



Election Manifesto 2002

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FOREWORD BY AN TAOISEACH

Since 1997, Fianna Fáil has led a Government which has helped our country to achieve a lot. Real progress has been achieved on problems which we have struggled with for generations.

The era of mass unemployment and emigration has been brought to an end and we finally have in place the foundations for building a just and lasting peace on this island.

On the basis of the ambitious programme which we set before the people in 1997, we have worked hard to implement our promises and we are proud of what we have achieved - but we also know that there is a lot more that remains to be done.

This manifesto sets out an agenda for the years ahead to protect and build upon our recent peace, prosperity and progress. Over the next few weeks we will publish further documents relating to key issues.

We are now taking our message to the people. That message is that our country has achieved a lot and can, with the right policies, achieve much more in the years ahead.

OVERALL SUMMARY

Over the last five years, Fianna Fáil in Government has worked hard to deliver on its promises to the Irish people. The era of mass unemployment and emigration has come to an end and there has been an historic breakthrough for peace.

We are proud of our achievements, but no Government could be expected to achieve everything it aspires to do in one term. We believe that the last five years have provided the essential foundation for building a lasting peace, prosperity and progress – but we also believe that there is much more still to be done.

In this election the people are faced with a clear choice, between ambitious yet responsible policies or a return to the failed approaches of the past. This Manifesto sets out our detailed agenda for the years ahead – with clear priorities on how we can:

- Build lasting peace and reconciliation on this island
- Protect and expand prosperity for all
- Achieve sustained progress on important issues such as health, pensions and education
- Deliver more effective and responsive public services.

PEACE

Amongst the full range of achievements since 1997, it is the historic breakthrough for peace represented by the Good Friday Agreement that we are most proud of. But the work of building a just and lasting peace is not yet over.

Our vision of an Ireland at peace, also involves an Ireland which takes its place amongst the nations of the earth as an active and committed worker for international cooperation and development. This includes our participation in the European Union, United Nations and other international bodies. It also includes helping to support the world's poorest and most vulnerable peoples.

- We will use all of our political strength to broaden and deepen peace and reconciliation on this island.
- We will seek to promote the cause of peace internationally and will ensure that Ireland becomes one of the world's top 5 development aid donors.
- We will work to ensure that Ireland remains a full and active participant at the heart of the European Union.

PROSPERITY

In 1997 we promised the people a new era of prosperity. In the place of 'growth without jobs' and high personal taxation, we have delivered the historic advance of over 370,000 new jobs as well as record tax reductions and one of the Europe's strongest financial situations. Under Fianna Fáil Ireland has been the world's most dynamic economy, with prosperity reaching far beyond traditional areas and sectors.

But the work must go on: irresponsible policies could return us to the failed model of the 1980s when Ireland led the world in indebtedness. Prudent economic policies and investment in the long-term security of our prosperity are absolutely vital. Our

programme for the next five years is based on maintaining Ireland as a strong, dynamic economy and ensuring that we build lasting prosperity for all.

- We will maintain the Budget close to balance or in surplus in accordance with the Stability and Growth Pact.
- We will introduce a radical new way of funding and delivering major capital programmes through the establishment of a National Development Finance Agency which will, in the first instance, concentrate on roads, public transport, health facilities and schools.
- We will consolidate the spectacular reduction in taxation since 1997 and complete our programme of corporation tax reduction.
- We will invest in research and information technologies as a key to our future prosperity.
- We will develop the social, economic and physical infrastructure of rural Ireland.
- We will actively support the development of the regions.
- We will implement a comprehensive integrated transport policy.

PROGRESS

Fianna Fáil believes that the great challenges of building peace and prosperity, have at their core the objective of achieving real and sustained social progress. We have worked hard to use this period of national opportunity to invest in vital social services and to lift well over 200,000 people out of poverty.

But we know there is a lot more to do. That's why we are committed to an ambitious agenda to ensure social progress including the ending of consistent poverty in our country, the expansion of employment opportunities and the development of world-class public services.

- We will work to end consistent poverty in our country.
- We will reach a level of at least €200 per week for all old-age pensions.
- We will protect our National Pension Reserve Fund from the irresponsible and short-sighted raiding proposed by others.
- We will seek to negotiate a new Partnership Agreement.
- We will complete our programme of increasing Child Benefit.
- We will reduce class sizes for the junior years in primary schools and implement a programme to achieve at least minimum modern standards for all school buildings.
- We will implement our Health Strategy to permanently end waiting lists and achieve a world-class health system for all.
- We will end waiting lists for care services for people with disabilities.
- We will recruit an extra 2,000 Gardai and target them against street crime and drugs.
- We will work to develop disadvantaged rural and urban communities.
- We will promote diversity and tolerance.
- We will promote the sporting and cultural life of the nation.

LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD

Last year, we in Fianna Fáil celebrated our seventy-fifth anniversary. We remembered the challenges of our young republic and marked our growing self-confidence as a nation. We celebrated an Irish democracy which is governed by the rule of law and a vision of Ireland which is enterprising, progressive and inclusive. We saluted not just a political party but a movement which reflects the aspirations and hopes of *all* Irish people. As we once again put an ambitious programme before the people we continue to draw on the Party's record of building peace, prosperity and progress in our country.

Since 1926, Fianna Fáil has been a catalyst for broadening the world of Ireland. During the 1960s, our *Programmes for Economic Expansion* transformed the economic direction and dynamic of our country. Our vision of free secondary education and radically expanded 3rd-level provision ensured that the door of opportunity was opened for our country. Our policies promoted a more equitable and accessible system of services and support. In 1965, Fianna Fáil initiated the ground-breaking talks on Northern Ireland and in 1973, we led Ireland into the EEC.

In doing this, we drew on the idealism of our founders and raised the expectations of new generations.

New directions are always challenging and often uncomfortable. But the people have trusted Fianna Fáil to lead them towards a new Ireland. Their support was vindicated in a succession of achievements that transformed the nation. With a weak and ineffective Government leaving Ireland in serious economic difficulties, it was Fianna Fáil which again led Ireland back to recovery, stability and growth. We pioneered social partnership, an approach which has well outpaced the aggressive ideological policies found elsewhere. We led Ireland through the increasingly complex world of the European Union and again, the Irish people embraced our vision that a new Ireland could develop with confidence only in a broader world.

Over the last five years, Fianna Fáil has again led Ireland through a period of unprecedented prosperity and growth. We ended the era of mass unemployment and created over 370,000 new jobs. We raised pensions to historic levels and dramatically increased investment in vital public services such as health, education and social supports. We provided for the first long-term strategic plan to improve our infrastructure and our quality of life. We consolidated an economy that is still the envy of the world.

And, in our proudest achievement, we achieved an historic breakthrough for peace – restoring the ceasefires and negotiating the *Good Friday Agreement*

which ended decades of violence and civil strife on our island. We kept our word to the Irish people. We created something that was real and tangible and once again, Fianna Fáil delivered.

It was the dream of Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmet that Ireland should take its place among nations. Fianna Fáil has always been committed to this ideal and worked to ensure that Ireland makes an active and positive contribution to the European Union, the United Nations and other international bodies. We have also always believed that our Nation has responsibilities to poorer countries – and we are proud to be the Party which has ensured that Ireland has, during our term, become one of the top aid donors in the world.

Over the last five years, we have led an Ireland which is exciting and dynamic. But it is also a changed Ireland where our people want to secure what we have achieved, build on it and move forward. We believe that the work is only beginning to make sure that our country builds and protects lasting peace, prosperity and progress.

Our Republican philosophy is derived from a belief in the people and has at its core a social vision where Government works hard to deliver for the people. Our aim in building and sustaining a vigorous and innovative economy is to improve the standard of living and quality of life of all our people, and to make Ireland the flourishing country that generations of patriots dreamed of – and we want that Ireland to be a peaceful and pluralist place.

It is in this spirit that we set out before the people our programme for the next five years and ask them for their support.

Making It Happen

Economic and Budgetary Background

- During our term of office we have worked hard to deliver real and sustained economic progress. Our taxation and investment decisions have been crucial in delivering average GDP growth rates of close to 10% per annum – a record for any OECD country. Not only has the size of our economy increased substantially, we have created over 370,000 new jobs and invested in the development of key public services such as pensions, health and education.
- Because of our responsible budgetary policies, we have made significant inroads into reducing the burden of debt on Government finances. This year we will pay a full €1 billion less in interest payments on the national debt than in 1997 – money which is helping deliver major increases in health, education and other key public services.
- We have also implemented policies to ensure that our fiscal and economic circumstances are sustainable over the long-term. Most importantly, the National Pension Reserve Fund, is ensuring that Ireland will be able to pay decent pensions even when the population ages significantly, as it is projected to do.
- The evidence is that this economy has the capacity, with the right policies, to continue to grow significantly, generating more jobs and helping to fund further significant improvements in public services. Budget 2002 contained a very conservative GDP growth projection for the medium term of around 5%. While less than the recent spectacular growth rates of recent years, this remains well ahead of projections for most of the OECD and gives us the capacity to keep on a stable and upward economic growth path.
- The international economic outlook has improved in recent months. We can expect to reap the benefit of this. Inflation will fall during the year and employment prospects can be expected to improve. The challenge is to position ourselves so that we can take maximum advantage of these circumstances in both economic and budgetary terms.
- The achievement of strong growth is, of course, dependent on renewed world growth and no adverse economic shocks. They also depend on the right policies continuing to be pursued domestically, particularly on maintaining competitiveness and sensible budgetary policies.
- We believe that the clear and obvious lesson of the times that Ireland has left behind is that we cannot tax and spend our way to employment and better services. In fact, the surest way to cause unemployment and undermine the public finances would be to implement unsustainable spending plans or to try to return to the days of high taxation.

- In 1997 we put before the people our priorities for the development of services. During our time in Government we have been guided by these priorities and we have actually gone beyond our commitments in many cases. For example, our increases in pensions, health and education have gone well beyond our 1997 promises.
- In this Manifesto we have again set out our priorities for public spending and we are confident that we will deliver on them.
- This Manifesto is predicated and dependent on continued growth in the economy. Fundamental to its successful implementation and the benefits it will bring to our economy and society is the management of budgetary policy in accordance with the EU Stability and Growth Pact. As such, we will maintain the Budget close to balance or in surplus.

Delivering Good and Effective Government

Over the past five years, we have implemented a wide range of initiatives to improve the responsiveness and effectiveness of government as well as to ensure that the holders of public offices operate within a strong ethical code. Over the next five years, we want to build further on this work, ensuring that the public can know that their government is working in their interests efficiently, effectively and informed by the highest personal standards.

Integrity in Public Life

First and foremost, politics is about public service. Elected office is the highest honour any citizen can achieve. We recognise the need to continually work to build public confidence in public affairs. Public life needs the talents and energy of people who passionately care about their community and their country. We firmly believe that events of the past must be dealt with fully and openly.

With this in mind, Fianna Fáil has already initiated the most thorough and far-reaching enquiries into the conduct of public business in the past, not only in the history of this State, but in the recent history of most democratic countries. **We are determined to act on all the issues arising from the enquiries and Tribunals. We will see these through, and our democracy will be the healthier for it.**

Over the last five years, the Fianna Fáil/PD Government has governed with integrity in the public interest.

- Through our legislative record, we have laid down a fair and honest basis for politics. During the lifetime of this Government, we have not only prescribed high standards, but also established serious penalties for breaching them. We will keep these regulations under review.
- We have already promoted a comprehensive and radical reform of the local government system in Ireland, including a strong ethical code.
- Fianna Fáil in Government will build on this and through both legislation and other action, we will aim to restore public confidence in political life and increase public participation in our democracy.
- Fianna Fáil will introduce legislation to regulate the role of lobbyists in public affairs and to provide a registration system.
- Within two years, Fianna Fáil will initiate a wide-ranging review of both the range of ethics measures passed in this last 28th Dail, as well as of the Ethics in Public Office Act (1995). We will examine how well these measures are working in practice, at both national and local level, and, where it is necessary improve upon them. We will do so on an all-party basis and seek to make them more effective.
- We will introduce a Proceeds of Corruption Act modelled on the Proceeds of Crime legislation, to further target white collar crime and corruption in both public and private sectors.
- We have passed eight Acts to strengthen our laws against abuses of public office and increase transparency.
- Under legislation which the Fianna Fáil/PD Government introduced all political donations must be deposited in a special account. Parties are required to furnish and audit accounts and likewise, the allowances of

Party Leaders are now audited. We have also passed tough new legislation to eliminate any potential financial influence on decision-making and to prevent corruption. A cap has been placed on donations to political parties. Fianna Fáil do not believe that, as has been established by recent experience, there is any validity in artificial distinctions between personal and corporate donations.

Proven Partnership

More than any other party, Fianna Fáil has opened up public policy to public participation. Fianna Fáil pioneered the concept of Social Partnership and has continued to deepen the process of consultation: extending it to initiatives such as the Health Strategy – which involved this country’s largest ever public consultation.

During the last five years we again negotiated a successful partnership agreement, *The Programme for Prosperity and Fairness*, which has been the most comprehensive and ambitious of the Agreements.

- We will seek to negotiate a new partnership agreement to follow the PPF. Our core objective in negotiating the new agreement will be to ensure that recent progress is protected and built upon. In particular, we want to ensure that work continues to extend prosperity and progress to more and more communities.
- We believe that the great achievement of the partnership process has been to serve as a foundation for national development. It is vital that partnership be responsive to changing fiscal and economic situations, domestically and internationally, as they arise.

Strategic Planning

We believe that a culture of strategic planning is central to effective initiatives. The lack, for example, of a comprehensive plan for infrastructural development has meant that many badly needed projects have been delayed for a number of years. The National Development Plan marks a major departure from this old approach. A similar story could be told in relation to areas such as childcare, housing and local development.

The expansion of strategic planning and the provision of multi-annual funding has made sure that;

- planning and resource allocations are more integrated and predictable
- accountability is more clearly achievable
- Departments and Agencies are in a position to respond more comprehensively and achieve greater value for money.

Semi-State Sector

Fianna Fáil is determined to ensure that commercial semi-State companies which employ tens of thousands of workers, will continue to provide essential services of world-class quality at a competitive price to the consumer. We will:

- secure a viable long-term future for all State companies in whatever form is most appropriate for the enterprise concerned, without ideological preconceptions.

- Ensure that all public enterprise is managed in the spirit of social partnership, with a view to achieving optimum service delivery and value for the public.
- Support the maximum commercial freedom of semi-State companies, subject to the fulfilment of national strategic and balanced regional policy objectives.
- Encourage PPPs where this can speed up investment, increase competition and keep down prices to the benefit of the public; where it will result in greater efficiency in the delivery of services; and where it can draw on expertise and manpower resources from home and abroad not currently available in sufficient strength.

An Efficient Enabling Process

- We will fully implement our published proposals for Dáil reform that will establish for the Oireachtas, a continuous and more effective oversight of public affairs, including the capacity to conduct cost-effective investigations into serious failures in the implementation of public policy, where this can be done on a non-partisan basis.
- We will build a greater culture of review of public spending by publishing regular evaluations of key spending programmes. As part of this, each Department will publish key indicators for each major programme against which progress will be assessed. Reviews will be conducted independently and will be published within three months of completion. We will also ensure that that Departments publish Annual Reports within four months of the previous calendar year. These reports would set out how departments have fallen behind, as well as met levels of services which have been targeted within agreed timetables.
- Over the last five years we have developed a new model for designing, developing, financing and running major projects called Public-Private Partnerships (PPP). PPPs have already been applied to projects such as the Maritime College in Cork and will feature in the new LUAS lines in Dublin. We will substantially increase the use of, and opportunities for PPP approaches in order to achieve results on time and yield value for money.
- We will establish the National Development Finance Agency.
- We will establish a new integrated Department of Transport.
- We recognise the central importance of the Freedom of Information Act in ensuring transparent and accountable public administration. We will ensure that the Act covers all significant areas of public services, involving both those currently in place and such new services as may be established in the future.

eGovernment

We believe that Government can work better, at all levels, and in particular in its direct work with individual citizen through utilizing the potential of Information Communication Technologies. Over the past five years we have moved the eGovernment agenda forward significantly. We established OASIS, BASIS, Revenue Online Service and the EFORMS platform amongst others. €109m has been made available to a wide range of agencies to support 150 eGovernment projects.

- We believe that there is major scope for further expanding the range and quality of online services.
- We will ensure that all public services capable of electronic delivery are available through a single point of contact by 2005 at the latest. The Public Sector Broker will include flagship services to citizens like motor taxation, driving licenses, passport services and other registrations services.

Delivering Value for Money

An essential part of good government is ensuring that the people's money is used efficiently and effectively on the issues which matter to them. We have carried out a wide range of initiatives to improve the oversight and management of public funds.

- We will publish regular value for money audits of key government spending programmes.
- As part of this we will put in place a streamlined process of public expenditure reviews. We will publish a timetable of reviews within six months and publish all key reports.
- The National Development Finance Agency will ensure that public projects are developed to maximise both quality and value for money.

Supporting Good Citizenship

It is a core part of our republican beliefs that the state should seek to fully its citizens in public issues. It is an unfortunate part of the modern world in most countries that civic engagement has lessened as economic development has progressed. Through the operation of specific funding programmes, we have sought to support volunteerism and it is a core part of our local development work that there be a constructive engagement with communities.

Our major expansion in funding for local sports and youth facilities which we have implemented has been driven by a wish to support what has been termed 'social capital'.

- We recognise the importance of encouraging participation in the electoral process. Only one element of this is the day of the week on which polling may be held. In the past various changes to the day of polling were advocated as a spur to turnout. There is, as yet, no firm evidence that moving polling to another day would increase turnout. However, we believe that there are much wider issues which should be examined and are sufficiently important issue to merit detailed study. We will seek, on an all-party basis, to agree an agenda on this, including Constitutional changes to allow the introduction of polling on more than one day, possible both Friday and Saturday.
- We will seek to ensure that all State agencies and funding programmes recognise the importance of fostering community spirit.

PEACE

Amongst the full range of achievements since 1997, it is the historic breakthrough for peace represented by the Good Friday Agreement that we are most proud of. But the work of building a just and lasting peace is not yet over.

Our vision of an Ireland at peace, also involves an Ireland which takes its place amongst the nations of the world as an active and committed worker for international cooperation and development. This includes our participation in the EU and other international bodies. It also includes helping to support the world's poorest and most vulnerable peoples.

SECURING PEACE IN IRELAND

Within four weeks of returning to Government in 1997, Fianna Fáil helped to secure a second IRA ceasefire. During the following months, we participated in the multi-party negotiations that concluded in the Good Friday Agreement. In May 1998, we led the campaign to ratify the Agreement by an unprecedented 94.5% 'Yes' vote, as part of the first concurrent all-Ireland exercise of self-determination since 1918.

But the work of building a just and lasting peace goes on – we cannot be complacent and we must tackle age-old attitudes of mistrust and division.

Over the next five years, the overriding priority of Fianna Fáil in Government will be to secure lasting peace in Ireland through the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, the consolidation of its institutions, and the development of a spirit of friendship and cooperation between North and South. This we will do without prejudice to the ultimate goal of achieving a united Ireland in peace and agreement.

A lot done since 1997

- We have helped overcome obstacles to the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, so that the establishment of the institutions could be agreed and successfully developed, including those in which we are directly involved.
- We have worked towards an unarmed peace through the putting of a varied and substantial quantity of ammunition, arms and explosives beyond use on a phased basis.
- We have tackled those who try to undermine peace and frustrate the will of the people through implementing the tough laws which were introduced in the aftermath of the Omagh bomb.
- The North-South Ministerial Council (NSMC) has already met over 50 times. This cooperation has already delivered important achievements for this island, North and South.
- Foot and Mouth Disease was contained through all-island cooperation,
- The new Tourism Ireland Company has launched its first overseas marketing campaign.
- Intertrade Ireland has taken new initiatives on venture capital, all-island graduate placement and bringing businesses together, North and South.
- Waterways Ireland has developed a range of important projects including a large Marina in Limerick.
- The NSMC has launched an important Study on Obstacles to Cross-Border Mobility.
- Cooperation in education policy and the planning of some special needs provision has begun.
- An Ghaeilge is being supported and promoted through the Language Body, with the Irish Government also contributing to the funding of Ulster-Scots.
- Cooperation on a range of environmental issues, including research, is advancing rapidly.
- The Human Rights Commission has been established.

- Agreement has been reached on meetings between the structures of civil society North and South, with the objective of establishing the North-South Consultative Forum.

Outside the NSMC framework major progress has also been achieved:

- An important agreement on cross-border energy supply was made in the autumn of 2000. This will serve the North-West region as well as parts of the Dublin-Belfast corridor, from Dundalk northwards.
- We helped to fund the Messines Peace Park and Round Tower in Belgium that commemorates those who fought with Irish and Ulster Divisions in the First World War.
- We have also acquired the site of the battle of the Boyne, and are developing visitor facilities there.
- We have funded and organised visits and exchanges with Northern Ireland parties and community groups at both national and local level.
- Large scale funding has been provided for a wide range of cross-Border initiatives on education.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

We will work with the British Government, the Northern Ireland Executive and the parties and communities in Northern Ireland to find solutions to outstanding problems in the implementation of the Agreement, in order to ensure the smooth functioning of all the institutions established under the Good Friday Agreement. We will also seek to complete with the help of all concerned, the transformation of organisations involved in paramilitarism, so that the highest standards of democracy and human rights can apply. In Government, Fianna Fáil will seek to:

- consolidate the success of the North-South Ministerial Council, and of the Implementation Bodies, and develop and expand mutually beneficial cooperation both islandwide and in the border regions. We will also cooperate with the British Government in the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference and bilaterally, on non-devolved matters.
- within the framework of the British-Irish Council, develop cordial bilateral relations with Scotland and Wales and other autonomous regions, as well as with the UK as a whole
- encourage US and European support for the peace process. We will also continue to welcome the engagement of countries like Australia, Canada, Finland, New Zealand and South Africa, each of which has assumed responsibilities in relation to different aspects of the process, where an independent third party is required. The US, Australia, Canada and New Zealand also either contribute or have contributed to the International Fund for Ireland.
- foster mutual respect and a sense of security between different traditions, and will pursue an active policy of reconciliation.
- pursue the formation of the North-South Parliamentary Body envisaged in the Good Friday Agreement.
- seek to finalise through the Post Office a more accessible system of obtaining Irish passports in the North, to help fulfil the entitlement to citizenship laid out in the Good Friday Agreement.
- Put in place All-Ireland Free Travel for pensioners resident in all parts of this island.

- be supportive of the new Police Service of Northern Ireland established in conformity with the recommendations of the Patten Report, the Office of the Police Ombudsman, and of a reformed administration of justice.
- support the principle of full public enquiries into the murder of Pat Finucane, Robert Hamill and Rosemary Nelson, and use our good offices to advance the establishment of the truth.
- We will act upon the recommendations of the Barron Enquiry into the Dublin, Dundalk and Monaghan bombings and continue to work to ensure that all persons and agencies, both here and abroad, cooperate fully with the enquiry.
- Ensure that 'the right to freedom from sectarian harassment' set out in the Agreement become a reality. Fianna Fáil support the Parades Commission, but believe that the passage of traditional parades through residential areas should take place only with the agreement of the residents
- in so far as it lies within our power, create and maintain a secure environment for political progress and bring about, both through the application of law and by persuasion, a complete and lasting cessation of all paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland and throughout these islands, including punishment beatings and shootings, and the transformation of movements linked to paramilitary organisations into exclusively democratic organisations and completion of the process of putting arms beyond use.
- improve North-South infrastructural links, facilitate cross-border regional planning, and remove obstacles to equality of opportunity, rights and treatment in Northern Ireland.
- support groups and organisations which work for greater understanding and tolerance, particularly through the development of education and youth programmes.
- ensure that a high level of funding is maintained for initiatives to promote peace and reconciliation
- promote valuable initiatives such as the Centre for Cross Border Studies and their role in evaluating policies to promote peace and reconciliation
- support in the longer term, a pluralist and multicultural united Ireland, brought about peacefully and by agreement, in accordance with the provisions and the spirit of the Good Friday Agreement, bearing in mind the ongoing desire of many in the Nationalist community in Northern Ireland to participate in an independent Ireland. Fianna Fáil equally recognise the need to address the legitimate fears of the Unionist community for their identity and security in a changing context.

IRELAND'S ROLE IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Fianna Fáil believes that the European Union of Nation States and peoples represents the 20th Century's greatest contribution to the cause of peace in Europe. Just as it has been central to Europe's progress, so it has been central to ours and Fianna Fáil believes that a strong and effective EU will be as important a part of our future as it has been of our recent past.

The EU is likely to be enlarged significantly over the next few years. We believe that it is essential to ensure that the Union can operate efficiently and effectively following enlargement. We further believe that the Nice Treaty, which will be ratified by our other 14 partners, provides the basis for the necessary changes. After 30 years at the center of the great European project, we are determined not to allow our position and influence to be unnecessarily marginalised.

But the Irish people must always be recognised as full partners with the Government in the European Union. They must be satisfied that new Treaty engagements, both now and in the future, respect the sovereign identity of all member States and also that engagements entered into are without prejudice to Ireland's specific tradition of neutrality encompassing non-membership of military alliances.

A lot done since 1997

During the past five years, Fianna Fáil in Government has been working hard to ensure that we play an effective part of the EU's development and that our vital national interests are guaranteed.

- Ireland qualified for membership of the Euro in 1998; and became a member of the Euro from 1 January 1999; Ireland. We successfully oversaw the Euro's introduction in notes and coins from 1 January 2002.
- The Berlin European Council in March 1999 saw a very satisfactory conclusion to the Agenda 2000 negotiations, which contained an important agreement on the funding of the CAP to 2006, and preserved Ireland's continuing access to Structural and Cohesion funding, albeit on a tapering basis, also to 2006, amounting to around €3.8 billion, and enabled the Border, Midland and Western Region to retain Objective 1 Status.
- We achieved agreement with the EU on a single low rate of corporation tax.
- Ireland's vital national interest, the requirement for unanimous decisions on taxation, was safeguarded in the Nice Treaty negotiations. The weighting of Ireland's voice in decisions by qualified majority vote continues to reflect its position as a sovereign State, rather than purely by head of population. We also ensured that enhanced cooperation between willing partners would not lead to a two-tier Union.
- The European Charter of Fundamental Rights which includes an EU-wide ban on the death penalty, was adopted at the Nice Summit in December 2000.
- We have played a full part in the work, begun at the Lisbon European Council in March 2000, to enable the EU to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world through a series of actions to enhance competitiveness.
- We have established the National Forum on Europe to debate the fundamental issues relating to Ireland's and Europe's future, which has been attended by all

parties and sides of the debate, with the exception of the main Opposition party Fine Gael. Hearings have been held round the country.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

- We believe that the process of enlargement is very firmly in our national interest. If we succeed in negotiating a suitable Declaration, and in the light of the work of the Forum on Europe and proposals to improve the oversight and understanding of our work within the EU, we will submit the Nice Treaty to the people in a referendum to be held this Autumn and will campaign strongly for a Yes vote
- Fianna Fáil accepts that in an enlarged Union decision-making has to be streamlined, and accepts that membership of the Commission should not exceed 27, provided that Ireland has a continued right to membership on the same basis as all other member States. Ireland will of course continue in all circumstances to be represented at senior levels in the Commission.
- We believe that the broad institutional balance, as it currently exists, serves the Union well. We will oppose efforts to have existing integration supplanted by purely intergovernmental cooperation, or important common policies, such as the Common Agricultural Policy or regional and social policy, extensively renationalized.
- Fianna Fáil believes that, whereas the requirement of unanimity is necessary for matters affecting vital national interests, the blocking minority formed by *ad hoc* alliances of member countries is in practice also an important and satisfactory safeguard. There are only very rare occasions, when it would be practicable or justified for a single country on its own to persist in exercising a national veto.
- Fianna Fáil sees enlargement as an extremely positive development which will strengthen the voice of medium-sized and smaller countries, and considers that our best interests lie in assisting and working with the applicants, many of whom look to Ireland as a model. Within the next 12 months we will publish a specific programme to ensure the expansion of social, cultural and economic cooperation with all countries that are joining the European Union.
- Fianna Fáil in government will take part in peace-support and humanitarian operations (Petersberg tasks) in missions that are endorsed by the UN, in line with our longstanding commitment going back to Eamon de Valera of balancing neutrality with support for international collective security. We will work directly with the UN as well as with our EU partners under a UN mandate, to protect human rights and to prevent ethnic conflict and humanitarian disasters. We will work to ensure that the European Security and Defence Policy continues to develop in the service of peace.
- Fianna Fáil support the principle of subsidiarity, that the EU should not become unnecessarily involved in the micro-management of decisions that are best left to national governments, or regional and local authorities, acting in the light of their own circumstances.
- Fianna Fáil will support the community method, which has been defined by the Commission as combining ‘negotiation between States, expression of the will of the people and the operation of strong and lasting institutions’.
- Fianna Fáil will seek to strengthen accountability particularly for important and significant decisions in the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament through better Oireachtas structures and to improve the level of information through Departmental and Ministerial briefing. We will, in particular, implement

our Dáil reform proposals as they relate to improved scrutiny of EU legislation and developments.

- Fianna Fáil believes that a strong and healthy economy, including sound public finances, is Ireland's best contribution to the stability of the Euro.
- Fianna Fáil will seek to run a proactive and efficient EU Presidency in 2004, which may see the first applicant countries from Central and Eastern Europe take up membership and to focus the Union on important priorities from both an EU and a national perspective.
- Fianna Fáil will play a full part in the Constitutional Convention and the Europe-wide debate on the future shape of the European Union. Fianna Fáil will insist on a model that respects as well as pools the sovereignty of Nation States. We are particularly opposed to a federalist suggestion, put forward for consideration by Fine Gael, in their policy document *Ireland in Europe - The Way Ahead*, that the Council of Ministers should be transformed into an Upper House of the European Parliament, as a consequence of a directly elected Commission becoming the Government of the Union – a development which would make it very difficult for it to perform its function of impartially upholding the community interest.

SUPPORTING DEVELOPMENT, HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

Fianna Fáil believes that Ireland must continue to play an active role in promoting development, human rights and democracy in the world. Over the past five years, major steps forward have been made, to the extent that Ireland is now one of the world's top development aid donors and succeeded in being elected to a term on the United Nations Security Council. We believe that there is much left to do in order to build on the positive foundations of the last five years.

A lot done since 1997

Amongst the achievements of the last five years are:

- We became the first Irish Government to publish a multi-annual programme to reach the UN's development aid target and have been implementing this programme. The budgetary allocation has been well over doubled, from €155m in 1997 to €372m in 2002 and Ireland is now, per capita, the 11th biggest aid donor in the world.
- The increased budget has enabled us to contribute more actively to disaster relief, refugee emergencies and post-war reconstruction in countries such as Kosovo, East Timor and Afghanistan.
- A Development Office has been opened in Dili, in East Timor, to aid this highly impoverished and war-damaged country.
- Development Offices are now operating effectively in Ireland's six priority countries in Africa, which are amongst the world's poorest countries.
- €12m has been allocated over 3 years for reconstruction in Afghanistan.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

Our overall aim will be to complete our major expansion of our development aid programme, achieving the UN target and, in the process, becoming one of the top 5 aid donors in the world by 2007. As a result, Ireland will have moved in 15 years from a low position among more developed OECD countries to the forefront of donor nations, giving us the potential of playing a more leading role in the international development debate. We will thereby demonstrate solidarity with developing countries, many of whom face crippling problems. Ireland's links with the developing world have been nurtured by our aid programme, as well as consciousness of our history. Fianna Fáil values highly the huge contribution made by missionaries and aid workers, and this is now fully reflected in our aid programme.

- Our aid programme will be developed along the lines of the Ireland Aid Review Report.
- Its principal aim will be to contribute to the reduction of global poverty, inequality and exclusion.
- Extra care will be taken to ensure effectiveness, value for money and accountability, and that the programme reflects values cherished by Irish people, including our commitment to human rights and democracy.
- The focus will in the first instance be on the basic essentials of life, such as health and education, food security, safe water supply, roads, and wherever possible, working with the Governments and Agencies of the countries concerned.
- Particular initiatives will be taken both in the aid programme and at the highest political level to fight the HIV / Aids crisis, which is ravaging many poorer countries, especially in Africa.

- Ireland's recent experience in rapid economic transformation and conflict resolution will be made available to other countries, where relevant and where requested.
- While encouraging private sector involvement, Irish aid will remain untied from commercial considerations.
- The bilateral aid programme will concentrate mainly on least developed African countries, but with some increase in targeted aid aimed at East Timor, a new priority country in Asia, reconstruction in Afghanistan, countries in Central America, and, in selective cases, parts of Central and Eastern Europe.
- Funding to Non-Governmental Organisations will increase at least proportionately with the growth of the Irish Aid Budget, with a new Forum, the Development Conference, to bring together Government, NGOs, missionaries and the academic community. There will also be an Ireland Aid Advisory Board charged with general oversight and the provision of strategic advice to the Minister for Foreign Affairs.
- Steps will be taken to make the public more aware and better informed on the Irish aid programme. There will also be a greater emphasis on development education.
- Ireland will continue to advocate, and make a significant contribution to, debt cancellations in Least Developed countries.
- Ireland will use its influence under the Ireland Aid Programme to encourage respect for human rights, and to develop democracy.

DEFENCE IN THE SERVICE OF PEACE

Fianna Fáil will continue to attach great importance to having a soundly based approach to national defence, and believes maintaining a defence capacity related to security needs is an important expression of national sovereignty.

Fianna Fáil in Government will follow through the implementation of the 2000 Defence White Paper, designed fully to equip our Defence Forces to meet peace-time challenges at home and abroad. Fianna Fáil will maintain and enhance the capacity of our defence forces to make a proud contribution to international peacekeeping, whilst strengthening them in their primary task of protecting national security, including our natural resources. Fianna Fáil recognises the importance of maintaining high morale in the defence forces.

Recent events have highlighted the vital importance of international cooperation, and of maintaining national security and the capacity to contribute appropriately to wider efforts at a high level. Fianna Fáil will give a high priority to the work of the new Office of Emergency Planning, in the Department of Defence, so as to identify potential terrorist threats, and so as to ensure maximum preparation and protection for the civilian population in the event of attacks on Ireland, or attacks likely to affect life in Ireland.

A Lot Done Since 1997

- The White Paper on Defence, the first in the history of the State was published and set out a plan for the rest of this decade, to reshape and modernise the Defence Forces, and enhance their contribution.
- We have delegated most of the day-to-day administration and routine purchasing decisions from the Department of Defence to the Defence Forces.
- Almost 3,000 personnel have been recruited – over double the original target for the period.
- During our time in Government, the Defence Forces have successfully completed their 23 year UNIFIL mission in Lebanon, have served in the KFOR force in Kosovo, SFOR in Bosnia, and have gone further afield than ever before to protect the integrity and independence of the people of East Timor in UNTAET. A contingent has also been sent to serve for one year with the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea.
- The Defence Forces have played a continuing role in protecting national security since 1997, and providing back-up for the civil authorities, especially in potential emergencies.
- The Ombudsman Bill has been published as promised.
- The Civil Defence Budget has been increased significantly and a new Civil Defence Bill has been enacted – the first such piece of legislation in 50 years.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

- We will maintain a full complement of 10,500 in the Permanent Defence Force, with the option of an extra 250 recruits at any one time. A continuous recruitment policy will be maintained.
- A new career development plan, involving the continuation of a policy of regular recruitment will be implemented, so that personnel are offered rewarding,

challenging and progressive careers, leading later in many cases to excellent career opportunities in civilian life.

- The new Integrated Personnel Management System will be introduced
- Savings from streamlining the force in line with the number above and from the sale of surplus properties will be used to fund the investment programme of €320m for new equipment and infrastructure, on top of the €229m invested since 1997. 100% of revenue from property sales will be invested in infrastructure and equipment.
- Equipment replacement programmes for the Army Air Corps and Naval service will continue.
- Consideration will be given to equipment and arrangements necessary to protect our air-space and ground installations from the air.
- Civil Defence will be further developed to make it a top class back-up emergency service, and to integrate it fully into emergency planning. It will be managed by a Civil Defence Board underpinned by a modern legislative framework.
- The overall strategy for the development of the Reserve Defence Force, in line with the recommendation of the September 1999 report of a special Steering Group will be carried out on the basis of an Implementation Plan, following full consultation, over the next 5 years.
- Approximately 850 Irish troops will be available to serve abroad in rotation at any one time in international peacekeeping, including peacekeeping under EU auspices, but also directly in UN missions further afield.
- Fianna Fáil believe that, if Ireland is to continue to be meaningfully involved in peacekeeping abroad, in which we have valuable experience that has been acquired over 40 years to contribute, we must continue to participate in the structures that allow European neutral and non-aligned countries to work closely with EU partners, without prejudice to our military neutrality or the fundamental policy position of any group. We will be involved exclusively in operations that are endorsed by the UN. We believe the international community must try and respond to major humanitarian crises and be able to intervene actively to stop ethnic slaughter.
- The Archives of the Bureau of Military History, relating to the War of Independence will be opened by end 2002 and will be relocated, alongside the archives of the Department of Defence, to Collins Barracks.
- Fianna Fáil welcomes the ongoing contribution of the representative organisations in the Defence Forces to the implementation of change, with the support of those most directly affected.
- The Office of Emergency Planning will take the lead role in planning to meet threats from international terrorism and will work with all Government Departments and agencies who have emergency planning responsibilities.

PROSPERITY

In 1997 we promised the people a new era of prosperity. In the place of high unemployment, negative growth and high personal taxation, we have delivered the historic advance of over 370,000 new jobs as well as record tax reductions and one of the Europe's strongest fiscal situations. Under Fianna Fáil Ireland has been the world's most dynamic economy, with prosperity reaching far beyond traditional areas and sectors.

But the work must go on: irresponsible policies could return us to the Failed model of the 1980s when Ireland led the world in indebtedness. Responsible budgetary policies and investment in the long-term security of our prosperity are absolutely vital. Our programme for the next five years is based on maintaining Ireland as a strong, dynamic economy and ensuring that we build lasting prosperity for all.

DELIVERING STRONG GROWTH AND A HEALTHY ECONOMY

The core of our programme for the years ahead is to sustain strong economic growth, high productivity, full employment and rising living standards. Maintaining healthy public finances and keeping down personal and business taxes is critical to this. Within those constraints, our available resources will be concentrated on improving the quality of public services, and further delivering further real improvements to pensioners and people on low incomes.

Our policy is to further develop the Irish economic model, combining the most positive and distinctive features of our own experience, with the dynamism, investment and light regulation characteristic of the US economy and the social solidarity and inclusive participation characteristic of the European economy. We are committed to maintaining a favourable business environment, so that we can continue to attract mobile capital investments and technology, associated with high paying jobs.

A Lot Done Since 1997

- The last five years under a Fianna Fáil-led Government have seen the Irish economy outperform all others, with GDP growth averaging 10% per year. Our policies of sound public finances, social partnership, tax reform and reduction created the confidence that has led to this outstanding result.
- Irish living standards in real terms now match the EU average – a full decade ahead of the target set by the last Government.
- Over 370,000 new jobs have been created; Unemployment has fallen from 10% to 4%.
- Inward investment has, on a per capita basis, been five times the EU average.
- The Exchequer finances moved into sustained surplus.
- The national debt has fallen in both relative and absolute terms. The debt/GDP ratio was one of the highest in Europe and has now fallen to under 35% (the second lowest in the EU) and ensuring that this year we will pay €1 billion less in debt interest payments than in 1997.
- A highly ambitious National Development Plan is in place – with funding coming primarily from domestic resources rather than EU grants.
- Fianna Fáil has fulfilled the main tax reduction pledges in its 1997 Election Manifesto – delivering significant tax reductions for all groups. The standard rate was reduced from 26% to 20% and the top rate from 48% to 42%.
- Just as important has been our programme to take people out of the tax net and to reduce the number of people paying high marginal rates of tax.
- 690,000 low-paid people are now out of the tax net, while 370,000 people have being taken off the top rate of tax.
- The standard rate of tax has been reduced between 1989 and 2002 from 35% to 20% and the top rate from 58% to 42%. 30 out of 31 reduction points have been carried out by Fianna Fáil Ministers of Finance.
- We have developed Europe's most favourable tax system for the low-paid, as the EU has acknowledged.
- We have also reduced high marginal tax rates on all workers.
- Income tax reform has greatly reduced the disincentive to work.

- The introduction of tax credits has greatly increased the fairness of tax changes.
- We cut capital gains tax in half from 40% to 20%, but increased the yield from €168m in 1997 to €882m in 2001.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

Maintaining healthy public finances

- Fianna Fáil believes that one of the great lessons of recent Irish history is that responsible fiscal policies lie at the heart of the generation of both job opportunities and the resources needed to fund good public services.
- Arising from our membership of the Euro, a number of Treaty obligations must be fulfilled. Under the EU Stability and Growth Pact, the basic commitment is to respect the medium term objective of close to balance or in surplus and to take corrective action when there is an actual or expected divergence from this objective. All Member States are also committed under the Treaty to avoid excessive deficits at any time. The requirement of close to balance or in surplus does not distinguish between current or capital spending. This is the overriding framework for budgetary policy and must and will be respected by Fianna Fáil in government.

Providing for the future

- Providing for future liabilities is an essential part of sustaining confidence in our economic management. Fianna Fáil will continue to set aside, as required by law, 1% of GNP to provide for future pension obligations. We will not entertain any proposal to divert these funds to current use.

Keeping down Inflation

- Fianna Fáil regards it as essential to maintain low inflation, in order to ensure our continued competitiveness. Fianna Fáil will support increased competition particularly where direct benefits will accrue to consumers.

Public Expenditure

- Notwithstanding major progress achieved since 1997, continued investment in essential improvements in public infrastructure and social services is required over the next few years. These are necessary, if dynamic growth is to be maintained. Fianna Fáil's aim will be to achieve as rapidly as we can a high European standard of public services, having proper regard to variations in our particular circumstances (for example, key differences in demographic profile).
- We also have to recognise that a dynamic economy (not weighed down by heavy costs) provides the fastest means of generating the necessary resources for rapid physical and social improvements.

Financing Major Developments

- Over recent years we have put in place a comprehensive series of plans to develop our infrastructure as well as key public services. The public capital programme has been moved from a position where it was involved primarily in maintenance rather than serious development.
- It is increasingly clear that new methods of financing major capital development programmes is required. This must take account of the need to maximise efficiency, delivery and value for money across complex, multi-annual programmes.

- We will establish, under the auspices of the NTMA, a new National Development Finance Agency (NDFA) to finance major public projects and to evaluate all financing aspects of PPP projects. This vehicle will finance both commercial and non-commercial type projects.
- We envisage that the NDFA will initially focus on three primary areas:
 - National Roads
 - Public Transport
 - Health facilities (hospitals and facilities for older people and people with disabilities)
 - Schools
- The establishment of the NDFA will ensure maximum value for money in the financing of development projects. It will also enable the Government to apply commercial standards in evaluating financial risks and costs associated with projects, thereby ensuring that the best financing package is availed of in each instance.
- The NDFA will also be able to compete with private sector financing of PPP projects, thus ensuring maximum value for money .
- Funds raised through the NDFA will replace direct Exchequer funding to the maximum extent possible.

Taxation

- Fianna Fáil policy over the next five years will be to consolidate the spectacular reduction in the tax burden achieved since 1997.
- Where the fiscal situation allows for further reductions, the emphasis in tax policy will be on:
 - Keeping those on low incomes and the minimum wage out of the tax net;
 - Achieving the situation where 80% of taxpayers pay only the standard rate;
 - Completing the reduction of the standard rate of corporation tax to 12½ % in 2003;
- We will seek to use the full potential of the new tax credit system to effectively target further changes.
- We will work to ensure that everyone is tax compliant.

SUSTAINING FULL EMPLOYMENT

Fianna Fáil in Government, having reduced unemployment to the lowest level in the history of the State, by creating over 370,000 new jobs between 1997 and 2001, will aim to sustain a situation as close as possible to full employment. Over the next five year period, we envisage that numbers at work may increase to 2 million people or over. In order to progress as a society, we will be seeking a maximum proportion of skilled, well-paid and flexible forms of employment, both full and part-time, for the benefit of everyone seeking paid employment.

A Lot Done Since 1997

- Under this Fianna Fáil-led Government, employment has reached its highest level in the history of the State.
- With unemployment falling to around 4% from around 10% in mid-1997, Ireland has for the first time achieved close to full employment, and has an unemployment rate comparable to the US and well below most EU countries.
- We have attracted a quarter of a million people into the labour force.
- We have brought about a substantial reversal of emigration. Since 1996, over 120,000 people have returned to Ireland.
- Long-term unemployment is down to barely over 1% as a result of our targeted policies. Down from 86,000 to 24,000.
- Corporation tax has been dramatically reduced from 36% in 1997 to 16% in 2002.
- The National Minimum Wage has been introduced, in accordance with a Fianna Fáil 1997 Election pledge.
- FÁS has played an active role in helping unemployed people find suitable work and training, and continues to have a significant budget of €650m in 2002.
- We have continued to have success in attracting high levels of foreign direct investment, one of the principal bases of the Irish economic model.
- Ireland entered the EURO at a very competitive rate.
- The volume of exports, with the assistance of active Government promotion, has doubled since 1997.
- Over 100 social economy enterprises have been approved to date, benefiting the economic and social development of disadvantaged communities, and approximately 600 jobs created.
- In 2002 Ireland ranked first in the world as the world's top globalised economy (A.T. Kearney Consultants Survey).

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

- To keep Ireland one of the best places in the world to carry on business, and to further sharpen our competitiveness.
- We will encourage the Irish operations of multinationals to engage in high value added activities that are likely to be retained during periods of global rationalisation, and also to take a long-term strategic view.
- We will complete the process of lowering corporation tax paid by all businesses to 12½% in 2003.
- We will keep down personal tax levels so as to encourage the incentive to work, with a particular emphasis on further relieving the burden for the lower paid.
- We will continue to encourage pro-actively a better spread of jobs throughout the country and, where necessary to facilitate this, we will provide the infrastructure to make regional locations more attractive for industry.

- Changes in the level of the minimum wage will reflect both increases in the cost of living, and be designed to maximise the incentive to work, without detrimentally affecting employment levels.
- We will carry out a fundamental review of training and employment supports to ensure that they focus on the needs of the most marginalized and disadvantaged groups to help them to progress to the open labour market.
- We will establish a training fund of up to €2,500 per person for unemployed people facing very serious barriers to employment.
- We will extend, on a permanent basis, the Employment Action Plan to all persons on the Live Register for longer than 6 months and to other marginalized and disadvantaged groups.
- The very successful Small Business Task Force, the implementation of which helped small firms to grow strongly, will be relaunched to give a fresh impetus to the important role of small business in Ireland.
- We will continue to engage in active export promotion, especially in newer markets in Central and Eastern Europe (with enlargement adding 75m people to the Single Market, which will then comprise 450m people), the Middle East, South-East Asia and Latin America.
- As one of the most successfully globalised countries in the world, we will continue as labour market conditions require, to attract home from abroad Irish people and other EU nationals with skills and experience to fill the vacancies created by a growing economy. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment will administer a transparent and rapid response immigration process.
- We will implement the National Development Plan so as to provide the modern infrastructure, education and training, needed to sustain increased employment in all parts of the country.
- We will seek to resolve potential issues, difficulties and conflicts in the spirit of social partnership.
- FÁS will continue to provide training and employment, especially for unemployed people or people entering the labour market.
- We will conduct a National Skills Audit to highlight the strengths and gaps in the country's qualification base, and adjust training accordingly.
- Fianna Fáil recognise and will develop the value of the social economy through the further creation of social economic enterprises.
- FÁS will continue to provide resources for training people with disabilities in order that they may play as full a part as possible in employment.

IMPROVING THE CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

Improving labour and employment conditions has been at the heart of Fianna Fáil's contribution in government for 70 years. The achievement of high quality working conditions today, while retaining the flexibility necessary to the successful operation of a modern economy, is an entirely feasible target, best achieved by Government working in close consultation with the social partners.

A Lot Done since 1997

- Fianna Fáil is particularly proud of the successful implementation of its 1997 campaign pledge to bring in a National Minimum Wage (€6.35 in 2002), which is one of the highest in Europe, not only without detriment to employment, but, if anything, increasing employment in net terms, by making it more attractive to take up.
- Part-time workers under new legislation can no longer be discriminated against. The purpose of the Employees (Part-Time Work) Act, 2000 is to facilitate the development of part-time work on a voluntary basis and to contribute to the flexible organisation of working time in a manner that takes into account the needs of both employees and employers.
- The number of part-time workers now represents almost a fifth of total numbers at work, with women accounting for three-quarters of those in part-time employment.
- The Carer's Leave Act, 2001, allows employees to leave their employment temporarily for a period of up to 15 months (65 weeks) to provide full-time care for people in need of constant attention. This is combined with the new Carer's Benefit Scheme, designed to facilitate and support employees who wish to leave the workforce temporarily to take up caring duties at what is often a particularly sensitive and trying time.
- An agreed Code of Practice on Sunday working in the retail sector was secured in 1998 under the Organisation of Working-Time Act, 1997, which is acceptable to workers and their employers.
- Substantial staffing and resource increases have been provided for the Health and Safety Authority, the State body charged with the day-to-day implementation of our health and safety laws. A Construction Safety Partnership Plan has been agreed. Codes of practice in respect of work in confined places, and the prevention of accidents to children and young persons in agriculture have been introduced.
- Codes of Practice have also been introduced to prevent Workplace Bullying, following the report of a taskforce entitled 'Dignity at Work'. A Charter has been endorsed by the social partners, and the Health and Safety Authority have established a Bullying Response Unit.
- Industrial Relations legislation has been amended to facilitate the resolution of disputes, where negotiations do not take place, as a result of difficulties arising in relation to the baggage handlers' dispute at Ryanair.
- The Labour Inspectorate has been expanded, to oversee compliance with the broad range of employment rights legislation, including the Minimum Wage.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

- The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act of 1989 will be updated, following the review of the Health and Safety Authority. The legislation will include an innovative approach to the application of a range of penalties to a graduated range of offences, with new maximum penalties up to €130,000.
- The Statutory Redundancy Scheme will be comprehensively reviewed with a view to implementing key improvements.
- A fundamental review will be undertaken of the functions of the Employment Rights Bodies, which have a role in resolving industrial relations disputes, mediating between employers and employees, and making decisions about employment rights. This is with a view to clarifying both for the public at large and for employers and employees the principle under which issues or cases are referred to the Labour Court, the Labour Relations Commission, the Employment Appeals Tribunal, and Rights Commissioners, and to help streamline the appeals process.
- Under its new strategy, FÁS will engage with redundant workers and people facing the prospect of long-term unemployment to ensure that the period out of work for a substantial number of people is kept to a minimum.
- Fianna Fáil will continue to support women who wish to participate in the labour force; a continuing increase in the provision of affordable childcare facilities, and the obligation on firms to provide 'family friendly' work arrangements. Training for women returning to the workforce will be provided.
- We will strengthen the parental leave scheme in line with the recommendations of the social partners.
- In view of the gradual ageing of the workforce in prospect and the increase in life expectancy, Fianna Fáil will review ways in which retired people can be encouraged, where they so wish, to extend their working lives without financial penalty and in conditions which suit their personal lifestyle wishes.

KEEPING IRELAND AT THE CUTTING EDGE

Investment in Research, Development and Innovation

During the last five years ambitious policies on science and technology have been at the core of much of Ireland's economic success. Two years ago we became the world's largest software exporter and over 150,000 people are now at work in knowledge-based industries.

A dramatic increase in the funding of advanced research has been accompanied by legislative, educational and infrastructural developments. These have combined to ensure an expanding skills base and a growing culture of innovation.

We believe that ongoing action is required to ensure that we protect recent progress and ensure that Ireland continues to be a world leader in knowledge-based industries. This requires a commitment to action on a series of important issues including support for research, scientific training and technological infrastructure.

A Lot Done Since 1997

- In 1997 the Taoiseach decided to significantly increase the priority of science and technology issues on the Government's agenda. He appointed a cross-departmental Minister for Science & Technology and charged the Department of Public Enterprise with delivering key regulatory and infrastructural developments. As a result, Ireland's performance has improved significantly on a number of key indicators and the foundations are well in place to protect and expand our technological base.
- We created and implemented one of the most successful schools technology programmes in the world. Within 18 months, Ireland became the first country in Europe to have all schools connected to the Internet, and we remain one of only two countries to have achieved this target.
- We provided over 1300 free internet access points in our libraries to ensure that availability to all people.
- We recognised the need to invest in science in schools through new curricula, training programmes and refurbishment grants.
- We created a wide range of new course, at all levels, to help meet skills needs, with schemes such as the Fast-track Into Technology helping long-term unemployed people get high-skills jobs.
- We have actively supported new projects in knowledge-based industries and worked to attract Research facilities of major companies.
- We have provided for the largest ever programme of research and development. Science Foundation Ireland has been created to drive forward research in strategically important areas.
- The first ever dedicated research budget has been created in the Education sector - with €600m provided in the NDP.
- A series of initiatives have been implemented to ensure that we tackle the Digital Divide.
- Progressive and ambitious E-Commerce Legislation has been enacted.
- We have invested substantial resources to ensure that Ireland has major international connectivity capacity.

- We have implemented a series of measures to drive forward the e-Government agenda.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

- We will ensure the putting in place of open-access broadband on a national basis, to fully include rural communities.
- We will implement a comprehensive programme to expand the number of school pupils taking Science subjects, to include provision for facilities, curricula teachers and training.
- We will drive forward our Schools IT programme based on the principle of school-based planning and devolved funding. We will ensure that progressive training courses are available to teachers.
- We will work to ensure that Ireland develops a world-class research capacity.
- We will place Science Foundation Ireland on a statutory basis as a dynamic vehicle to provide funding for areas of strategic national importance including ICTs and biotechnology.
- We will ensure that the Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions is maintained with funding rounds being placed on a biennial basis.
- We will bring together the Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering & Technology and the Irish Council for Humanities and Social Sciences Research as separate parts of an overall statutory Irish Research Council. As well as running individual research grants schemes, the IRC will develop new schemes for smaller, term-limited research projects.
- We will ensure that all research funding is based on external assessments.
- We will work to ensure that Ireland draws down at least €190m under the EU 6th Framework programme with a new emphasis on aiding institutions and SMEs with administrative and other requirements.
- We will actively support the development of industry-based research capacity.
- We will maintain annual funding to promote community access to technology.
- We will review available fiscal instruments for the support of advanced connectivity.
- We will implement an ambitious eGovernment agenda aimed at ensuring that the public will be able to access most key Government services electronically.

DEVELOPING THE REGIONS

Fianna Fáil believes regional development within our country should be more evenly balanced. We believe that each and every region must have, and must be encouraged to have, a role in sustaining our prosperity and progress. The focus of Fianna Fáil's strategy will be to build up the different regions in terms of critical developments.

A Lot Done Since 1997

- Fianna Fáil has negotiated continued Objective I status for EU funding purposes for the Border, Midland and Western regions, ensuring continued prioritisation of these regions' development needs.
- We have ensured that higher proportion of new aided industrial projects go to outside the Dublin Region.
- Under the National Development Plan, Fianna Fáil in Government has allocated €17.5 billion to the Border, Midland and Western regions, representing a per capita allocation of 23% higher than the national average.
- Investments in road, rail, water, gas and broadband connectivity will all contribute to making the regions more attractive.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

In Government, Fianna Fáil will:

- complete and implement the National Spatial Strategy, which is aimed at building up the strength of all regions. This strategy will give all areas of the country opportunities to develop to their potential. As a result, we will maximise and sustain the economic performance of the country as a whole.
- while seeking to consolidate and enhance the international competitiveness of Dublin and our other main cities to promote development, we will further encourage a greater proportion of new inward investment to focus on areas outside the Greater Dublin Area, in line with the National Spatial Strategy.
- support the achievement of balanced regional development. This is vital if we are to ensure that particular regions of our country are no longer held back by infrastructural deficiencies. We will ensure that they will have the ability to compete, especially in regard to energy, transport and communications.
- continue our commitment to the progressive decentralisation of Government Offices and Agencies. Fianna Fáil recognise the particular importance of this programme to well-placed and substantial towns that do not have a lot of industrial employment. The first phase of a new decentralisation programme will be announced in the early months of a new Fianna Fáil-led Government.
- recognise the particular importance of developing the entire border region, to cooperate with the authorities North of the border, especially in relation to improved access, tourism development, and inward investment, as well as harmonising the opportunities for cross-border employment, trade and environmental protection.
- work and consult closely with regional bodies, County Development Boards and task forces, including the Western Development Commission and Shannon Development, in implementing policies to achieve more balanced regional development.
- We will ensure the putting in place of open-access broadband on a national basis, to fully include rural communities.

- Fianna Fáil will establish regional boards at Shannon and Cork Airports which will operate the airports and report to Aer Rianta. These new regional boards will act as a subset of the main Aer Rianta Board and provide a strong local focus in increasing aviation activity in the individual airports.
- The NDP capital development support for regional airports will be pushed through to a successful conclusion. A new three year Public Service Obligation air service programme to regional airports will be launched this year.
- As outlined in our integrated transport policy, we will seek to significantly improve transport services in the regions.
- We will continue with our efforts to extend the gas grid and ensure that significant investment is made in developing the electricity grid in the regions.

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

We believe that a strong agriculture is a vital part of a strong economy and the cornerstone of a vibrant rural community. Fianna Fáil's vision and aims for the sector remain clear and steadfast: the development of a competitive, sustainable and consumer focussed agri-food industry. The Industry into the future must be capable of successfully competing worldwide and provide viable incomes to farm families. At the same time, we recognise the need for a much wider rural agenda to help support the wide diversity found within rural communities.

In the face of major challenges, we have worked hard to support Irish agriculture – providing a major expansion in domestic support for farming and delivering at the negotiating table. We are determined to defend the gains of Agenda 2000 in the forthcoming mid-term CAP review and in the WTO.

We have a clear vision for the future of rural communities with agriculture at its centre. Opportunity for diversification must play an increasing role. Our aim is the continued enhancement of agriculture and our vision is for rural communities where young people have a choice between attractive options. We are also firmly committed to radically developing the social and physical infrastructure of rural Ireland.

A lot Done since 1997

Over the past five years Fianna Fáil in Government has demonstrated its strong commitment on all important fronts.

Market Supports

- We negotiated a hugely successful outcome to Agenda 2000, turning a prospective loss into a substantial gain - against all the odds. Over the period 2000-2006 Irish farmers will receive €13 billion in direct payments and other supports.
- We reopened export markets for beef, took comprehensive action to boost consumer confidence and provided critical shipping capacity for the export of live animals.
- In the WTO negotiations, we successfully resisted attempts to eliminate export subsidies while the successful reform of the sheepmeat regime provides a stable platform for future development.
- We intervened with special national funding of €250 million to support Irish producers when beef markets plunged due to food scares in Continental Europe.
- We significantly improved the funding for the Disadvantaged Areas Compensatory payments which surpass the old Headage scheme by the order of 50%. This new area-based payments system will be further adapted in order to ensure equity between farmers.

Food Safety

- Major progress has been made in the area of food safety. The Food Safety Authority is set up as a statutory independent agency to ensure the integrity and safety of Irish food.

- The Irish control system for BSE has been enhanced on an ongoing basis and the EU's Scientific Steering Committee has concluded that it has been "optimally stable" since 1998.
- The National Beef Assurance Scheme has been enacted with full traceability for all cattle movements. A National Sheep Identification system has been introduced.

Environmental Protection

- Provided matching Exchequer funding for the very successful REPS scheme which fosters and promotes environmental friendly farming. Introduced a code of Good Farming Practice.
- Introduced national investment schemes for farm improvements to control on-farm pollution ahead of the new EU structural schemes coming on stream.
- Progressively raised the expenditure ceiling for the accelerated taxation relief on capital allowances for farm pollution control facilities.

Delivery of Payments

- We have streamlined the delivery of the direct payments scheme to become one of the most efficient in the EU.
- We have conducted nationwide information seminars to assist farmers maximise their entitlements and through the progressive use of information technology, we have made major progress in simplifying the application procedures under the various schemes.
- We have established an Independent Appeals Office.

Improving Structures

- The Early Retirement and Installation Aid schemes to encourage early transfer of ownership have been adjusted to enhance their impact on land mobility.
- In quota management, almost 10 million gallons of milk have been granted to young dairy farmers during the past two years.
- In total, 80 million gallons have been restructured over the past two years, almost equivalent to the entire volume restructured in the previous ten years.

Education and Research

- A major step forward has been the mainstreaming of agricultural education with the Institutes of Technology.
- A €20 million refurbishment of our agricultural colleges is also underway.
- Established a €32 million fund to promote research and development in agri-food biotechnology.

Taxation Changes

- VAT refunds have increased from 3.3% in 1998 to 4.3% in 2001.
- The expenditure limit for the accelerated rate of capital allowances for farm pollution control facilities was raised to €63,000.
- Capital Gains Tax was reduced from 40% to 20% in 1998, and the CGT retirement relief on agricultural assets increased to €470,000.
- The capital acquisition tax threshold on gifts and inheritances between parents and their children was increased from €244,000 to €380,000.
- Stamp duty relief for young trained farmers was increased to 100%.
- Probate tax on inheritances was abolished.
- The capital allowance write-off period for plant and machinery was reduced from 7 to 5 years.
- More generous provisions for the treatment of land acquired by compulsory purchase orders were introduced for both CAT and CGT.

- Tax relief for the purchase of milk quota was introduced, and
- The period for profit deferral and stock relief for disease related compulsory disposal of livestock has been extended from 2 to 4 years.

Foot and Mouth

- When farmers faced the threat of Foot and Mouth, Fianna Fáil in Government put the entire country on an emergency footing. We mobilised a national effort not seen before. The spread of this disease could have jeopardised much of the national economy. In co-operation with all our citizens and in particular, with our farmers, our quick, thorough and efficient response to this threat ensured that this did not happen.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

Over the next five years, Fianna Fáil in Government will draw on all its experience to further develop a sustainable and competitive agri-food sector in line with the long-term strategy which we have put in place with the Agri-Food 2010 Action Plan. Our overriding objective is to ensure that farming earns a return in line with the norm in the rest of the economy. We will:

- Defend the gains made under the Agenda 2000, in particular direct payments, export refunds and the prospective payment of almost €13 billion in the period 2000-2006 in direct and other payments, including the substantial 50% increase in beef premia.
- Under the 2010 Plan of Action and through the financial commitments of €8.5 billion to agriculture, food and rural areas under the National Development Plan, support both fulltime farming and those who wish to combine on and off-farm work
- Maintain the Government and diplomatic offensive to improve world access and the opening of markets.
- Broaden the scope of agricultural education, anticipating that in some cases, farming may be combined with other occupations. We will also support young and other committed producers through, for example, the continued management of milk quotas, and the various grants and other incentives.
- Provide through Teagasc, a dedicated service which will help part-time and transitional farmers use their capabilities and time to best advantage and efficiency and, where necessary to diversify their income through appropriate training through an Opportunities Programme.
- We will implement the recommendations of the Advisory Group on the role of Women in Agriculture.
- Protect the fundamental principles of the CAP in the EU enlargement negotiations. As necessary, we will also support measures such as adequate EU finances, in order to ensure the smooth integration of the agriculture of the applicant countries of Central and Eastern Europe joining the European Union, while preparing to take advantage of new market opportunities.
- Continue to promote the highest standards of food safety and foster a culture of innovation, quality and excellence so that the food industry can further strengthen its market position and obtain best returns on investment.
- In recognition of modern society's high expectations from agriculture and the food industry, we will continue to pursue actions through the EU to ensure that the same high standards apply to imported food as to domestic products.

- Promote overseas through Bord Bia the ‘Food Island’ image with international business capability.
- Encourage the food industry to build long-term relationships in premium export markets with a strong emphasis on growth in value-added products. The growth in prepared consumer foods and food ingredients sectors over recent years exemplify the manner in which the food industry can maximise its potential.
- Encourage the Irish beef industry, in particular, to make the development of sustainable EU markets its over-riding priority with the twin objectives of gaining greater stability and closing the gap between Irish and European prices. The key to making this happen is the building of an integrated supply chain through partnership arrangements between producers, processors and retailers, underpinned by the National Beef Assurance Scheme and industry quality schemes in product promotions.
- Promote the preservation of the environment through good farming practice supported by grants and special tax incentives to assist on-farm investment and careful waste management. We will foster a clean and attractive countryside with a high quality of life that can be enjoyed and appreciated by all. As part of this policy Fianna Fáil in Government will seek to make the REPS scheme more attractive and thereby increase participation.
- Continue to maintain a high state of vigilance against animal disease and make further progress in the control and lowering the incidence of TB and brucellosis. Enhance co-operation with the Northern Ireland authorities on keeping the island of Ireland disease-free.
- Enhance the contribution of horticulture, by supporting the production of product in an environmentally friendly manner and marketed to uniformly high standards.
- Seek to develop the agriculture colleges as wider rural development resources.
- Further develop the organic sector through an increase at production level and the development of a single national label to take advantage both of “clean green” image of Irish agriculture and the added appeal of organic food.
- Set the quality of service, including, the efficient and timely delivery of payments as an integral part of all operational priorities.
- We will agree a series of proposals with farming organisations designed to tackle red-tape and argue strongly for their adoption at EU level.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The last few decades have seen a period of sustained change for communities throughout rural Ireland. Changing work patterns and pressures on both population and services have had an often profound impact. Over the last five years, Fianna Fáil has worked hard in Government to set a new agenda of development for rural Ireland. We believe in helping people to live and work in rural communities with specific measures being enacted to ensure that a network of key services is secured.

A Lot Done Since 1997

- We published the first ever White Paper on Rural Development to act as the foundation for a significant development of rural development policies throughout government.
- Leader II and Leader + were introduced to provide training and development funding for rural areas, with €150m committed for the period of the National Development Plan.
- We introduced the Rural Renewal Scheme which has helped 100 rural towns.
- The Clar programme was introduced with €25m funding targeted at the areas which have experienced the greatest population decline. The programme has already helped secure 400% additional funding from other agencies and is providing the basis for ensuring that mainstream programmes are adapted to be more appropriate to rural areas.
- Over €12 million in equity was paid into An Post in order to provide an extra financial underpinning to the network of Post Offices.
- Over 120 one-teacher schools in the most marginal rural areas have received an extra teacher.
- Record funding has been invested in upgrading rural water supplies in each year since 1997, rising to €80 million this year, eight times the 1997 level. In addition, a new Rural Towns and Villages Initiative has been introduced specifically aimed at addressing the most pressing water and sewerage needs in our smaller towns and villages. More than 70 schemes, at a cost of more than €140m, are now included in that programme.
- Non-National roads, the key transport infrastructure in many rural areas, have benefited from a doubling of investment, reaching €438 million this year.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

- We will give a clear priority to the protection and development of rural communities.
- We will continue the CLAR programme, ensuring annual funding and publishing annual reports on progress.
- When the relevant results of the Census are available we will review the data and consider additional areas for inclusion in CLAR.
- We will establish a Rural Social Economy Programme which will provide secure, community-related, employment opportunities for persons in families eligible for the Farm Assist scheme. These opportunities will be flexible enough to allow individuals to attend to their own farming needs at critical times. They will, in addition, focus on skills important to maintaining the countryside and rural communities.

- We will publish a new set of funding and staffing entitlements aimed at ensuring that schools in rural areas can offer a balanced curriculum where pupil numbers may be low.
- We will ensure that every county has a comprehensive rural transport initiative in place.
- We will roll-out broadband to make it accessible to as many rural communities as possible.
- We will maintain the network of Garda stations.
- We will seek to develop the agriculture colleges as wider rural development resources.
- We believe that the housing needs of people from or working in a particular rural area should be able to be, subject to good planning and design, accommodated in their area.
- We will support rural post offices and seek to develop commercial services in rural areas with specific investment being made in developing the Government Services Agency approach to provide additional services.

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF ISLAND LIFE

Fianna Fáil is committed to improving the quality of life and equal opportunity and treatment for those who live on our offshore islands, believing that they make a contribution to the nation out of all proportion to their size in population. Fianna Fáil in Government has worked hard to deliver major improvements to island life, which has been for the first time made an explicit part of the functions of a Minister.

A lot Done since 1997

- An new Inter-Departmental Committee on the Islands has operated and aided the delivery of various improvements for islands and islanders.
- **Subsidised ferry services** have been introduced for the first time to service Clare Island and Inishturk, Co. Mayo and Inishbofin, Co. Galway and Arranmore Island, Co. Donegal.
- **Daily passenger ferry service** have been introduced serving the two smaller Aran Islands, Inis Meáin and Inis Oírr, thus increasing significantly the level of service to these islands.
- Daily ferry services have been introduced servicing Bere, Sherkin and Whiddy Islands off the Co. Cork coast.
- The **improvement of landing facilities** on five islands off the Co. Cork coast and major works on landing facilities on Tory and Arranmore Islands, Co. Donegal were carried out.
- Funding of over €0.75m has been provided for the **connection of eight islands to the national power grid.**
- Record funding has been provided by Fianna Fáil over the last number of years toward infrastructural development on offshore islands, and in many cases this funding has attracted matching funds from the Local Authority which has endured unprecedented development on the Islands.
- Funding in excess of €18.4m was provided in the period 1997 to 2001 for the provision of works and services on the populated offshore islands as follows:
 - Donegal €3.6m
 - Mayo €1.9m
 - Galway €8.4m
 - Cork €4.6m
 - Sligo €0.5m
 - Limerick €0.13m

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

- We will ensure that the islands remain an explicit part of the functions of a Minister.

- We will identify proposals to provide a subsidised cargo service to islands in consultation with island communities and ferry operators.
- We will provide a new air service (fixed wing) to Tory Island, Co. Donegal and Inisbofin, Co. Galway and to upgrade the existing infrastructure at Inis Mór, Inis Meáin and Inis Oírr, Co. Galway.
- A specific allocation will be provided to Enterprise Boards in each county with non-Gaeltacht off-shore islands, to encourage and develop enterprise on these islands.
- We will provide Broadband technology to offshore islands.
- We will introduce a home improvement grants, in line with the home improvement grants available to Gaeltacht Communities, to non-Gaeltacht islands, and will increase the level of new house grants on non-Gaeltacht islands to the same level as that available on Gaeltacht Islands.
- We will include transport costs for schoolchildren as a constituent part of the Remote Area Grant.
- We will ensure that healthcare provision on the offshore islands is developed in line with the principles of the Health Strategy, particularly in relation to the expansion of primary care services.
- A comprehensive programme will be implemented to provide youth services on offshore Islands along with increased funding towards sport and leisure activities and the appointment of dedicated sports officers.
- We will establish Comháirle na nOilean.

Promoting Tourism

Fianna Fáil has always recognised the importance of tourism to the Irish economy. It was the action taken by Fianna Fáil in the late 1980's and early 1990's that started the pattern of growth, which has obtained over the last decade. The tourism industry is a significant contributor to the exchequer, attracts high employment and has a broad regional spread. We believe it will continue to be a vital industry and that it requires sustained support and investment in the coming years.

A lot Done since 1997

- We have allocated €444 million to tourism under the National Development Plan, introduced the first ever multi-annual budget for tourism marketing and invested record amounts of exchequer funding in selling Ireland as a destination at home and overseas.
- Overseas visitor numbers have increased by 25%: up from 5.1million in 1997 to 6.4 million in 2000. Foreign earnings increased by 38% in the same period.
- We have strengthened partnership arrangements by creating the Tourism Marketing Partnership, which allows the industry to have a say in how marketing budgets are spent by the Tourism State Agencies.
- Following our success in helping to secure the Ryder Cup, we introduced the International Sports Tourism Initiative with a budget of €55 million over seven years to attract prestigious international sporting events with tourism potential.
- We brought forward a specific marketing initiative to enable small accommodation providers such as B&B's to market abroad.
- Through the continuation of the Capital Allowances Scheme, we have facilitated significant expansion and upgrading of the hotel and accommodation sector.
- In response to the Foot and Mouth crisis in 2000, an extra €12.7 million was made available for a reassurance campaign in all our major markets.
- In recognition of the importance of low-cost access for tourism growth, particularly from the Continental European market, the Government has decided that Aer Rianta shall build a low cost facility at Pier D in Dublin Airport and be available for the 2003 season.
- We launched a new Tourism Product Investment Programme for which €127 million has been committed under the NDP. Its aim is to support investment in visitor attractions in less developed tourism areas leading to balanced regional development within the sector.
- In accordance with the Good Friday Agreement, we have successfully established, Tourism Ireland Limited, the all-Ireland marketing company, whose job it is to market the whole of Ireland overseas.
- We have started the process of amalgamating Bord Failte and CERT to create a single National Tourism Authority, which will promote excellence and build capability within the tourism sector.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead.

Over the next five years, Fianna Fáil will:

- restore Irish tourism to a planned annual growth path of 5% per annum by continuing to invest in the industry.

- broaden our source markets so that we are not over-reliant on any one market and , in particular, seek to increase our share of the Continental European market .
- continue our policy of fostering expansion and competition on air and sea routes from all our key markets.
- continue to support and promote Tourism Ireland Limited in its work of promoting the whole island of Ireland as a tourist destination.
- complete the task of creating a new National Tourism Development Authority which will compliment the work of Tourism Ireland by promoting best practice in the industry to make Ireland a world class destination.
- ensure the construction of a state of the art National Conference Centre and aggressively promote Ireland as a venue for international conference business.
- ensure that Ireland becomes a destination to which visitors will want to return again and again by putting the maintenance of standards and services at the top of the tourism agenda.
- continue to support the B&B and small accommodation sector through specific marketing initiatives.
- encourage year-round activity-based and special interest tourism, which results in greater regional and seasonal spread of the benefits of tourism and more sustainable growth within the industry.
- ensure that local authorities takes account of the needs of the tourist industry in its provision of infrastructure.
- promote sensitive development of tourist areas and encourage environmental best practice among tourism providers.

AN INTEGRATED TRANSPORT POLICY

Fianna Fáil in Government over the next five years will implement an integrated transport policy, designed as far as possible to overcome existing delays, bottlenecks and congestion and to provide alternative choice by alternative modes of transport. This will involve following through a massive public investment programme, which did not exist when we took office. Fianna Fáil also recognise the importance of competitive access transport and of maintaining a national airline.

A Lot Done Since 1997

Public Transport

- We have been the first Government to commit to the renewal of the entire rail network. Major Exchequer investment in railways has been undertaken for the first time, rising from nil in the 1997 Estimates to nearly €400m in 2002.
- A major Bill on rail safety has been published, marking out a radical and strong legislative statement for rail safety in Ireland. The rail safety programme has been launched.
- New services developed (including the extension of the DART to Malahide and Greystones, and opening of new stations at Clontarf, Barrow Street and Monasterevin).
- 246 miles of track have been renewed; 143 miles of fencing have been completed; 200 bridges have been renewed; and, 211 levels crossings have been modernised. 67 new mainline rail carriage are in the process of being ordered.
- Long-term plans for a modern fully integrated public transport system in the Dublin area have been elaborated by the Dublin Transport Authority and are being steadily implemented. The first phase of the LUAS, avoiding much of the disruption in the centre of Dublin contained in the previous plans, is well on route to completion.
- Bus priority corridors have been a great success, with the bus fleet expanded by over 25%, and a huge increase in usage on many routes.
- High frequency bus services have been provided out of provincial cities, and to outer commuter areas from Dublin, as well as on major expressway routes.
- Purchase of annual bus and rail commuter tickets through employers can now be offset against tax
- A €4.4 million rural transport initiative is being implemented.

Roads

- Our road infrastructure is one area where we have had a lot of catching up to do because of years of under-investment. Over the last five years, we have made considerable progress in building a better and safer road network and are now moving forward under the guidance of the vision we set out in the National Development Plan.
- We are providing over €1 billion for investment in our national road network this year, an all-time record and three times the 1997 level. Altogether, over our five years in government, funding of over €3.5 billion has been provided for the national roads programme. By the end of last year, over 270 km of new and significantly improved national roads had been completed since 1997 and an additional 172 km were under construction.

- The non-national road network has also seen a huge injection of investment. This year, funding of close to €440 million is being provided, twice what it was in 1997. By the end of last year, nearly 25,000 km of road had been improved since the Restoration Programme began.

Road Safety

- The first ever Road Safety Strategy was produced and has been helping to save lives on our roads.

Taxis

- We proposed improving Taxi Services in a fair and equitable way for all stakeholders.
- We have increased significantly the number of wheelchair accessible taxis
- We have appointed a Taxi Hardship Panel to report on the nature and extent of extreme personal financial hardship.

Aviation

- Up until the aftermath of 11 September, Aer Lingus offered new daily services to Los Angeles and Baltimore/Washington, which it is hoped to resume when conditions improve. Passenger traffic has continued to grow to almost 18m passengers in 2000. The London/Dublin route is now the second busiest in the world.
- Almost €700 million is being invested in the three State airports. Regional service air links have been supported with almost €14 million allocated under the NDP to 2006 to support essential infrastructure.
- Bus links to and from Dublin Airport have been much improved.

An Agenda For the Years Ahead

Integrated Transport

- Fianna Fáil will establish for the first time an integrated Department of Transport with responsibility for the national roads programme, public transport and aviation.
- Fianna Fáil supports the idea of lower pricing for public transport around the peak travel times. We will examine the possibility of introducing discount for travel within an hour either side of the peak times to help spread the load. This will be further facilitated by integrated ticketing and smart card technologies which will allow a differential pricing system to be introduced.
- Fianna Fáil welcomes the response of the Public Transport Partnership Forum to the Government consultation document. We support the Forum's suggestion that an independent public transport regulatory authority should be established. At present, a review of bus regulation outside Dublin is being undertaken by consultants on behalf of the Department of Public Enterprise. On return to government, Fianna Fáil will consult with the Forum on the findings and conclusions of this review and on any subsequent Government proposals for institutional and regulatory change outside Dublin. Fianna Fáil will place particular emphasis on replacing the Road Transport Act, 1932, with modernized legislation.

Railways

- Fianna Fáil will complete the first rail safety programme involving investment of €546 million and initiate a new five year programme beginning in 2004.
- An independent Railway Safety Authority will be established to regulate safety, to assess safety plans submitted by operators, to investigate accidents, and to set standards.

- A strategic rail review will provide a blueprint for the future development of the railways in Ireland, to make maximum use of them following their physical renewal. Apart from speeding up services and improving comfort and capacity, where needed, on existing intercity routes, consideration will be given in consultation with local interests to the provision of new regional and commuter routes, including a Dublin-Navan new rail-line, a Western Rail Corridor and building new links or spurs off existing lines.
- The DART will be upgraded from 6 to 8 car trains to relieve overcrowding at peak times. The outer suburban Kildare and Maynooth lines will be upgraded.
- Improvements to services and rolling stock will continue. 80 diesel rail cars will be brought into service in 2002/3 to increase capacity in particular on outer suburban lines, such as to Drogheda and Dundalk.
- Fianna Fáil will ensure the advantages of rail freight will be actively encouraged and marketed.
- Dublin Light Rail will be introduced between Tallaght and Connolly station and between Sandyford and St. Stephen's Green on schedule by October 2003.
- In July 2000, the Government approved the development of a metro system for Dublin. Particular priority will be given to the development of an early link to Dublin Airport.
- Fianna Fáil will fully support the independent Railway Procurement Agency will operate to provide a single statutory process for railway infrastructure projects, and a regulatory framework for running light rail, and as a State responsibility for procuring light rail and metro projects as determined by the Minister. This will provide a framework both for public service providers and public-private projects.

Buses

- Further progress will be made on upgrading the bus fleet, providing bus priorities both in Dublin and other cities, and in increasing the level and frequency of service, and the interchangeability of commuter tickets on bus and rail.
- New services will be introduced both to some new housing developments but also to existing poorly served communities
- Fianna Fáil will build upon the clear success of the Nitelink and late DART services.

Roads

- We will fully implement the National Roads Programme provided for in the National Development Plan. This will deliver major improvements to the national road network right across the country, including high quality dual carriageway or motorway links between Dublin and the Border, Cork, Limerick and Galway by 2006 and Dublin to Waterford by 2007.
- We will continue with the very significant programme of investment in non-national roads which are so essential to sustaining the fabric of rural Ireland. We will complete the current Restoration Programme on schedule by 2005 and will follow this with a further significant improvement programme.
- Given that one of the most common complaints made about our road system is the lack of proper signage on non-national roads, we will put in place a new 5-year plan to ensure that non-national roads are properly signposted. The possibility of implementing this programme through a Public Private Partnership will be explored.
- A programme to further promote and support the development of innovative, community based public transport projects will be pushed forward.

Greater Dublin Area

- All the improvements to the road, rail and bus networks we propose to implement in the Greater Dublin Area form part of the integrated transportation strategy for the period to 2016 – “*A Platform for Change*”. To bring greater focus and better co-ordination to the implementation of this strategy and to land-use and transport issues generally, we will introduce legislation to establish a new Greater Dublin Land Use and Transport Authority with a strong mandate, including executive powers to be used where necessary.

Road Safety

- To ensure improved standards of driving, a driver-training scheme for young drivers will be introduced. Initially, the scheme will be voluntary, but will attract lower insurance premiums for those who successfully complete the course. If the voluntary scheme is successful in leading to a reduction in death, injuries and accidents among young drivers, it will become statutory.
- In recognition of the unacceptably high premiums, we will urgently move to implement the recent report on Motor Insurance Costs.
- Work on the penalty points system will be completed to ensure its implementation at an early date on an all-island basis.
- A new 3 year Road Safety strategy will be introduced on the expiry of the present one, building on progress made, and to provide a framework for securing further progress in the years ahead.

Taxis

- We will continue the process of making taxis wheelchair accessible
- We will implement the recommendations of the Taxi Hardship Panel
- We will appoint a single national regulator for the industry for the future regulation of licensing, standards and the quality of service.

All-Ireland Free Travel

- Fianna Fáil in government will establish All-Ireland Free Travel for pensioners resident in Ireland (north and south). Building on the Good Friday Agreement, we will work to ensure that pensioners can travel free from Mizzen Head to the Giant's Causeway and all points in between.

Aviation

- The agreed Aer Lingus survival plan has the full support of Fianna Fáil in government.
- Low cost travel is the fastest growing sector in the aviation industry. Fianna Fáil will ensure that all our State airports will cater for the requirements of this sector.
- Fianna Fáil will on return to government ensure that a low cost facility is built at Pier D in Dublin Airport in time for the 2003 season.
- Future capital requirements for the State Airports in the light of the Aviation Regulator's cap on aviation charges, and of the best independent advice available will be provided, so as to avoid as far as possible unnecessary delays or overcrowding at airports, as passenger demand continues to rise.
- Fianna Fáil will support the development of new air passenger services and the maintenance of existing services at Cork and Shannon, recognising in particular the vital importance of daily transatlantic flights from Shannon for employment in the entire region.
- Fianna Fáil will establish regional boards at Shannon and Cork Airports which will operate the airports and report to Aer Rianta. These new regional boards will act as a subset of the main Aer Rianta Board and provide a strong local focus in increasing aviation activity in the individual airports.

- The NDP capital development support for regional airports will be fully implemented. A new three year Public Service Obligation air service programme to regional airports will be launched this year.
- We will continue the public subsidy to regional airports bearing in mind recent figures show that 250,000 passengers per year avail of these services thereby helping to reduce road congestion.

MARINE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Fianna Fáil believes strongly in the need to support, protect and develop our marine and natural resources. These resources can play a particularly important role in areas where other industries are less likely to be established. Over the last five years we have worked hard on these areas and we believe that the next five years could see major, lasting and positive developments, especially in peripheral regions, if the right policies are implemented.

A Lot Done since 1997

- The NDP is supporting investment of €406 million in developing a sustainable, competitive and quality driven seafood industry.
- Our whitefish fleet renewal programme is the largest targeted investment in our fishing fleet, in the history of the state. Under this €100 m programme, we introduced 32 new vessels, 12 modern second hand vessels and we modernised and improved safety on over 600 vessels.
- €53 million has been invested in our fishery harbours, and the NDP provides for further investment of €84 million. Major modernisation programmes are underway at Killybegs, Ros-a-Mhil, Dingle, Greencastle, Castletownbere, and other strategic harbours and piers.
- We negotiated a new Irish entitlement to the third largest tuna quota in the EU.
- We secured EU agreement to put in place fish stock recovery programmes and introduced the first European programme for innovation and sustainability in the fishing industry.
- We have been the first to take on the task of developing our inshore fishing sector and have increased funding from €100,000 to €2.6 million per annum.
- We have established a streamlined and transparent licensing system for aquaculture, including faster processing of applications and a statutory Appeals Board.
- We have ensured high quality and safety of Irish farmed seafood through a national monitoring and testing programme.
- We have modernised our inland fisheries management structures and provided for investment of €39 m. We have tackled pollution and poaching through new co-operative efforts between State Agencies and local communities.
- We established the National Salmon Commission along with radical and ground-breaking management regimes for the salmon resource.
- We have put in place a new strategy to restore seatrout stocks.
- We are supporting the development of a strong merchant shipping sector focusing on Irish employment, through a competitive tax regime and a new Irish Maritime Development Office.
- We are corporatising Wicklow, Dundalk and Bantry Ports and we merged Shannon Estuary and Foynes Port Company, to make them more efficient and more competitive.
- We have dramatically improved safety at sea: Grant Aid has been provided for safety equipment on 700 fishing vessels and made it mandatory to wear lifejackets; We have established a Maritime Safety Directorate and a Statutory Marine Casualty Investigation Board; We have introduced legislation to regulate adventure centres and the use of fast power boats and jet skis.

- We have strengthened the Coast Guard by providing a dedicated Medium Range Search and Rescue Helicopters in Dublin, Shannon and Waterford.
- We have published the first ever national strategy on marine research and development and relocated the Marine Institute to Galway.
- We are building a new €32 m research vessel.
- We introduced a major investment programme for marine leisure. Four marinas are already being built in Kerry, Galway and Sligo under this €38 m programme. We are developing pilot marine tourism projects in the west and we have invested in the traditional boats sector.
- We are developing forestry by providing a total investment of €889 million in the NDP and we secured substantial increases in premiums for forestry planting.
- The Corrib Gas Field will boost our energy supplies and aims to have gas brought ashore by January 2004.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

- To press for fundamental reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, with the aim of sustainable development, better governance, stakeholder involvement, conservation, stock building and maximising Ireland's access to fisheries.
- To introduce a new fleet licensing policy to ensure equity, transparency and an independent appeals process.
- To complete the renewal and modernisation of our whitefish fishing fleet.
- To set out a long-term strategy for the sustainable development of our fishing industry, arising from the work of our Seafood Foresight Group.
- To establish efficient management structures and develop our fishery harbours, including electronic auctioning, new distribution networks and completion of investment programmes for harbours including Killybegs, Rossaveal, Castletownbere, Greencastle, Dunmore East and Dingle.
- To increase competitiveness, critical mass, diversification, and sustainability in our aquaculture sector
- To develop a new North Shannon Angling Development Programme, based in Carrick-on-Shannon
- To restore and develop game, coarse and sea angling as a major recreational and tourism resource, through NDP investment and an all-island scientific research programme.
- To support angling clubs by ensuring access to leasing agreements for State Fisheries and by developing a nationwide management policy for State Fisheries, including management by angling clubs. We will provide funding for angling clubs for enhancement works on lakes and rivers.
- To protect and develop our wild salmon resources, through a management regime that will ensure a sustainable future for salmon angling, tourism and commercial fishing.
- To develop new devolved service structures to support the sustainable management, development and protection of the marine coastal zone and seafood resources.
- To ensure that our ports are equipped for the demands of our growing economy, through investment and the development of seamless transport systems between road, rail and ports and best utilisation of property assets. To continue to support an active Irish shipping sector.

- To develop a network of strategically located ports outside Dublin while recognising the key role of Dublin as Ireland's premier port.
- To develop Ireland as a centre of excellence for marine research.
- To increase forest planting levels to 20,000 hectares per annum. We will also ensure wider public consultation.
- To Develop regional forest plans and an independent statutory appeals procedure.
- To increase the opportunities for offshore wind and wave energy generation.
- To consolidate the Minerals Development Acts.
- To encourage further exploration for hydrocarbons and minerals while maximising the value added to the Irish economy.

PROGRESS

Fianna Fáil believes that the great challenges of building peace and prosperity, have at their core the objective of achieving real and sustained social progress. We have worked hard to use this period of national opportunity to invest in vital social services and to lift huge numbers of people out of poverty.

But we know there is a lot more to do. That's why we are committed to an ambitious agenda to ensure social progress including the ending of consistent poverty in our country and the development of world-class public services.

BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

Over the last five years, we have worked hard to expand the cycle of opportunity in our society and to provide a new beginning for marginalized people and communities. This period of prosperity has led to real and measurable progress across a wide range of issues.

The relevant studies show that, during the first half of our term alone over 200,000 people were lifted out of poverty. It is expected that later studies will show this early progress being further built upon. The definition of poverty and the study methodology are those which were accepted by the Fine Gael/Labour government in 1996.

Our successes in driving employment creation, tackling long-term unemployment in particular, targeting supports towards marginalized groups and a series of record increases in social welfare payments, have all contributed to this progress.

For the next five years we are setting the historic target of effectively ending consistent poverty in our country, with a minimum target of reducing it to below 2%.

A lot Done since 1997

- We have reduced poverty to historically low levels.
- We have implemented the largest series of social welfare increases in the history of social welfare in this country.
- These increases have seen the basic income of welfare-dependent people increase by up to 50%, and ahead of both inflation and the average income increases in the labour force.
- Historic increases in the Child Benefit have been implemented – with the rate now treble the 1997 rate.
- We established the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion which has given a new drive and focus to coordinating action on combating exclusion across Government.
- We have taken thousands of pensioners and low paid people out of the tax net.
- We have dramatically increased spending on existing and new social inclusion measures.
- We have implemented targeted initiatives tackling issues such as urban disadvantage, homelessness, educational disadvantage, long-term unemployment and rural isolation.
- We have introduced a minimum wage, helping thousands of low-paid workers.
- Long-Term Unemployment, one of the greatest causes of poverty, has been successfully tackled and reduced to 1% - from 86,000 to 24,000.
- We have provided new levels of support for community and voluntary activity, with well over €100 million allocated in voluntary activity grants.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

- We will implement the recently revised National Anti-Poverty Strategy with its ambitious targets across a broad range of areas.

- We will work to effectively eliminate poverty, with a minimum target of reducing it to below 2%.
- We will work to generate the resources to achieve our new benchmark level of €150 for social welfare payments.
- We will publish an annual report of progress towards the achievement of anti-poverty targets.
- We will carry out a fundamental review of training and employment supports to ensure that they focus on the needs of the most marginalized and disadvantaged groups to help them to progress to the open labour market.
- We will fund an ambitious programme of data gathering on social indicators, including consistent poverty and social capital, to ensure that policies are developed on the basis of sound information.
- We will work to promote social capital in all parts of Irish life through a combination of research and ensuring that public activity supports the development of social capital, particularly on a local community level.
- We will continue to support initiatives to expand corporate social responsibility and will examine ways to support the expanded activity of new funds such as the Clan Credo initiative.

PENSIONS

Providing for Pensioners: Today and in the Future

The implementation of the largest series of increases in the history of state pensions in this country is only one aspect of Fianna Fáil's work in government on promoting and protecting the incomes of pensioners. We have also implemented a radical series of reforms which allow people to provide more easily for their own retirement and ensures that today's workers will have decent pensions available to them when they retire.

We see the provision of decent pensions as a core part of the responsibility of Government. We are committed not only to continuing improvements in the incomes of pensioners, but also to protecting the security of pensions into the future.

A Lot Done Since 1997

- Before the last Election we promised to raise the Old-Age Contributory Pension to €127. We went much further than this, with the Contributory Pension reaching a level of €147 this year and the Non-Contributory Pension reaching €134.
- We implemented a series of changes to the tax codes in order to remove 70,000 pensioners from the tax net.
- We radically reformed the basis for personal pensions in this country, allowing people to maximise their pension benefits even when moving employment.
- We established the National Pension Reserve Fund, which now amounts to €8bn, which will ensure that today's pension increases can continue to be paid far into the future.
- We ensured that a range of other improvements were implemented for pensioners, including the extension of the Medical Card and free schemes.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead **State Pensions/Pensioners Incomes**

- We will implement pension increases significantly ahead of rises in the cost of living and ensure that pensioners are in a position to keep up with general income levels in the economy. We will increase the basic state pension to at least €200 by 2007.
- We will introduce a Homemaker's Pension, for pensioner spouses currently in receipt of the Qualified Adult Allowance, set at the level of a full non-contributory pension.
- We will remove the requirement whereby a person reaching 65 must first retire for a period before being able to work and retain a portion of their pension. We will, at the same time, examine and seek to remove other financial disincentives for people of pension age who may want to continue some form of employment.

Supplementary Pensions for Lower-Income Groups

- Lower income groups are unlikely to take out personal pensions and do not benefit from tax subventions designed to increase pensioner incomes. We will establish a group to report on options for lower income groups to ensure that

they can have an earnings-related pension when they retire. This report will be published and acted upon during the term of the next Government.

National Pension Reserve Fund

- The overwhelming lesson from other EU countries is that an aging population can put major strains on government finances and force a significant tightening in pension provision. All demographic projections show that Ireland will face these pressures in the future if no advance provision is made. We reject the short-term policies of those who advocate using all available resources for current spending. **We are committed to maintaining the National Pension Reserve Fund and the payment of 1% of GNP per annum into the Fund – and we will not raid it as proposed by other parties.**

INVESTING IN A QUALITY PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

The development of a world-class public health service is a core objective for Fianna Fáil. Following an extensive series of detailed studies and reports, we have published the National Health Strategy, the most comprehensive plan of its type ever produced in this country.

A combination of greater investment and a reform of the system will provide a high-quality and accessible health service for all. It will ensure a major expansion in the level and quality of services throughout the country. And it will encourage the end of the two-tier health system by ensuring that public patients will have access to timely and quality services in all parts of the system.

A lot Done Since 1997

- Health funding has been increased by 120%.
- As a result, this year over 100,000 more treatments will be carried out than was the case in 1997.
- Total employment in the health sector is up significantly, with over 4,000 more nurses, doctors and other health professionals working in the system.
- the largest programme of modernisation of health services in the history of the state is underway, through €3.3 billion included in the National Development Plan.
- The first extension in hospital bed capacity in decades is underway, with 709 beds being put in place this year.
- Over 4,000 day, residential and respite care places for people with disabilities have been put in place as part of the largest ever expansion in disability services.
- Services for older people have been expanded significantly, with over 1300 new staff working in dedicated services and almost 2,000 new community nursing and day care places have been provided. This year, total funding for services for older people is €168 million higher than in 1997.
- €749 million of full-year funding is already put in place for the development of services in line with the National Health Strategy.
- The first national studies on critical areas such as acute bed capacity and value for money within the health system have been completed.
- A new partnership structure within the health system to help develop policies on a more constructive and inclusive basis has been put in place.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

Through the National Health Strategy, we have provided the most comprehensive ever blueprint for the development of a world-class health system for all. Based on the most extensive programme of consultation and research ever carried out in this country, implementation has already begun – through the putting in place of €749 million of full-year funding for service development. The Strategy forms the basis of our agenda for the years ahead.

In Government, Fianna Fáil will:

- Implement the National Health Strategy, through a coordinated multi-annual programme of service development.
- further develop the our hospital system in order to ensure that they will have the capacity to treat people within new national guidelines for maximum waiting times.
- expand public hospital beds in line with a programme to increase total capacity by 3,000 during the period of the Strategy.
- Permanently end waiting lists in our hospitals within two years through a combination of bed capacity, primary care, secondary care and targeted reform initiatives.
- reform the system of planning and funding our hospitals to ensure that the needs of people in all parts of the country are addressed, and that public funding is producing the highest possible level and quality of care.
- improve the staffing of our hospitals by expanding the number of nurses working in key professional positions, hiring additional consultants and more health professionals, especially in priority areas, including general practice and emergency facilities.
- Implement a full range of measures to improve Accident and Emergency Services by significantly reducing waiting times and having senior doctors available at all times.
- give hospitals extra resources where they can specifically show how, as a result, they can treat more patients in a more efficient way.
- A set of national quality protocols will also be developed which will require that all patients, irrespective of where they live, receive the quality of care which they require.
- End waiting lists for appropriate care places for people with disabilities.
- implement a major reform and development of primary care services. As a starting point, 24-hour GP cover will be extended throughout the country by implementing a new co-operative and out-of-hours service.
- We will also develop a network of primary care centres where general practitioners, community health nurses, physiotherapists and other professionals will work together to improve care available to all groups.
- Extend medical card eligibility to over 200,000 extra people, with a clear priority being given to families with children.
- Develop community facilities for the elderly, including community nursing units, in such a way as to actively promote independence.

CHILDREN

Fianna Fáil has worked hard to develop a new approach to the way that our society listens to and acts in the interests of children. The National Children's Strategy has provided a blueprint for an Ireland where every child can develop to their full potential. The United Nations has praised it as a model of its type and the process of completely re-orientating policy and implementation is now well underway.

A lot done since 1997

- Services for vulnerable children have been significantly expanded, with funding increased by €174m.
- A new deal for foster care has been implemented, with major increases in funding and support for foster families.
- Family support initiatives such as the Springboard Projects have begun to have an impact in improving the life chances of children in the most marginalized families.
- The Children Act has been enacted, completely reforming the laws in relation to the care of children, including introducing options to custodial sentences.
- The Children's Office has been established and is now providing leadership in the development, implementations and oversight of policy.
- Child Benefit has been dramatically increased and the Government's policies have meant that child poverty has been reduced, with over 75,000 children lifted out of poverty.
- We published the Children First guidelines on the prevention and handling of child abuse and have funded their implementation. These guidelines have received widespread international praise.
- We have put in place the first ever national childcare strategy and so far provided funding for over 30,000 Childcare places.

An Agenda for the Years ahead

- We will work to end Child Poverty, with, at a minimum, a reduction of the rate to below 2% within five years.
- We will complete our programme of multi-annual increases in Child Benefit and ensure that there is no going back to the days when it received only minor and occasional increases.
- We will fully implement the Children's Strategy.
- We will develop a National Play and Recreation policy which will aim to ensure that all children have access to at least a minimum standard of play and recreation facilities.
- We will establish the Office of the Children's Ombudsman in accordance with our recent legislation on this topic and have the office fully operational during 2002.
- We will publish independent evaluations of all child welfare services.
- We will fully implement the Children First guidelines for the prevention, identification, reporting, assessment, treatment and management of child abuse in all its forms.
- We will ensure that the National Longitudinal Study of Children is fully established and that the information generated will be widely disseminated.

- We will ensure that every county implements a Childcare Strategy by the end of 2002, providing the planning and funding basis to significantly increase childcare provision.
- We will strengthen the parental leave scheme in line with the recommendations of the social partners.

EDUCATION DRIVING PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY

Fianna Fáil has always put education at the heart of its work in Government. We have been behind every major expansion in participation and investment in education. Over the last five years we have built further on this tradition. Education is central to our programme of building further economic and social progress across the next five years.

We will invest significantly in developing the quality and inclusiveness of all levels of education, from pre-school to advanced research. Clear priority will be given to expanding educational opportunity, while also underpinning and developing the system as a whole. It is our vision that every child will receive the support they need to achieve their full potential and that every citizen will have the opportunity to participate in lifelong learning.

A Lot Achieved since 1997

One of the first decisions taken by the new Fianna Fáil-led Government in mid-1997 was to agree extra funding for education. Since then, we have continued to prioritise education, implementing a comprehensive programme of investment and reform. We have increased Education spending by 86%, to €5.4 billion. This is having a direct impact, with international studies showing significant improvements in our standing on issues such as adult literacy, integrating IT into schools and building up quality research in our Universities and Institutes.

Some of the key achievements of this Government have been:

- Dramatically increasing funding for building, running and renovating schools
- Bringing Irish education rapidly into the forefront of the information age
- Implementing programmes to tackle disadvantage at all levels of education
- Delivering the smallest class sizes in the history of Irish Education by appointing 4,000 extra teachers.
- Radically developing supports for children with special needs
- Investing massively in Adult Education

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

- To ensure that early-education services deliver the maximum benefit for all children, we will introduce a national early-education, training, support and certification system and expand state-funded early-education places, with the priority being given to a new national system of funded early-education for children with intellectual disabilities and children in areas of concentrated disadvantage.
- We will continue to reduce the pupil:teacher ratio in our schools. Over the next five years we will progressively introduce maximum class guidelines which will ensure that the average size of classes for children under 9 will be below the international best-practice guideline of 20:1.
- We will continue the expansion in teacher training, introduce reforms to teacher training courses as recommended by an expert review and develop a series of initiatives to increase teacher supply.

- We will implement changes to retention and support policies which will assist schools in areas of significant disadvantage to recruit and retain teachers.
- Every school will receive support for the purchase of appropriate and age-related literacy tests to assist teachers in their work.
- We will further expand adult literacy services through the provision of training places for over 70,000 people during the next five years.
- We will continue our policy of implementing significant increases in direct school funding.
- We will ensure that reducing absenteeism and early-school leaving is a core priority over the next five years.
- We will establish a new targeted scheme of school meals for disadvantaged pupils which will combine existing schemes and integrate them within other initiatives.
- We will build on the unprecedented investment which we have made in school buildings to ensure that every school attains modern standards within the next five years.
- Over the next five years we will ensure that Irish schools are at the top of international tables in terms of the use of information technologies in curriculum delivery and will examine the use of computers in the State Examination system.
- We will establish a national expert advice, oversight and provision service for special needs education by end-2002.
- We will develop on a North-South basis a Centre of Excellence for study, research and training on special needs and the development and dissemination of best practice models.
- Over the next five years we will progressively develop adult education services to a stage where we will offer a “Second-Chance Guarantee”. Under the guarantee every person who left school without completing the junior-cycle at second level will be offered the chance to participate on an adult education course.
- We will continue our unprecedented programme to modernize third-level buildings throughout the country.
- We will continue to support advanced research in third-level institutions. As part of this we will establish an overall Irish Research Council on a statutory basis. The two existing non-statutory Research Councils will become statutory entities of this wider body. The IRC will have responsibility for individual and limited-term project funding.
- We will ensure that the number of mature students in third-level expands significantly over the next 5 years and the number of disadvantaged students participating is doubled over the same period.
- We will address the need to expand third-level provision in key areas through Reachout facilities linked to existing institutions. Two pilot projects are already underway and further projects will be provided almost immediately to provide a network of support for students and industry.
- We will promote Ireland as a centre of excellence in education and research to attract overseas students and researchers.

DISABILITY AND CARING

Fianna Fáil believes that every individual should be helped to develop to their fullest potential. Over the last five years we have implemented programme of legislative and service development to assist people with disabilities and carers which has gone dramatically further than the record of any previous government. This programme is already directly benefiting thousands of people. But we recognise that the historical lack of provision requires continued effort, and we are committed to implementing a further major programme in this area.

A lot Done Since 1997

- Funding for disability services in the Department of Health and Children alone has increased by 147%, from €391m to €961m
- Over 4,000 new day, respite and residential care places have been put in place, representing the largest development programme in the history of disability services in this country.
- Put in place a programme to end the inappropriate use of psychiatric facilities for people with intellectual disabilities and ensured that this is over half-way to completion.
- Four major pieces of legislation have been implemented. These are:
 - The Equal Status Act
 - The Employment Equality Act
 - The National Disability Authority Act
 - The Comhairle Act
- The number of dedicated teachers for children with disabilities has increased from 100 to over 1,000, with the number of special assistants for these children increasing from 300 to over 3,000.
- Key disability services have been mainstreamed, ending the era of segregated services.
- We have provided significant funding for the establishment and running of People with Disabilities Ireland, the first national representative body to include all groups and base its elections on a universal, county-based franchise.
- The Home Helps payment has been increased significantly.
- The Disabled Person's Grant for modifications to private houses has been doubled and a scheme was introduced to provide for modifications in new houses.
- A new Carers' Benefit Scheme has been introduced and the Carers' Allowance, a scheme introduced by Fianna Fáil, has been extended from 9,000 to nearly 25,000 this year.
- A new respite care grant for carers' has been introduced.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

- We will complete our programme to end the waiting list for appropriate care services for people with disabilities and will, as a part of this, complete our programme to end the inappropriate use of psychiatric facilities for people with learning disabilities.

- We will complete consultations on the Disabilities Bill and will bring the amended Bill through the Oireachtas during 2002 and include provisions for individual rights of assessment, appeals, provision and redress.
- We will refer to the All-Party Committee on the Constitution the issue of constitutional provision for positive action measures. The Committee will be asked to complete a programme of research, consultation and debate within 12 months, to address implications such as those for private property and to make a specific recommendation to Government.
- We will, following further consultations, enact the Education (People with Disabilities) Bill and establish as a matter of priority a new dedicated Special Needs Education Council with independent assessment, appeals and redress mechanisms.
- We will provide a statutory basis for the achievement of the 3% employment quota in the civil service.
- We will establish a National Centre for Universal Design to serve as a leader in promoting universal access.
- We will complete the development of the National Centre for Excellence for the Visually Impaired.
- We will complete the work of the group examining the introduction of a costs of disability payment by end-2002.
- We will introduce a new Home Subvention scheme to maximise support to those needing full time care in the community.
- We will improve the Carer's Allowance so that all carer's whose joint family income is at the average industrial wage will qualify for a Carer's Allowance at the full rate.

HOUSING

Fianna Fáil remains committed to a high level of home ownership, with public provision for the least well off, while recognising the need to encourage a wide variety of accommodation options to cater for different needs. Fianna Fáil in Government will seek to maintain over the next 5 years the record level of new house completions achieved during the current term in office.

The supply of new homes, with targeted schemes for lower income groups, is the key to keeping the price of homes at an affordable level for potential first-time buyers entering the housing market. While recognising the role of the investor in the housing market, Fianna Fáil is determined that this should not be at the expense of making conditions impossible for first-time buyers.

A Lot Done Since 1997

Our record in the housing area over the last 5 years is unparalleled. Right across the housing spectrum, we have introduced radical changes and supported their implementation with unprecedented resources.

- In every year of this Government, housing output has reached a new record level. Last year's record 52,000 completions was 50% up on 1997. Overall, 230,000 new houses have been built since 1997.
- We introduced the most radical initiative in the housing sector in the history of the State under which up to 20% of residential land must be provided to the local authority at the lower "agricultural" (rather than residential) value for the provision of social and affordable housing.
- More than €1.7 billion is being provided for housing this year, almost 3½ times what it was in 1997. Overall, €9 billion is to be invested under the National Development Plan.
- We have brought the local authority housing programme to its highest level for a generation. 7,000 local authority houses were started last year and 5,000 were completed. Overall, the housing needs of some 11,000 households were met last year, the highest level since 1986.
- We have made major progress on the €2.5 billion Ballymun Regeneration Initiative with the first of the new homes now completed and occupied. Regeneration programmes are also underway in inner city housing complexes in both Dublin and Cork.
- We have also set a new record in the voluntary housing sector where, last year, thanks to the improved funding which we have made available, 1,250 new voluntary houses were provided for elderly, disabled and homeless people.
- We established a Commission on the Private Rented Sector and legislation to give effect to the Commission's comprehensive report is now being prepared.
- The funding for the Disabled Person's Grant, the Essential Repairs Grant, the Special Housing Aid for the Elderly and the Shared Ownership Scheme have all been significantly improved. For example, we have doubled the effective maximum Disabled Person's Grant to €20,320. And the grant can now cover up to 90% of the cost of the works, compared to two-thirds previously.
- We're addressing the difficult problem of homelessness in a planned way through a new Integrated Strategy which we're supporting with record funding. And we're also not just being reactive – we have now put in place a Preventative Strategy to target those at risk of homelessness and help to stop them falling into

that situation in the first place. Together, these plans have the capacity to end homelessness in the years ahead.

- We've passed new legislation in relation to traveller accommodation, all local authorities have drawn up plans for accommodating travellers in their areas and the numbers of traveller families accommodated has increased by 22% since 1997. Indeed, last year alone, some 350 traveller households were provided with accommodation, the highest number ever in any one year.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

Fianna Fáil in Government will continue its multi-stranded approach to addressing housing needs right across the spectrum. This will involve sustaining the record levels of house building we have achieved, continuing the record level of funding we are providing for the wide range of social, affordable and voluntary housing initiatives and addressing the needs of specific groups such as the elderly, the disabled and travellers, through appropriate targeted measures.

- To ensure a continued record level of housing supply, a key factor in stabilising house prices, we will extend the Serviced Land Initiative, make more efficient use of housing land and make further Special Development Zone designations as required.
- We will commit to a further expansion of the various social housing programmes so that we reach a target of meeting the housing needs of 15,000 households per annum.
- We will continue our strong record of financial support for the voluntary housing sector so that the ultimate target of 4,000 accommodation units per annum envisaged under the National Development Plan can be reached.
- We will implement the most significant ever package of reforms in rented accommodation sector, arising from the report of the Commission on the Private Rented Sector, including the establishment of a new statutory Private Residential Tenancies Board. This will provide the basis for a more professionally operated private rented sector, with greater security of tenure for tenants.
- We will consider the introduction of legislation to regulate the establishment and operation of apartment complex management companies.
- We will ensure that the comprehensive Homelessness Strategies now in place are implemented in full, taking pre-emptive steps to ensure that high risk groups do not become homeless in the first place and that for those who do find themselves homeless, that we have a full range of services – emergency accommodation, health, welfare, education and training – available to assist them.
- We will ensure the full implementation of local authority Traveller Accommodation Plans.
- We will adapt the New House Grant to reflect the requirements of the National Climate Change Strategy.
- We will introduce a carefully targeted and focused scheme which will conserve and improve our older housing stock.
- We will maximise the use of vacant space in buildings for residential accommodation, particularly measures to respond to the “empty nest” situations where large family homes are now occupied by only one or both parents.
- We will take further steps to streamline the approval procedures for local authority house building projects.

- Through the local authority system, Housing Advice Services will be provided information on all the housing options and supports will be available to the public.
- Enforcement of planning and building regulations and standards will be strengthened through the building control officers of Local Authorities.
- We will finalise the compilation of a National Public Property Register to identify properties in state control suitable for housing projects.
- We will ensure that the statutory enforcement of access requirements are strengthened.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Five years ago, Fianna Fáil promised to prioritise the protection of our environment. We have been true to our word. The record economic growth we have had since 1997, if not properly managed, had the potential to negatively impact on our environment. However, the programme of environmental actions which we have been working so hard to implement has shown that it is possible to secure significant economic progress without sacrificing the environment we hold in trust for future generations. Indeed, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, in its first ever Environmental Performance Review of Ireland, endorsed the overall good quality of our environment.

A lot done since 1997

Right across all the environmental sectors – air, water, waste, litter and climate – we have left our mark of achievement. In particular;

- Air quality has benefited from our extension of the smoky coal ban to 10 additional cities and towns and our ban on the sale of leaded petrol introduced in January 2000.
- For the first time since water quality monitoring began 30 years ago, we have succeeded in reducing the proportion of our rivers and lakes which are suffering from pollution.
- After shameful neglect by the previous Government, we have put in place the first ever concerted programme of action to address the quality of drinking water in group schemes, backed up by record funding.
- For the first time ever, comprehensive waste plans are in place right across the country, separate household collection of recyclable waste is being rolled out (already covering more than 150,000 households in Dublin alone), “bring banks” for recycling have more than trebled and more than €125m is being provided for waste recycling activities.
- We have introduced a new plastic bags levy and will shortly be introducing a levy on waste being disposed in landfill, providing important financial incentives to make recycling more attractive. We’re setting up a new ringfenced Environment Fund into which the proceeds of these two levies will be placed, funding a wide range of important environmental initiatives.
- We have injected considerable energy into the drive against litter. Awareness and education activities have been strengthened but so too has the whole area of enforcement which, for too long, had been the “poor relation” – indeed, comparing the first 6 months of 2001 with the corresponding period in 1997, on the spot fines for litter increased from less than 1,000 to more than 13,000 and the number of litter wardens employed more than trebled to 300.
- We have lost no time in responding to probably the greatest threat facing humanity – climate change. We produced a comprehensive strategy setting out the wide range of measures we have to take. And we lost no time in implementing those measures – although the Strategy is little more than a year old, the full implementation of the measures already announced or underway will yield 20% of the required reduction in emissions.
- As promised in our 1997 manifesto, we have brought all the environmental stakeholders together for the first time in a formal sense through *Comhar – The National Sustainable Development Partnership* which has proved to be a

very significant success in terms of removing some of the conflict from environmental issues.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

Over the next 5 years in Government, Fianna Fáil will –

- Establish a new Office of Environmental Enforcement dedicated to ensuring that the considerable body of environmental legislation now in place is effectively enforced. We will also ensure that the penalties for breaches of environmental legislation reflect the seriousness of the offences involved.
- Extend the smoky coal ban to further centres, reduce both toxic Persistent Organic Pollutants and other pollutants which cause acidification and radically upgrade our air quality monitoring system.
- Continue with our €4.4 billion programme of investment in water and sewerage schemes, ensuring that sewage discharges from all our major urban centres are treated in line with EU Directives.
- Ensure that group water schemes meet the quality standards of the Drinking Water Directive by end 2003.
- Increase by 10% per annum the number of blue flags awarded each year up to 2007.
- Establish all remaining river basin management projects by end-2002.
- We will ensure that effective management structures are put in place to develop the Liffey Valley as a national park and amenity.
- Through good farming practice, ensure that the water quality threats posed by phosphorous and nitrates are addressed.
- Modernise the outdated legislation in the water services area with a new Water Services Bill which will deliver a more professional water service and better value for money.
- Establish a new National Waste Management Advisory Board to co-ordinate and advise on all aspects of waste management policy.
- Extend the separate household collection of recyclables to most urban centres by 2006 and support the recycling effort by moving to weight-based charging for waste collection.
- More than double the number of Civic Amenity Sites where items can be brought for recycling and more than treble the number of bring banks.
- Strive to secure early agreement on industry led initiatives for recycling and recovery of waste arising from construction/demolition, motor vehicles, tyres, newsprint, electronic equipment and batteries – in the absence of agreement, we will regulate to introduce mandatory obligations.
- Enhance our hard hitting awareness campaign in relation to litter, supported by finance from the new Environment Fund, ensure that State organisations lead the anti-litter drive by example and press ahead with the full implementation of the Litter Action Plan and the National Litter Pollution Monitoring System.
- Earmark specific funds from the general funding allocations to local authorities for improving environmental performance.
- Through *Comhar – The National Sustainable Development Partnership*, continue to work in partnership with all the relevant stakeholders to address the key environmental challenges we face.

CONTINUING THE FIGHT AGAINST CRIME

Fianna Fáil's stands for a society where all people can feel safe in their communities, business and homes. Our outgoing Government was the first in recent history to give priority to improving law and order and we have made a difference. If re-elected, Fianna Fáil in Government will commit even further resources to tackle crime, break up the gangs involved in serious crime, especially robberies and drug trafficking, free the country of any remaining paramilitary activity, and reduce random and gratuitous violence caused by excessive alcohol or stimulatory drugs.

A Lot Done Since 1997

This Government has made restoring respect for the rule of law a top priority, the absence of which has a disproportionately negative impact on poorer neighbourhoods and people. Fianna Fáil in Government has made major inroads into crime:

- Unprecedented level of resources have been made available to the Garda Síochána including a massive increase of 53% in the Garda Síochána Vote, from 1997 to the current year;
- The strength of the Garda Síochána now exceeds 11,700, an all-time high, which represents an increase of approximately 900 gardaí since the Government took office, and will reach the planned strength of 12,000 this year;
- The number of prison places has been increased by two-thirds or over 1,200 places with a further 700 closed places on the way;
- The revolving prison door has been firmly shut, doing away with the unplanned temporary release of prisoners;
- Indictable crime has been cut by 27%;
- Important steps that have been taken in relation to dealing effectively with crime and crime-related issues through the establishment of the State's first ever National Crime Council;
- Record Funding of over €110 million under the National Development Plan 2000-2006 for crime prevention directed towards young offenders;
- Expansion of the Garda CCTV programme, for which €15 million has been allocated over the period 2001 to 2003;
- Successful operations undertaken by the Criminal Assets Bureau and the excellent results it has secured.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

If elected to serve in government, Fianna Fáil will :

- Expand the Garda Síochána by a further 2,000.
- Target the expanded numbers particularly at those areas of greatest need, especially areas experiencing a significant drugs problem.
- Increase the number of civilians attached to the force so that trained police officers are released to operational duties tackling crime and defending our citizens.
- Extend the use of CCTV cameras and also grant aid local communities to provide them.
- Create an independent Garda Inspectorate, which will have the power to investigate complaints.

- Conduct regular detailed analyses of Garda to population ratios to ensure every region in the country has appropriate policing and in this context we will support rural Garda stations to ensure no closures of needed facilities.
- Ensure that in accordance with the Constitution only one army and one police force will operate in this State.
- Deploy the full weight of the State, including the post-Omagh legislation, against any organisation that seeks to continue the violence of the last 30 years.
- Target the assets of all persons involved in drug dealing and, in particular, middle-ranking criminals thus breaking the link between drug abuser and large-scale supplier.
- Continue to target dealers at local level by making additional resources available to existing drugs units and for the establishment of similar units in areas where they do not currently exist.
- Establish a co-ordinating framework for drugs policy in each Garda District, to liaise with the community on drug-related matters and act as a source of information for parents and members of the public.
- Ensure each Garda District and Sub-District be required to produce a Drug Policing Plan to include multi-agency participation in targeting drug dealers
- Introduce a Proceeds of Corruption Act modeled on the Proceeds of Crime legislation, to further target white collar crime and corruption in public and private sectors.
- Complete our programme of modernising the prisons and providing extra places, so as to avoid overcrowding and the reopening of the revolving door.
- Make full use of the probation service where appropriate as an alternative to custody.
- Tackle the high level of illiteracy and lack of educational accomplishment prevalent in many prisoners by supporting enhanced educational programmes within prisons
- Provide skills training courses to enhance employment prospects on release.
- Provide for compulsory drugs testing of prisoners where appropriate.
- Provide for Drug Testing and Treatment Orders.
- Require convicted drug dealers to register with the Gardaí after leaving prison.
- Fully enforce the measures in the licensing laws that ensure mandatory temporary closures of licensed premises - pubs, clubs and off-licences - where there have been convictions for allowing underage drinking.
- Ensure that the role of Victim Support continues to be recognised and strengthened as an essential service
- Guarantee funding of Victim Support as a cornerstone of Government policy in victim care and review existing funding levels in the light of proposed reviews
- Establish a "Victim's Council" to bring together a range of victim interests to assist in the formulation of victim policy.
- Extend the power to the DPP to appeal against lenient sentences in serious cases before the District Court.
- Continue to support the Courts Service to ensure it and the judiciary are equipped to dispense justice equitably.
- Introduce night courts and weekend courts.

BETTER FACILITIES FOR THE ENJOYMENT OF SPORT

Fianna Fáil has always placed a high priority on sport. Our decision at the outset of this Government to make the Sports portfolio a full Cabinet position has put sport at centre stage. Over the last five years we have allocated record levels of funding for the provision of sports facilities at local, regional and national level so that everyone now has the opportunity to enjoy sporting activity, either as a participant or as a supporter. We have also invested substantially through the National Governing bodies in the coaching and training of sportspeople from junior to elite level. Fianna Fáil remains committed to the provision of world-class sports facilities and in particular to the building of a National Stadium at Abbotstown.

A lot done since 1997

- We have allocated €211 million to 2,984 projects under the Sports Capital Programme for the provision of sporting and recreational facilities at all levels. (The Rainbow Government allocated just €24 million).
- The annual budget for Sport and Recreation has increased from a paltry €17 million in 1997 to almost €120 million in 2002.
- An investment of €57 million has been made over the last three years under the Local Authority Swimming Pools Programme representing a five-fold increase in the budget for the Programme.
- The construction of Ireland's first ever 50 metre pool at the University of Limerick has been completed and was officially opened by An Taoiseach last April. Work is well underway on the country's second 50 metre pool at Abbotstown which will be open in time for the 2003 Special Olympics.
- The Irish Sports Council was established on a statutory basis from 1 July 1999. Since then, its programme budget has increased from €12 million to €24 million.
- Arising out of the Murphy Inquiry into child sexual abuse in swimming in 1999, a revised Code of Good Practise in Children's Sport is now being applied across all sporting organisations to ensure a safe, secure, and welcoming environment for children participating in sport.
- In November 1999, we introduced our first ever-national anti-doping in sport programme. Ireland is one of just 30 countries that compete in International Sporting Competitions with such a programme.
- Grant aid to sporting bodies, including the Paralympic Council and Special Olympic Ireland has been substantially increased during the lifetime of this Government.
- We helped secure the Ryder Cup, the most prestigious international golfing event in the world, to be held in 2006.
- An initiative to promote sport among older people has been put in place.
- A strategy for High Performance Sport was developed following a review of our performance in the Sydney Olympics. €3million has been allocated towards the commencement of this strategy.
- A pilot scheme for local sports partnerships has been introduced and is now operating in 12 counties.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

- Fianna Fáil will continue to invest in sports facilities around the country, particularly at local level where clubs of all codes, run by volunteers, remain the backbone of Irish sport.
- We will start work on the construction at Abbotstown of a world-class national stadium that meets the needs of the three main sporting organizations. We also remain committed to the development of a range of other top class facilities at Abbotstown.
- We will continue to support the joint Ireland/Scotland effort to host the European Football Championships.
- We will work with local authorities to provide at municipal level a range of public facilities such as swimming pools, gymnasia and synthetic, floodlit playing pitches.
- We will establish mechanisms involving relevant government departments, the Irish Sports Council, the local sports partnership and sporting organizations, to promote sport among school children and inculcate a life-long habit of physical activity at an early age.
- We will continue to support the implementation of the High Performance Strategy and in particular, its short-term aim of improving Ireland's team performance at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens.
- Following a review of the operation of the existing Local Sports Partnerships, we will support their establishment throughout the country as quickly as possible.
- Through the Local Sports Partnerships, we will seek to advance the role of the Community Games in Irish sport.
- We will continue to encourage voluntarism in Irish Sport and we will recognize, on a national platform the contribution of individual local volunteers by setting up National Volunteer Awards on the lines of the Gaisce Awards.
- Preparations are well underway for the Special Olympic Games to be held here in 2003. The Government has given €10 million towards the cost of hosting the Games. We will work with Special Olympics Ireland and other organizations to ensure that the enthusiasm engendered by the Games results in increased participation in sport by people with disabilities.
- The Special Olympics will be the biggest sporting event to be held in the world in 2003. Three years later, we will host the Ryder Cup. Fianna Fáil will continue to invest in the attraction of major sporting events to this country.

SUSTAINING A CONFIDENT CULTURE

Fianna Fáil believe that cultural vitality is an important expression of our national identity. Our aim is to ensure that in our Republic cultural activity is available and accessible to all. We want to break down barriers between people and cultural participation and expression, be those barriers about region, about disability or about an inhibiting perception of eliteism. Irish artists are internationally recognised and honoured.

In Government Fianna Fáil will continue and seek to enhance the level of support for the arts so as to encourage artistic composition, performance, and appreciation. Drawing strength from Ireland's own artistic talent and vision, we will seek the widest possible engagement with best international influence. Particularly we will seek to deepen and enhance collaboration and exchange on this island and to take full advantage of the possibilities offered by our membership of the European Union, and the growing multicultural dimension to our society at home.

A lot done since 1997

- Fianna Fáil in Government has delivered on funding for the arts, under successive Arts Plans. The Arts Plan in place when we took up office involved only €33m and had been lengthened in duration to five years. We delivered the required funding one year quicker and have fully implemented a new Plan providing €127m for the three years 1999-2001.
- Fifty years after the establishment of the Arts Council a major review of arts legislation has been completed and a new Bill is ready for discussion and enactment by the next Dáil.
- €62m has been provided for arts and cultural centres around the country to provide access to quality venues for the creation, expression and appreciation of art and culture.
- The National Cultural Institutions, under-financed for years, have got substantial additional resources to improve services and access.
- A Heritage Fund has been established to assist the national institutions acquire artefacts of significant heritage value.
- A comprehensive set of measures for the protection of our built heritage has been implemented, including the established of the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage on a statutory basis. This agenda is underpinned by a €127m programme to protect heritage properties in state care.
- The protection of our natural heritage has been enhanced by the enactment of the Wildlife Amendment Act.
- A major review of the Irish film industry was carried out resulting in a 10 year strategic plan which is helping to underpin and develop the industry.
- The Music Board has been established.
- We have published an Action Plan on Architecture.
- Overall, 11 pieces of legislation have been enacted, compared to 5 during the previous government.
- The funding for TG4 had been doubled since 1997.

An agenda for the years ahead

- To provide the necessary funding to sustain and develop the increased level of activity in the arts round the country, through the Arts Council, and otherwise in accordance with statutory provisions.
- We will support the implementation of the Third Arts Plan.
- To enact a new Arts Act, the first in over fifty years, to provide a more inclusive definition of the Arts and map out, on a statutory basis, a new relationship between artists, the Council and the Minister.
- To enhance cultural facilities at a spread of locations around the country.
- To assist the strategic development of the National Cultural Institutions.
- To foster the Irish film industry through financial incentives and the restructured Irish Film Board.
- To implement the recently published National Heritage Plan.
- To develop measures, in partnership with local authorities, to protect and strengthen areas of Georgian built heritage that surround the core Georgian areas of Dublin and other centers.
- To develop maximum North-South cooperation directly and through the relevant agencies, in recognition of common interests and a largely shared culture.
- To help develop the music industry in Ireland through the Music Board.
- To ensure the early establishment of the Irish Academy for the Performing Arts under the aegis of the Department of Education and Science.
- To rebuild the Abbey, our National Theatre.
- To build a new facility in Wexford to host the renowned Opera Festival and to serve as a regional centre for the arts.
- To consider with urgency the recommendations that will be made by the recently established Forum on Broadcasting.
- We will continue to support the development of Irish language broadcasting. In line with legislation which we have already enacted, we will establish TG4 as a separate statutory body.
- Finalise the long-term strategic development of the National Concert Hall.
- Support the development of arts education in general, with a special effort being made to increase both the availability of and participation in music education.

THE IRISH LANGUAGE AND THE GAELTACHT

Tá borradh agus spéis sa Ghaeilge méadaithe as cuimse le blianta beaga anuas. Tá gníomhaíochtaí úrnua ar siúl go huile-oileánda ó bunaíodh Foras na Gaeilge agus tá scéimeanna teanga an Údaráis agus na Roinne ag fágáil rian dearfach ar fhorbairt na teanga sa Gaeltacht féin.

Tá sé mar pholasaí ag Fianna Fáil tógáil ar an obair dhearfach atá ar siúl le cúig bliana anuas agus dul i ngleic le straitéisí úrnua cruthaíocha a láidreoidh an Ghaeilge ar fud na tíre agus sa Gaeltacht, ach go háirithe.

The strengthening of the language and of the Irish speaking communities has been a central objective of Fianna Fáil, as it has been since the foundation of the party.

Fianna Fáil have encouraged a large increase in the use of and interest in the Irish Language over the last number of years. Since the establishment of Foras na Gaeilge all Island activities have increased, and the language schemes operated by Údarás na Gaeltachta and the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands have had a positive effect on the development of the language in the Gaeltacht areas. Action will be taken to give a fresh impetus to the ongoing efforts to strengthen the position of the Irish language in the Gaeltacht and throughout the country.

A lot Done since 1997

- An Interdepartmental Committee on Islands, Gaeltacht and Irish Language was established and has been chaired by Minister of State to ensure policies are implemented effectively and that the delivery of State services to Islands and the Gaeltacht is co-ordinated.
- An Foras Teanga was established with the commencement of the British Irish Agreement Act, 1999, representing a radical development in relation to the promotion of the Irish language on an all-island basis. Bord na Gaeilge has been dissolved and has been replaced by the Irish language agency of An Foras. (An agency for the promotion of Ullans also forms part of An Foras.) An Foras Teanga now has responsibility in relation to Irish language educational publication and terminology and the funding of eight specified voluntary Irish language organisations.
- In April 2000 the Government established a Commission to review and assess the position of the Irish language in the Gaeltacht and to make recommendations on the strengthening of the language therein.
- The Official Languages Equality Bill has been published, setting out a legal basis for the official languages (Irish and English) and in addition it will ensure the language rights of the citizen in her/his dealings with the State.
- Significant investment has been made in the support of the Irish language in schools in terms of curriculum development.
- The Údarás na Gaeltachta (Amendment)(No. 2) Act, 1999 radically amended the legislation relating to Údarás na Gaeltachta, including the establishment of statutory Regional Boards of an tÚdarás and of an Evaluation Committee for an tÚdarás;.
- Total full-time employment in industries assisted by an tÚdarás has increased steadily since 1997.

- Additional finance has been made available for some Gaeltacht schemes which foster and promote the Irish language.
- Deontas Labhairt na Gaeilge has been increased to over €250.
- Mná tí who keep Irish Students have received 4 increases since 1997
- New house grants for Irish speakers on Gaeltacht Islands have been doubled to over €15,000
- Over €10 million has been spent under the Housing Acts (Gaeltacht) since 1997.
- Under the *National Development Plan*, in conjunction mainly with the Local Authorities but in some cases with the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources a major programme of marine works aimed at improving the pier infrastructure of the Gaeltacht and Islands is being implemented. Consultants have been employed to prepare Preliminary Reports on a number of harbour facilities most of which are now either completed or nearing completion.
- An extra €6 million per year has been provided for the improvement of Strategic Gaeltacht Roads. 2000 was the first year of a seven year plan, the objective of which, when completed, is having one good road of suitable standard into every Gaeltacht area. The additional funding, is in addition to the funding which would ordinarily be available to the relevant Local Authorities for the improvement of the roads in question.

An Agenda for the years ahead

- We will use the report of the Gaeltacht Commission – An Comisiún faoin nGaeilge sa Ghaeltacht as the basis for future policy.
- A West Coast Digital Corridor will be developed to provide high-quality broadband telecommunications facilities for both Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht communities from Donegal to Cork. Údarás na Gaeltachta will be charged with facilitating the provision of similar facilities in any Gaeltacht areas not covered by the Corridor, where demand exists, including offshore islands.
- We will enact the Official Languages Equality Bill in 2002.
- An action plan will be implemented to ensure that all State Departments and agencies will quickly meet their obligations under the Official Languages Equality legislation.
- Scéim Labhairt na Gaeilge will be fully reviewed in the context of modern day needs, and ways to how to promote the Irish language among young people will be examined.
- Youth and sports funding schemes will be reviewed in the context of their impact in the Gaeltacht and Islands.
- Assistance and advice will be made available to Irish language youth clubs, and the needs of the Irish summer colleges will be specifically addressed.
- An Foras will be requested to develop materials specifically for families who wish to raise their children through the medium of Irish.
- A comprehensive study of the current status of the language in the Irish media will be undertaken.
- The Language Assistant scheme in Gaeltacht schools will be strengthened and expanded to include cooperation with parents in the home.
- A comprehensive review of the needs of all Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht schools will be undertaken. As part of the work of the Department of Education & Science, the physical condition of all buildings used by these schools will be

reviewed and a programme put in place to ensure that they meet required standards.

- The development of the Gaeltacht infrastructure will continue through the schemes operated by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands and Údarás na Gaeltachta.
- The major works programme as outlined in the National Development Plan 2000 – 2006 will be carried out.
- The improvements carried out under the strategic roads scheme will continue, to ensure that the road infrastructure in remoter areas of the Gaeltacht will be improved and that there is at least one good road into every Gaeltacht area.
- The relevant national schemes will be reviewed to ensure that appropriate supports are in place for the Irish language childcare sector throughout the country.
- A strategic review will be completed by end-2002 in relation to the employment support work of Údarás na Gaeltachta with a view to identifying new strands of employment creation in Gaeltacht areas.
- The 1% arts scheme for infrastructural projects will be extended to all Gaeltacht infrastructural projects.

Promoting Gender Equality

As a republican party, Fianna Fáil believes that all people should have the opportunity to develop to their potential and to make a contribution to the economic and social life of society. The waste of human potential which stems from inequality must be of fundamental concern and tackling it must be a priority.

We believe that the key lesson of the last few decades on work on equality is that activity cannot be concentrated in one area, nor can progress be achieved primarily through distinct programmes. It is through the effective mainstreaming of equality policy that real progress can be achieved. At the same time, serious and sustained targeting on specific issues continues to be required.

In the different sections of this manifesto various initiatives for promoting equality are addressed. In the context of gender equality, we believe that, while there has been progress, much more remains to be done.

A Lot Done Since 1997

- We completely modernised and expanded Ireland's equality legislation through the Employment Equality and Equal Status Acts.
- The funding for the enforcement of equality legislation has been significantly expanded.
- The National Development Plan has provided for a major multi-annual programme for the funding equality promoting measures.
- The minimum wage has helped many thousands of women in low paid jobs.
- The provision of refuges and supports for women experiencing domestic violence have been significantly expanded.
- A national programme to promote family-friendly workplaces has been established.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

- We will implement the National Plan for Women and ensure that an effective review mechanism is put in place for implementation.
- We will publish regular reviews of the operation of equality legislation and ensure that the enforcement authorities are in a position to effectively carry out their duties.
- We will ensure that the issue of low pay continues to be addressed through a combination of tax, welfare and minimum wage policies.
- We will ensure that each public sector entity implements a structured programme to address imbalances in gender representation in management positions.
- We will implement the National Anti-Poverty Strategy's proposals for effectively ending poverty amongst women, with a minimum target of reducing it to below 2%.
- We will ensure that life-long learning policies are responsive to the needs of women and, in particular, ensure that FETAC and HETAC fulfil their mandates to develop appropriate mechanisms for recognising alternative modes of progression.

- We will ensure that flexible provision and childcare services are available in education and training programmes.
- We will ensure that there is a distinct funding stream for women's organisations and networks.
- We will fund a detailed study in differences in gender performances at third-level.
- We will ensure annual funding for awareness programmes to tackle violence against women and ensure that housing and shelter programmes fully address the needs of women who have experienced domestic violence.

SUPPORTING DIVERSITY AND TOLERANCE

In cultural terms, Ireland is becoming a more complex and diverse society. Fianna Fáil welcomes this new and growing diversity. As a republican party, we believe that tolerance and inclusivity are at the core of positive identities. But we also recognise that Ireland is facing new challenges to our assumptions and attitudes. We face this new century, confident both in our own traditions as a people and that other cultures and nationalities which differ from these traditions, can be accommodated within and greatly enrich them.

As Ireland becomes more diverse, we should learn from mistakes elsewhere and avoid any new divisions that might develop in our country on race or ethnic lines. We must also recognise that the historical prejudice experienced by Travellers, should have no place in Irish society. As a party and in Government, Fianna Fáil will continue to work to promote greater respect for the person and for the diversity, equality and cultural difference in Ireland

A Lot Done since 1997

Since 1997, Fianna Fáil in Government have:

- established the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Multiculturalism. This body draws on a wide range of expertise and represents many interests and organisations. Its brief is to advise the Government on combating racism and to make recommendations on best practice for the area.
- Developed and funded a public awareness programme, currently running, to address racism and promote a more inclusive, inter-cultural society. For these purposes, a core budget of €5.7 million has been allocated.
- Expanded the statutory basis for challenging racist behaviour in Ireland.
- set up the Equality Authority and the Director of Equality Investigations to fight discrimination on racial grounds when experienced by individuals.
- established a Human Rights Commission with new independent powers to promote human rights.
- Funded the Citizen Traveller campaign to challenge public attitudes towards persons in the Travelling community.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

Over the next five years, Fianna Fáil in Government will:

- uphold the entitlement of all people to equal treatment before the law
- undertake an annual review of the Anti-Racism campaign in order to identify new avenues to combat racism
- complete a review of the laws on incitement to hatred and ensure that people who incite racial hatred have no place in Irish society
- enhance the excellent work which is currently underway in our schools, to educate for diversity and promote tolerance
- prioritise the National Programme of Action to give effect to the commitments made at the World Conference Against Racism in Durban

- appoint an expert group on managing cultural change to advise Government on strategic issues and integrated approach to this complex issue
- review campaigns designed to promote tolerance and understanding between the settled and travelling communities and maintain multi-annual funding for targeted programmes.

ASYLUM AND IMMIGRATION

The issue of very large numbers of people seeking asylum has re-emerged as a major issue throughout Europe in recent years. With relatively little experience of this issue, and the presence of major existing strains in areas such as housing supply, Ireland has seen significant pressures. For example, the number of asylum applications rose from just over 400 to about 11,000 between 1995 and 2000.

We recognise that asylum is a complex, long-term issue that requires action at national, European and international levels. Within these contexts, we will work in a balanced way to:

- seek practical, enlightened and humane solutions
- uphold the key values and priorities of our modern State, and
- fully meet Ireland's obligations under the 1951 Geneva Convention and other international human rights organisations, to which Ireland belongs.

Fianna Fáil also recognise that a modern international economy requires a strategic immigration policy which is attuned to both the labour force changes and the needs of long-term economic development. We welcome immigrants who come here to work legally to support Ireland's development and we will help them to become full and active participants in Irish life.

A lot Done since 1997

In order to deal with our relatively new experience of immigration and asylum seekers, Fianna Fáil in Government have:

- increased processing capacity. There are now almost 700 staff working in the asylum processing and immigration areas, as compared with only 20 when the Government took office.
- reduced the processing times for asylum. Since November 2000, the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner has processed over 12,000 cases. The processing of asylum appeals in the Refugee Appeals Tribunal has also improved.
- established the Reception and Integration Agency. An Interim Advisory Board was appointed in February 2001 to oversee accommodation arrangements for asylum seekers, and to support integration of refugees into society, and
- concluded readmission agreements with Romania, Nigeria, Bulgaria and Poland.
- through the Illegal Immigrants (Trafficking) Act, 2000, created an offence of trafficking in illegal immigrants. Our Immigration Act, 1999, also set out in a transparent way the principles, powers and procedures governing the repatriation process.
- established the Garda National Immigration Bureau. Its functions include deportation and combating trafficking.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

We will build on our work by:

- ensuring that all new asylum applications can be finalised within six months and that other applications, which are currently outstanding, can be dealt with quickly
- increasing the rate of repatriation of failed asylum applicants, whose applications have been processed to finality, in order to maintain the integrity of asylum policy
- keeping under review the number of applications from non-nationals to remain in the State on the basis of parentage of an Irish-born child and initiate all-party discussions on the issue of such constitutional or other measures which might be required
- working with the International Office of Migration to devise a voluntary repatriation programme for illegal immigrants
- continue to develop the legislative framework for dealing with this complex issue. In particular, we will prepare a new Immigration and Residence Bill which will consolidate legislation in the area and provide for future developments
- review processing arrangements for work visas, including greater integration of consular and commercial reviews to ensure both speedy processing and reasonable safeguards
- ensure the effective monitoring of the working conditions of all persons with work visas.
- Through our Overseas Development Aid programme we will work to support the development of countries experiencing large-scale economic migration.

TACKLING DRUG ABUSE

Drugs can destroy the lives of not only individual users, but families and communities as well. The fight against drugs is one of the great challenges of the modern world and it one where we believe major progress can be achieved.

We believe in working on many levels at once. There are four key overall elements of our policy:

- Investing in **prevention** measures, particularly through education and community development
- Reducing the **supply** of drugs through tough measures
- Providing **treatment and rehabilitation** to help users to stabilise and recover
- Actively funding **research** into drugs so that new approaches can be identified.

A lot Done since 1997

- We have comprehensively reviewed all drugs-related programmes and policies and published a new **National Drugs Strategy** which is the most comprehensive and ambitious strategy of its type ever launched in this country.
- Funding of €155m has been targeted at areas experiencing a heroin problem in order to develop community facilities and supports.
- A dedicated fund of €130m has been established to develop sporting and recreational facilities for young people in areas experiencing a heroin problem.
- Areas experiencing a significant drugs problem have been prioritised under a range of mainstream programmes
- The number of treatment and rehabilitation places has been doubled to over 6,000 with an international review stating that Ireland now has one of the world's most effective drug treatment programmes.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

- We believe that a significant reduction in drug use can be achieved through the determined implementation of our Drugs Strategy and we are committed to this.
- We will continue to prioritise heroin and cocaine for intervention, and will publish separate national targets for supply reduction for each major type of drug.
- We will ensure that regional drugs task forces operate efficiently to ensure that prevention programmes are active in all areas of the country.
- We will ensure that an early-warning system, involving all key agencies, is in place to track the potential spread of heroin into new areas.
- We will publish annual reports of activity and progress towards the achievement of specific prevention, supply reduction and treatment targets.
- Additional Gardai will be concentrated in the areas experiencing the greatest drugs problems and the activities of middle-ranking dealers will be targeted
- Treatment and rehabilitation programmes will be expanded so that there is a place available for every person seeking the service.

- Having already made significant progress, by end-2002 we will publish a plan to completely end all heroin use in Irish prisons within the term of the next government. This will include the availability of treatment and rehabilitation for all who need them and the introduction of compulsory drug testing for prisoners where necessary. Where a person has been found to be involved in the supply of drugs to a prisoner we will introduce a new stiffer penalty.
- As part of the new regional management structures of the Department of Education & Science, local supports will be provided and new guidelines will be issued to all schools on the implementation of a drugs policy.

REGENERATING DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

While committed to the work required to tackle disadvantage evident in all areas, Fianna Fáil believes in targeting support to help our most marginalized communities to break the cycle of inter-generational disadvantage. In recent years, many communities which saw mass unemployment and a lack of facilities have experienced major progress. We want to go further and to open up opportunity to every community.

A Lot Done since 1997

- Targeted funding of €280m has been provided under the National Development Plan to develop the community infrastructures of our poorest communities.
- The Young People's Facilities and Services Fund has provided €60m to date to develop youth facilities in these communities.
- The Integrated Services Process was successfully developed, providing the blueprint for a radical change in the delivery of state services in disadvantaged communities.
- The Revitalising Areas through Partnership, Investment and Development (RAPID) programme was successfully launched, providing a new departure for the 25 most disadvantaged urban communities and 20 most disadvantaged provincial towns.
- Through the RAPID programme and the CLAR programme we have ensured that local development initiatives are more appropriately tailored to the needs of local communities rather than imposing a single national design.
- Under the Remedial Works scheme, over €126 million has been provided to modernise older local authority housing.
- Major redevelopment schemes have been established in key areas, such as the €2.5 billion regeneration of Ballymun.
- The City and County Development Boards (CDBs) have been established in every city and county and are now finalising strategic plans for economic, social and cultural development in their areas, with a particular emphasis on tackling social exclusion.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

- We will fully implement the RAPID programme in our most disadvantaged communities. When the small areas data is made available from the latest census we will review the areas covered and consider additional areas for inclusion.
- We will continue the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund and complete a comprehensive survey of the availability of recreation facilities in disadvantaged areas.
- We will ensure that the remedial works scheme is focused on bringing older elements of the local authority housing stock up to modern standards.
- We will ensure every local authority housing development of over 75 units has a dedicated childcare facility.
- The Education Welfare Board will publish an action plan on school attendance and early school-leaving, developed in full partnership with the community, for each area covered by the RAPID programme.

- Each relevant Government Department will allocate specific staff whose principal duty will be to ensure that the Department is effectively engaged with the RAPID communities along the lines of the final report of the Integrated Services Process.
- We will ensure that all Government Departments and State Agencies fully support the implementation of the strategic plans now being finalised by the City and County Development Boards.
- The strategic plans of the CDBs will be reviewed to ensure that they are effectively targeting the areas of greatest need.
- Each Department will publish, as part of its annual report, a statement of the work undertaken to support Integrated Services work in these areas.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The last few decades have seen a period of sustained change for communities throughout rural Ireland. Changing work patterns and pressures on both population and services have had an often profound impact. Over the last five years, Fianna Fáil has worked hard in Government to set a new agenda of development for rural Ireland. We believe in helping people to live and work in rural communities with specific measures being enacted to ensure that a network of key services is secured.

A Lot Done Since 1997

- We published the first ever White Paper on Rural Development to act as the foundation for a significant development of rural development policies throughout government.
- Leader II and Leader + were introduced to provide training and development funding for rural areas, with €150m committed for the period of the National Development Plan.
- We introduced the Rural Renewal Scheme which has helped 100 rural towns.
- The Clar programme was introduced with €25m funding targeted at the areas which have experienced the greatest population decline. The programme has already helped secure 400% additional funding from other agencies and is providing the basis for ensuring that mainstream programmes are adapted to be more appropriate to rural areas.
- Over €12 million in equity was paid into An Post in order to provide an extra financial underpinning to the network of Post Offices.
- Over 120 one-teacher schools in the most marginal rural areas have received an extra teacher.
- Record funding has been invested in upgrading rural water supplies in each year since 1997, rising to €80 million this year, eight times the 1997 level. In addition, a new Rural Towns and Villages Initiative has been introduced specifically aimed at addressing the most pressing water and sewerage needs in our smaller towns and villages. More than 70 schemes, at a cost of more than €140m, are now included in that programme.
- Non-National roads, the key transport infrastructure in many rural areas, have benefited from a doubling of investment, reaching €438 million this year.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

- We will give a clear priority to the protection and development of rural communities.
- We will continue the CLAR programme, ensuring annual funding and publishing annual reports on progress.
- When the relevant results of the Census are available we will review the data and consider additional areas for inclusion in CLAR.
- We will establish a Rural Social Economy Programme which will provide secure, community-related, employment opportunities for persons in families eligible for the Farm Assist scheme. These opportunities will be flexible enough to allow individuals to attend to their own farming needs at critical times. They will, in addition, focus on skills important to maintaining the countryside and rural communities.

- We will publish a new set of funding and staffing entitlements aimed at ensuring that schools in rural areas can offer a balanced curriculum where pupil numbers may be low.
- We will ensure that every county has a comprehensive rural transport initiative in place.
- We will roll-out broadband to make it accessible to as many rural communities as possible.
- We will maintain the network of Garda stations.
- We will seek to develop the agriculture colleges as wider rural development resources.
- We believe that the housing needs of people from or working in a particular rural area should be able to be, subject to good planning and design, accommodated in their area.
- We will support rural post offices and seek to develop commercial services in rural areas with specific investment being made in developing the Government Services Agency approach to provide additional services.

PURSUING THE CLOSURE OF SELLAFIELD

Fianna Fáil regard the continued existence of Sellafield as an **unacceptable threat** to Ireland. We believe that **Sellafield should be closed** in view of

- the devastating impact that a serious accident or terrorist attack could have on all aspects of life in Ireland
- the ongoing risks from pollution of the marine environment
- its poor safety record, and
- its lack of transparency and veracity with regard to its accidents as well as its normal operations.

A lot done since 1997

Over the past five years, Fianna Fáil in Government have pursued this objective through diplomatic means and legal action. We:

- have taken a case under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea before a Tribunal of 21 judges of the international community. Our case strongly objected to the commissioning of the mixed oxide (MOX) fuel fabrication plant at Sellafield. Although the commissioning went ahead, the Tribunal accepted the admissibility of our case and a full hearing is expected later this year.
- have engaged economic experts to strengthen the Irish case, given the absence of an economic justification for the plant as well as the non-disclosure of commercial data, as required by law.
- have succeeded before the OSPAR Commission. The Commission effectively decided to call on the UK and France to review, as a matter of priority, authorisations for the discharge of radioactive substances from nuclear reprocessing facilities, and to implement the non-reprocessing option for nuclear spent fuel management.
- are in the process of taking legal action against the UK on the issue of the Sellafield MOX plant, as well as examining our options under EU law.

An Agenda for the Years Ahead

Over the next five years, Fianna Fáil in Government will:

- Use the OSPAR process, the Euratom Treaty and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, to continue to challenge nuclear operations at Sellafield on economic, legal, environmental and safety grounds. We will also monitor the eligibility of the nuclear industry to access billions of pounds of State-guaranteed write-offs.
- work with other like-minded nations to stop the international transport by sea of nuclear waste for reprocessing
- continue to be a leading opponent in all international bodies of attempts to foist nuclear energy on developing countries
- seek full disclosure of all information relevant to accidents, malfunctions, unauthorised disclosures and lapses in safety procedures, and of any evidence of heightened risk to health or the environment.
- keep up-to-date nuclear emergency plans, including sufficient stocks of medical supplies, so as to minimise harm to public health from the effects of any possible exposure to radiation in Ireland