



PARTY MANIFESTO

Rewarding Work Rebuilding Trust





Party Leader, Lucinda Creighton TD

RENUA Ireland was created to drive change, in a political system that has resisted fundamental change for decades. We will build a transparent accountable state based on ethics, integrity and the reward of merit.

In this manifesto, we present one of the most ambitious political programmes ever presented to the Irish people.

We want to build a country where work is rewarded and job creators and innovators are valued, primarily through a low tax economy. Our proposal is to introduce a simplified tax system, replacing 17 different rates of tax with a flat rate of income tax, set at 23%. This will have a transformative effect on the lives of millions of Irish people. They will have more disposable income to care for themselves and their families. Working harder will now be worthwhile because people will immediately feel the reward.

Our Flat Tax policy, together with our proposals on enterprise and entrepreneurship, would make Ireland the most attractive place in the English-speaking world to invest and to grow a business. We will robustly grow our indigenous economy through creating jobs and opportunity for our young people. Ireland can become the Hong Kong of Europe.

We believe that communities should have real ownership over local services. Our proposal to introduce democracy and strengthen the 'meitheal' spirit at local and community level will see our citizens engaged in decisions that affect their own lives like never before.

RENUA Ireland is determined that the old, the sick and the vulnerable should be able to live in security and dignity. We are proposing a tougher, no-nonsense 'Three Strike' approach to sentences for dangerous criminals and repeat offenders, to end the feeling of fear and threat that is widespread in rural areas.

Healthcare must protect patients and treat them with respect. We will re-focus the health system on realistic and deliverable targets. We will deliver multi-disciplinary primary care, relieving pressure on acute hospitals and ensuring greater access to the care patients urgently need.

RENUA Ireland is on a mission to end the cronyism and insider-dealing that pervades Irish public life. We will be guided at all times by an ethos of openness and 'Government in the Sunshine'. We want to change the entire culture of the political system by being a watchdog that has bite.

RENUA Ireland maintains that the central objective of Government is to raise the quality of life for all citizens in society. We will implement a clear and transparent mechanism to review our targets. We intend to introduce an independent method of measuring social progress annually, instead of simply focusing on GDP growth rates. Economic expansion is worthless if it is not felt at the grassroots level by our citizens. RENUA Ireland is committed to introducing a Social Progress Indicator (SPI), an annual publication that can be clearly understood and will become the benchmark in measuring how Ireland is advancing each year.

I am proud to lead a party that has put forward an innovative and challenging agenda for change. In Government RENUA Ireland will honour two simple promises - Rewarding Work and Rebuilding Trust.

This is our task. We need your support to make it happen.

Warm wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lucinda', written over a light blue circular stamp.

Lucinda



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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RENUA Ireland wants to build a country where work is rewarded and job creators and innovators are valued, primarily through the creation of a low tax economy. We will build a transparent and accountable state based on ethics, integrity and the reward of merit. Our manifesto for the General Election of 2016 proposes fundamental change to the economic, social and political landscape in Ireland.

1.2 Economic Vision and Principles

We believe that the Irish state must commit itself to economic prudence and long-term planning. Budgets cannot and will not be crafted to appeal to short-term and sectional interests. We will reform the budgetary process and its interaction with our parliament, and mandate government to operate balanced budgets during periods of economic expansion.

1.3 Taxation Policy

We will revolutionise personal taxation in Ireland by introducing a flat tax of 23%. A marginal tax rate in excess of 50% is morally wrong and acts as an obstacle to economic growth and personal fulfilment. Our flat tax will reward work and act as a game-changing stimulus to the Irish economy.

1.4 Business and Enterprise Policy

RENUA Ireland's vision for the Irish economy places indigenous enterprise and entrepreneurialism at its core. We will make Ireland a thriving environment for those who want to create jobs and drive growth. We will reform cumbersome business taxes and consolidate our unwieldy range of enterprise schemes.

1.5 Regional Development and Regeneration

We want to rebuild the rural high street in Ireland and empower communities to shape their own futures. We will invigorate Irish towns by encouraging the development of vacant lands and rolling out Business Improvement Districts across the country.

1.6 Tourism and Hospitality

Tourism has proven itself to be one of our most resilient sectors of the economy. RENUA Ireland is committed to ensuring that tourism continues to thrive. We will integrate and strengthen tourism marketing. We commit ongoing long-term support for the 9% VAT rate for the services sector. We aim to achieve real cuts in electricity prices and water charges to support the continued growth of the sector. Our tax reform proposal to introduce a 23% Flat tax will incentivise further job creation.

1.7 Agriculture and Agribusiness

Farming and agribusiness are an essential part of Ireland's social and economic fabric. We want to release the underlying potential which exists throughout Ireland's agricultural sector. This will be achieved by developing modern business practices and flexible commercial arrangements for Irish farmers, including changes to land ownership structures and the facilitation of greater competition.

1.8 Fisheries

We will bring real economic recovery to our fishing communities. We support a full renegotiation of the Common Fisheries Policy, and will prioritise a tougher regime of quota enforcement. We will address the prevalence of under-reporting by increasing prosecutions, encouraging whistleblowing and making the structures for the development of our fishing ports more transparent and accountable.

1.9 Financial Services and Banking

The Irish Credit Network will dramatically change the banking landscape in Ireland and force our pillar banks to revise their lending practices. We will establish Local Public Banks based on the successful model which exists in Germany, and address the mortgage arrears crisis by mandating the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) to intervene in the housing debt market.

1.10 Community and Social Policy

The absence of high quality and affordable childcare represents the biggest social challenge facing working families in modern Ireland. RENUA Ireland will invest one billion Euro over the lifetime of the next government in building a network of community crèches which allow parents to participate in the workforce in the knowledge that their children's safety and well-being is secure. We will also implement a €500 million tax break for working parents to ease the pain of the childcare second mortgage. We will establish a recognisable Minimum Lifestyle Standard against which the socio-economic outputs of government will be benchmarked.

1.11 Public Sector Reform

We will enrich and invigorate the vital role played by the public service in the efficient management of the state. We believe that accountability and transparency are essential to creating a culture of high performance. We will replace the existing model of increments and inefficiency with a vibrant and meritocratic system of performance management which rewards excellence.

1.12 Political Reform

We will deliver a transparent and accountable political system, underpinned by our belief in 'government in the sunshine'. We will bring forward referenda to give the Irish people the opportunity to make politicians think and act nationally. We will end the undemocratic culture of secrecy that permeates throughout our parliament and government. Under RENUA Ireland the people will finally have the right to know.

1.13 Housing

Ireland is not building enough homes. RENUA Ireland believes a ten billion Euro investment in community housing is required to fill the gap with a long-term, holistic and integrated housing model. We will match existing public lands with private pension and investment funds to create mixed-tenure housing developments and improve the supply of accommodation in areas of high demand.

1.14 Justice

RENUA Ireland will make it our mission to restore trust in the justice system by introducing tough measures such as a 'three strike' rule for serious criminal offences including murder, rape, child sex abuse and burglary. RENUA Ireland will also increase the current 'life sentence' tariff to a scale where life really does mean life. We will adopt a zero tolerance approach to white collar crime and implement a practical plan to tackle rural crime.

1.15 Education

RENUA Ireland's core educational priority is that every child should have equality of opportunity. We will work towards creating an equal chance early childhood education system, strengthen the regulatory system for crèches, and open up schools to transparent competition for management positions. We will move towards a model of continuous assessment for secondary state exams, and improve access to loans and finance for third level students.

1.16 Health

RENUA Ireland firmly believes that the crisis in our health service can be ended. Hospital Trusts will be supported to promote independence and competition. We envisage a major new role for GPs as patient advocates in a GP centred care system. We will prioritise the roll out of a network of local multi-disciplinary primary care services and prioritise home-care options for the elderly

1.17 Climate Change and Natural Resources

Ireland has the capacity to become a global leader in the area of energy innovation and the efficient use of renewable energy. We will prioritise the integration of solar, tidal and biomass energy into our mainstream networks, while leveraging our rich and varied natural resources.

1.18 Arts and Culture

The provision of funding to the arts sector must be modernised and adapted to reflect the multicultural diversity of our society. The role of the state in the area of arts and culture will be particularly important as we journey through a decade of commemoration of Irish independence, which we believe should belong to the entire island of Ireland.

1.19 Foreign Policy and Defence

Ireland must define its position within the complex and volatile geopolitics of the 21st century. In particular, this will require a clarification of our relationship with organisations such as NATO and the UN and an examination of how to manage our neutrality in light of international conflicts and issues in global politics.



2 ECONOMIC VISION AND PRINCIPLES

RENUA Ireland believes that the state must commit itself to new macro-economic management principles which will end our endemic culture of boom and bust. These principles require prudence and the placing of citizens' interests at the heart of economic planning. RENUA Ireland believes in promoting the national interest over sectional, short-term interests. This is the essence of leadership. We believe that economic management and transparency within government is necessary if this vision is to be achieved.

RENUA Ireland priorities for the economy:

- A constitutional/legislative commitment to balanced budgets, meaning politicians will never be allowed bankrupt the country again.
- Empowering Dáil Committees to properly scrutinize Departmental budgets in a similar manner to the PAC.
- The creation of new Accountability Panels will have the power to recommend the dismissal of non-performing Ministers and senior civil servants.
- A new Ministers and Secretaries Act, which, will ensure that both Ministers and Senior Public Officials are held accountable for their decisions.

2.1 Balanced budgets

RENUA Ireland believes that the state should run balanced budgets in periods of economic expansion. We will protect future generations by introducing legislation which will prohibit the government from operating a current budget deficit during periods of growth.

Cost: neutral

2.2 Reform of the budgetary process

RENUA Ireland believes that the government must overhaul its method of financial planning by engaging in real-time budgetary review processes.

We will legislate to provide the Oireachtas committees with strong powers of scrutiny and co-creation for all departmental and agency budgets. Newly-empowered Oireachtas committees will begin the process of preparing for the next year's budget the day after the current year's budget is produced.

We will reform the budgetary process so that every line of expenditure is explored, challenged and understood before an allocation is made. We will overhaul financial planning at government level by replacing our cash basis method of accounting with an accruals-based method.

Accruals-based accounting means that money unspent in one year can be carried over into another year within a department's budget without the loss of this funding (i.e. it can be used for a strategically useful purpose). Zero-based analysis means that an allocation must be deemed to be appropriate before the accruals method allows the Department or Agency to carry the provision over to the next financial year, thus avoiding significant financial waste in the process.

Cost: neutral, to be delivered within existing budgets

2.3 Parliamentary oversight of budget process

RENUA Ireland believes that our parliament is far too weak and has far too little influence over public spending. We will give parliamentary committees an oversight role over the formation of budgets in each Department. These committees will have access to specialist advice so that they are equipped to challenge budgets and ensure that allocations and priorities are driven by the public interest.

Cost: €15m will be provided to fulfil this function

2.4 Responsible political proposals

RENUA Ireland believes that political parties should be held accountable for their own proposals.

We will radically expand the scope of the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council (IFAC) so that political parties, parliamentarians and parliamentary committees can request an estimate of the financial cost and implications of any proposal for matters over which the Oireachtas has jurisdiction. Requests from Oireachtas committees with budgetary competences will be given priority, and all reports and estimates prepared by IFAC will be made available to the public.

IFAC will be provided with additional resources in advance of general elections, allowing voters to comprehensively review and compare the competing party manifestos. Increased transparency at election time will extend beyond polling day itself, as IFAC will also be mandated to cost and analyse any Programme for Government agreed by coalition partners.

Cost: €500,000 will be provided to the IFAC to undertake this role

2.5 Enhanced governance

RENUA Ireland believes that Ministers and Senior Public Officials (Secretary Generals, Assistant Secretary Generals and their equivalents) should be held responsible for the decisions they make and the implementation of government policy. Under the Ministers and Secretaries Act 1924, the Minister has sole responsibility for their entire department.

RENUA Ireland will change this law so that both Ministers and Senior Public Officials are held accountable for their decisions and management.

To further enhance the power of the Oireachtas, RENUA Ireland will give Oireachtas committees the power to refer Ministers and Senior Public Officials to an Accountability Panel which will be responsible for reviewing their performance and issuing recommendations up to and including termination of contract and removal from office. This is a vital step in introducing government in the sunshine to Ireland. The Accountability Panel will be proposed by the Minister for Public Expenditure and approved by the Houses of the Oireachtas, and will act independently of government.

2.6 Growing the domestic economy

We believe that the Irish economy is too reliant on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) as a source of tax revenue, employment and growth. We believe in a balanced and sustainable economic model which acknowledges the benefits of FDI while creating a healthy environment for domestic enterprise.

We believe that a combination of clear business support initiatives, competitive personal and business taxes and a vision for how and where the State buys its goods, services and works can make Ireland the most entrepreneurial economy in the world.

3 TAXATION POLICY

Our current model of income tax is progressive but penal. RENUA Ireland wants a tax policy that is progressive, fair and drives job creation.

RENUA Ireland believes in a competitive economy that rewards its citizens and the businesses that generate the wealth to pay for public services.

RENUA Ireland's tax reform policies will generate significant growth in domestic enterprise, reward those who work hard, and eliminate reliefs and shelters which only benefit the rich. Our proposals streamline the personal and business taxation systems, underpinning our core beliefs in rewarding work and promoting government in the sunshine.

RENUA Ireland priorities for taxation:

- A flat rate of tax at 23% which frees workers to retain 77% of their income.
- A tax system which stimulates enterprise and job creation in the domestic economy.
- The immediate ending of tax discrimination against the self employed.
- The abolition of tax shelters for the wealthy.
- A new system of property tax which will directly benefit communities in areas such as childcare and community based care for the elderly.
- The abolition of excessive secondary charges such as motor tax and the TV licence.

3.1 Personal taxation

3.1.1 A Flat Tax Model

RENUA Ireland is proposing the abolition of the current income tax model, the Universal Social Charge, and Employee's PRSI. We will introduce a simplified flat tax of 23%, with a basic income payment to all individuals. All tax credits will be eliminated under this system.

A single rate of 23% will apply on all income. Those earning up to €70,000 per annum will receive a pro rata (graduated) basic income payment of up to €3,600 per person in the household. The payment will decrease gradually as household income increases.

The flat tax model eliminates the disincentives to work which are prevalent in the current system.

People who are currently working part-time because they hit a 52% marginal rate (as a couple or individually) over a low income threshold will instead retain 77c from every additional euro they earn under our tax system. One immediate impact of this step would be the filling of vacant hospital consultant roles from returning Irish medical professionals, as well as attracting home badly needed nurses, who currently have no incentive to return from the UK or Australia.

This system will increase cash flow, put money back in people's pockets, increase spending, reduce the black market and have a range of secondary spin-offs and multipliers. Most importantly, we will ensure that it is always worthwhile to take on extra hours, work more shifts, move from part time to full time employment, or seek a promotion, pay increase or bonus.

Cost: neutral

3.1.2 Ending the Tax Discrimination against the Self-Employed

RENUA Ireland believes that the current system of taxation discriminates strongly against the self-employed. In government, we will immediately replicate the tax credit available to all PAYE workers so that this discrimination is eliminated. RENUA Ireland favours its introduction as an immediate short-term priority before our flat tax can be introduced.

Cost: €123m

3.1.3 Tax reliefs, Tax Shelters and Tax Credits

A flat tax model makes tax reliefs, shelters and credits unnecessary. Instead, industries will have to sell the benefits of their products and services to consumers. Industries that have historically benefitted from tax efficiency schemes that only the very wealthy could avail of, will now have to provide an economic return to investors which does not come at a cost to taxpayers.

The only circumstance in which RENUA Ireland believes reliefs should be permissible is a situation where appalling economic planning has led to a market failure. Childcare and community care for patients with long-term conditions are two obvious examples at present. RENUA Ireland favours the use of short-term reliefs while long term capacity is being developed. Such reliefs, however, should never become permanent.

Cost: Long term savings estimated in excess of €1.5bn

3.1.4 Reforming Capital Acquisitions Tax (CAT)

Capital Acquisitions Tax (CAT) brought in €356m in 2014 – less than 1% of the total tax take in that year. CAT is primarily levied on home owners in large urban areas or on large family homes outside these cities.

RENUA Ireland believes that the ceiling over which CAT is levied should be lifted to €500,000 from the newly raised ceiling of €290,000. While RENUA Ireland is not proposing a change to the thresholds for other inheritances and gifts, such funds will simply be treated as normal income and be taxed at the flat tax rate in the future.

Cost of raising threshold €74m

3.1.5 Modernising Capital Gains Tax

RENUA Ireland is committed to changing the approach to investment in Ireland. Instead of giving tax breaks to certain sectors, we believe that businesses in the economy should compete to attract investment from private investors. Capital gains tax is a tool that can radically reduce the dependence of Irish businesses on the banks for credit and capital.

We are proposing that the following changes be made to encourage the growth of Irish businesses:

- A reduction in the rate of capital gains tax from 33% to 20% for productive businesses where the investment is up to five years in duration;
- A reduction in the rate of capital gains tax from 33% to 15% for productive businesses where the investment is up to eight years in duration;
- A reduction in the rate of capital gains tax from 33% to 10% for productive businesses where the investment is in excess of eight years in duration;
- Retention of a 33% rate for all other assets and businesses that are not productive entities (e.g. holding vehicles for dry assets like property).
- A mechanism to enable productive businesses founded elsewhere to move to Ireland and avail of the applicable rate relative to their foundation date where their business operations are moved to Ireland;

Cost: Revenue generating. Conservatively projecting a 50% increase in this head of taxation per year for five years. This will generate an additional €274m in year 1 and over €1bn over the lifetime of the next Dáil.

3.1.6 Stamp duties and Other Tax Reforms

RENUA Ireland is proposing the following reforms of other taxes, charges and duties:

- Abolition of motor tax: See under 3.2.4

Cost: €250m

- Abolition of the TV licence: RENUA Ireland favours abolishing the TV licence. The current social protection fund (circa €54m) will be ring fenced for public service broadcasting, and all TV and Radio stations will be eligible to bid for access to the fund. RTE will have to fund its operations from its commercial income to compete with private sector broadcasters. RENUA Ireland believes in public broadcasting, however, but believes it should be paid through the progressive tax system rather than a regressive license fee.

Cost: neutral

- Local Property Tax: We will overhaul the existing Local Property Tax model and replace it with a split charge system:
 1. A Zoned Land Tax will be calculated on the basis of how much it costs to operate each local authority. This will create a direct link between taxpayers and the performance of their local authority. The total operating cost after commercial rates is allocated on a per square meter basis on zoned land. This approach penalises the hoarding of zoned land and derelict buildings.
 2. A Site Value Tax (0.1% of site value) will be used to fund the development of social infrastructure across the state. Immediate priorities include childcare and sheltered housing and convalescent care facilities for the elderly. The purpose of this fund is to have up to €500m for nationwide investment, on a competitive basis, every year for thirty years.

Cost: neutral

3.2 Business & Enterprise Taxation

3.2.1 Corporation Tax

RENUA Ireland supports the retention of a Corporation Tax rate of 12.5%. We also recognise the importance of our relationships with our trading partners and other EU member states. RENUA Ireland is committed to ensuring that the overarching goals of the OECD's Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) project can be facilitated, while also ensuring that Ireland remains a compelling investment location. It is in the interests of all member states that large multinationals pay tax on profits generated by accessing EU markets.

Cost: neutral

3.2.2 Knowledge Development Box

RENUA Ireland acknowledges the potential for a Knowledge Development Box tool if it rewards and incentivises research and development in Ireland. As this is a new scheme, it is premature to form a view on it at this point. RENUA Ireland believes that it should be subjected to a review after its first three years.

Cost: neutral

3.2.3 Tax Simplification Programme

RENUA Ireland favours the simplification of the tax code for personal taxation and the elimination of credits, reliefs and shelters. The introduction of a flat tax with a basic income and the removal of reliefs and shelters will introduce a clear and certain environment for rewarding work and entrepreneurship.

Cost: simplifying the system itself is a tax neutral exercise

3.2.4 Motor Tax

RENUA Ireland will eliminate the motor tax and replace it with a simple levy on fuel. Hauliers and PSVs would have a ceiling for their activities so that they are not unduly penalised by the new system. This approach will bring all petrol and diesel devices into the tax net and large savings will accrue through the elimination of unnecessary bureaucracy in local authorities, the Gardaí and the Courts Service. It ensures that the more than 130,000 untaxed vehicles will be immediately brought into the tax net along with all other petrol and diesel-powered devices and promotes the 'polluter pays' principle.

Cost: €250m on a net basis (operational savings, excise changes for diesel and revenue raised with this measure)

3.2.5 Capital Gains Tax

In conjunction with a flat tax system, our proposed changes to Capital Gains Tax (outlined in detail at section 3.1.5 above) are designed to address specific cultural weaknesses in the Irish business landscape.

These changes will increase the rate of private investment in Irish businesses, help to close the competitive gap with other economies such as the United Kingdom for investment and make Ireland one of the best locations for entrepreneurs to invest in.

Cost: projected to generate in excess of €1bn over a full Dáil term

3.2.6 Regional Investment Incentives

We believe that government should promote a balanced regional spread of inward investment and FDI across Ireland. This will help to ease the burden being placed on housing, office space and other infrastructure in Dublin and ensure that high-quality jobs are being created in areas with the capacity for growth.

Cost: neutral

3.2.7 Employee share investment schemes

We will introduce a share-based remuneration scheme for employees as a useful way of allowing people to shield income from marginal rates in excess of 50%, whilst helping their employers to invest in growth, innovation and expansion.

We will end the disincentive of taxing the awarding of shares to employees as income, which results in paying over half their notional value immediately, for what are often illiquid shares forcing workers to find tax payments from scarce savings. Instead we will shift the timeline to the disposal of shares and the tax to CGT. Staff participating in such schemes will not be taxed until such time as their shares are taken out of the business or sold, and when they are, a reduced CGT rate of 20% will apply.

Cost: neutral

3.2.8 Streamline all grants, reliefs and investment programmes

Ireland's business support environment is exceptionally weak by comparison to peer investment locations such as Israel. RENUA Ireland believes a first step in improving supports is to consolidate the existing schemes, of which there are over sixty operated by dozens of agencies, into a single structure that provides tiered access to funding and advice. RENUA Ireland believes that Enterprise Ireland and the Local Enterprise Offices are the best agencies available at present to coordinate this consolidation.

Cost: neutral - additional funding will be freed up for business support through the significant simplification of the number of bodies providing incentives and supports.

4 BUSINESS AND ENTERPRISE POLICY

RENUA Ireland believes in promoting enterprise and in rewarding hard work. We believe that our business environment can benefit from competition and from transparency in how we organise and regulate our economic affairs. RENUA Ireland's proposals for infusing our businesses with an outcome-focused culture are motivated by our belief in supporting and enabling creativity and entrepreneurialism.

RENUA Ireland priorities for enterprise:

- A spatial strategy to drive capital investment in big infrastructure for the regions.
- Ending the banking monopoly on lending to SMEs with a new Irish Credit Network and new public banks specifically tailored for SMEs.
- End the power of banks to demand personal guarantees for business lending.
- Reduce and simplify the labyrinth of sixty enterprise quangos, streamlining and simplifying the supports for business nationwide.
- Finally end the blight of upwards only rent reviews.
- Finish the process of dismantling FAS.

4.1 Transforming the credit environment

Ireland's credit environment is deeply dysfunctional. The systematic use of personal guarantees compounded the fallout from the financial crisis. Personal and business banking became intertwined and, furthermore, asset-backed lending compromised the ability of businesses to leverage their assets when the financial crisis struck.

RENUA Ireland will ensure that lessons are learned from the crisis. Our proposals strengthen the credit environment for businesses and ensure that only businesses with viable plans obtain access to credit facilities.

RENUA Ireland is proposing:

- The Irish Credit Network: The Irish Credit Network will be a working capital member-owned network that provides cash flow-based lending and invoice discounting services for business, modelled on the system which has operated successfully in Switzerland for nearly a century. It will speed up payments between businesses, reduce the need for working capital finance and eliminate most fees. This network will be created by the state but will be owned by and run by businesses, under Central Bank regulation.

Cost: neutral (set-up costs recouped through a temporary transaction charge)

- Local Public Banking: Local public banking has worked for decades in countries such as Germany where it provides specialist credit services to SMEs, as well as those in the agricultural and fishing sectors. We will give this organisation a mandate to lend €1.2bn into the Irish economy using cash-flow based lending against business plans. It will be funded by €300m from the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) fund.

Cost: €300m from SBCI fund

- Ending the Culture of Personal Guarantees: Personal guarantees will be made illegal on business loans. We will ensure that lending takes place on the basis of the business plans only. The wider economy will benefit from increased competition between the pillar banks. In the interim, we will require the Central Bank of Ireland to enforce an adjusted Code of Conduct for lending to SMEs.

Cost: neutral

- Reforming Bankruptcy: We will change bankruptcy in Ireland so that the process can be completed within a 12 month calendar period. This will improve Ireland's ability attract investment and incentivise entrepreneurialism.

Cost: neutral

4.2 Revolutionising investment supports

RENUA Ireland will streamline all government supports and incentives into a single structure of funding grants, mentorship schemes and employment incentives. The EIS, SURE and other schemes have not been taken up in any significant numbers by businesses because they are too cumbersome and bureaucratic.

All grants, investment supports and employment/hiring incentives will be tiered, with three levels for micro business development, small business development and businesses above this level.

Cost: design of new structure through one off project costing €500k

4.3 Transforming the business environment

4.3.1 Commercial Rates

Our Local Property Tax (LPT) proposals are a mechanism for the transformation of local government. Under our proposals, local authorities will gain control of rates and use LPT reforms to balance the ratio of residential to commercial rates.

Cost: neutral

4.3.2 Upward-only Rent Reviews

RENUA Ireland will provide for benchmarking rents to find the true market rate and will introduce arbitration processes where agreement cannot be reached to find a fair market level.

Cost: neutral

4.3.3 Modernising the National Training Fund

RENUA Ireland will make 50% of the national training fund (including Skillsnets funding) available for workplace training. This can be divided into streams to support wider economic goals and to address the three biggest issues in the unemployed sector: youth unemployment, the long-term unemployed and the under-employed. This proposal will help drive productivity and make it more attractive for people to go back into our workforce.

Cost: savings accrue by reducing the size of the Solas organisation further

4.4 Capital investment programme

RENUA Ireland's primary focus points for capital investment are:

- The development of primary care centres and convalescent facilities across the country in order to make hospital beds available;
- The development of a network of community crèche facilities across the country to provide affordable access to childcare;
- The development of sheltered housing in towns and villages to give senior citizens an alternative to rural isolation and the choice of moving to areas of economic, social and community activity;
- The development of a clean tech hub in the Midlands focused around Athlone, Tullamore, and Mullingar. Further detail is outlined in the energy policy section;
- The completion of ultra-fast fibre broadband networks encompassing all major towns and villages;
- The development of working hubs in designated towns in Ireland.

5 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION

Dublin's infrastructure is creaking, it lacks adequate housing that can be seen in other parts of Ireland. While, its education, healthcare and transport facilities are at capacity. We can and must drive development across the rest of the country. One of the few positive legacies of the Celtic Tiger era is a network of motorways that has made traversing the country much easier. While rapid links between Dublin and other parts of the country exist, links between cities like Cork and Limerick, Waterford and Cork, Galway and Limerick and Galway and Sligo should be greatly improved. RENUA Ireland believes that our economic planning and national policy should positively discriminate in favour of much greater investment in regional towns and cities.

RENUA Ireland priorities for regional development:

- Create living cities with vibrant town centres across the state.
- Rebuild Ireland's high streets with a new Business Improvement District policy.
- The restoration of town councils on a volunteer basis to give people back control over their lives.
- The development of a smart agricultural industry to ensure Ireland becomes a world leader.

5.1 Living towns and cities

RENUA Ireland fully supports the principles of living towns and living cities. Landowners, including the State, should be penalised for not utilising fully serviced land beside amenities. Opportunities for people to live above businesses to bring people back into villages, towns and cities must be supported. Services can be provided more economically when people are clustered together.

RENUA Ireland favours a use it or lose it policy when it comes to high value serviced premises, especially in cities to ensure that such properties are redeveloped or sold for redevelopment.

RENUA Ireland also favours the conversion of vacant commercial premises (especially in towns and villages) to residential accommodation in order to revitalise town centres and utilise available buildings.

RENUA Ireland favours the commercial rating of unused or underused commercial premises until they are rezoned and being used for residential purposes or have been redeveloped and are being used as viable commercial premises.

Cost: neutral

5.2 Regional regeneration

RENUA Ireland favours the use of the flat tax, capital gains tax and visa programmes to drive the development of businesses in the thirty towns or so with populations over 10,000 people as well as Cork, Waterford, Kilkenny, Limerick and Galway. RENUA Ireland will mandate the development of themed clusters and themed links with Institutes of Technology to enhance the attractiveness of locating and clustering with like-minded businesses in such areas.

This approach will also be used in key nodal points along strategic corridors, for example Ardee in County Louth along the North South Economic corridor.

To further assist this, in designated towns, the vacant properties levy outlined above will be used to fund a rates break for start-ups and new businesses. This will operate on a sliding scale over three years with full rates applying from year three.

RENUA Ireland is committed to developing a Smart-Agricultural Hub in the South East in partnership with industry, representative bodies and 3rd level Institutes of Technology across the South East region. Food supply is one of the greatest challenges the world will face over the next 100 years and beyond, and it is vital that Ireland address this through the harnessing of the combined efforts of the various stakeholders and experts.

RENUA Ireland believes that Ireland's expertise in Agriculture and Information Communications Technology (ICT) can be combined to develop a smart agricultural industry that can become a world leader in developing technologies and methods to increase productivity and efficiency, while at the same time protecting and enhancing the quality of Irish produce.

5.3 Rebuilding the High Street

Ireland's towns and high streets have suffered enormously during the recession. RENUA Ireland has a plan to bring life back to our rural towns.

This will occur via the roll out of the Business Improvement District / Purple Flag programme to the thirty towns in Ireland with populations in excess of 10,000 people. An initiative like a BID can help drive smart town and city initiatives in conjunction with local authorities and other stakeholders. BIDs work, they improve the visual appearance of towns, help more businesses to open or expand and also generate increased footfall.

RENUA Ireland is proposing the development of a fund of €5m to drive this initiative over a four year period with three towns becoming eligible for selection by way of a competitive application process each quarter. This fund will pay for the resources necessary to develop BIDs so that towns can thrive across Ireland.

Cost: €1.25m per year for four years

5.4. Community empowerment

RENUA Ireland believes strongly in providing communities with the capacity to come together to improve their locality. RENUA Ireland's proposes that town and district councils be given powers and access to resources so that they play an enhanced role in decision making about the future of their communities. We believe in grassroots activism in districts, towns and villages across the country. Further details on this are contained in the political reform section of this document. RENUA Ireland is proposing that such councils operate on a volunteer basis.

Towns with less than 10,000 residents are becoming residential satellites of larger towns that have acquired critical mass.

Small villages have their own unique personalities and character. This must be allowed to blossom with imaginative infrastructural development.

Successful plans for smaller towns and villages do exist and RENUA Ireland is in favour of these scaled down versions being made available to community leaders for implementation in conjunction with local authorities, local politicians and other stakeholders

Cost: neutral

5.5 Roads & Infrastructure – Vital for Regional development

RENUA Ireland believes that the Western Corridor Route network from Cork to Letterkenny must be completed in order to address the infrastructural under-development of these regions. The Western Corridor Route will assist in achieving greater regional balance in terms of population, employment, rural development and living standards countrywide.

These infrastructural developments, combined with the development of fibre network broadband and clean energy will help to deliver an environmentally sustainable and highly accessible Ireland.

5.6 Expand the Role of the Rural Pub

Rural pubs are an integral part of the community and our culture. With the demise of local shops, post offices and Garda stations, the local public house has become a focal point for community interaction and social discourse. RENUA Ireland wants such facilities to receive assistance in expanding their role if they so wish. A grant assistance scheme should be put in place to enable the proprietor to provide some tourist and local history information. In practice this is happening in many areas already with the local publican having become a useful resource in tourist information.

To qualify for the scheme there would be a requirement to allocate a section of the premises to display relevant information as well as attendance at a one-off training day. An exact template would be agreed between Fáilte Ireland and the Vintners Associations. The benefits of such a concept are obvious for all. Information would be available at times when our tourist offices are closed at a fraction of the cost of establishing a dedicated service. A human face is superior to an App and generations of local knowledge and anecdotes cannot be surpassed in providing visitors with authentic guides to rural Ireland.

6 TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY

Tourism alongside Agriculture is a key domestic industry and a major supplier of jobs and opportunity across rural and urban Ireland.

During the recession a mix of clever tax policies and the hard work of our innovative hoteliers and publicans meant tourism was one of the few industries that managed to survive.

Now that some economic sunlight has returned RENUA Ireland wants tourism to grow and thrive.

RENUA Ireland priorities for tourism:

- A real strengthening of tourism marketing.
- Ongoing long-term support for the 9% VAT rate.
- Securing real cuts in electricity prices and water charges.
- Tax reform that incentivizes job creation.
- Developing innovative new products centered on organic and natural foods, micro-breweries, distilleries and nature based experiences.

6.1 Strengthening tourism marketing

The duplication and overlap between the roles of Local Government authorities, Tourism Ireland, Fáilte Ireland, and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board needs to be ended.

6.2 Ireland's international visibility

There is a need to continue to reinforce Ireland's brand across international markets. Despite an increasingly challenging trading environment and additional competition in the marketplace, Ireland's spend on destination marketing has almost halved over the past seven years. This year, an estimated €36 million will be spent by Tourism Ireland on marketing compared to €62 million in 2008.

Destination marketing represents an investment, not a cost to the taxpayer; as every €1 previously invested by the state in destination advertising in top source markets resulted in a visitor spend of €34 in the country.

6.3 Hosting major sporting, cultural and business events

Major international events can be leveraged to raise international visibility of Ireland as a destination of choice, and therefore they have the potential to increase visitor numbers significantly. In collaboration with public and private partnerships, strategies need to be developed to attract large-scale events from bid stage and to help to successfully stage major events.

6.4 Value Added Tax

The current rate of 9% in Ireland has restored our competitiveness among European tourist destinations. Any increase would place Ireland at a serious competitive disadvantage. We therefore support the objectives of industry organizations such as the Irish Hotel Federation, the Restaurant Association of Ireland, ITIC and IBEC in maintaining the 9% VAT rate for tourism services.

6.5 Utility services costs and environmentally responsible energy use

Escalating water charges needs to be addressed. This is a major concern for those in the accommodation and food industries who are high users. Ireland's utility costs must be maintained at competitive levels in comparison with competing countries.

Environmental responsible use of energy and the protection of the environment are universal goals. The tourism industry should aspire to lead the way in adopting a responsible approach to energy use, and encouraging energy efficiency is a key competitive asset for tourism in Ireland.

6.6 Labour

The tourism industry is labour intensive, and so maintaining cost competitiveness is a major challenge. The introduction of RENUA Ireland's Flat Tax policy, which greatly rewards work, will allow employees to benefit from moving from part-time to full-time employment.

6.7 Improving accessibility

Ireland's transport infrastructure needs to cater for increased numbers of tourists and visitors to travel to and within the country.

As an island nation, good air access, hub connectivity and sea access is vital to tourism. Airport landing fees must be maintained at international levels in order to maintain our competitiveness. Removing airport tax for travelers helps maintain competitive ticket prices.

New routes could be supported for a fixed period in order for them to become established in their markets.

6.8 Industry development support

Travellers are seeking to engage with tourism products that have an authentic story, and are looking to interact more closely with providers.

Additional offerings can be developed around organic and natural foods, micro breweries, distilleries, driving routes, nature-based walking and cycling trails and around other ways of utilising our natural resources including our inland waterways and coastal resources.

6.9 Product development clusters

Following almost a decade of challenging conditions, a number of our tourism assets are ageing and no longer fit for purpose.

There is a need to build on the existing tourism product to encourage visitors to extend their stay. Development of tourism clusters, in urban areas or close to significant heritage sites, will assist greatly in this as they will act as bases from which visitors can further explore neighbouring regions.

6.10 Regulatory reform

Tourism currently faces a disproportionate regulatory burden which acts as a barrier to investment.

6.11 Partnership approach

A collaborative approach is encouraged in bringing together government agencies, local authorities and industry stakeholders in order to leverage all available resources, knowledge and expertise to maximise outcome in this area.

6.12 Labour shortage

The tourism industry has a labour shortage across all areas, and with visitor numbers set to increase on an annual basis additional employees will be required. This shortfall needs to be addressed by government agencies, educational institutions and the industry itself, in order to rebuild the industry's reputation as a career of choice.

6.13 Job opportunities

As a service industry, tourism relies heavily on people. Growth in tourism requires an expansion of the workforce. In addition to encouraging school-leavers to consider a career in tourism, a specially trained task force is required to assist jobseekers in finding meaningful employment in the industry.

6.14 Training

Industry training schemes need to be developed in partnership with all stakeholders to create a visible career path for those entering the industry and for existing employees who wish to develop their skills sets and progress within it.

6.15 Digital capacity

The availability of a high-speed broadband network throughout the country is required as a foundation to building digital capability, which is essential in both, marketing Ireland and in encouraging visitors to explore further when they arrive. In order to remain competitive in a digital world it is essential to build efficient digital marketing, booking, and payment and information platforms.

6.16 Data and skills

Almost every other industry is also competing for digital expertise. The up-skilling of employees is therefore a high-priority. In order to improve technical skills, a range of training programs should be developed in conjunction with the industry to allow individuals to up-skill. This training can be a combination of workshop modules and e-learning tools.

Government agencies will assist industry stakeholders by providing digital industry training and modules for up-skilling.

6.17 Digital marketing

The emergence of digital technologies has changed the way in which potential visitors can access information. Digital is therefore one of the most important channels for marketing and promoting tourism.

6.18 Digital content

It is important that content is kept up to date. Local authorities can play a key role in keeping content fresh and relevant. While an overall digital marketing strategy will be developed nationally, it can be maintained on a local level.



7 AGRICULTURE AND AGRIBUSINESS

Agriculture and agribusiness bind together our communities and copper-fasten Ireland's reputation as a producer of food of the highest quality. Our proposals seek to release potential throughout this vital sector of the Irish economy, recognising the enduring entrepreneurial spirit of the farming community and its role in our society.

RENUA Ireland's radical taxation proposals for flat taxes, capital gains tax reform and support for enterprise will be of very significant benefit to the farming and agribusiness sector. These proposals are outlined in the taxation and enterprise sections of our manifesto.

RENUA Ireland priorities for agriculture:

- The creation of a fund to protect farmers from the consequences of price volatility.
- A new bond scheme that will enable farmers to invest in land.
- Better opportunities and support for long term land leasing.
- Real competition in sheep production and support for hill farmers.
- The return of a Green friendly beet industry.
- The development of a thriving, world beating, thoroughbred and sport horse sector.

7.1 Price Volatility Fund

An ongoing challenge facing all producers in the agricultural sector is the serious volatility in commodity prices. It is a significant financial burden and greatly hinders long term planning. At present, this is very evident in the dairy sector, where the welcome end to the quota regime and the resulting increase in milk production has to some extent been offset by ongoing downward trends in milk prices.

RENUA Ireland is proposing a Price Volatility Fund to help all producers deal with this ongoing issue. Such a fund, similar to the Marginal Protection Programme of the United States or the UK Deficiency Payment Scheme of the 1950s and 1960s, would provide income certainty at times of significant price challenges across the industry. Producers would be allowed to invest some of their profits tax free at times of high income receipts, and taxation would only apply once withdrawals were made from the fund.

7.2 Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

The CAP will remain central to the production of sufficient quantities of quality food for the people of Europe. For all its faults, it remains the outstanding EU Policy Directive.

RENUA Ireland fully supports the retention of a strong CAP.

However, as a party of enterprise and work, RENUA Ireland recognises that future EU Agriculture support must be directed towards farmers involved directly in farming activity on a full-time or part-time basis. The historical payments support schemes will not continue indefinitely. Ireland should lead rather than follow EU decision-making during the mid-term and later substantial review of the CAP.

Balanced economic and social development of our country requires a degree of flexibility in the financial support of agriculture in more peripheral and marginal areas of the island. Notwithstanding RENUA Ireland's strong support for direct payments based on current producers, additional assistance for farmers in less advantageous circumstances must be part of any new future programme.

7.3 Land Mobility

Irish land changes ownership very infrequently, making it almost impossible for smaller farmers to expand. It is in the national, economic and social interests of the country to maintain the maximum number of small holders and farming families. RENUA Ireland believes a Financial Bond Scheme is needed to enable investment in land by trained farmers. Such a scheme, initially operating as a lease, could progress to full purchase after a suitable qualifying period.

A Financial Bond Scheme will enable farmers to build equity in land until they are able to enter a commercial term loan with a financial institution such as the Local Public Banks proposed by RENUA Ireland. Equivalent banks in countries such as Germany specialise in such arrangements for their farming sector, operating along the lines of a national bond scheme supported by the land and its productive potential.

7.4 Long-Term Land Leasing

Productive farmers can only expand production if there is adequate access to additional land. Long-term land leasing must be encouraged. Current incentives for long term land leasing are not sufficient and must be revised.

7.5 Share Farming

Share farming offers an avenue into agriculture production for farmers seeking to start or expand production in conjunction with other farmers. Opportunities to collaborate should be flexible and a range of capital allowances should be available to farmers who register the arrangement as a commercial business. This will incentivise taxation and financial planning in the farming sector.

7.6 Competition in Meat Processing

RENUA Ireland is a party which believes strongly in competition. A situation close to monopoly has been allowed to develop in the beef industry. Many of the lessons from the Beef Tribunal report of the 1990's have not been learned. The concentration of power within the beef industry remains problematic and is damaging Irish farm incomes.

RENUA Ireland will encourage and support the development of charitable trusts which would fulfil many of the functions previously undertaken by co-ops. These trusts can provide access for farmers to their own processing facilities and sales can be facilitated via an online mart developed and operated to keep overheads low.

7.7 Support for Hill Farming and the Sheep Industry

Hill farming, a vital contributor to the maintenance of Irish mountainsides and valleys has been discouraged in recent years. We believe that hill farmers should be allowed managed access to natural designation areas in co-ordination with the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Conservation areas will benefit from appropriate grazing by sheep and the access to commonage by farmers will reduce input costs for lamb production.

7.8 A Beet Industry for Ireland.

The EU no longer produces excess sugar and the market has changed dramatically since the time of Ireland's exit from sugar production. Sugar beet, the most profitable tillage crop that can be grown in Ireland and also an environmentally friendly break crop, should have a pivotal role in Irish agricultural production.

RENUA Ireland therefore supports the development of a beet processing plant in Ireland to produce sugar for domestic consumption, bio-ethanol for mixing with imported petroleum and beet pulp as an animal protein feed.

RENUA Ireland supports the appropriate capital allowances for investment in re-building our sugar industry.

7.9 Horse and Greyhound Racing

Tens of thousands of jobs are maintained in the Greyhound and Horse Racing sectors and these sports continue to fly the flag for Ireland on the international stage.

RENUA Ireland recognises the key role of these industries in the economic life of rural communities.

We believe that a properly and sustainably funded Horse and Greyhound Fund is crucial to the long term viability of both sectors. We believe that the 1% betting levy is a hopelessly inadequate basis for the fund. We are committed to increasing the levy to 3% of turnover and ringfencing it to ensure the long term future of these job rich industries.

We believe the thoroughbred industry continues to have enormous potential for growth, with the right vision and a strategy to guide it.

RENUA Ireland proposes an independent, comprehensive review of the overall contribution and benefits of the

thoroughbred industry to our economy, the current challenges faced and the appropriate solutions. This report will be independently commissioned by the Department of Agriculture.

We believe a senior level Department unit should be created to facilitate and drive government policy on the sector.

7.10 The Sport Horse Industry

RENUA Ireland acknowledges that this once thriving sector has been allowed to decline in recent decades due to a lack of vision and lack of support for sport horse producers. We believe that all responsibility for the sport horse sector should return to the Department of Agriculture.

A new national breeding programme must be developed to ensure that we dramatically improve the quality of our stock, particularly for the show jumping, eventing and dressage sectors. In order to ensure the best quality horses are available for Irish riders to compete at the top international level, we propose a temporary four year tax incentive scheme to attract investment in the sector, with a clear goal of garnering medals at the Tokyo Olympic Games in 2020, thus showcasing Irish equestrian sport and breeding at the very highest level.



8 FISHERIES

RENUA Ireland is committed to our country's fishing sector, and in government we will bring about a real economic recovery to Ireland's fishing communities.

RENUA Ireland will work to end the scenario where other fleets, such as the French, Spanish and Dutch, have profited from their extensive access to Ireland's rich fishing waters, while Irish fishermen are forced out of the industry.

RENUA Ireland priorities for fisheries:

- Reform the ineffective Common Fisheries Policy, which is not properly policed.
- End the under-reporting of catches which is endemic throughout Ireland.
- Challenge ineptitude in the public management of our inland, inshore and deep sea resources.
- Our Marine territory extends far beyond our coastline. It represents about ten times our landmass. RENUA Ireland recognises the potential of the seabed and is committed to building on the Marine Coordination group and its policy of harnessing our ocean wealth.

8.1 A New Common Fisheries Policy

We believe that the current level of Ireland's total allowable catch is completely unacceptable. In the early days of our membership of the European Community, Ireland received large amounts of structural aid from Europe in return for allowing access to our territorial waters.

Since then, our economy has been transformed. Ireland is now a net contributor to the European Union. We need to reframe the CFP during the next round of ministerial negotiations and to make that a primary national interest.

RENUA Ireland also supports the adoption of a stronger stance on quota enforcement as both a conservation measure and as a means of preventing states from manipulating the common market. This should be used as a first step in a full-scale renegotiation of the CFP in our national interest.

8.2 Tackling Under-Reporting in Ireland

The Sea Protections Fisheries Board has abjectly failed in its primary task of policing the quota system in Ireland. RENUA Ireland, in line with our proposals for public sector reform, supports the overhauling of its management and the introduction of meaningful enforcement in all of Ireland's landing ports.

Prosecutions for so-called 'black fishing' must be intensified as these criminal activities threaten to endanger the survival of both endangered fish species and declining coastal communities. 'Black fishing' also tends to benefit large boats that have the capacity to overfish and under-report, at the expense of smaller scale boats struggling to make a living.

RENUA Ireland believes whistle-blowing is needed from within the industry to ensure political interference does not compromise efforts to protect Ireland's bio-diversity and to guarantee the continued health of our demersal and pelagic stocks.

8.3. Competent management of our waters and stocks

Ireland must significantly increase its monitoring capacity in Irish waters and in our rivers and lakes. To achieve this, we will introduce two practical measures:

- a) Extensive use of drones and the mandatory use of specialist software and weights by vessels in Irish waters. Any vessels in Irish waters which do not transmit data on catches will be automatically returned to port for inspection. This is intended to be an effective audit system that will apply equally to Irish and foreign vessels in our territorial waters. Any data which shows evidence of criminal wrongdoing will be published. This transparency will help to restore the faith of Irish fishermen in their government's commitment to the fisheries industry.

- b) A national framework for habitat protection will be put in place, with public and private authorities contracted to monitor and test inland and coastal water conditions. This testing will ensure that Irish waters have not been compromised by agricultural run-off, industrial pollution or human interference in sensitive areas. Particular attention needs to be given to water standards during spawning seasons in inland water zones and in the policing of invasive species in our seas, rivers and lakes.

This system will be overseen by a panel of experienced auditors and managers assisted by international experts from countries that have had success in dealing with overfishing and water quality maintenance.

9 FINANCIAL SERVICES AND BANKING

The role of the banks in facilitating the development of the bubble during the Celtic Tiger has been well-documented. RENUA Ireland believes that the remaining banks are incapable of acting in the broad public interest. An unreformed banking industry would undermine our proposals for a progressive and economic sustainable model for our country.

We have a vision for the financial services sector that is practical but also transformative in its ambition and scope. We believe that with sufficient competition and the right set of structures and regulation, Ireland can develop a strong, sustainable financial industry which is profitable and which fulfils a social function.

RENUA Ireland priorities for the financial services sector:

- Halve the banks share of the market through new sources of credit.
- Empower credit unions to loan to small SMEs.
- Decisively end the mortgage arrears crisis with an NTMA backed scheme.
- Develop a whistleblowing service which will encourage revelations about unethical banking behaviour.

9.1. The pillar banks

RENUA Ireland believes that the State should organise its exit from AIB, BOI and Permanent TSB in an orderly manner that maximises the return to the taxpayer. Our proposals for remediating the arrears crisis are best facilitated while these entities are under State control. As a result, we believe it is better to resolve the arrears crisis, stabilise the final balance sheets of the banks (after asset values and book value loans have been rebalanced) and then consider the refloating of these institutions.

Cost: neutral

9.2 To enhance Competition in the banking sector

9.2.1 RENUA Ireland proposes to develop an Irish Credit Network for business in Ireland

RENUA Ireland has proposed the development of an Irish Credit Network. This model allows businesses to use credits backed by invoices to pay each other within a peer-to-peer banking network. This model has operated successfully in renowned banking cultures like Switzerland for 80 years and enables instant payments between fellow members. Liabilities are secured against company assets to guarantee payments within the system. For companies with encumbered assets, an invoice discounting model will apply. RENUA Ireland believes that this will provide major benefits for Irish businesses and the SME sector in particular. RENUA Ireland would mandate all government departments and agencies to join this system, eliminating issues arising from payment delays.

Cost: neutral, set-up costs redeemed through a temporary transaction fee

9.2.2 Local Public Banks

RENUA Ireland has proposed the introduction of two local public banks to provide cash-flow based lending and specialist banking services to Irish businesses. This model is based on the successful local public banking model in countries like Germany. It will be funded using seed capital from the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland which will be leveraged on a 6:1 ratio, which is highly prudent. Loans will be issued against business plans with a bias towards cash-flow based lending.

9.2.3 Credit Unions

Credit unions have had to professionalise and adapt to stringent new regulation over the past few years. It is a testament to the voluntary and community ethos of credit unions all over the country that they have managed this complex process so well.

RENUA Ireland believes that the potential of credit unions to assist in tackling many of our national challenges is immense. At the moment the credit unions are prohibited from engaging in lending to small local enterprises. They are also restricted in how they can invest their members' deposits. We believe there is a role for credit unions to invest in small business and to create a fund for social housing. Irish credit unions have €8 billion on deposit. Prudent investment of these funds could make an enormous contribution to the Irish economy and to Irish life.

9.3 Resolving the arrears crisis

A very large number of mortgage holders are being recycled through phases in an effort to ensure that loan write-downs do not occur until such time as it suits the banks to move against the mortgage holder. This is damaging our economy, causing huge personal distress and is also preventing Ireland from moving on from the financial crisis. RENUA Ireland maintains that capitalising arrears, interest free payments, schemes of arrangement and payment holidays are totally ineffective instruments that simply defer dealing with the situation. Allowing banks to wait until it suits them to sell an asset - thus socialising the cost of making people homeless - constitutes a second bailout of the banks. Two solutions have the potential to work and RENUA Ireland is proposing them to resolve the arrears crisis:

Mortgage to rent:

In this scenario, the NTMA will be tasked with purchasing the houses at current market value from the banks. The mortgages will be managed as a securitised bond for the State. The occupants can remain in their home and pay market rent for it. The rental flows to the bond and provides a long term yield for the State. It also increases housing stock that can be made available for social and affordable purposes where tenants move house (when emigrating, inheriting a family home, etc.).

Cost: revenue generating as rental income flows to state and state acquires an asset base

Debt warehousing:

In this scenario, on appeal by a mortgage owner, a bank will be asked to write down the value of the mortgage to the current market value. The mortgage holder services the new mortgage value. Upon the sale of the house, any capital appreciation in excess of the mortgage paid off by the borrower goes to the bank that entered into this scheme.

Cost: neutral

9.4 Insolvency, bankruptcy and personal guarantees

RENUA Ireland favours the overhaul of the Irish insolvency regime. RENUA Ireland notes that Ireland's second chance environment is particularly weak when compared to peer economies and much of this is attributable to the penal approach taken towards people who fail in business or life. RENUA Ireland is committed to introducing an insolvency and bankruptcy regime that can be completed within a single calendar year.

A critical aspect of this reform is making it illegal to blur the lines between personal and business banking. RENUA Ireland proposes making personal guarantees illegal. A whistleblowing service will be put in place to ensure a cultural shift occurs in this regard. Banks will need to lend to businesses on the strength of the business plans they put forward.

Cost: neutral

9.5 The funds industry

RENUA Ireland is deeply concerned about the €400bn projected shortfall in pension provision. Even if Ireland achieved a net inward migration of the approximately 1 million people necessary to maintain the ratio required to pay old age pensions in thirty years' time, there is likely to still be a dramatic fall in living standards relative to today. Based on current economic data, they will not be honoured and cannot be honoured.

Change is required and RENUA Ireland is proposing a Universal National Pension scheme. Introducing this scheme includes moving new entrants in the Public Sector from a defined benefit scheme to a defined contribution scheme. The raiding of the National Pension Reserve Fund during the crisis has made this issue particularly acute. Ireland cannot afford to delay in planning for its future and having a mature conversation about what people can legitimately expect when they are in their elder years.

The funds industry will play a vital role in facilitating access to a Universal National Pension scheme and operating it on behalf of citizens. RENUA Ireland favours auto-enrolment and making pension provision mandatory.

Cost: neutral

9.6 Other industry matters

9.6.1 Tackling moneylending and providing universal access to banking

RENUA Ireland was the first political party to put money lending on the policy table. Some 18% of our population have no access to mainstream banking services despite the fact that the introduction of basic banking products by the pillar banks was a requirement of the bailout. RENUA Ireland insists that this must happen.

RENUA Ireland believes that basic banking loans can be provided affordably by providing for a modest deduction at source from social welfare income that is paid into designated basic bank accounts (current accounts with debit cards). As the direct debit is guaranteed, such facilities can be provided very cheaply with a cost of credit between 6 and 9%. The scheme should operate on a licensed basis.

Cost: neutral

9.6.2 Venture capital and equity investment environment

RENUA Ireland has outlined compelling proposals to enhance the attractiveness of Ireland's investment environment. It is a long term aim of RENUA Ireland to reduce the dependence on banks for access to funding to 50% from the current level of around 90%, thereby bringing us in line with peer economies like Denmark.

Cost: neutral



10 COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL POLICY

We should encourage and foster a spirit of community, sharing and cooperation. The meitheal is the cultural and philosophical glue that has held Irish communities together both at home and abroad. RENUA Ireland believes that our social policy should set a framework that protects the vulnerable and upholds the spirit and sense of community that our society benefits hugely from.

RENUA Ireland priorities on community and social policy:

- Measure the quality of life of our citizens and implement changes based on the results. Ireland is a society not merely an economy.
- Create an Assisted Families Unit to provide dedicated care from one trusted individual to families.
- The transformation of early childcare with a billion Euro infrastructure programme and major childcare tax breaks.
- Extend the role of the Ombudsman to include those with recognized disabilities.
- Create new care structures to preserve the dignity and independence of our elderly.
- Ensure those who receive social welfare contribute back to society.

10.1 Social Progress Measurement

RENUA Ireland maintains that the central objective of Government is to raise the quality of life for all citizens in a society fit for all, not few. Other parties have spoken vaguely of 'social targets' but we will implement a clear and transparent mechanism to review our targets.

We intend to introduce a method of measuring social progress annually, instead of simply focusing on GDP growth rates. Economic expansion is worthless if it is not felt at the grassroots level. RENUA Ireland believes that Ireland needs a Social Progress Indicator (SPI), an annual publication that can be clearly understood and will become the bellwether in measuring how Ireland is advancing each year. This will be a singular SPI that everyone understands, one constructed independently across a range of sub-indices. It will be available on merrionstreet.ie for every citizen in the State to see.

Social progress will be measured by 58 indices covering literacy, disease prevalence by area, economic activity and schools provision. These are listed in Appendix 1

10.2 The need to address the Causes of Poverty

Poverty has become intergenerational. We must break the cycle. Living in poverty has a negative impact on one's health, education, quality of life and self-esteem. It is difficult to put a cost on the consequences of poverty, but around 200,000 children live in households experiencing poverty. Difficult childhood experiences can lead to lifelong social exclusion. Each year, billions of euros are spent on welfare, yet social exclusion is rising.

10.1.1 Early Intervention

RENUA Ireland wants to concentrate resources in the early intervention stage for families who are the single most important care unit in society. Social problems begin at an early stage and continue to develop unless there is early intervention. By bringing about reforms which promote early intervention, we can help to tackle some of our society's most pressing problems, while producing life-lasting benefits among our youngest and most at-risk citizens.

10.1.2 Assisted Families Unit

Stress in the household casts a layer of dejection and hopelessness over both parents and children. In many cases the absence of a consistent father figure adds to these difficulties. Many families see the authorities and agencies that seek to assist them as the enemy. This is not helped by the scenario whereby many different people deal with the family, such as professionals involved in educational assistance, healthcare and social care, as well as juvenile liaison officer and many others.

RENUA Ireland will establish a human face in social policy. We will establish an Assisted Families Unit, similar to Britain's Troubled Family Unit. The unit would have a specific budget and would initially operate on a pilot scheme working with a designated number of families. It would involve the allocation of a dedicated family worker to identified families. This family worker would liaise with the relevant state agencies on behalf of the family and operate on the concept of an expanded public health nurse system. Intervention would be proactive rather than reactive.

10.3 Childcare

Many Irish families have been trapped with boom time mortgages and unaffordable childcare costs, and RENUA Ireland is proposing a childcare tax credit to assist them.

We only believe in credits and reliefs in areas of market failure and this is one such area. The credit, which will cost €500 million per annum, will be allocated on an 80% service user, 20% service provider basis. The purpose of this relief is to ensure that mothers and fathers who want to work outside of the home can do so.

Ultimately this is a supply issue and RENUA Ireland is also proposing to use a social cohesion fund, funded by local property tax, to deliver a network of community crèches across the country. Many of these crèches will have long-term arrangements with workers on community employment schemes. This model works and can deliver affordable childcare by maintaining overall standards and reducing operating costs and costs to working parents.

RENUA Ireland also favours changing maternity leave to make it available to either parent so that they are able to decide how best to split statutory leave between them.

RENUA Ireland recognizes the critical role in society played by those who decide or who are in a position to raise their families on a full time basis.

RENUA Ireland does this through a graduated basic income which goes to both parents whether they work inside or out of the family home.

This formally recognizes the role played by full time care givers.

10.4 Disability and inclusion policy

RENUA Ireland believes that it is time to make rights for the disabled a reality. This can only be achieved by ensuring that people with disabilities have their rights vindicated in a manner similar to the role played by the Ombudsman for Children. RENUA is proposing the following measures to enhance inclusion and to vindicate the constitutional rights of disabled citizens.

RENUA Ireland commits to ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Our policy is based on equity, access and support.

10.4.1 An Ombudsman for people with disabilities

RENUA Ireland will set-up a new unit dedicated to people with disabilities under the aegis of the Ombudsman's office. Co-location will ensure that this can be done as efficiently as possible. This office will be provided with powers to hold local authorities, public bodies and Government Departments to account for their treatment of disabled citizens. This will include reviewing the performance of the National Disability Authority. Citizens will have a direct right of appeal to the Ombudsman's office.

Cost: additional function to be capped at a budget of €1.5m

10.4.2 Access to employment

The figures relating to the unemployment rate of people with a disability are a major concern and represent a lost opportunity for the economy.

Access to employment for disabled citizens will be facilitated through the expansion of the JobBridge program. People on disability allowance should be provided with access to community employment, apprenticeship and JobBridge programmes that offer them an opportunity to work in their communities.

Cost: neutral

10.4.3 Inclusion and recognition

RENUA Ireland believes that local authorities are directly responsible for ensuring that the needs of their citizens are catered for. The Barcelona Convention requires that towns and cities be made more disability friendly. RENUA Ireland will task the new unit for disabilities with measuring the progress of local authorities by way of a league table outlining which authorities is providing for inclusion and enhanced access.

Cost: neutral, to be facilitated by enforcing local authority compliance with existing requirements

10.4.4 Independence and Choice

The continuing failure to implement individualised funding plans for people with disabilities need to be addressed. RENUA Ireland will introduce an individualised funding option for those who wish to have greater independence over their service provision including control of personal assistants requirements. This funding mechanism will take account of successful schemes run in other jurisdictions.

Cost: neutral, as it involves the redistribution of existing funding

10.4.5 Cost of Disability

The individual cost of Disability is of great concern and Renua will set up a Commission into the Cost of Disability which will be asked to report within a year. Their findings will inform budgetary decisions into future targeted government financial support.

10.5 Our elder citizens

Our elder citizens are pillars of our communities. The isolation and loneliness faced by many senior citizens are surmountable challenges. Currently, the only options available to senior citizens are to stay in their homes with virtually no support or to enter nursing homes. RENUA Ireland believes people should be provided with the support to remain in their homes or to have access to community-based housing designed for senior citizens, in the heart of our communities.

10.5.1 Linking in with the community

RENUA Ireland will use funds from local property tax to develop fit for purpose communities for senior citizens so that they have options besides living in isolation or entering a nursing home. Services can be more readily provided this way, and can be provided to people who continue to live independently but who choose to visit community centres for company and as a social outlet.

Cost: to be facilitated from annual fund of €500m over long term

10.5.2 Protecting the vulnerable

RENUA Ireland believes that all carers must be subject to vetting. Vetting, qualifications and supervision are essential. HIQA must use its powers to ensure that home care providers meet the highest standards.

Furthermore, community centres and primary care centres must be used more intensively along with community care facilities and home care packages to keep senior citizens out of long term stay in general hospitals which do not fit their medical and social needs.

10.5.3 Living with dignity and in safety

RENUA Ireland favours the rolling out of intelligent devices and wearable technology to all elder citizens so that they can contact and receive an emergency response. This should be a standard feature of continuing care for elder citizens. It can also be used to trigger alerts in the event of break-ins or possible robberies.

Moreover, methodologies used to coordinate activities (apps, networks etc.) should be leveraged to help elder citizens to meet and stay in contact with one another. RENUA Ireland believes extending the existing programmes which are in place in the library system can help to further develop links between elder citizens.

10.6 Welfare, long-term unemployment and minimum lifestyle standards

RENUA Ireland believes that every government should have clear goals. RENUA Ireland is committed to minimum lifestyle standards and also in ensuring that work always pays.

Following the examination of a number of reports, the fact remains that land is costing a completely disproportionate amount of people's incomes. RENUA Ireland is determined to reduce the amount spent on property via mortgages, rent or the welfare system by significantly increasing supply until housing can be obtained at a more sustainable rate of 2-3 times average earnings.

A life on welfare is debilitating and impacts negatively on self-esteem. RENUA Ireland is proposing that all people in receipt of social welfare who have been unemployed for more than six months will be enrolled in community employment schemes or an expanded JobBridge apprenticeship programme. No able bodied person will get state assistance without contributing to their communities. A minimum of 20 hours per week will be sought in return for job seekers payments.

Finally, government must determine what a minimum lifestyle standard is for the country and then seek to provide it through efficiencies and savings in government and by lowering the cost of living in society through supply side interventions. RENUA is proposing a benchmarking exercise to determine the minimum lifestyle standard and the development of a national plan to deliver these standards. This will resemble the UN's Millennium Development Goals for human development. This is directly linked to the roll-out of RENUA Ireland's plans for e-government and the measurement of the outputs of government via our Clearview policy proposal.

Cost: neutral, to be facilitated within existing government budgets

10.7 Tackling homelessness

The first challenge for any party seeking to address the needs of homeless people is to identify what people mean by homelessness. RENUA Ireland believes that there are two primary categories: people who sleep rough and people who have become unhoused and that are desperately seeking access to housing.

10.7.1 Homeless supports

There are some people who may be permanently homeless and who are not able to live their lives without assistance. These people should be able to live in dignity with support from the wider community. Each local authority must be mandated to put a plan in place to provide access to hostels and sheltered accommodation that meets the needs of our fellow citizens.

10.7.2 A holistic and realistic response to homelessness

The unhoused will be assisted through the policies outlined in the housing section of this document.

We propose an integrated plan to help homeless people to deal with many of the problems which affect them. For many of them, issues arise due to their time in institutions or the care system. Some key factors in homelessness include domestic violence, addiction, sexual abuse, mental illness and institutionalisation.

Local Authorities will be mandated to put an inter-agency plan in place to ensure a network of supports are made available to enable all those who want to live a full life are provided with avenues to achieve this goal.

10.8 Social care services for vulnerable citizens

RENUA Ireland supports the placing of Children First on a statutory footing. Additionally, RENUA Ireland supports the full implementation of the Ryan Report. Furthermore, we believe that there is a lack of accountability in the social care sector and that a review of the Child Care Act, the Children Act and the Children's Rights Refenda is necessary to ensure that they will be implemented in full.

The following areas require urgent attention as they relate to support for people in crisis.

10.8.1 Early year's provision

Early year's provision needs to become a national issue. RENUA's proposals on childcare are outlined earlier in this document. We must also address the issue of afterhours care. Our school buildings are underused and RENUA Ireland favours the development of a system of afterhours care as exists in other countries.

Cost: neutral to tax payer, to be provided as a paid for service initially

10.8.2 Mental health and psychiatric services

Obesity and eating disorders are reaching epidemic levels in our youth population. Suicide and self-harm remains a profound problem in communities throughout Ireland. Systemic intervention is necessary to provide young people with the ability to cope with health issues, be they mental or physical.

Child and adolescent psychiatric services need to be significantly enhanced. RENUA Ireland supports the increase of the share of the health budget for mental health services to 7%. Further to this, social care provision needs to be audited and restructured.

10.8.3 Exiting the care system

The poor level of services in place for young adults leaving care is a root cause of many social problems that they experience and that society endures. Current services for young adults leaving the care system must be reviewed so that access to counselling and other vital support services are not automatically withdrawn at the same time that young people are required to leave the care system.

10.8.4 Preventing abuse

RENUA Ireland supports the use of soft information in the vetting of individuals that work with children

Cost: neutral



11 PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM

RENUA Ireland recognises the importance of the public service and its role in maintaining a functioning society. Public servants make essential contributions to the lives of the Irish people in our schools, hospitals and on the streets of our towns and cities. However, since the foundation of the state, the public service has undergone few major changes.

We believe that the public service must become more transparent, more accountable and more open in the way in which it operates. Change must begin with governance and accountability at the top of the political and administrative levels of our public service.

RENUA Ireland will create modern workplaces where the focus will be on outcomes not process. These changes will be driven by technology, allowing staff to work flexibly and cost-effectively while at the same time maximising access to services, increasing productivity and encouraging innovation.

RENUA Ireland priorities for the public services:

- Developing a new system of open governance where performance is easily measured.
- Real accountability for senior civil servants.
- Create Accountability Panels to examine and report upon the performance of senior civil servants and ministers.
- Create a ring fenced fund to reward merit in the public sector.
- Replace increments with merit based pay.
- Reform government procurement rules to benefit small Irish SMEs.

11.1 Reforming governance of the Public Sector System

The 1924 Ministers and Secretaries Act continues to govern the relationship between government ministers and the public service. RENUA Ireland will implement the following changes to Ireland's structures of public governance:

- The full separation in law of the role of the minister from that of the secretary general (or their equivalent);
- The development of an Accountability Panel which will ensure that individuals - both at a political level or at a senior level within a state body – are responsible for their own actions or inactions;
- A commitment to open government and government in the sunshine at all levels of the public service.

Cost: neutral

11.2 Clearview – defining and measuring government outcomes

RENUA Ireland believes that government must have a specific and defined purpose. Government departments and agencies should exist to achieve specific outcomes.

RENUA Ireland is committed to introducing e-government into Ireland, following the successful Digital Society model that Estonia has developed.

RENUA Ireland will implement:

- The development of output-based systems that measure the outputs of government departments, government agencies and government services;
- A system of audit to inspect the collection and processing of data for these systems to ensure that they deliver government in the sunshine.

- Speedy interventions where services disimprove and meaningful rewards where they improve.
- A measured and defined Minimum Lifestyle Standard, which will be achieved through savings delivered by metric-based management and accountability across the public sector.

Cost: neutral, to be delivered from within operating budgets

11.3 Developing a high performance culture

We believe that systems of management and review must focus on outcomes. We want to reward individuals, teams or units that perform strongly and achieve results.

RENUA Ireland will:

- Commission and introduce a programme of management training that will begin at senior grades within the public sector and be cascaded down over a period of time;
- Ensure that each department and agency has task-related training programmes in place that are fit for purpose;
- Ensure that every employee has a clearly defined job description and that their goals for each quarter and year are clearly explained and outlined;
- Instigate a new, transparent and objective performance management system that is aimed at driving higher performance standards in the public service;
- Introduce a set of supportive tools and sanctions which will assist underperformers in improving their outputs and support managers in dealing with underperformers after all reasonable steps to improve performance have been taken;
- Commence an annual audit of performance grading across the public sector. The outputs from these audits will feed into accountability reviews for senior civil servants and ministers;
- Produce an annual report outlining performance at a summary level for each department and agency with the summary of the recommendations made to that department or agency in relation to their management of staff performance.

Cost: neutral, to be delivered within existing operating budgets

11.4 Real accountability for Senior Officials and Politicians

We believe that there must be consequences for governance failures in public life. Good governance practices ensure that those who hold the highest offices are held to the highest standards. We believe that this is the best way to change the culture of management in the public sector.

RENUA Ireland will:

- Introduce a new code of ethics and high performance for all senior officials and ministers;
- Ensure all ministers and senior officials can be referred to an Accountability Panel at the request of a committee of the Oireachtas;
- Develop an accountability framework for leadership that is independent of political influence;
- Provide for the delivery of each Accountability Panel's report to the chairman of the relevant relating to the review is made available to the public in real time.

Cost: neutral, to be facilitated within existing operating budgets

11.5 Rewarding High Performance in the Public Sector

RENUA Ireland wants to begin a progressive and realistic dialogue about public sector remuneration. We believe that the era of increments, occasional benchmarking exercises and social partnership agreements should be consigned to the past and replaced with a modern and meritocratic system.

In government, we will:

- Task the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council with the setting and monitoring of public pay and reward, based on cost-of-living requirements and economic growth;
- Create a ring-fenced fund to reward high performance in the public sector, based on productivity and outcomes;
- Develop a performance management system that differentiates performance in an effective manner comparable to private sector organisations;
- Allocate bonuses related to achieving success and delivering savings.

Furthermore, it is clear from pension's industry projections that the existing model of public sector pensions is unsustainable.

The forecasted gap in the provision of public sector pensions is in excess of €400bn at current market prices – more than 2.5 times our GNP. Continued failure to introduce radical change has the capacity to destroy the economic viability of the state.

RENUA Ireland will:

- Develop a universal, mandatory pension scheme on a defined contribution basis in the public sector;
- Introduce auto enrolment in pensions for all citizens (public and private including contractors working for the public sector);
- Transition public sector workers from a defined benefit pension scheme to a defined contribution scheme;
- Cap accruable public sector pensions at €60,000 per annum, so as to match the limit at which a super levy is imposed on private sector pensions.

11.6 A Vision for Public Procurement

The Irish government spends approximately €13 billion every year on private sector vendors and service providers. Yet despite European Union directives that promote competitiveness and ethical behaviour on the part of buyers, we still know far too little about how this huge, mostly domestic, sector of our economy works.

RENUA Ireland believes that this must change so that better value for money is achieved and that wider goals that supporting domestic growth are also achieved in government expenditure.

In government, we will:

- Introduce social impact clauses under the new procurement directives, requiring Government Buyers to consider the economic, social and environmental impacts of their purchasing. These impacts would form a part of the overall objective scoring criteria for the award of public procurement contracts;
- Reform and develop new systems of procurement which will favour the development of a regionally orientated tendering process over national framework agreements;
- Implement a policy of mandatory training, under which all public buyers will have to develop a personal e-tendering profile and complete a training module before they can contract on behalf of the State;
- Extend the duties of the current Ombudsman to include public procurement. The duties will be based on the effective Canadian review system which costs €2.6m to oversee expenditure of €52bn;
- Follow the example of Barcelona's municipal authority by ensuring that public procurement focuses on 'contracting for outcomes' rather than contracting for services;
- Introduce full e-procurement in Ireland, which will mean that all expenditure and contracts are traceable and will be eligible for monitoring and review.

Cost: €2m to extend the Ombudsman's mandate. All other commitments to be facilitated within existing budgets



12 POLITICAL REFORM

Our proposals for political reform are the most radical ever put forward by a party of the Oireachtas. The purpose of our proposals is simple – to deliver transparent, accountable government that carries out its business in the sunshine. Furthermore, RENUA Ireland is committed to the principle of freedom of conscience.

RENUA Ireland priorities for political reform:

- Ensure national politicians prioritize the nation rather than local or vested interests.
- Dismiss corrupt members of the Oireachtas.
- Reform local government to allow every town have its own mayor.
- Give local communities real power over how they are run.
- Introduce term limits for cabinet ministers and Taoisigh.

12.1 Putting the Country First

We want to fundamentally break the link to boom and bust cycle politics. Traditional party politics has compromised the national interest since the foundation of the state. Our political culture is directly responsible for decades of economic hardship and an engrained culture of emigration.

To put people at the centre of politics, we will:

- Amend Article 15 of Bunreacht na hÉireann by adding a provision that demands that each member of Dáil Eireann represents the whole country and not merely the constituency in which they were elected;
- Introduce legislation mandating new standards of behaviour for Oireachtas members, including grounds for dismissal from the Oireachtas and the triggering of a bye-election where parliamentarians seek to pervert the national interest for clientalist reasons;
- Create a strengthened system of local government based on a three-tiered system. The role of local government representatives will be defined and their competencies clearly distinguished from the role of national politicians;
- Detachment and lack of trust will be replaced with consultation. Changes to local government will assist in developing the concept of people having ownership of the communities where they live.

Proposals

a) Community Council

Every town or agreed area should have its own mayor and local council. This council would be elected by a ballot of the relevant town or area and would not involve remuneration. This council will have a statutory input into all local government responsibilities. The Minister for the Environment will propose a model following a period of consultation with local authorities, other relevant bodies and the public. There are some good examples of how this system can operate, such as the Blessington Forum in County Wicklow, which already fulfils this role in an unofficial manner.

b) County Council: Every Council will have a directly elected Mayor

The promised reform of local government has resulted in a further centralisation of power. Municipal councils have less staff and responsibility than the abolished Town Councils. RENUA Ireland will ensure that every county council will have a directly elected mayor and the current powers vested in the CEO will be transferred to the Mayor. This will put transparency and accountability at the heart of Local Government. County Councils will have complete control over the expenditure of their budget. They will be subject to audit by central government.

c) Regional Authorities

Regional Authorities will be given a greater role in the co-ordination of the provision and procurement of some services and contracts. Economies of scale and efficiencies will be central to this development.

12.2 Reform of the Oireachtas, Executive and Electoral system

The root cause of our broken system of politics is our electoral system. We believe that the primary function of an Oireachtas member is that of national legislator.

We are proposing the following changes to our system of government:

12.2.1 Changes that do not require constitutional change:

- The introduction of term limits for all ministers on a statutory basis. Ministers should not serve more than two consecutive terms or nine years in office, with the lesser of the two taking precedence; following a break in appointment of at least 100 days, service can recommence. This policy is proposed to avoid inertia and group-think. Rotation will also ensure that there is more ministerial experience in Parliament and that new ideas can be brought to Government
- The implementation of stringent fitness and probity criteria for all prospective ministers and ministers of state, including financial solvency rules that will be drafted as requirements for the highest offices of state;
- The election of the Ceann Comhairle of the Dáil and Cathaoirleach of the Seanad by secret ballot. A secret ballot will also apply to the election of committee chairpersons;
- The removal of all state board appointments, judicial appointments from the political system. State appointments will be independent of government and subject to scrutiny by Oireachtas committees;
- A requirement that the use of the guillotine in parliamentary debates be deemed necessary by the Attorney General;
- New powers to be accorded to the Oireachtas in relation to reviewing submissions made by a citizens' petitions process;
- New powers to be accorded to Oireachtas committees to independently refer specific questions on constitutional or policy issues to an expert commission. Government will be obliged to respond to the findings of any such commission;
- A modernisation of Seanad electoral panels, with elections to be held on the same day as general elections;
- The creation of an exceptional power to delay legislation from being passed in the face of significant principled opposition. This power will require the support of the majority of parties / technical groupings in Dáil Eireann, and there will be limits on how frequently it is used.

12.2.2 Changes requiring constitutional change:

- We will introduce a referendum giving the Irish people the opportunity to adopt a new electoral system of single seat constituencies, elected on a proportional representation basis
- RENUA Ireland will also examine the feasibility of developing a list system to ensure real talent gets its opportunity to rebuild the state.

Cost: neutral on all measures

13 HOUSING

As a society, we have yet to fully embrace cradle-to-grave, holistic thinking to provide for our people. The impact of this failure can be seen in a legacy of environmental degradation, from unoccupied one-off houses to ghost estates and developments that are not fit for purpose. Reorientating politics to focus on the progressive, long-term improvement of our society requires integrated thinking.

The state has managed social housing schemes for decades, and will continue to have a role in their management in the future. Ireland's housing policy must start planning for inter-generational needs, so that there are options for the elderly to move into accommodation that is suited to their needs later in life.

Younger people have few options to live alone due to a lack of well-equipped high quality studios. Similarly, we have too few affordable family units within a reasonable commuting distance of where jobs are being created.

RENUA Ireland priorities for housing

Securing a ten billion euro public private partnership fund to resolve our housing supply crisis.

Prioritizing the needs of working families who do not qualify for social housing but who are also priced out of home ownership.

Strategic housing developments that look after the young and the elderly.

The development of living towns and cities through targeted methods.

13.1 Short-term Crisis Alleviation Measures

In the short-term, targeted demand side measures can be used to improve access to housing for people that have become homeless or are at risk of losing their access to housing. Rent certainty is not the solution, as it will weaken the incentives for developers to build homes – especially where there is a planning requirement for social and affordable units. In the interim period, RENUA Ireland will introduce the following measures:

We will allow private landlords to write off income tax on rental income generated from tenants on housing benefit, as this negates the difference between private rental rates and housing benefit allowance. As many of the people who have become unhoused claim rental supplement and/or housing benefit, this measure will ensure that, at a minimum, they remain an attractive commercial proposition from the perspective of a landlord.

- We will introduce financial incentives for landlords to expedite and encourage the re-entry of apartments situated above commercial units into the market.

Cost: saving over emergency accommodation

13.2 Long-Term Housing Provision at a Low Cost

We believe that the state's main role in the housing market is to oversee a regulatory regime that can generate a base of affordable housing stock for its citizens. RENUA Ireland will ensure that high-density, high-quality, affordable, mixed-tenure housing developments are built on state-owned land. We want the state to bring down the cost of housing so that it can reduce the cost of the subsidies it is providing to the private rental sector through social transfers.

At present, pension funds and private investors are looking for sustainable, long-term returns on their assets. We believe that the state should work with local authorities to identify sites that are close to existing services and amenities and develop high-density, mixed-tenure housing. These developments will provide family homes, starter homes, studios and accessible homes for the elderly. Local authorities will continue to manage these developments while pension funds and investors receive stable, long-term income flows. After a period of time agreed on a commercial basis with the property funds, the ownership of the development and its associated income flows will revert to the state. Privatisation of these schemes will be illegal.

RENUA Ireland will:

- Audit appropriate high-potential sites and identify sites that can bring capacity on-stream as quickly as possible near existing population centres;

- Introduce a scheme for pension fund investment to develop housing schemes in return for a sustainable, long-term income flow;
- Introduce a management structures within the developments, with membership that includes residents from housing developments;
- Vest local authorities with responsibility for the property management of the developments.

Cost: neutral

13.3 Living towns and cities

As outlined in our policy on regenerating towns and cities, RENUA Ireland believes that empty commercial sites should be levied with additional charges until they are de-rated and used as residential property or refurbished and re-let as commercial properties.

Similarly, vacant or derelict buildings and land banks that have planning permission should face levies where they are being hoarded, whether by the state or by private land owners.

Cost: neutral

14 JUSTICE

One of the core tasks of any state is to create a society whose people feel safe. Years of cutbacks and austerity have now created the opposite phenomenon. In rural and urban Ireland people feel under siege and distressed in a manner not witnessed since the appalling murder of Veronica Guerin.

People believe they are living in an age of 'jail not bail'. This collapse in faith in our justice system is unacceptable. It is time for the state to respond to the concerns of its citizens in a tough minded but reasonable fashion.

RENUA Ireland priorities for criminal justice:

- A three strike rule for serious criminal offences including murder, rape, child sex abuse and burglary.
- Ensure life means life with an increase in the current life tariff.
- A new zero tolerance approach to white collar crime.
- Making parents responsible for crimes committed by their children.
- End the political appointment of Judges.
- A real practical plan for rural crime.

14.1 Tougher Sentencing

14.1.1 Three Strikes Rule

RENUA Ireland will introduce a three strikes rule for serious criminal offences resulting in a mandatory life sentence on a successful prosecution of the third offence.

Currently in Ireland, mandatory sentences set down by legislation are limited and include murder, possession, burglary or importation of drugs with a certain market value with intent to sell or supply and certain offences under the Firearms Acts, or a second or subsequent "serious" offences including murder, certain non-fatal offences against the person, specified firearms and explosives offences, and aggravated burglary.

RENUA Ireland would direct the Law Reform Commission to identify and recommend the specific crimes that should be subjected to the three strike rule. Murder, rape, child sex abuse and burglary are three crimes that we believe should be subject to the three strike rule.

Judicial discretion on the application of the three strike rule would only be allowed in exceptional circumstances.

14.1.2 Life Means Life

Where an offender is convicted of murder, and is therefore sentenced to life imprisonment, RENUA Ireland will introduce legislation to provide that the judge may recommend a minimum term to be served by the offender.

In England and Wales, the English Criminal Justice Act 2003 provides that where a court imposes a life sentence, it must make an order regarding the minimum term to be served by the offender before he or she may be considered for release by the Parole Board.

Where the court is of the opinion that because of the seriousness of the offence, no such order should be made, it must order that the early release provisions are not to apply to the offender.

Currently in Ireland, the average "life sentence" is a paltry 17 years. This does not reflect in anyway the real life sentence that families and friends suffer after losing their loved ones to murder.

4.1.3 Parole Board on Independent Statutory Basis

We will commit to legislation to ensure that the Parole Board is brought on an independent statutory basis:

- In 2001 the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform established the non-statutory Parole Board to review the cases of prisoners serving long-term sentences and to provide advice in relation to the administration of those sentences;

- The Parole Board may only review cases which have been referred to it by the Minister and which generally concern prisoners serving sentences of 8 years or more. Prisoners serving mandatory life sentences for ordinary murder may be referred to the Parole Board but not prisoners serving sentences for certain offences such as murder contrary to section 3 of the Criminal Justice Act 1990;
- The Parole Board advises the Minister for Justice by way of recommendations as to whether the prisoner should be released. These recommendations may be accepted or rejected in whole or in part by the Minister for Justice with whom the final decision regarding release lies.

14.2 Making Parents Responsible for Juvenile Crime

It is time that parents are held to account for the anti-social behaviour that causes terror in some of our communities.

RENUA Ireland believes that if a child falls foul of the law, their parents can and should be held legally responsible if:

- a) Their child continually gets into trouble.
- b) They do not take reasonable steps to control their child's behaviour.

We would introduce laws to make it mandatory for parents of children to attend the hearings where their child faces charges as well as requiring parents to pay the court costs of the proceedings if they are found guilty.

It is no longer acceptable that the majority of hard working families should have to suffer at the hands of a minority, who do not take their responsibilities seriously.

14.3 Collaring White Collar Crime

The failure to increase accountability or to implement all findings of the Moriarty tribunal, and the turning of a blind eye towards abuses of auditors – particularly in financial services and banking – is unconscionable. The State winks at the well connected. RENUA is proposing truly radical but entirely practical and pragmatic changes that will leave this cancerous culture of privilege and entitlement in the past:

- Criminal liability for reckless lending: RENUA Ireland will introduce legislation that imposes criminal liability on a senior manager of a banking institution, fund or insurance undertaking who knowingly puts the viability of the institution at risk through their acts or omissions;
- Criminal sanctions for company directors: laws will be introduced to provide for harsher sentences including custodial sentences of up to ten years for directors. This is based on a model in Australia that punishes people who act recklessly or dishonestly;
- Curbing the limited liability escape hatch: RENUA Ireland is proposing changes to insolvency and bankruptcy law but creditors must be protected from sharp practice. As a result, RENUA Ireland will insist that all company directors (or their equivalents) must make a declaration confirming that revenues do not derive from illegal, anti-competitive or otherwise unlicensed activity;
- Removing ignorance as a defence: legislation will be introduced to prevent directors from escaping civil or criminal liability as a result of their limited involvement in the day-to-day running of an organisation. All directors will be accountable at law. This will ensure corporate governance is invasive and active;
- Erasing the white collar culture of mitigation: new sentencing guidelines will be introduced for white collar criminals so they cannot fall back on an absence of prior convictions or a "good character". Instead, impacts on other companies, tax compliance and purchasers of their services will count;
- Creating competent board rooms: we will make the completion of minimum competency modules a mandatory requirement for all people performing directorship or equivalent roles;
- Facilitating whistleblowers: we will tackle the cultural issues with whistleblowing in Ireland by providing amnesties / immunities from prosecution for people disclosing corporate malfeasance. We will also provide incentives along the lines of the American system where whistleblowers are accorded a percentage of settlements / asset seizures;
- Improving the administration of justice: We will prioritise resources for the Garda Bureau of Fraud and remove its subsidiary status within the force. We will also allow for special investigators with the requisite expertise to be present during interviews with witnesses and suspects on white collar crime matters;

- Creating a stronger legal system for corporate crime: Due to the complexity of commercial cases and the lack of reform to date, RENUA Ireland is proposing a sea change through the introduction of a Special Corporate Criminal Court modelled on the Civil Commercial Court. It will expedite proceedings, create significant procedural efficiencies and be populated by specialist judges;
- A Commission of reform of Ireland's White Collar Crime: We will explore the following additional items through a Commission:
 - A Special Investigation Unit for serious corporate crime (which would pool current offices and enhance them into a Serious Fraud Office);
 - Reform of the regime of auditor's civil and criminal liabilities including the creation of a criminal offence for auditors knowingly or recklessly including misleading, false or deceptive matters in an audit report;
 - Empowering enforcement prosecution authorities to make Deferred Prosecution Agreements through which a company can self-report on corporate crimes and make a civil settlement to avoid prosecution.

14.4 Garda Reform

14.4.1 Rural Policing

Rural divisions of police have much smaller numbers of Gardaí assigned to dedicated community policing units. This has to change.

There must be much more community policing in rural areas to counter the loss of Garda stations across the country.

RENUA Ireland supports the introduction of rural engagement officers like those established in New Zealand, involving the prioritisation of locations across the country where citizens are more likely to be victims of crime, with a focus on families, youth, road policing, organised crime, alcohol and drugs.

RENUA Ireland commits to a nationwide survey that will independently assess the locations around Ireland where rural crime is taking place and we will match resources accordingly through greater community policing and the use of enhanced technology.

14.4.2 Structural Reform

RENUA Ireland does not believe the piecemeal measures introduced in the wake of the whistle-blower scandal are sufficient to implement the recommendations sought in the Morris, Guerin and Fennelly Reports.

RENUA Ireland believes that the Law Reform Commission should draw together the different strands of reviews and recommendations in this area.

The recommendations of the Morris tribunal have to be reviewed to assess what was done to implement them. If they have not worked, we must ask why. This could be done quickly if the impetus were there. It is important that the public knows what the proposed independent policy board will do and how that will relate to GSOC and the Garda Inspectorate.

The Guerin report and high profile criminal cases have identified problems such as:

- Gardaí not putting dates on statements;
- Junior Gardaí handling cases with little assistance from their superiors;
- The practice of a junior level Gardaí - who is not equipped with enough experience or with the necessary tools - prosecuting a rape case or a serious robbery.

It is not clear what levels of continuing professional development are taking place with these Gardaí.

Introducing quangos and new legislation is not enough to bring about structural reform of how the Gardaí operates or to maximise the effectiveness of our police force.

14.5 Courts reform

14.5.1 Judicial Appointments

RENUA Ireland envisages the Judicial Council being afforded the powers to:

- contribute to the appointments process;
- introduce training for new judges;
- introduce a programme of continuing professional development for judges;

Despite the publication of the 2010 bill by the outgoing government, several private members bills on judicial appointments and a call from the Chief Justice of Ireland that a Judicial Council be established, these calls have all fallen on deaf ears.

We now know that the coalition government agreed a secret deal ensuring that Fine Gael would receive two thirds of the appointments, with Labour receiving the remaining third. This is no way to run a democracy.

RENUA Ireland would make absolutely certain that judicial appointments are no longer a game of political bartering, and we would establish an independent judicial council that would be tasked with recommending one nominee per judicial appointment to the Minister for Justice, rather than seven as is currently the case with the Judicial Appointments Board.

The Judicial Council would be responsible for appointments to the District Circuit and all Superior Courts.

The Judicial Council should be comprised of:

- the Chief Justice;
- a member of the Court of Appeal nominated by the members of the Court of Appeal;
- a member of the High Court nominated by the members of the Court;
- the President of the Circuit Court;
- two former attorney generals having served for two different governments;
- one former Minister for Justice not having been a member of a party currently in government;
- an elected member nominee by members of the Bar Council of Ireland;
- an elected member nominee of the Law Society of Ireland;
- an elected nominee of the Board of the Free Legal Advice Council;
- an individual appointed by the Minister.

If the Minister for Justice does not recommend to government the nominee put forward to the Judicial Council, the Minister must publish on the Department of Justice's website the reasons for not making the appointment.

If the government does not support the recommended appointee put forward by the Judicial Council, the Taoiseach must publish on the Department of the Taoiseach's website the reasons for not making the appointment.

15 EDUCATION

Education is one of the foundations stones of a civilised society. Yet Ireland has no real philosophy or social and educational goals for our developing young adults.

This is a glaring gap from early childhood through to third level and it is selling our young people dangerously short.

RENUA Ireland priorities for education:

- Lead the biggest change in early childcare since free education in the 1960's
- Implement strong regulation and a standard learning curriculum for crèches
- Standardise tests in primary schools to ensure no child is left behind
- Restore pupil teacher ratios to best international practice
- Commit to replacing the Leaving Certificate with assessment so that one bad day doesn't ruin a child's life chances
- Develop proper third level income streams for colleges to stop Ireland's slide down the world rankings

15.1 Early Childhood Education

The issue of access has been addressed elsewhere in this manifesto under childcare. As such this section will deal with issues relating to the Early Child Centred Education (ECCE) sector.

15.1.1 Qualifications

The quality of early childhood education needs to be standardised. This can be achieved through the introduction of minimum qualifications for staff working in the industry. The qualifications should be directly linked to the national framework of skills.

Similarly, there should be minimum standards for instructors on childcare courses including minimum levels of experience so that they can properly instruct their students using both their practical experience and their theoretical knowledge.

15.1.2 Oversight

While a national syllabus has been introduced as part of the partially subsidised pre-school year, the regulatory regime overseeing its rollout is underdeveloped and requires stronger oversight and auditing.

The regulatory system for crèches needs to be led by experienced and qualified childcare workers.

15.2 Primary Education

Primary education covers key periods in learning where vital literacy, numeracy and socialisation skills are developed. The world is changing quickly and Ireland is a country that now lags rather than leads in primary education. Making changes to improve these lagging standards is crucial in any policy.

Renewable terms for Principals: School leadership should be flexible and adaptable. RENUA Ireland is proposing that principals be given eight year long renewable terms. After the eight years, the position of principal must be opened for competition. This is an important way of ensuring that principals do not suffer burn-out and that they are provided with an avenue back to frontline education should they choose to pursue it.

Cost: neutral

Competition for posts of responsibility and other managerial roles: Posts of responsibility and other managerial roles should be opened to an interview process every five years also. During their tenure, post holders will be expected to make a strong contribution to the structures and culture of the school. These posts should be paid. They will be entitled to reapply for their post or for an alternative post within the school at the end of the five year period. Post holders will have an opportunity to relinquish responsibilities should they choose to do so.

Cost: neutral

Continuing professional development: Exchange programmes are completely underused in Irish education. Formal links should be established with countries such as Finland and Canada in addition to Leargas exchange programmes with both students and teachers completing exchanges where possible. Teachers should be encouraged and supported in yearlong exchanges with high performing systems so that they can bring back and implement the ideas learned from other systems.

15.2.2 Performance management and standards

Primary schools will use standardised testing in the area of literacy, language and numeracy twice yearly. Parents will be informed of these results as soon as they are available.

Leadership mentoring and remediation programmes will be put in place following evidence arising from Whole School Evaluation, PISA and standardised tests as well as qualitative and quantitative information acquired within schools. The privileges currently available to Deis Schools will be rolled out to all schools.

Principals, teachers and boards of management must ensure that the standard of teaching is of the highest level and that assistant teachers are supported and encouraged to up-skill as much as possible.

Teachers with special talents and qualifications in specific areas such as music, drama and art will be encouraged and supported to take other classes within a school by local arrangement.

15.2.3 Teacher training

The advent of independent teacher training courses presents a challenge to the consistency and standards of training which teachers entering the profession receive. The re-introduction of the interview system along with minimum entry exam result requirements to gain access to Teacher training will help ensure that suitable people enter the profession. This along with the development of a portfolio of work on completion of teacher training will help maintain professional training standards.

15.2.4 Curricular change and parental involvement

Curricular change needs to become a process that reflects the changing world. As teachers are asked to engage in continuous professional development, the curriculum needs to facilitate:

- Subject content;
- Teaching modalities;
- Parent assisted self-directed learning;
- Monitoring and measuring of student engagement and learning;
- Remediation and intervention with students with learning difficulties and other challenges.

Teachers are highly skilled, highly educated professionals performing extremely intense activities with children in classes that are often far too big. The pupil teacher ratio must be in line with best international practice.

Multi-disciplinary support structures for schools (educational psychologists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists) to be made available to clusters of schools with their allocation based on need. Our aspiration is to reduce student teacher ratios in line with international best practice.

15.2.5 Structure of Boards of Management

Consideration needs to be given to the roles, functions and competencies of boards of management. New standards of corporate governance and competence are needed to support principals and boards of management.

15.2.6 Access to Primary Education

The lack of school places in certain parts of the country where the population is growing rapidly is a cause for huge concern. RENUA Ireland believes that every child is entitled to access a place in their local area. We will undertake an in-depth analysis of the census and of demographic projections across the country to ensure that we plan our school building programme and school expansion schemes based on demand and need.

RENUA Ireland also recognises that there is over-provision of certain faith-based schools across the country and that there is an urgent need for more diversity in terms of school ethos.

RENUA Ireland supports the rights of families and communities to have access to schools with a religious ethos as well as schools without such an ethos.

In government, RENUA Ireland will ensure that the abandoned school divestment process is reignited. This process must respect the needs and concerns of parents, communities, the religious institutions who currently have patronage of 94% of our schools and most importantly the children themselves.

15.2.7 Rural Schools

RENUA Ireland would reinstate the pupil teacher ratio in 2, 3 and 4 teacher schools to the levels of 2012. The majority of these schools are in rural areas. Their value is not just educational, their value goes way beyond that. These schools are at the heart of our rural landscape and therefore must be protected.

15.3 Secondary Education

The Irish education system should facilitate people in achieving success on the path which they have chosen, be it academic or vocational, and RENUA Ireland supports overhauling our outdated structures to expand the options available to all students, while providing Ireland with a highly-skilled workforce ready to compete internationally.

15.3.1 Leadership in education

Renua Ireland wants high targets and standards for people working in the second level system. Pay and reward should be commensurate with a level of academic accomplishment to ensure that the best and brightest are attracted to this vitally important profession.

Cost: neutral

15.3.2 Challenging sacred cows – moving to a culture of self-directed learning

What is the purpose of the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate? If the Junior Certificate is to have a role in the future, it will perhaps function as a means of ensuring that minimum standards in essential life skills like numeracy and functional literacy have been achieved. Beyond that however, does the over-reliance on generalist, academically driven content suit the needs of all pupils passing through the system?

Furthermore, does it make sense for us to enable a culture where people are not being taught that every assignment and every week matters? The monolithic milestones of the Junior and Leaving certificate reward those who work hard and consistently but these examinations do not demand it. Renua Ireland believes that there is a role for State exams but that they should not count for any more than 30% of the final marks a student achieves when leaving the educational system. School is a place where social and life skills are learned by students. A feature of other high performing school systems is their emphasis on continuous assessment and Renua Ireland strongly supports the inclusion of this ethos into the fabric of our educational system.

This progressive measure will mean that one bad exam will no longer ruin a student's chance of being accepted into their preferred college course. Instead it means that in relative terms, every assignment they undertake will count for more. It will also mean that students have a good idea of what kind of college courses they can realistically apply for when entering their final year in school.

Cost: neutral

15.3.3 Applied leaving certificates

RENUA Ireland believes that access to applied subjects needs to be greatly expanded. This includes links to industry for people interested in careers in tourism and hospitality, retail, fashion and design, agriculture, car maintenance, or crafts and trades like woodwork, metalwork and construction studies. Students should have access to practical, fit-for-purpose applied leaving certificates that provide for a mix of work experience modules and academic tuition. Poland, Germany and other countries successfully operate this system, and so should we.

Cost: neutral

15.3.4 Management systems and structures

While third level roles allow occupants to undertake roles and step back from them, similar flexibility does not pertain in the secondary system. Similar to our proposals for the primary sector, RENUA Ireland is proposing that principals and their deputies be given six year renewable terms in their roles. Both principals and their assistant managers should be given a path back to the classroom if they wish to do so.

Similarly, holders of posts should be paid for those roles and the roles should be term bound and open to competition. The downgrading of these posts was a deeply regrettable consequence of choices made during the financial crisis.

Cost: neutral

15.3.5 Structure of Boards of Management

The challenges here are similar to the primary system. Once again we need to give new directions and new roles to boards of management. In particular high standards of corporate governance must be developed and adhered to.

Cost: neutral

15.4 Special Education

The extension of disability into the Ombudsman's remit will play a key role in enforcing the often neglected rights of the disabled in Irish schools.

15.5 Adult Education and Reskilling

As noted under the secondary system, re-skilling and the role of apprenticeships needs to be broadened and re-launched in Ireland. RENUA Ireland sees the Colleges of Further Education (CoFEs) as being critical engines that facilitate people entering employment or re-skilling.

RENUA Ireland wants an enhanced role for ETBs in linking with Colleges of Further Education.

RENUA Ireland will shift resources from Solas to provide for the apprenticeship programmes delivered through partnerships between the CoFEs and local industry partners, such as hotels, restaurants, trades and so on.

Cost: neutral

15.6 Universities and Institutes of Technology

Universities in Ireland are underfunded. The cuts to the funding of universities have resulted in their international rankings plummeting since the start of the financial crisis. Attending a third level institution is not simply a rite of passage. It should also deliver outcomes for students that have demonstrable utility in the marketplace where graduates will ultimately seek employment. RENUA Ireland believes there needs to be changes to the funding model for third level institutions, in line with the research focus of Institutes of Technology (ITs).

15.6.1 Funding model

The State has limited capacity to fund all its priorities. International averages show the college graduates typically earn in excess of 40% more over the course of their careers than people who do not go to college. Currently however, many people who do not go to college subsidise those that do.

RENUA Ireland believes that young adults should be provided with access to a loans system so that they can afford to meet the true economic cost of properly funded third level courses.

Our system of student loans would require students to start repaying them once the salaries they earn exceed a certain threshold – likely to be in the region of €25,000 per annum.

A condition of introducing these loans will be linking any inflation to the CPI. Colleges will be tasked with enhancing their own fundraising efforts to obtain funding in excess of this new income stream.

A second feature of this system will be ring fencing the existing funding so that a meaningful system of access scholarships can be provided for people from low income households.

Cost: neutral

15.6.2 Lecturing, research and academic freedom

RENUA Ireland strongly supports academic freedom. This means that academics should be provided with the freedom to pursue their research without corporatist interests being allowed to silence them or curtail their work. RENUA Ireland commits to providing for academic freedom in contracts of employment in Ireland.

RENUA Ireland also believes that it is unrealistic and unnecessary to force all educators in the third level sector to become academic researchers. There are third level educators who love teaching but who have little interest in research and vice versa.

The salary and job descriptions in colleges and universities should be changed to reflect this. Researchers who attract significant income streams should not be required to undertake extensive lecturing commitments if it harms their college's capacity to become a leader in a given field. Lecturers who enjoy teaching should be facilitated in doing so.

We believe these changes have the capacity to improve the way staffing and research occurs in third level institutions.

Cost: neutral

15.6.3 Research focus and funding for Institutes of Technology

The Institutes of Technology lack a specific, specialised focus for research purposes. RENUA Ireland is in favour of allowing ITs to bid for research roles so that they can become a central part of an eco-system of research and industry partnership across the country. Limerick IT and Blanchardstown IT have research interests in dairy and in horticulture. This concept should be extended, more finely honed and aligned with start-up incentives and business development programmes. In parallel with this, ITs will retain a key role in providing valued and valuable courses in a mixture of practical and academic disciplines across the State.

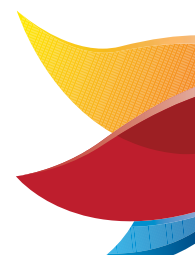
Cost: neutral

15.6.4 Students and third level

Students are not always best served by the course options they are provided with. RENUA Ireland favours increased specialisation by colleges in full-time courses offered by Institutes of Technology, in preference to the unnecessary balkanisation of what should be broad-based, generalist courses.

As some of this has been driven by a desire to manipulate the CAO points system, RENUA Ireland wants to put the emphasis back on the benefits gained by students from taking such courses. RENUA Ireland envisages:

- Larger, more general third level courses;
- Less duplication of courses across the university and IT sector;
- Focus being placed back on the benefits gained by the students rather than the colleges.



15.6.5 Access to third level for People with Disabilities

The HEA in conjunction with the CAO will be tasked with setting up an entry system into third level education for people with disabilities who wish to follow a non- traditional route towards further training or education such as modular assessments over a longer time frame.

Cost: neutral

16 HEALTH

There have been ample reports on the problems in the health sector in Ireland. What is needed now is practical action and tough decisions to deal with problems and implement the solutions to them which have been known for a very long time. The main failure, as noted in the section on Public Sector reform, is Ireland's inability to respond to crises. But whilst the health sector is not perfect it is hugely resilient and those working within it have shown an appetite and capacity for reform under progressive leadership. The health sector is not perfect, but it can be greatly improved.

RENUA Ireland priorities for health:

- Support the Hospital Trusts and promote independence and competition between them to drive costs down.
- Lead the roll out of a network of local multi-disciplinary primary care services
- Prioritise home-care options for the elderly
- Secure real value for money on drugs including using generic medicines where possible
- A major new role for GPs as patient advocates in a GP centred care system
- Proper resourcing of Ambulance and Emergency centres
- Prioritizing care by family members of the elderly

16.1 Strategic considerations

There is a need for consensus on the change priorities for the healthcare sector from all the stakeholders. Top-down solutions fail when there is no buy-in or the wrong solutions are being imposed and practitioners rightly resist their implementation.

RENUA Ireland is proposing a National Health Forum, modelled on the New Ireland Forum to generate a permanent national dialogue with all stakeholders in the sector. This Forum will consist of the HSE (or its equivalent), the Department of Health, politicians from all sides, civil servants, unions, professionals, medical and healthcare businesses, pharmaceutical manufacturers, independent researchers of note (a mix of national and international) and patient groups. The Forum's full report will need to be completed within six months, with the list of recommendations being made public. The remit of the forum in establishing the priorities for the system will be as follows:

- To develop a twenty year forecast for healthcare requirements that is maintained as a living strategic document focused at a principles level and refreshed annually;
- To debate and agree on all policy initiatives in the field of publicly and privately funded healthcare before the proposals are presented to the Oireachtas Committee on Health (which acts as its link to the Executive in line with our proposals for enhanced roles for parliamentary committees);
- To develop and agree five and ten year plans for healthcare management across the system;
- The development, oversight and implementation of a plan to leverage information technology solutions across the sector to avail of the advances that are changing the shape of healthcare.

RENUA Ireland sees the National Health Forum as the only realistic way by which the engagement and buy-in necessary can be garnered.

16.2 The patient is a citizen

Patient participation is already key to the treatment of many conditions. Medical technology changes leveraging the internet of things will mean that this will become a universal feature of healthcare treatment (e.g. diabetic monitoring of blood sugar levels).

The health service of the future will need to be shaped and designed around the increasing participation of citizens in the management of their health.

This will be a core element to RENUA Ireland's plan to prioritise the health sector for our ambitious e-government strategy.

16.3 Structural priorities

The following are key overarching priorities for RENUA Ireland's healthcare policies:

- There has been enough change, now a system has to be backed. RENUA Ireland will support the Hospital Trusts and promote independence as well as competition between them to drive costs down. GPs will play a central role in helping this happen;
- Expansion of local access to multi-disciplinary primary care services and movement of patients to social care facilities and home care packages when they have long-term conditions;
- Committing to deep specialisation in specific hospitals and clinics for elective procedures. More local hospital beds become available if deeply specialised centres treat patients with conditions before they become acute. These centres must be able to deal with regional volumes;
- Use patient outcome data, and big data from committing to e-healthcare to continuously improve patient outcomes and treatment costs;
- Leverage EU and national procurement directives to obtain value for money on drugs including using generic medicines where possible;
- Demand more accountability and rationalisation from Sec 38 and 39 bodies. The service level agreements need to be vastly improved and management of the SLAs considerably tightened.

16.4 Electronic Health Records (EHR)

RENUA Ireland supports the establishment of Electronic Health Records (EHR) as a central component in our health service. The introduction of EHRs will involve the creation of a nationwide, computerized system of patient records which will be instantly accessible by medical professionals. This patient-centered approach will allow people to access their own records and track their medical history, while improving the resources available to medical practitioners in a manner which will not compromise patient privacy. Estonia's implementation of EHR since 2005 provides an example of how it can radically improve a small country's healthcare system. Bureaucracy has been reduced, efficiencies increased and healthcare outcomes improved, and we believe that planning for the introduction of EHR should be a core part of our proposed National Health Forum.

16.5 General practice / primary care sector

General Practitioners are the lynchpin around which all else revolves for patients. GPs are patient advocates and manage the relationship with other services like hospital consultants and mobile clinical services (such as public health nurses). RENUA Ireland wants to ensure that primary care services are used to their maximum potential. As a result, we believe that supports to GPs must be greatly improved by introducing and implementing the following measures:

- Greater services are to be provided to patients via GPs in their own practices / primary care facilities. This will enable the management of long term and chronic conditions within the community. The following services needed to be provided for at the primary level:
 - Funding for GP assistants / physician assistants to manage diabetes, renal care and obesity / endocrine disorders;
 - Medical consultants are to be established on a community basis and co-located in GP/primary care facilities offering paediatric, endocrinology and gerontology services;
 - Day care procedures to be delivered in appropriately resourced primary care centres;
 - Community First Responder Schemes to be developed on a national basis and linked to the Ambulance Service. The Ambulance Service needs to be resourced to ensure that it can meet best international practice response times.
 - Realistic pricing and payments for services provided by GPs;
- Mobile clinics to be used to treat certain illnesses and perform day procedures. Services that can be provided in this way include those relating to gynaecology and obstetrics, paediatrics, cataracts, ophthalmology, melanoma, dermatology and respiratory conditions.

- Mobile clinics can also be used in conjunction with pharmacies and GPs clinics to improve access to vaccination programmes like influenza and chicken pox.
- Move towards fully funding annual dental check-ups and a complete, thorough annual health check via a GP. This means adopting approach where the focus is preventative in nature and ensures the very best patient outcomes per euro invested.

16.6 Secondary care

There is a requirement to adapt the current, general hospital model to take account of scientific and technological advances. The country cannot afford to lose bed numbers but there should be flexibility in terms of where some of those beds are situated.

RENUA Ireland believes that the secondary care system needs to be changed but major changes can only be implemented when acceptable risk mitigation measures are in place to help move to new structures, processes and approaches.

RENUA Ireland is proposing the following measures:

- There needs to be an increase in the effective number of acute beds brought about by removing patients with chronic care conditions and step-down patients from acute beds. This can be achieved by:
 - Expanding the role of GPs and primary care centres;
 - Removing elderly patients from acute beds by providing them with comprehensive home care packages;
 - Purchasing access to step-down care beds from private nursing home providers;
 - Using sheltered accommodation to take elderly or infirm patients who need minimal but continual monitoring;
 - Creating a consultant pharmacist role in hospitals so that suitably qualified professionals can lead the management of pharmacy in a cost effective manner.
- Ensure that elective surgery does not become emergency surgery by encouraging deep specialisation. Initiate an air ambulance service nationwide via a medical helicopter service (e.g. coastguard, air corps or private service providers).
- Where Ireland has too few patients with rare conditions to maintain specialised teams (and provide them with enough cases to remain at the top of their skill set), access to these skills should be purchased from large, distinguished health service systems in other EU countries.
- The role of medical scientists should be enhanced in cancer care and in the provision of chronic endocrine disease management.
- The number of medical scientists is to be increased to cope with the demands of diagnosing and managing chronic illnesses such as cancer care and endocrine / metabolic diseases.

16.7 Elder care

Senior care should be kept as close to home as possible. Mobile clinics and GPs should be used where possible to this end.

RENUA Ireland will prioritise the development of sheltered housing so those who that have chronic conditions but who need minimal monitoring are looked after in a sympathetic, secure and cost-effective manner.

There is a requirement for a massive increase over the new few decades in the quantum and nature of home care packages.

Nursing home provision should be incentivised with a long-term plan for controlled expansion in the sector. This must be tightly managed and conform to stringent standards. Speculative building should not be facilitated.

Provide for access to home care package funding for family members who help the elderly to remain in their homes. This will constitute a direct payment to family members who are caring for senior citizens.

16.8 Mental Health Services

RENUA Ireland has pledged to implement in full the 'Mental Health Reform 6 Point Plan for Mental Health.

1. Produce a detailed, time-lined Government action plan to continue the reform of mental health supports and improve the mental health of the whole population, in line with A Vision for Change and the Healthy Ireland Framework, ensuring that adequate funding and the structures for good governance and oversight of the plan are in place.
2. Improve access to early intervention by extending the Counselling in Primary Care service to people on low incomes.
3. Ensure that the mental health of all children and adolescents is supported, including access to mental health promotion and early intervention supports, community-based support, and accessible and holistic mental health services and supports which minimise the use of in-patient beds, with a commitment to ending the inappropriate admission of children and adolescents to adult wards within the first year.
4. Update Ireland's Mental Health Act in line with international human rights standards and the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, within the first year of Government.
5. Ensure access to housing and tenancy sustainment support for people with mental health difficulties.
6. Reduce the proportion of people with a mental health disability outside the labour force.

16.9 Whole life healthiness

RENUA Ireland believes that communities and citizens must take responsibility for their individual and collective health. RENUA Ireland will commission the development of a flexible structure under which families and communities across the country can educate themselves as to how they can maintain balanced diets and engage in active lifestyles.

Every village and town will be able to come together and apply for designation as an Active Town. This programme will be designed by dietitians, experts in physical exercise and other stakeholders and made available to villages and towns in each county. Being an Active Town will be seen as an attractive prospect for people when they consider where they want to raise families, move to, or retire to as services will be clustered around such areas.

16.10 Preventative policy positions

There are considerable costs to treating smoking, obesity and alcohol related conditions, and we will advocate the following policies to counter these problems.

- Prominent, obesity-related health warnings to be placed on soft drinks and on alcohol;
- Eliminate advertising of soft drinks and confectionary during children's programming on television;
- Balanced lifestyle education focusing on eating healthily and living an active lifestyle to be rolled out via RENUA's Ireland's Active Ireland plan;
- Pool all excise and duties from alcohol, tobacco and (where relevant) sugar and place in a dedicated fund for healthcare

16.11 Open Disclosure

RENUA Ireland is committed to openness, transparency and accountability. Patients should always have access to the facts and the truth when dealing with our health services.

16.11.1 Medical Negligence Insurance

In Denmark, patients insure themselves against adverse outcomes. When such events occur, they draw down on their insurance. The Danish equivalent of the Medical Council reviews the doctor(s) performance with regard to negligent actions/inactions and decides upon sanctions where they are necessary. The Danes have therefore separated insurance and patient care from negligence issues.

The benefits of this approach are as follows:

- The patient is removed from the courtroom;
- Legal expenses are dramatically reduced;
- The need to prove negligence is eliminated;
- The State Claims Agency continues to fund indemnity for doctors in the public system so no change is required for it.

RENUA Ireland is proposing a move to this approach.

16.11.2 A Healthcare Professional Indemnity Act

- RENUA Ireland is proposing the introduction of legislation that will indemnify all healthcare professionals making a first disclosure. They will have a robust defence in any litigation on foot of an adverse outcome unless a court held that the disclosure was such that immunity could not be provided (the Symphysiotomy cases in Dundalk would be an example of where this would be inappropriate).

RENUA Ireland is proposing the following:

- Following an adverse event, all the healthcare professionals will be required to make full statements, on camera, to a specially qualified judge / coroner;
- The professionals will be questioned by their own legal advisors and by a prosecutor representing the interest of the patient;
- The court will decide if what was disclosed represented a stateable case of negligence. Where this is the view of the court, the case will proceed to full trial with all evidence gathered during this initial process becoming inadmissible.
- Where the outcome is deemed to be an error of judgement lacking recklessness or culpability, it would certify this conclusion to the parties. The victim would be asked if they accept the decision, and without liability being admitted, proceed to settlement. If the victim chooses not to accept the certification process of the court, they would have to proceed to a full trial with the certification of the court on the record.

The process has precedent in criminal law where criminal cases start in the district court. It has the capacity to improve the operation of this entire section of the law, reduce costs to the taxpayers and deliver more rapid access to justice for victims.

16.12 The National Children's Hospital

RENUA Ireland is committed to the construction of the National Children's Hospital as a vital piece of national health infrastructure. We regret the politicisation of this project for more than a decade.

After the failed venture at the Mater Hospital in 2012, we fail to understand the logic of choosing St James's Hospital – another congested city centre location with limited access and no scope for expansion in line with projected population growth.

A planning decision on this new location is currently awaited. If the application is successful we will support the construction of the hospital in order to serve the urgent needs of our sick children.

If the application is unsuccessful, we will seek to fasttrack the construction of the National Children's Hospital on a more suitable site on the outskirts of Dublin, co-located with a maternity hospital as international best practice demands.



17 CLIMATE CHANGE

There is a delicate balance to be maintained between Ireland's use of its natural resources, our protection of its eco-systems and the fulfilment of the needs of a growing, developed economy as new technological advancements continue to alter the optimum energy mix. Climate change, natural disasters of a manmade or a force majeure nature and energy security are amongst the largest long-term challenges facing the Irish state. More needs to be done to ensure that we harness our natural, national assets to the benefit of the citizens of the State and that we increase our ability to service our national energy requirements through increased self-sufficiency. We must also ensure, insofar as it is possible, that we identify early technological trends and how they will impact us – for example, in alternative energy storage.

RENUA Ireland priorities for climate change:

- Move our renewable energy strategy away from wind farming that is based on bulldozing communities through pylons and windmills, without adequate consultation and consent
- Ensure Ireland's natural resources become the property of the people rather than the State
- Oppose unproven methods of energy extraction such as fracking
- Develop alternative energy sources such as tidal energy
- Significantly reduce Ireland's dependence on imported energy sources
- Grow an afforestation, solar-powered and biomass energy generation strategy

17.1 Climate Change

Ireland imports over 80% of all the fuel required to power the national grid. International fuel prices are the main determinant of energy prices. This dependency exposes Ireland to price shocks such as those seen during wars in oil producing countries or when tensions arise between the EU and Russia in relation to gas supplies. Diversifying energy supply should be a much stronger long-term focus in achieving Ireland's national security goals.

17.1.1 Hydrocarbon dependency

Petroleum and other oil products remain the main imported fuel. Excluding the transport sector, Ireland is more dependent on gas for energy production now than it is on oil or coal. Ireland needs to start diversifying its energy generation input sources to include more renewable sources of fuel than can be developed on the island of Ireland. RENUA Ireland will make this a national priority.

17.1.2 Fracking

An August 2015 study of 44,000 fracking wells in the USA outlined that fracking wells, particularly shallow fracking, can compromise aquifers. This presents a clear danger to Irish citizens in rural locations dependent on ground water.

Until such time as fracking techniques have verifiably improved to the degree that they do not compromise natural sources of water supply in private wells, RENUA Ireland is completely opposed to fracking.

RENUA favours the development of energy from renewable sources instead.

17.1.3 Renewable energy

Solar and photo-voltaic energy

RENUA Ireland believes that the use of solar power can reduce our dependency on imported fuels. As a result, RENUA Ireland favours the promotion of retro-fitting houses and apartment complexes with solar power generation systems.

Solar panels should be integrated into every new planning application for residential or commercial property.

The growth in their use should be promoted through the existing retro-fitting grants as well as through the opening of the energy system to the purchase of excess micro-generated capacity from micro producers.

A final consideration is for the State to co-commission (with other energy dependent states) major solar facilities in third party countries with privileged pricing for the direct purchasing of cheap excess energy which can be delivered to the Irish grid via submarine cables.

Tidal / hydro

European reports outline that Ireland has the strongest tides in the EU. These reports indicate that the oceans around Ireland could supply 500% of what is required to operate the national grid. RENUA Ireland believes that the development of tidal energy must become a strategic long term priority in the drive to achieve self-sufficiency.

Biomass

RENUA Ireland favours the development of biomass as a home heating fuel with potential for energy generation. This industry could support the existing aim of bringing Ireland's afforestation rate back up to 20% from its current low single digits rate, while providing an economic output for forestry in Ireland. Biomass generation via the afforestation of protected areas offers an opportunity to further decrease energy dependency and improve our carbon sinks.

Wind Turbines

RENUA Ireland believes that the economic case for the development of wind turbines based on current technologies is questionable. Accordingly, in line with developing international practice RENUA Ireland does not support the development of wind farms, without an improvement in the industry's economies of scale.

17.2 Natural resources

RENUA Ireland believes that lessons must be learned from Ireland's corporatist attitude towards State assets. It has meant that the few have benefited with regard to the dispensing of lucrative licenses during the recent history of the State. RENUA Ireland believes in the creation of a national sovereign wealth fund to manage State assets. This is the model which was adopted by Norway and by the Shetland Islands in Scotland and it has proven to be a viable option for developing their natural resources.

RENUA Ireland believes that ownership of natural assets should revert to the Irish people, and not to the Irish State.

This applies to our forests, bogs, parks and areas of natural conservation, our water and extractive industries like oil, gas and mineral wealth.

Cost: neutral

17.3 Climate change and afforestation

Ireland has the second lowest percentage of forested land in EU. Ireland can become a lung for the continent by bringing our rate of afforestation up to at least 20%, which is an existing goal of Coillte.

Considerable benefits can accrue from increased use of forestry in uplands and on marginal land. It will provide additional carbon sinks to offset economic activity and provide additional natural habitats for wildlife and recreational facilities for citizens. It could also feed into and support biomass production in the country.

Cost: neutral

17.4 Cleantech

RENUA Ireland is proposing the development of a cleantech hub for the midlands. This is to be based on the model developed in Guessing, Austria. It is known for its self-sufficiency in energy as well as its use of locally available biomass. Along with our proposals to focus on tidal, wind, biomass and sea based hydro-electric generation; Ireland can develop an industry that becomes a leader in these areas.

Clean technology is increasingly in demand and it is still sufficiently young as an industry for Ireland to develop products and acquire expertise that has export potential. There will also be beneficial side effects for Irish industry as a whole as a result of Ireland becoming a leader in cleantech.

The benefit of cleantech is in the long-term reduction in the quantity of energy needed to fuel the economy.

17.5 Waste Management

Ireland uses landfills far too much. By moving Ireland's focus towards incineration, composting and power generation from commercial and household waste air pollution from landfill waste, groundwater pollution and vermin proliferation can be controlled.

It is worth considering the distribution of free green cones to divert waste from landfill and incineration. This can divert as much as 40% of household waste into household level treatment without any outside support.

Cost: to be determined

17.6 Air quality standards

We believe that Ireland should commit to achieving WHO standards for air quality in Ireland and that the biggest challenge in this regard is ensuring there are minimum air quality standards for Irish housing.

Ventilation in Irish homes can lead to a variety of health problems, especially when combined with dampness or other aggravating factors. RENUA Ireland favours the development of minimum air quality and ventilation standards for all homes as a health protection measure. All people renting private housing or vendors disposing of a property would have to ensure these standards are met before housing can be rented out or sold.

Conforming to WHO standards will mean that Ireland will have to do more to reduce fuel emissions in large cities and reduce the use of turf and coal for heating purposes, particularly in built-up areas. While smoky coal is due to be phased out, composite coal mix products and turf / peat should remain under review.

Cost: neutral



18 ARTS AND CULTURE

Culture and the Arts have always been synonymous with Ireland. They are as significant a part of our international identity as they are of how we see ourselves. Actors, painters, poets, playwrights, authors, dancers and musicians have enriched the tapestry of the story of Ireland.

This sector also generates a significant amount of economic activity. Up to 90,000 Irish jobs are supported and in excess of €5bn in revenue is generated by this sector every year. This equates to about 3% of our GDP.

RENUA Ireland believes that the Arts and Culture must be far more valued by policy makers.

RENUA Ireland priorities for Arts and Culture:

- Moving funding of the Arts from Local Authorities to the Arts Council
- Ensuring our cultural institutions such as the Abbey have a countrywide touring and exhibitions policy
- A radical reform of the teaching of Irish embracing modern immersion methods
- A regeneration of our main cultural institutions after a decade of austerity

18.1 Funding the Arts in Ireland

Creating visual and performing art is a form of learning, and just as our educational system needs to adapt to different and more flexible forms of schooling, so too does the arts funding model need to allow for more creative and inspirational methods of creating art.

We believe there is no cultural, social, political or economic justification for local authorities to have control of funding for local art galleries and theatres. Our local authorities should be focused on local government, and the funding of the arts should be administered by our expert body, the Arts Council.

A complete re-organisation of funding procedures is necessary, and will simplify the process while making it more user-friendly:

- The present funding model was created decades ago, and needs to be re-energised and re-structured. Internal administrative structures within arts institutions should be more fluid, with staff being shared across various artistic platforms.
- All theatre companies in receipt of substantial funding should be obliged to bring at least one production nationwide per annum. Theatres such as The Abbey are institutions of national significance, but they remain disconnected from those outside Dublin.
- Funding for the large institutions should be apportioned every three years, rather than annually, with a two-year funding model for all single project applications.

18.2 Commemorating our History

The next general election takes place against the backdrop of the celebrations of a century since the Easter Rising. 2016 will provide an opportunity for Ireland, as a nation, to reflect on its own journey towards independence, and the opportunities and challenges that the journey has produced.

The legacy of 1916 is far from straightforward, but its place in our collective national personality is hugely significant. Already there has been considerable debate about how best to commemorate the uprising, and that debate is likely to continue as we reach various milestones in the coming years.

RENUA Ireland believes that during this decade of commemoration, it is vital that the Irish State asserts ownership over the legacy of our fight for independence. Irish history belongs to the whole of the Irish people, and not to smaller fringe and extremist movements who will seek to commandeer and control the way in which we remember the architects of our modern state. In government, we will ensure that the Irish State takes on a role of leadership and recognises the commemoration as belonging to the whole population.

RENUA Ireland also commits itself to the development of Moore Street and its surrounding area as a national cultural quarter which will remember and respect all aspects of the evolution of an independent Irish state.

18.3 Our language, Our Heritage

With English established as the language of commerce in an increasingly globalised economic environment, our national language is at a crossroads. Either we allow it to continue its slow downward trend towards extinction, or as a nation, we collectively decide to arrest its decline and embrace the most fundamental aspect of our national identity.

We believe that the modern revival of the Welsh language provides a roadmap for a revitalisation of the Irish language. Ireland can and will rediscover the pride it has for its native tongue and the great cultural and artistic history that goes with it.

The first step on this path must be a fundamental rethinking of how we teach Irish in our schools. It is an appalling indictment of our education system that generation after generation of Irish teenagers leave school with little more than a smattering of vocabulary and grammar. To achieve real change, we must blend the traditional and immersive 'living language' elements of education with a renewed focus on grammar and accuracy.

19 FOREIGN POLICY AND DEFENCE

19.1 Foreign Policy

Ireland's foreign policy has traditionally revolved around neutrality and overseas development aid (ODA). While these two aspects have undoubtedly assisted the building of Ireland's soft power overseas, monolithic concepts should not dictate the future of Irish policy unless there are clear benefits to maintaining our ODA programmes or military neutrality. It is likely that Ireland will need to adopt much more nuanced positions with regard to these two areas of foreign policy focus.

Similarly, we are living through a period of retrenchment in foreign policy and cooperation. Germany and other states are becoming increasingly strident in adopting and maintaining nakedly realist positions within an EU where interdependency and power sharing is meant to be the *modus operandi*.

RENUA Ireland's foreign policy and defence priorities are to:

- Develop our reputation in the field of conflict resolution
- Hasten the speed of normalisation between the two communities in Northern Ireland
- Enhance the capacity of the Defence Forces to respond to today's radically changed security environment.
- Create a stand-alone Intelligence Corps
- Enhance the role of the Naval Service in policing our waters

19.1.1 Ireland's place in a world of non-state violence

It remains the case that most current wars are either civil wars or conflicts involving non-state actors. It is therefore questionable as to how well Ireland's attitude towards military neutrality serves our national interest. As a country that is unquestionably part of the West, can Ireland expect to be immune to terrorist attacks from non-state actors motivated by radical and extremist ideologies?

While membership of NATO is not in our national interest, Ireland could further its partnership with other non-aligned states like Finland so that policing and monitoring missions can be undertaken. Ireland is a member of the EU and should play a full part in protecting the interests of Ireland within the Union.

Ireland is known for peace and soft power. We should not turn our back on this legacy.

19.1.2 A beacon for post-conflict zones

Irish political representatives have spoken about exporting our conflict resolution process from Northern Ireland but we have not done enough to make this happen. RENUA Ireland favours making post-conflict resolution activity the third plank of Ireland's foreign policy and a primary function of our diplomatic corps.

To facilitate such objectives and secure an influx of new expertise RENUA Ireland believes that one in ten diplomatic appointments should come from outside the diplomatic corps

19.1.3 A white paper for Ireland's foreign policy

Ireland's foreign policy is confused at present. A white paper needs to be developed defining our relationship and position on:

- The European Union;
- NATO;
- The UN charter, specifically Art 51 and Art 52 mandates;
- The rise of non-state actors and non-state terrorist forces;

- Multi-polarity and the power shift to Asia;
- Neutrality in a multi-polar world with transient borders;
- Global threats to economic stability like migration, wars over natural resources wars and long-standing unresolved conflicts.

19.1.3 Enhancing the Diplomatic Corps

Ireland is fortunate to possess some of the best talent in the world within the ranks of our diplomatic corps. RENUA Ireland is very proud of the standard of representation found in our relatively small embassy network across the world. We believe that we can further enhance impact of our overseas representation by opening up a small number of ambassadorial posts to non-career diplomats. The number would be capped at 10% of all such posts. This would enable the Government to make key strategic appointments to certain capital cities or institutions if and when required. An excellent example of how this can work was the appointment by the European Union of a former Taoiseach to the post of EU Ambassador to the United States. This was widely regarded both in Europe and in the US as a high profile and high powered appointment, which dramatically raised the profile of and opportunities for the EU in Washington DC at the time.

19.2 Northern Ireland

A safe Northern Ireland is in our national interest and keeps Irish citizens safe. RENUA Ireland is determined to ensure that the preservation of peace on our island and the reconciliation of its people remain vital national interests of the Irish state.

The Irish Government, as an equal partner, must retain an active and ongoing level of dialogue and engagement to strengthen the peace process and further develop the agreed political institutions. The continuing work of genuine reconciliation must be supported and the necessary security measures in the battle against dissident paramilitary threats must be matched by a renewed effort to persuade those outside the political process to engage and participate. The legacy issues of the decades of violence must be dealt with in an open, transparent manner. A Commission on Truth and Reconciliation can be a constructive part of a very necessary healing process.

19.3 Defence Policy

19.3.1 The Irish Defence Forces

The Irish Defence Forces have a long history of loyalty and duty to the State and they have developed a world class reputation while serving in UN approved missions. RENUA Ireland is proud of our Defence Forces. We recognise the high level of leadership, management, logistical and other skills acquired by personnel who serve in the Defence Forces.

Due to the vagaries of the service many personnel leave the Defence Forces at an early age. We recognise that their potential, expertise and the skills they have acquired, often in hostile environments, are sometimes not recognised by businesses and other government departments. We will actively work for the creation of a system which can connect departing individuals with potentially interested bodies, both public and private.

RENUA Ireland notes the August 2015 Defence White Paper which lists categories of risks that can pose security challenges to the State. It is also noted that threats to the EU can adversely affect Ireland's security and economic interests. We will work on ensuring that the Defence Forces are prepared and have the flexibility required to respond to threats that affects Ireland's security. We are supportive of the role played by the Defence Forces in overseas missions which will continue into the future.

The Defence Forces have a supporting role to the Gardaí in the internal security of the state. We are supportive of that role and will work on ensuring that the military responses that may be required for any new threats are suitable.

19.3.2 Cyber Security

RENUA Ireland recognises that a cyber attack on state assets could pose a serious threat to Ireland's security and its economic future. We will engage all stakeholders, both private and public, to ensure that comprehensive preparedness exists for any possible cyber attack. The expertise of the Defence Forces in the cyber area will be built upon and will be harnessed across public and private enterprises to ensure that the necessary knowledge and skills are available to ensure security and business continuity.

19.3.3 Intelligence

The threats to the State have become more complex and inter-related. There is a need to ensure that there is joined-up analysis across government departments. Intelligence is vital for the forewarning of threats and is a force-multiplier for government departments, state agencies, the Gardaí, and the military. We will examine the existing intelligence architecture to ensure that it is suitable for the current and future threat environments.

The Defence Forces operate on peace support operations in some of the most hostile areas of the world and deserve first-class intelligence capabilities which have the potential to save lives. We will move away from the present Defence Forces ad-hoc intelligence personnel system and will create a professional Intelligence Corps. This will ensure continuity in personnel and expand their expertise in intelligence skills and analysis, in the long run saving lives. The potential role of military attachés will be examined also.

19.3.4 Civil Defence

Climate change and the resultant damage caused by violent weather patterns have the potential to seriously challenge the resources of our civil authorities. The Defence Forces are often called upon as a last resort to aid the civil authorities. We will work make sure there is joined-up planning and integration between services and bodies to ensure that the Defence Forces are available and utilised at the appropriate time.

19.3.5 Reserve Defence Forces

RENUA Ireland acknowledges the sacrifices inherent in volunteer service and the enormous potential of our Reserve Defence Forces. The civilian skills of the members of the Reserve are often under-utilised and need to be better harnessed in the military environment. We will work to develop a system that will ensure that voluntary service to the state through the Reserve Defence Forces is fully recognised.

19.3.6 Naval Service

Naval Service personnel have recently operated in the Mediterranean and have been rightly praised for their professionalism. We are supportive of this mission and can see this as the precursor to other possible naval missions. Ireland is highly dependent on our external trade links and is reliant for its economic well-being on the unimpeded movement of goods. The Naval Service has a vital role not alone in this area but also in policing our seas for fisheries protection and drug interdiction. We recognise that it is important that the Navel Service is fully supported in these vital tasks.

APPENDIX

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