

People Before Profit



Share the Wealth: An Alternative Vision for Ireland



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Introduction

By Richard Boyd Barrett

Despite government parties' claims of economic recovery, Ireland remains a deeply unequal society. Government growth projections and claims of economic stability lack all credibility in the face of the evidence that another global economic down-turn is looming.

The neo-liberal policies of the Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, and Labour governments, have reinforced inequality and increased Ireland's vulnerability to economic crisis. Wealth is now concentrated in the hands of a tiny minority of the population. Levels of poverty have increased and we are experiencing a crisis in our key public services.

The failed policies that created the crash of 2007/8 have been replicated, intensified and accelerated. Under the guise of austerity and so-called fiscal discipline, public investment and spending has been slashed to facilitate the further privatisation of key sectors of the economy, such as housing, health, public transport, energy, and increasingly education.

Progressive taxation based on income, wealth and profits is being systematically replaced with regressive user charges and flat taxes. These hurt the less well-off and starve public services of necessary funding, while benefitting big corporations and the super-wealthy.

Successive governments' policies have failed to produce any significant improvement in the living standards for the majority or in the quality of public services. The current state of health, housing and water services are the most dramatic and visible evidence of this. The run-down of public investment has produced a dire crisis for those relying on public services, driven up costs for the public, and simultaneously prepared these essential public services for privatisation.

Austerity policies increase the power of the purely profit-driven financial and banking interests that are speculating and dictating investment in key areas. This creates economic bubbles in one area, chronic under-investment in others and locks us further into a disastrous boom-bust cycle. Simply put, the policies for which the government are now commending themselves are creating the conditions for the return of economic crisis.

Economic inequality and privatisation creates greater social inequality and prevents the state from addressing it. Women, children, young people, the disabled, travellers, immigrant communities and refugees have all suffered disproportionately from the impact of economic crisis and austerity.

Despite repeatedly claiming to pursue an equality agenda, in the last Dáil the Labour Party voted against calling a referendum on the 8th Amendment and against a bill allowing abortion in the cases of fatal foetal abnormality. It has voted down a bill to close direct provision centres, and against a bill outlawing discrimination against children in access to primary schools on religious grounds.



Richard Boyd Barrett

Equality is not a government priority. The drive to cut public spending makes the government reluctant to invest resources or pass legislation that could end social inequalities and discrimination. This is partly because of the cost and partly because they continue to rely on some of the most conservative sections of our society for political support. In some cases, those on the political right actively encourage discrimination in order to divert attention from the real problems.

The State has been slow or unwilling to investigate some of the most horrendous cases of abuse, negligence and malpractice, particularly in the church and in the Gardaí. This is due to fear of the cost involved and fear of alienating the predominantly conservative institutions, which Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil in particular depend on.

Irish Foreign policy, particularly when it comes to military neutrality, is also completely hostage to big business and multi-national corporate interests. Despite public opposition, the Irish government continues to allow the US military use of Shannon airport to pursue bloody wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. Ireland has moved closer towards involvement in NATO /EU militarisation and the EU arms industry. Criticism of flagrant human rights abuses and outright atrocities by regimes like Israel or repressive Middle Eastern states are also muted for trade reasons.

Similarly, environmental policy also takes second place to big business interests. The Irish government's refusal to seriously tackle climate change is disgraceful. Likewise, its shameful efforts to seek exemptions for Ireland in the area of reducing CO2 emissions are a direct result of protecting Ireland's largest and wealthiest beef barons. This is of no benefit to small farmers who are the ones that will be ruined by flooding and are being constantly squeezed by the big producers and multi-national chains.

People Before Profit (PBP) believe we must break from this failed and dysfunctional model. We must re-organise the economy on the basis of democratic planning and wealth re-distribution in the interests of the majority, not simply the privileged few. We must build a society that guarantees equality, fairness and a decent quality of life for all of our citizens.

To do this, we must reverse the drive towards privatisation, make a priority of investing in key public services and infrastructure and develop strategic public enterprise and the domestic economy. To fund public services and investment, we must re-balance the tax system to ensure that corporations and the wealthiest in our society pay their fair share in tax. We must reduce the burden of regressive taxes on low and middle income households to stimulate domestic demand in a sustainable way.

We must gear our foreign policy towards tackling global inequality, opposing war and racism and supporting forces that challenge corporate or tyrannical elites. We should instead openly favour economic equality and social solidarity. Crucially, we must take urgent measures domestically, and support all genuine international efforts, to deal with climate change and ensure the protection of the environment and natural resources that sustain us all.

Our Priorities: A Summary

The ultimate priority of People Before Profit is to reverse societal inequality that has seen the rich get richer and the poor poorer. An overhaul of the taxation system along with proper investment in public services to provide high quality education, housing, transport, health and social services is essential. To bring about this change, there must be an end to privatisation and investment based on corporate interest. People Before Profit prioritises:

1. **Prevention of privatisation and retention of State funded services and Ireland's natural resources in public ownership;**
2. **The implementation of a progressive taxation model that sees those who have the most pay the most. This will include the abolition of the water charges; the abolition of the property tax on the primary unit of family residence; the removal of the USC for incomes below €70,000.**
3. **Creation of a National Health Service free to all at the point of access, with greater investment in all areas including mental health, and the promotion of alternative treatments over prescribing medications;**
4. **Building 50,000 social housing units over five years, imposing effective rent controls and ending the practice of evicting families who show genuine financial distress in mortgage re-payments;**
5. **Reversing welfare cuts imposed on vulnerable groups and the poorest in society and ending discriminatory employment practices;**
6. **Proper investment in education to provide a universal, accessible, lifelong education system, free at the point of access for all;**
7. **Recognising childcare as a universal right and developing a public system of crèches;**
8. **Investing in disability services and removing barriers that create or enhance inequalities;**
9. **Promoting suitable and sustainable use of our land and supporting small farmers;**
10. **Recognising and valuing the contributions of culture and the arts to Irish society.**
11. **Repealing the 8th Amendment to the constitution.**
12. **Reversing discrimination against young people in social welfare and 'new entrant' wages.**
13. **Outlawing discrimination in access to schools on religious grounds.**

People Before Profit: Recovery for All.

Arts

People Before Profit believes in absolute artistic freedom and that artistic practice should be available to the whole of society regardless of income, location or social background. There should not be a division between excellence and access in the Arts. PBP also recognises that the arts and creative practices can be beneficial for people with mental health problems and in the reduction of mental health issues.

People Before Profit supports:

1. The National Campaign for the Arts demand to increase state funding of the Arts to the European average of 0.6% of GDP;
2. Removal of 'availability for work' requirement for registered artists on Jobseeker's Allowance to allow artists to do unpaid work;
3. Opening up existing facilities such as schools and colleges for after-school artistic activities for children and teenagers. Open up NAMA buildings for use by local arts organisations;
4. A 'New Deal' jobs programme to deliver jobs in the public sector for artists. This will encourage artists to contribute their skills and creativity to society whilst earning a living wage.
5. All children having greater access to culture\art as a right, both within and outside the education sector;
6. A new fund targeted at promoting access to arts participation in disadvantaged areas for adults and children.

Childcare

Childcare is a vitally important aspect in the life of the child. The current model of early years care and education being provided on a for-profit basis creates huge inequalities in society, disadvantaging many children and their families. A universal childcare system, funded through progressive taxation, is essential to provide all children with the best possible start to their lives. PBP will:

1. Introduce a system of childcare funded by the state. In the immediate term parents will receive a state subsidy and only pay a maximum of 30%. The provision will be fully funded for those on low incomes;
2. Increase the regulation of all child-minders and after school services;
3. Facilitate professionalisation of childcare workers through increasing pay and requiring and enabling progression to qualifications at levels 7 and 8 on the qualifications framework;
4. Introduce maternity leave entitlements which allow a parent to remain at home for at least a child's first year, and extend paternity leave to be balanced with maternity leave.

Disability

PBP view disability as a societal issue, and not solely an individual impairment. An inclusive and accessible society for all should be paramount. People with disabilities cannot take action, be that

political or otherwise, to promote their human rights without the relevant resources being made available. The stark reality is that resources cost money and the denial of resources has the reciprocal effect of stifling the voices of people with disabilities to advocate for their own rights. PBP will:

1. Immediately ratify The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD), without change and alter all relevant legislation in accordance with the UNCRPD;
2. Reverse all cuts that people with disability have suffered under consecutive governments;
3. Provide a universal health service free at the point of delivery, funded through progressive taxation, democratically planned by health workers and service users with an emphasis on prevention and social support;
4. Protect wages and conditions for social care workers;
5. Provide people with disabilities with the right to choose the services which best meet their needs;
6. Ensure the right of people with disabilities to live as an autonomous adult;
7. Introduce workable schemes to replace the mobility and transport grants;
8. Implement regulations that ensure all homes are accessible and built in accordance to the needs of people throughout their lifespan;
9. Provide an accessible community, with good infrastructure which increases the quality of life for all;
10. Ensure publically owned and funded disability services and oppose privatisation as this will work against the social model and lead to the reintroduction of a medicalised system;
11. Improve the quality of services for people with disabilities.

Drugs

People Before Profit recognises the State's approach to drugs as problematic. Illegal drugs are sold widely, legal drugs such as alcohol are promoted via sporting events and pharmaceuticals are making huge profits on some very addictive and dangerous prescription drugs. PBP recognises the challenges faced by the many situations which relate to drug availability, use and dependency. We intend to:

1. Overhaul what and how children and young people are taught about drugs in schools, ensuring accurate, factual information is provided about the effect of drugs, their composition and contents, and the potential dangers and realities of drug consumption;
2. Recognise drug dependency as a medical problem, not a criminal one;
3. Decriminalise drugs based on the Portuguese model and the non-commercial legalisation of cannabis similar to the Colorado example. Today in Portugal 3 out of every million people die from overdosing. This is compared to the EU average of 17.5 per million;
4. Promote alternative treatments and therapies in place of the current over-reliance on prescription medication for a range of physical and mental health challenges.

Economic Policy Summary

After imposing austerity on the population for seven years, each of the mainstream parties are now making promises claiming that a 'fiscal space' of about €8 - €12 billion will finance these. This fiscal space is dependent on an assumption that Irish growth rates will be sustained into the medium term.

PBP do not share this confidence. The current turmoil on the global stock markets is a stark warning of growing difficulties in the world economy. This will eradicate the 'fiscal space' and the desperate promises of the conventional parties.

PBP believes any improvement in the conditions of working people is dependent on a fundamental transfer of wealth. We therefore commit to reversing the post-crash policy of making low and middle income Ireland pay the costs of the crash. Our progressive taxation proposal will shift the financial burden onto large corporations and wealthy individuals through:

1. Enforcing the 12.5% corporation tax by closing loopholes thus making all pay a minimum 12.5% tax on profits, rising to 15% over the life of the Dáil;
2. Introducing a Robin Hood Tax on financial speculation. We will implement the EU Commission proposal for a financial transaction tax of 0.1% on exchange of shares and bonds and 0.01 on derivative contracts;
3. Increasing income tax rates for high earners—those individuals earning over €100,000;
4. Increase the employers' contribution to social security (PRSI) in order to reduce taxes on PAYE workers. Ireland has the second lowest employer contribution to social security in the EU but Irish workers pay higher rates of personal income tax than many others;
5. Ending tax exile status granted to Irish millionaires. In 2013, just 13 individuals paid a levy of €200,000 for the privilege of avoiding Irish taxes;
6. Introducing a solidarity tax. The sales of commercial property valued at over €5 million will be subject to a 50% rate (rather than 33% rate) for capital gains tax;
7. Collecting the back taxes owed to the State by multi-nationals. PBP will demand Apple pay an estimated €8-17 billion in back taxes. The spending of public money in helping Apple defend its tax avoidance practices will cease immediately;
8. Writing down of bankers' debt. In light of the clear evidence that the ECB forced Ireland to take on the bankers' debt, PBP will be writing down this odious debt;
9. Ending wasteful public spending that seeks to benefit the wealthy. We will end the practice of using expensive consultancy firms for research. State run universities and research institutes will be funded to provide these services;
10. Developing a State legal service in order to dramatically reduce the €500 million annual bill that is paid to private legal firms;
11. Reducing TD's salaries along with the number of special advisors permitted and there will be an end to many perks;
12. Introducing a wealth tax of 2% on assets (excluding the family home or family farm) over €1 million

will be introduced. A national database on the distribution and ownership of financial and property assets will be created and maintained.

Education

People Before Profit believe education is a right and not a privilege. A universal, life-long national education service must be implemented to promote decent skills and opportunities throughout all our lives. Schools, universities and colleges must remain in public ownership and be democratically controlled. PBP will ensure:

Primary and Post Primary Education

1. The provision of modern, spacious, fully-equipped schools with multiple science labs, computer labs and classrooms with wifi access and all educational materials provided free of charge;
2. Appropriate counselling and guidance services and SNA provision for all pupils. Early intervention should be provided for those with Special Needs and a reversal of the 15% cut to special needs support;
3. Provision of additional resources for disadvantaged and traveller students;
4. Teachers and SNAs have a maximum class contact time of 18 hours per week;
5. Maximum class sizes enabling effective teaching and learning that supports the needs of every pupil. PBP will reduce class sizes, working towards a maximum of 18 at primary level, at senior level 24 pupils in single age classes; 20 pupils in two-age-group classes; 15 pupils in classes of three or more age group;
6. Access to education will not be controlled by religious beliefs. Discriminatory admissions practices that see children denied access to schools based on religion will be outlawed;
7. Small schools will be protected and supported in line with the wishes of local communities and parents, particularly in rural areas;
8. Curriculum will include subjects that promote creativity and civic responsibility;
9. National assessment methodologies will be determined in the context of academic standards, quality and inclusive practice, not cost savings. Teachers will not be placed in a position where their professional integrity may be compromised.

Further and Higher Education including Vocational Education and Training

1. State funding to Irish further and higher education needs to return to pre-crisis levels. Abolition of registration fees and expanding the student grants and Back to Education scheme;
2. Reversal of the commercialisation of our education system;
3. Research for the public good will be undertaken by our third level institutions, not restricted by corporate control;
4. The opportunity to return to education to develop skills and to learn new skills is available to all;

5. Further and higher education will be based on peoples' needs and aspirations and the curriculum and programmes available must reflect this;
6. Investment in the vocational educational sector to expand apprenticeship opportunities ensuring the needs and aspirations of all are provided for and the country will have a skilled workforce, replacing that lost to emigration or retraining following the economic crisis.

Employment and Labour Rights

Alongside a growth in precarious employment, there is also an expansion of a low wage economy. Ireland, according to a report published in 2014 (OECD Employment Outlook 2015), has the second highest percentage of low-paying jobs, second only to the United States.

To reverse these trends, PBP will:

1. Outlaw zero hours contracts;
2. Remove the employers effective veto on Joint Labour Committees which are designed to lay down minimum rates and conditions;
3. Give unions who gain 20 percent membership in any workplace an automatic right to bargain collectively with employers;
4. Outlaw the practice of employers splitting companies into a property asset company and an operating company to deprive workers of redundancy settlement;
5. Change company law to give workers of insolvent companies the first call on redundancy settlements;
6. Give workers back their full rights to take industrial action. Abolish the Industrial Relation Act which bans strikes for victimised shop stewards and political strikes;
7. Abolish the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) legislation;
8. Restore the retirement age to 65;
9. Ban bogus self-employment in all sectors including construction;
10. Provide self-employed people with equal social welfare and pension rights of PAYE workers;
11. Introduce an employment programme that creates public sector jobs in the arts, offering genuine job security and employment opportunities for artists.

Environment

Climate Change is the biggest issue facing the human race. Simply put, if we do not drastically reduce our carbon emissions we are facing extinction. 99% of climate scientists now recognise climate change as a manmade problem. PBP advocate a radical series of measures to reduce our CO2 emissions.

We need to act now to achieve an agreed Paris target level of Co2 mitigation to achieve 2 degrees centigrade in unison with other European countries. The Climate Change Low Carbon Development

Bill 2015 showed Ireland is way off track and will have major challenges post 2020 in decarbonising its economy. PBP favour investment in not-for profit, publically owned renewable energy projects. Our aim is to achieve the de-carbonisation of our economy including agriculture. We will ensure this through:

1. Proper investment in affordable public transport;
2. Retrofitted buildings to comply with energy efficiency regulation;
3. Substantial investment in renewable energies and serious divestment in fossil fuels;
4. Making Hydraulic Fracturing (Fracking) illegal;
5. Retaining our forestry in public ownership;
6. Increasing the afforestation of the country;
7. Developing and expanding the cultivation of native hard-woods and
8. Developing local community involvement in the development of Irish forestry.

Foreign Policy

People Before Profit will defend and promote Irish neutrality. We oppose any involvement with NATO and will stop US troops from using Shannon Airport as a transit point for military operations. We will ban Irish participation in the international arms trade. PBP:

1. Oppose all imperialist wars, conquests, interventions and occupations;
2. Oppose both the Western and Russian military intervention in the conflict in Syria;
3. Supports the Palestinian struggle for liberation;
4. Backs the international campaign for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions against Apartheid Israel;
5. Will withdraw from negotiations on TTIP/CETA/TISA/EU-Singapore treaties. These treaties will lead to privatisation of vital public services and result in job losses. They enable corporations to rewrite legislation to sue the tax-payer for compensation where regulations negatively impact profit.

Health

PBP is committed to creating a National Health Service that is universal, comprehensive and democratically planned. This will be funded by progressive taxation and free at the point of access. This will seek to overcome health and wealth inequalities evident in contemporary Irish society. Health inequality, including mental health inequality, is linked to income and wealth inequality. We can, therefore, improve everyone's physical and mental health through a general policy of wealth redistribution. PBP will:

1. Propose a constitutional amendment to prevent the privatisation of our health service;
2. End cuts to health service funding and jobs and reopen closed wards and reach targets of 15,000 beds as specified by the Health Strategy of 2001;

3. As a first step towards a National Health Service, increase the number of Primary Care Teams (PCTs), and the Primary Care Centres to house them. The services will be networked with hospitals and other health services and will be administered by direct employees of the state. These will be staffed with sufficient frontline professionals to provide early and prompt responses to physical and mental health difficulties;
4. Introduce a model of preventative medicine which will help pay for itself in the longer term;
5. Abolish the HSE and replace it with democratically elected Community Health Councils and an Independent Agency of Public Health Promotion that works with a responsible and accountable Department of Health to coordinate an effective and efficient Health Service;
6. Abolish prescription charges;
7. Create a state pharmacy which will source drugs from the world market, putting an end to the agreements with the Irish Pharmaceutical Healthcare Association (IPHA), and the Association of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers of Ireland (APMI). These agreements make the Irish state – which purchases 85% of all drugs - pay a higher prices for both patented and generic drugs;
8. Increase funding for Mental Health and Disability Services with at least 25% of the Mental Health budget going to Child mental health;
9. Implement 'Vision for Change' staffing recommendations (Adult services at 75%; Children's services at 50%);
10. Develop a system of 24-hour access to emergency beds in children's wards with trained staff for mental health emergencies and ensure out-of-hours Social Work cover from Tusla for childcare emergencies;
11. Improve liaison with and availability of school supports such as School Counsellors, Resource Teachers, SNAs and NEPS psychologists;
12. Reduce the over-reliance on prescribing drugs in the mental health service. Improve access to alternatives such as Social Support, Occupational Therapy, Psychotherapy and access to art and creative therapies. Access to trained advocates and the systematic use of Advance Health Directives will be introduced;
13. More closely integrate treatment of drug dependency and mental health, with promotion of non-drug options for personal and social problems;
14. Improve funding for services and facilities that assist safe withdrawal and longer-term rehabilitation for patients with long-term use of psychoactive drugs including prescription drugs.

Housing

People Before Profit recognises housing as a human right, not as an asset or commodity. Ireland currently has a housing crisis and PBP has been proactive in campaigning for an emergency house building programme since 2011. In this time the crisis has worsened and the government has and continues to implement policy decisions that will return Ireland to a property bubble and facilitate a future homeless crisis. PBP will

1. Immediately declare a national housing emergency to allow the State access the funds needed;
2. Commence a house building programme of 50,000 houses over 5 years, 10,000 per year. This should be underpinned by the provision of a national training programme in construction thus tackling both the housing crisis and the skills shortage;
3. Enforce NAMA to hand over 20,000 of its residential stock for the purpose of social housing;
4. Introduce efficient rent controls whereby rents are established through transparent criteria and rent increases are linked to the Consumer Price Index. Tenants will be given greater security of tenure;
5. End the discriminatory practice of 'rent allowance not accepted';
6. Establish an Independent National Housing Agency to oversee the delivery of safe and culturally appropriate Traveller Accommodation;
7. Impose a moratorium on evictions where owners of a family home can show genuine distress;
8. Introduce a homeless charter that gives people who are in emergency accommodation an option of leaving after 6 weeks.

Irish Language

The current government has shown little interest or enthusiasm in promoting the Irish Language. People Before Profit took part in a recent Dearg le Fearg protest to support the anger that many feel about its treatment. PBP will

1. Support measures to revive the economic base of Gaeltacht areas.
2. Insist that all public officials dealing with the Gaeltacht have full proficiency in the language.
3. Increase the use of the Irish language on the national broadcaster. Expand and develop TG4.
4. Provide free Irish language classes in areas where there is a local demand.

Land Use and Food

Current Irish agriculture policy is overly weighted towards supporting big farmers who are engaged in the export trade. PBP supports a strategy which keeps the maximum number of farmers on the land to produce food for the home market and create local jobs. We also support moves to a more sustainable form of farming.

People Before Profit have been and will be to the fore of preventing the privatisation of our forests. PBP believes

1. There must be a shift away from fossil fuels in order to develop a more diverse approach to energy;
2. We should utilise wind, wave and solar energy. Wind farms must, however, fit with the local environment and be of an appropriate scale. We are opposed to big corporations riding rough shod over local communities to impose massive wind farms geared to profits and exports;

3. A national home insulation programme that is part funded by the state should be implemented;
4. Healthy eating should be encouraged by establishing a proper healthy school and hospital meals programme;
5. Developing a proper meals-on-wheels strategy for the elderly, based on local community co-ops;
6. Encouraging the development of allotments in urban areas;
7. Banning vending machines selling sugary drinks in schools;
8. Imposing an extra 10% tax on producers of sugar-sweetened drinks as part of a wider strategy to tackle over-consumption;
9. Placing sugar and salt warnings on food packaging. Prohibition of the sale of foods with high fat, salt and sugar content in schools. Banning the advertising of these foods in schools and in the areas surrounding schools.

Law

People Before Profit will seek to end the class bias in the current justice system. Most people who interact with the court system go through the District courts. They can be sentenced or fined without a full written explanation of a judge's decisions - even when there are conflicts in evidence. By contrast, wealthy individuals can easily access the higher courts and use this access to delay investigations into corruption. PBP proposes an overhaul of the current justice systems which will include:

1. Ending the practice where the state is paying out €500 million a year to private law firms, some of whom simultaneously work for corporations which oppose state policies;
2. Developing the State's own legal service;
3. Introducing legislation to give the public direct access to barristers;
4. Cutting the cost of house sales by establishing directly employed licensed conveyancers in the public sector;
5. Abolishing the monopoly that the Law Society and the King's Inn have on training barristers and solicitors. Licensing third level institutions to engage in training programmes provided they show clear effort to broaden the social base of the legal profession;
6. Ending the practice whereby up to a third of our judiciary are political appointees;
7. Ensuring greater democratic oversight of who is appointed by a public appointments commission;
8. Creating greater protection for whistleblowers in the Garda and legal system and criminalising all attempts to ostracise them.

LBGT Rights

The Marriage Referendum and the Gender Recognition Bill were momentous achievements for LBGT rights. However a number of legal and social issues remain. Homophobia and transphobia are still

a significant problem. We also recognise that despite the progress made, depression, suicide and addiction rates among LGBT people are still significantly higher than in the general population. Isolation is also a major issue in rural areas and amongst older LGBT people. People Before Profit will continue the campaign for full equality for LGBT people. We will:

1. End the ban on blood donations from gay or bisexual men;
2. Introduce hate crime legislation to deal with homophobic and transphobic attacks and proper recording of same;
3. Introduce compulsory, secular, non- religious age-appropriate sex education which deals with issues around gender, sexuality, consent and contraception;
4. Restore and improve funding for mental health and addiction treatment services;
5. Provide proper funding for LGBT organisations and resource centres.

Natural Resources

Gas, oil, wave, wind, and solar energy are some of the astounding natural resources available in Ireland. These and other natural resources could be the key to Ireland's economic regeneration, providing sustainable growth within the island. PBP will:

1. Take Ireland's oil and gas resources into public ownership;
2. Suspend all existing agreements with oil companies and place a moratorium on all licensing rounds until the new model of state management has been introduced;
3. Introduce a new model of hydrocarbon management. This will be premised upon (a) public ownership of resources, (b) stronger state participation through production sharing and service contracts, and a national oil company, and (c) higher rates of financial returns through increased rates of corporate tax and royalties;
4. Develop and fund an integrated industrial development strategy comprising upstream and downstream activities. Public ownership of our natural resources will become the cornerstone of a new development strategy that will replace a reliance on foreign multi-nationals;
5. Use funds and infrastructure from oil and gas activities to diversify Ireland's energy supply;
6. Move towards more sustainable forms of energy production which would have additional industrial, economic, social, and environmental benefits;
7. Design and implement a new system of consultation and planning for hydrocarbon activities based on the active engagement of all stakeholders;
8. Ensure all exploration, production, and processing activities will be subjected to transparent, fair, and participative permissions processes involving community participation in decision making. Hydrocarbon activities will only be authorised when there is community consent.

Older People

Cuts over the last five years has seen social protection for the elderly slashed. People Before Profit want to reverse all the cuts that have been inflicted on our elderly. The increase in the state pension of just €3 in Budget 2016 is not enough to help pensioners manage and live dignified lives.

According to Age Action, in 2015, out of a total budget for older people's services of €1.53 billion, 57 per cent (€874 million) was spent on Fair Deal. Only 12 per cent (€185 million) was spent on Home Help services and just under nine per cent on Home Care packages (€135 million). A spending of €11 million should be used for weekend home help hours and €7 million of an extra 550 home help packages.

Our policy areas include:

1. Reverse the cuts to the Household Benefits Package
2. Full restoration of a universal right to a medical card for those over 70.
3. Restore funding and hours to home help. Increase home help hours and home help packages.
4. Increase the state pension.
5. Restore the retirement age to 65 and make it optional for each pensioner to continue to work if they so wish.
6. Develop the primary care centres and encourage greater use of care in the community.
7. Restore the bereavement grant of €850
8. Restore the telephone allowance which contributes to the isolation and loneliness of elderly people

Political Reform

The central beliefs of People Before Profit are built on a foundation of people power. Elected representatives are the voice of the people, accountable to the people and acting on behalf of the people. This is at odds with the existing system which is based on individuals and groups acting as directed by a party leader or informed by policies that are influenced by corporate interests and demands. PBP will:

1. Strengthen local democracy by abolishing control of unelected CEOs of local councils;
2. Ensure TDs' salaries are reduced to the average industrial wage and pensions are paid, based on service, at age 66, like all other workers;
3. Introduce a re-call procedure for TDs who vote against items they favoured in their manifestos;
4. Ensure Ministers are limited to one special adviser – paid at the same rate as TDs;
5. End the practice of commissioning consultancy reports from private accountancy/consultancy firms with a corporate bias. Third level institutions and publically funded research agencies will receive tenders instead;
6. Abolish fees for FOI requests;

7. Ban lobbying by PR agencies working on behalf of corporations. Ensure there is no preferential access for corporations. Insist they use their own representatives; meetings to be held in government buildings and that full records of proceedings are retained;
8. Ban Ministers and senior public officials from joining boards of corporations operating in areas relevant to their competence for a period of five years after leaving office;
9. Introduce citizens' assemblies, based on town hall meetings, which can choose delegates for national assemblies on a rotating basis;
10. End the concept of 'stakeholders representative' chosen by those in authority;
11. End the patronage system. All appointments to be advertised. The power to appoint to State boards will be removed from Ministers and vested in a Board that is ratified by a citizens' assembly.
12. Reinstate article 48 of the original constitution. Give citizens a right to referenda on receipt of 50,000 signatories.

Racism

People Before Profit declares itself completely opposed to racism in all its forms, including Islamophobia, anti-semitism, and anti-Traveller racism. We regard the ordinary people of every nation, ethnic group and creed, as our sisters and brothers. People Before Profit rejects the idea that there is a particular link between Islam and terrorism. PBP will seek to overcome all instances and causes of racism through:

1. Recognition of Traveller ethnicity by the Irish State;
2. Establishing an Independent National Housing Agency to oversee the delivery of safe and culturally appropriate Traveller Accommodation;
3. Asylum seekers being granted the right to work;
4. Ending direct provision;
5. Ireland welcoming refugees and ensuring the necessary funding and resources are made available to ensure people can live with dignity and equality;
6. Ireland taking a proactive role in helping to address the world's greatest humanitarian crisis since WW2;
7. Ending the practice of deporting asylum seekers.

Transport

People Before Profit favours an extension of free transport – not a reduction. We will oversee an increase in state investment in the public transport systems. We would abolish the National Transport Agency as it is a neoliberal agency whose chief concern is competition and facilitating private for-profit transport companies. The remit of a new state agency will be to provide cheap and efficient public transport that can facilitate the dramatic reduction in the use of private cars from the roads and ensure ease of

movement in our towns and cities. This will mean a significant increase in the bus fleet numbers of existing state companies in both Dublin and Bus Eireann and the expansion of the rail network. We will involve transport users and local communities in planning new routes with the goal of a dramatic reduction in Co2 emissions from private car usage. We will reverse the dramatic increases in the cost of public transport over recent years and stop any attempts to privatise this essential service.

The second biggest cause of Ireland's increased carbon emissions is transport. There is a totally inadequate public transport system with Dublin Bus, for example, receiving one of the lowest subsidies in Europe. Over 80 percent of people who use a car to get to work say that they do so because of inadequate public transport.

Through the following measures we would make public transport, efficient, affordable and environmentally friendly.

1. Resist and reverse all privatisation measures proposed to our National Transport Service including routes, bus and rail and staff
2. We will oppose anti-worker measures which will affect bus drivers, engineers and all other bus service workers
3. We would increase the subvention to the European average.

Water

Behind the spurious 'environmental' arguments relating to our water supply is a longer term agenda; an agenda to undermine the provision of public services, paid for through general taxation. Once charges are introduced, the service has a price, it has a monetary value allowing private contractors to take it over and run it for profit. This agenda was confirmed by the Lisbon Treaty which states that 'services of general economic interest' are subject to the laws of competition – meaning, the opening up of the market to private corporations. People Before Profit believe that water is a human right. In Ireland water is already paid for through general taxation and PBP believes that model should be retained to ensure access to all. PBP will

1. Retain the progressive taxation model of payment for water and abolish water user charges;
2. Abolish Irish Water, ban wasteful expenditure on consultants and rely on a public sector workforce to provide high quality water services;
3. Propose a constitutional amendment to prevent privatisation of our water;
4. Immediately cease the metering programme and re-direct funds to repair the pipe infrastructure;
5. Promote and invest in a rainwater harvesting programme.

Woman's Right to Choose

Deciding whether and when to have children and whether to have an abortion are very personal matters. We believe that these decisions should be made by women themselves, in consultation with their doctor, and with the support of their partner and family if that is appropriate. PBP supports a

legal abortion. We believe that access to abortion is a fundamental human right for women, and crucial to women's economic and social independence. We believe abortion should be available country-wide and provided free through the health service. PBP is committed to:

1. Supporting the repeal of the 8th amendment to the Constitution and calls for a referendum in 2016;
2. Providing access to free, safe, and legal abortion, North and South of the border;
3. Immediately repealing the 14 year maximum sentence on those who take an abortion pill.

Youth Equality

In Ireland, young people are discriminated against in a host of ways and there is an unofficial state policy of encouraging as many as possible to emigrate. PBP opposes all forms of discrimination and will ensure equal rights for young people. We will:

1. Outlaw discrimination in social welfare payments. Restore the social welfare payments to those under 26 to the normal rates;
2. End the practice of paying new entrants to public sector jobs a lower rate of pay simply because they started after 2011;
3. Create a state insurance company to lower car insurance costs for young drivers and others;
4. End discrimination in pension payments for new entrants compared to those who started before 2010.

