



**a fair  
recovery  
is possible**



Is Féidir Téarnamh Cothrom Bheith Ann



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#FairRecovery

# Sinn Féin

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# A FAIR RECOVERY IS POSSIBLE

The Government says that a recovery is underway. If it is, it isn't a fair recovery.

It is a two tier recovery, that benefits them and their friends at the top, not the majority of hard-working, fair-minded Irish citizens.

Sinn Féin believes that a fair recovery is possible. We believe that an equal society is possible. We believe that cronyism and greed can be replaced with fairness and hope.

There are numerous examples of the Government's subservience to the elites in Banking and other financial institutions and to the golden circles who have profitted from the recession. There are even more examples of the Government's attacks on citizens rights and entitlements and of the dreadful price being exacted from lower and middle income earners, children and senior citizens.

Fianna Fáil destroyed the economy and have learned little since. Fine Gael and Labour are now copying their policies. In Budget 2015 when they had the chance to ease the burden on Irish people, they chose to assist the richest 10%. They are now on the verge of returning us to the 'boom and bust' policies of Fianna Fáil, where billions of euro was squandered to buy elections and all of us have paid a huge price ever since.

We need a major change to how politics is done.

In the coming months we will set out our manifesto and a range of detailed, costed policies. This booklet sets out some of Sinn Féin's priorities. It is designed to start a debate about the future, about what type of country and society we want to live in, about equality, and the type of recovery we want. You can be part of this change in Irish politics.

## **The type of country we want to see is based on the right to:**

- » Decent work for decent pay.
- » Access to first class public services.
- » Affordable childcare.
- » Abolition of water charges and making the tax system fair.
- » Addressing the housing crisis.
- » Advancing the all-Ireland economy for all our benefit.

There are big decisions facing the Irish people and we need an honest discussion. We will be taking this debate to every community across the country in the next twelve months as we move towards the 100th anniversary of the 1916 Rising and delivering on the ideals of the Proclamation.



**Gerry Adams TD**  
Summer 2015



Sinn Féin believes that a fair recovery must secure decent public services, robust employment rights and a fair system of taxation. A Fair Recovery needs a new type of politics that respects the rights of citizens and operates with transparency, equality and fairness.

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### **A FAIR RECOVERY FOR WORKERS AND FAMILIES**

- » Decent work for decent pay – Increase the minimum wage by €1 and move towards a living wage, ban zero hour contracts and prioritise increases in pay conditions for low paid public and private sector workers.
- » Abolish unjust taxes – property and water charges.
- » Provide affordable childcare.
- » Support job creation and bring an end to forced emigration.
- » Develop the all-Ireland economy.

### **A FAIR RECOVERY MEANS EQUALITY FOR ALL CITIZENS**

- » Deliver jobs, services and opportunity to ensure the survival of small rural communities.
- » Equal rights for Irish speakers.
- » Protecting not punishing those in need.
- » Campaign for an islandwide referendum on Irish unity.
- » Introduce a Bill of Rights to guarantee the rights of all citizens.

### **A FAIR RECOVERY MEANS INVESTING IN PUBLIC SERVICES AND HOUSING**

- » Deliver 10,000 social housing units by the end of 2017.
- » Increase pressure on banks to resolve mortgage distress to enable families to stay in their home.
- » Provide access to healthcare on the basis of need alone.
- » Tackle Emergency Department overcrowding and the trolley crisis.
- » Abolish prescription charges and ensure children with serious illness and disabilities get the medical cards that they need.

### **A FAIR RECOVERY MEANS A NEW WAY OF DOING POLITICS**

- » End corruption and cronyism and hold those in public life to account.
- » Cut ministerial salaries by 40% and TDs and Senators salaries by 20%.
- » Overhaul appointments to State boards to make all appointments transparent and ensure all directors' salaries are fair.
- » Introduce real transparency in the use of public money.
- » Establish an Office of Planning Regulator.
- » Equality proof the Budget.

# FINE GAEL AND LABOUR'S 'RECOVERY' - FAIR FOR WHO?

Over €30 billion was taken out of the Irish economy in taxes and cuts during the recession which Fianna Fáil started, and Fine Gael and Labour prolonged. But we weren't all in it together. Some, like seriously ill children and vulnerable elderly people, suffered greatly. Others were protected and are the first in line to benefit again in Fine Gael and Labour's 'recovery'.

## WHO WAS FORCED TO PAY?

### FAMILIES ON LOW-MIDDLE INCOMES

Many pushed below the waterline as a result of the Property Tax, USC and water charges.

### SMALL RURAL COMMUNITIES

Over half a million people have emigrated since 2008 and many rural towns are now in serious decline.

### YOUNG PEOPLE AND CHILDREN

Our young people are continuing to leave in their droves because of poor opportunities, low wages and a lack of access to housing and childcare. Lone parent and child benefit was slashed and back to school allowance cut.

### THOSE MOST IN NEED

Discretionary Medical Cards withdrawn from thousands of seriously ill and disabled children and adults. Prescription Charges introduced, forcing sick people to go without medicine. There were also drastic cuts to Home Help hours, the mobility grant and annual Respite Care Grant.

### HEALTH SERVICE

One in every eight patients on a hospital waiting list is in the queue for over a year. Some people are waiting up to four years to see a consultant. There were 600 patients on trolleys in January 2015.

### THOSE IN HOUSING DIFFICULTIES

90,000 families on the social housing waiting lists; 104,693 households in mortgage arrears, legal proceedings to repossess homes have increased tenfold, rents are still increasing and the number of homeless children continues to rise.

## WHO DID FINE GAEL AND LABOUR PROTECT?

### PROPERTY DEVELOPERS

NAMA allowed to pay developers salaries of €200,000 a year while medical cards being stripped from children.

### BONDHOLDERS

Billions paid to international junior and senior bondholders who gambled on unstable banks while the government broke its social bond with the Irish people.

### VULTURE CAPITALISTS

Irish assets being fire-sold at huge discounts while the Irish citizen picks up the losses.

### THE VERY WEALTHY

Wealth tax and tax relief loopholes allowed to continue. In Budget 2015 instead of easing the burden on those who had suffered the most over the last four years, Fine Gael and Labour prioritised helping the richest 10%.

### BANKS

€64 billion of our money was pumped into the banks and then bank managers allowed to pay themselves salaries of €800,000 a year while keeping mortgage interest rates high and threatening families with eviction. They failed to get a resolution to the problem of legacy debt.

### THE GOLDEN CIRCLE

Just like Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour continued with political appointments to boards and failed to act on high salaries for politicians, in banking and on state bodies.

# A REPUBLIC FOR ALL

As we approach the 100th anniversary of the Rising, support for republican ideals is growing. People are hungry for real change. The Easter Rising is the defining event and the Proclamation of the Republic is the defining document in the history of Irish Republicanism. Our task is to apply its principles to the Ireland of today and to achieve the united Ireland of Equals promised in the Proclamation.

Sinn Féin is seeking a new, agreed and united Ireland. We want to build a just, fair and equal Ireland, an economically

prosperous and socially and culturally inclusive Ireland. We want to protect our most vulnerable, the elderly, children, the ill, the ethnic minorities, those with disabilities – and ensure that equality is the touchstone upon which all policies are formulated.

The republican vision of a united Ireland is based on the principles of equality, inclusion and sovereignty. There can be no place for sectarianism, exclusion or discrimination.



## SINN FÉIN WOULD:

- » Continue to campaign for an island-wide referendum on Irish unity - allow the people to have their say.
- » Build upon the work of the all-Ireland Ministerial Council.
- » Campaign for Northern representation in the Dáil - northern MPs should be automatically accorded membership of the Dáil with consultative and speaking rights.
- » Extend voting rights for Presidential elections to people in the North and the Irish Diaspora.
- » Develop the all-Ireland economy, including having a planned approach to economic development across the island of Ireland, one tax system and currency, integrating infrastructural development and creating a Border Economic Development Zone to harmonise trade and maximise returns for border businesses.
- » Campaign for a Bill of Rights for all Citizens and an all-Ireland charter of fundamental rights.
- » Promote the Irish language and culture.
- » Equality proof legislation before it is produced.
- » Continue to advance a process of reconciliation

# DECENT WORK FOR DECENT PAY

The number one priority must be the creation of decent jobs with decent pay, and a real commitment to our SME sector. 70% of people employed in the private sector work for SMEs, and these businesses are the engine of our economy. Opening up public procurement, maximising the potential of ecommerce and abolishing upward only rents are just some of the ways government could and should make it easier to do business in Ireland.

Despite all the governments spin unemployment remains high with hundreds of thousands of people on the dole. Thousands more young people are still leaving in their droves because of poor opportunities, low

wages and a lack of access to housing and childcare. This is creating a skills crisis for the future, and families left devastated at home.

We have one of the highest rates of low pay in the developed world. 20% of our workers are in low paid jobs and 50% of women are currently earning €20,000 or less a year. Employment continues to fall in the West of Ireland with fewer people in jobs than when Fine Gael and Labour entered government. Sinn Féin has introduced legislation to protect workers rights and entitlements, to abolish upward only rents and stop the worst expression of vulture capitalism as we've seen recently at Clerys.



## SINN FÉIN WOULD:

- » Invest in job creation and economic growth.
- » Increase the minimum wage by €1 and move towards a living wage.
- » Introduce legislation to abolish zero hour contracts and provide for banded hour contracts.
- » Prioritise the restoration of pay and conditions of low paid public sector workers.
- » Introduce supports for people with disabilities who wish to work.
- » Introduce tighter regulations on sub-contracting and the use of RCT1 tax certs.
- » Abolish JobBridge and GateWay and replace them with high quality employment schemes.
- » Support SMEs including opening up public procurement to SMEs and microbusinesses.
- » Develop an ambitious ecommerce strategy.
- » Oversee innovative 'localised strategies' to secure the future of our towns and villages.

# A FAIR TAX SYSTEM

If we want decent standards of health, education and childcare, then government needs resources. A fair recovery requires a tax system that raises sufficient revenue for government but does so in a manner that is fair and progressive.

Our tax system is deeply unfair. Since 2008 Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour have made it even worse by introducing the Universal Social Charge, the Property Tax and Water Charges.

Sinn Féin wants a fair tax system, one in which all people and businesses pay their fair

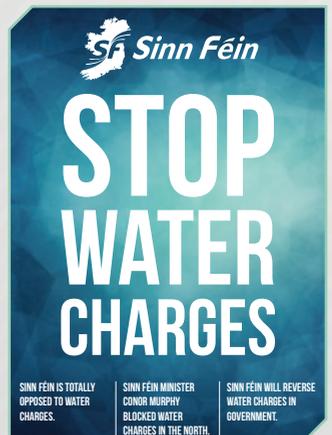
share. We want to scrap the Family Home Tax and Water Charges. We want to remove those on the minimum wage from the USC net. We also want to increase the overall tax take in a fair and progressive manner.

We also need expenditure rules that are socially, economically and fiscally responsible. The current EU rules on government spending are known as the expenditure benchmark and the debt and deficit targets are designed to reduce the deficit but carry a significant economic, social and human cost.



## SINN FÉIN WOULD:

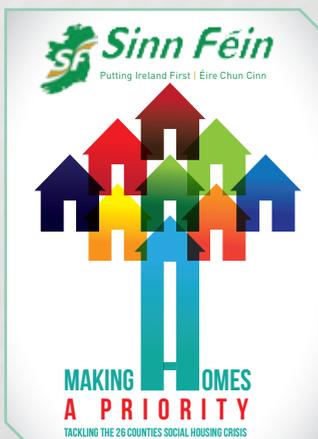
- » Abolish unfair taxes - the Property Tax and Water Charges.
- » Remove those on the minimum wage from the USC net.
- » Introduce a third rate of income tax on individual earnings over €100,000.
- » Introduce a tax on individual net wealth in excess of €1 million euros, excluding working farmland and business assets.
- » Increase the tax take as a percentage GDP in a fair and progressive manner
- » Overhaul the tax system to ensure the elimination of tax avoidance, unfair reliefs and loopholes.
- » Renegotiate the deficit reductions targets to make them socially, economically and fiscally responsible.



# A RIGHT TO HOUSING

Adequate shelter is one of the most basic human needs and is consequently one of the most important human rights. This government doesn't agree. We face a huge housing crisis. In October 2014, the official rough sleeper count was 20% higher than the previous year and nearly double the 2012 figure. According to April 2015 figures there are 3,000 people in emergency accommodation. Some families are forced to live in a single room. The number of homeless children continues to rise.

There are almost 90,000 households on the social housing waiting list. 104,693 households were in mortgage arrears at the end of Q1 2015. The number of accounts in arrears over 90 days was 74,395. Government inaction on home repossessions and rising rents are driving more families into homelessness.



## SINN FÉIN WOULD:

- » Deliver 10,000 social housing units by the end of 2017. This will be funded by a once off strategic investment fund injection of €1 billion to build over 6000 units, the government's budgeted 1,700 units and additional capital expenditure in 2016 & 2017.
- » Introduce rent controls, which would help stem the rising tide of homelessness.
- » Amend the Land Conveyancing Act to give greater protection to the family home.
- » Empower the Central Bank to be able to set caps on the Standard Variable Rate at the state backed banks.

# HEALTHCARE FOR ALL

Access to healthcare when and where you need it is a fundamental right in any decent society, but it was the first casualty as the recession hit. One in every eight patients on a hospital waiting list is in the queue for over a year. Some people are waiting for up to four years to see a consultant. We have seen a deterioration of the ambulance service with potentially lethal consequences. The government has failed to honour its commitment to provide €35 million of

ring-fenced mental health funding. And under this government's watch our public system's workforce has been shrunk by 9,255 whole-time equivalent staff.

The health system continues to fail people because it is a grossly inequitable two-tier, public-private system. Access to care is not based on need alone. Ability to pay is still a key factor in access to care both in terms of timely access, and in many cases, quality of care.



## SINN FÉIN WOULD:

- » Progressively introduce a universal public healthcare system that provides care to all free at the point of delivery, on the basis of need alone.
- » Tackle Emergency Department overcrowding and the trolleys crisis by opening and staffing more acute hospital beds and step-down beds and by investing in care services based in the community.
- » Phase out public subsidies for private healthcare.
- » Prioritise the extension of free GP care, abolish prescription charges and ensure children with serious illness and disabilities get the medical cards that they need.
- » Reduce the cost of medicines in our health system, including through changes to procurement.
- » Reduce waiting times by reversing the chronic under capacity across the system by recruiting additional frontline workers, including nurses, Speech and Language, Physio and Occupational Therapists, GPs and specialists.
- » Take action to make our maternity services safe including through the recruitment of additional midwives.
- » Increase emergency ambulance cover for each of the four regions.
- » Increase the suicide prevention budget and roll-out Suicide Crisis Assessment nurses in primary care and liaison nurses in A&E units.

# TACKLING THE CHILDCARE CRISIS

We need safe, quality and affordable childcare.

We need childcare workers that are trained to the highest standard and a system that is registered and regularly monitored. We need childcare that is affordable.

The issues of affordability and access to high quality childcare need to be tackled immediately. The average cost of childcare stands at €167 per week with costs as high as €268 per week in Dublin.

We also need to address the insecurity and low pay for workers across the childcare sector. These are the people entrusted with the care of our children, our most valuable asset. They must be supported, paid a decent wage and encouraged to update their skills and knowledge.

The ECCE free pre-school year is a good starting

point on the road to universal childcare provision. But it is not perfect. It contributes to the part-time, short-term nature of contracts available to workers in the sector. Many children with disabilities are excluded from availing of the pre-school year in full due to the lack of SNA supports. So the scheme, the capitation rate levels and sessional structure should be improved before it is duplicated for a second year.

Tax credits aren't the magic wand. Their value could be quickly eroded by increased fees, such is the scale of legitimate pressure on pay across the sector. Tax breaks will also do nothing to further the quality agenda in childcare delivery.

Sinn Féin is currently engaging with stakeholders in the sector and will shortly publish a comprehensive and lasting solution to the childcare crisis.



## SINN FÉIN WOULD:

- » Engage with parents and childcare providers to develop top quality childcare.
- » Ensure an increase in investment in state-funded childcare.
- » Examine and amend the ECCE free pre-school year to ensure it is providing decent terms and conditions to its providers and is meeting the needs of all children and parents.

# STANDING UP FOR RURAL IRELAND

Sinn Féin has a vision for rural Ireland. A vision to make it a sustainable place to live and to work. A place where the quality of life is matched by the quality of public services. A place where young educated graduates have the opportunity to stay and build their future and a place that welcomes back emigrants forced to leave over recent years.

People in rural Ireland are sick of being treated as second class citizens, fed up with underinvestment and angry at the lack of jobs and opportunity. It's time for change.

While historically, underinvestment and neglect are among the main reasons for the current imbalance, government policy continues to prioritise urban centres on the east coast.



## SINN FÉIN WOULD:

- » Regenerate rural towns with a commitment to keep open post offices, libraries, garda stations and other services; and producing policies for addressing business rates and vacant commercial buildings.
- » Prioritise roll out of high speed broadband in rural areas that have the poorest levels of access
- » Tackle depopulation with a rural resettlement and returning diaspora programme.
- » Rural proof all our jobs and social policies to ensure human resources, and financial and physical investment are evenly distributed throughout the State.
- » Fight in Europe for all rural industries and campaign for increases in fishing, sugar and other quotas.
- » Bring forward a charter of rights for our islands.
- » Protect the provision of public transport for rural areas.

# DEALING WITH DEBT

Public and private debt is crippling our economy and hundreds of thousands of families.

Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour have repeatedly put the interests of the banks before that of the economy, of society and of hard pressed families. €64 billion of taxpayers' money was poured into the banks. Over €30 billion went to NAMA. Yet families in mortgage distress and struggling small businesses are left to fend for themselves.

Nowhere is Fine Gael and Labour's unfair recovery more evident than in the treatment of banks versus the treatment of householders and small businesses.

Despite their pre-election rhetoric, Fine Gael and Labour have never even asked for a write down in the banking debt foisted on the Irish people by Fianna Fáil.

Meanwhile, banks were given a veto on mortgage deals with struggling families. They have used this veto to block deals that would allow people to remain in their homes and legal proceedings to repossess homes have increased tenfold.

Sinn Féin firmly believes that a better deal on both the public and private debt is possible.



## SINN FÉIN WOULD:

- » Reopen negotiations on Ireland's legacy banking debt.
- » Apply for European Stability Mechanism retrospective recapitalisation of AIB and Bol.
- » Amend the Insolvency Act 2013 to remove the banks veto and to reduce the bankruptcy period to 1 year.
- » Increase direct pressure on the banks to offer homeowners sustainable solutions to their mortgage distress that enables them to remain in the family home.
- » Direct the Central Bank to stop treating repossessions and voluntary surrender as 'sustainable solutions' under the Mortgage Arrears Resolution Targets.

# A NEW WAY OF DOING POLITICS

There is an urgent need for meaningful political reform of both our political culture and the political system. The choice is between the continuation of the old boys' club that protects and promotes its own and legislates for the few, not the many and a new type of politics that respects the democratic will of the people and operates with transparency, equality and fairness.

Power is centralised in the hands of a small number of Ministers. The Dáil, Seanad and Oireachtas Committees are denied any meaningful role in the legislative process. Local government continues to be stripped

of what little power it once had. People have even less opportunity to influence the decisions that affect their daily lives.

Politicians pay and expenses reflect a culture of privilege and entitlement that was inappropriate during the boom times and is simply immoral today.

The banking crisis showed the Irish people that a circle existed where people were appointed on the basis of who they knew and public money could be used to pay for financial gamblers' debts – our hard-earned cash used to bail out banks.



## TO ACHIEVE REAL POLITICAL REFORM SINN FÉIN WOULD:

- » End the centralising of power in the hands of a small number of Ministers.
- » Change the law to allow for the impeachment or removal from the Dáil of any TD involved in corruption, deliberate misuse of public money or fraud.
- » Cut ministerial salaries by 40% and TDs and Senators salaries by 20%. End the payment of unvouched expenses for politicians.
- » Increase the power of TDs to hold the Government to account and to question the Taoiseach and Ministers on issues of importance.
- » Give all TDs the power to bring forward draft legislation for consideration by the committee of which they are a member.
- » Give Dáil committees investigative powers and allocate committee chairs proportionally on the basis of party/group strength with no additional financial reward attached to them.
- » Overhaul appointments to State boards to ensure multiple directorships are limited; make all appointments transparent; ensure directors' salaries are fair; implement gender quotas; and provide for timely provision of accounts and regular auditing.
- » Establish an Office of Planning Regulator.
- » Reform and empower local government, including increasing participatory democracy.
- » Reduce the voting age to 16.
- » Extend voting rights in Presidential elections to people living in the North and to the Irish diaspora.



# EQUAL RIGHTS FOR IRISH SPEAKERS

Sinn Féin supports the restoration of the Irish language as the spoken language among the majority of people in Ireland and the creation of a truly bilingual society. We believe that there should be an Aire Gaeilge & Gaeltachta in Cabinet with responsibility for language policy delivery. We would fully review and upgrade the 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language, we would strengthen the Official Languages Act and we support an Acht na Gaeilge for

the North. Equality is an integral part of a democratic society and this includes upholding the rights of Irish-language speakers. In the North, Minister Carál Ní Chuilinn has shown the political drive Sinn Féin has regarding our native language. 10,000 people have now signed up to her Department's Líoфа campaign to improve their use of the Irish language.



## SINN FÉIN WOULD:

- » Full review and upgrading of the 20-year strategy on the Irish language with additional funding to make it happen. The Language Commissioner should have a stronger role in overseeing it's delivery.
- » Implement the recommendations of the report from the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Gaeltacht on the Official Languages Act.
- » Full status for the Irish language in the European Union - end the derogation now.
- » Increase funding to Údarás na Gaeltachta and Foras na Gaeilge.
- » Deliver proper language rights for citizens and guarantee the range and standards of service in Irish that citizens can expect from the State
- » Ensure a clear Government focus on the survival and development of Gaeltacht areas. The future of the Irish language is dependent upon the continuing existence of sustainable Gaeltacht communities where Irish remains the primary language of the community.