



THE FUTURE OF OUR WATER SERVICES

GOVERNANCE, FUNDING & DELIVERY

TODHCHAÍ ÁR SEIRBHÍSÍ UISCE

RIALACHAS, MAOINIÚ & SEACHADADH

AXE THE TAX

DOUBLE CHARGES

NO ACCOUNTABILITY

OVER SPENDING

Réamhrá

Ní mór do ghnáthshaoránaigh agus gnáth-theaghlaigh sa stat seo cáin eile aischéimnitheach a íoc le haisíoc a dhéanamh ar fhiacha bainc nach leo iad. Níl na daoine sin ba chúis leis an ngéarchéim sa gheilleagar, le titim an airgeadais phoiblí, leis an imirce agus leis an dífhos-taíocht ollmhór toilteanach glacadh le freagracht ar bith.

Creideann Sinn Féin go múnlaíonn dearcadh rialtais ar an sochaí, a uaillmhian, a anacaire idéalíoch agus na leasanna a seasann sé dóibh na roghanna polaitiúla a dhéanann sé. Leanann Rialtas Fhine Gael/an Lucht Oibre ar aghaidh le roghanna nach bhfuil le leas bhunús na saoránach agus go bhfuil na roghanna céanna ag sárú na mandáide a thug an pobal dóibh in 2011.

Cé gur gheall siad go ndéanfadh siad rudaí go difriúil, tá Fine Gael agus an Lucht Oibre ag athchúrsáil na polaitíochta ar theip uirthi, chomh maith leis na sean-dóigheanna le dul i mbun gnó, na dóigheanna ba chúis leis an ngéarchéim sa gheilleagar agus an ghéarchéim pholaitiúil ar an gcéad dul síos.

Ba é rialtas Fhianna Fáil/an Chomhaontais Ghlais roimhe sin a cheap coincheap an mhuirir uisce teaghlaigh agus a chomhaontaigh an polasaí míchothrom seo le Triúracht an AE/CAI/BCE mar chuid den tarrtháil airgeadais i Nollaig 2010. Dúirt siad ag an am go bhfuair siad an “margadh is fearr”. Ní aontaíonn Sinn Féin leis seo ar chor ar bith.

Nuair a vótáil an Dáil ar rún Fhianna Fáil/an Chomhaontais Ghlais Dé Céadaoin 15 Nollaig 2010 chun tacú le téarmaí an chláir tarrthála airgeadais, is amhlaidh gur vótáil Sinn Féin gan glacadh leis.

Rinne Páirtí an Lucht Oibre amhlaidh. Dúirt a cheannaire, Eamon Gilmore, “Tá Páirtí an Lucht Oibre in éadan an rúin mar gur drochmhargadh d’Éirinn é an méid atá ar fáil. Sa toghchán atá ag teacht iarrfaimid mandáid chun idirbheartaíocht a dhéanamh ar an gclár arís.” Rinne siad athrú iomlán air seo agus iad sa rialtas, tá siad ag cur i bhfeidhm an pholasaí a ndeachaigh siad ina éadan.

Dúshlán ollmhór é seirbhísí uisce agus séarachais d’ardchaighdeán atá inmharthana ó thaobh an gheilleagair de a sholáthar.

Tá taithí ar an láthair ag Sinn Féin agus taifead láidir aige mar pháirtí an méid seo a sholáthar ó thuaidh. I mBealtaine 2007 nuair a cuireadh na hinstitiúidí cumhachtroinnte ar obair arís, shocraigh Sinn Féin ar phleananna riail dhíreach Airí na Breataine muirir uisce tí a thabhairt isteach a fhreaschur.

Shocraigh Sinn Féin fosta nach ndéanfaí cuid ar bith de na seirbhísí riachtanacha seo a phríobháidiú trína chinntiú go mbeadh an Tionól, faoin Roinn Forbartha Réigiúnaí, ar an ngeallshealbhóir amháin den chuide-achta nua fónais, NI Water.

Inniu, de réir an Rialálaí Fónais ó thuaidh, sábhálann teaghlaigh €490 gach bliain ar an mean mar thoradh ar ár gcinneadh.

Ag an am, idir 2007-11, rinneadh £1billiún a infheistiú faoi stiúir Shinn Féin in uasghrádú ar infreastruchtúr uisce agus séarachais an Tuaiscirt agus bhí sé seo le leas beagnach milliún teaghlach agus gnólacht. Chuir sé seo feabhas ar chaighdeán an uisce óil, chaomhnaigh sé an timpeallacht agus thacaigh sé leis an ngeilleagar áitiúil.

Ta a fhios ag rialtas Fhine Gael/an Lucht Oibre an méid a baineadh amach ó thuaidh. Ó Eanáir 2012 tá sé i dteagmháil leis an Roinn Forbartha Réigiúnaí agus le NI Water ag fiosrú na gcúrsaí seo. In ainneoin go bhfaca siad an dóigh a bhfuil dea-chleachtas agus tús áite a thabhairt do shaoránaigh ag soláthar seirbhís éifeach-tach uisce agus séarachais, roghnaigh Fine Gael agus Páirtí an Lucht oibre ar mhuirear uisce tí atá míchothrom a leagan ar theaghlaigh.

Gheobhaidh teaghlaigh bille den chéad uair in Eanáir 2015.

Creideann Sinn Féin go bhfuil teaghlaigh ag íoc as na seirbhísí seo cheana féin tríd an gcáin ioncaim. Níor chóir tabhairt ar shaoránaigh íoc faoi dhó.

Rachaidh Sinn Féin i mbun feachtasaíochta go láidir i dTeach Laighean agus ar fud an stáit chun seasamh in aghaidh muirir uisce teaghlaigh a thabhairt isteach agus pleananna ar bith chun na seirbhísí poiblí seo a phríobháidiú anois ná sa todhchaí.

Cuirfidh Sinn Féin roimhe, áfach, le teacht i gcumhacht dóibh i rialtas, na muirir teaghlaigh seo a tharraingt siar más rud é nach gcuirfear stad leo.

Is mise



Gearóid Mac Adhaimh TD

Introduction

Ordinary citizens and families across this state are being forced to pay yet another regressive tax in order to repay a banking debt that is not theirs. Those responsible for causing the economic crisis, the collapse of public finances, the forced emigration and mass unemployment remain unaccountable for their actions.

Households already do pay for water and sewerage services through general taxation. This is how we have financed these vital services to date. The Government are imposing a second charge through a Household bill which Sinn Féin rightly opposes because is unfair.

Sinn Féin believes that the political choices a government makes are defined by its view of society, its ambition, its ideological anchor and the interests that it seeks to represent. The Fine Gael/Labour Government continues to make choices that are not in the interests of the vast majority of citizens and that are in contravention of the mandate it was given by the people in 2011.

Despite their pledge to do things differently Fine Gael and Labour are recycling the failed politics and the old way of doing business which was the cause of the economic and political crisis in the first place.

The additional household water charge was conceived by the previous Fianna Fáil/Green government who agreed this unfair policy with the EU/IMF/ECB Troika as part of the financial bailout in December 2010. They said at the time that they got "the best deal". Sinn Féin strongly disagrees.

When the Dáil voted on a Fianna Fáil/Green Party motion on Wednesday 15 December 2010 to support the terms of the financial bailout programme. Sinn Féin voted to reject it.

So too did the Labour Party. Its then Leader Eamon Gilmore said, "Labour is opposing the motion because what is on offer is a bad deal for Ireland. In the coming election we will seek a mandate to renegotiate the programme." The Labour Leadership did no such thing. They did a U-Turn and in government they are implementing the very policy they railed against.

Providing reliable high quality water and sewerage services - which are economically sustainable - is a major challenge. Sinn Féin is fully committed to meeting this challenge, however we want to get it right and not simply get it done.

Sinn Féin has first-hand experience and a strong record of delivering exactly this in the north based on the principles of fairness, affordability and sustainability. In May 2007 when the power-sharing institutions at Stormont

were restored, Sinn Féin decided to reverse the plans of British direct rule Ministers to introduce household water charges because taxpayers were already paying for these services.

Sinn Féin also ruled out any future privatisation of these critical public services by ensuring that the Executive, under the Department for Regional Development, remained the sole shareholder of the newly established utility company, NI Water.

Today, according to the Utility Regulator in the north, households save an average of €490 annually as a result of our decision.

At the same time between 2007-11 over £1 billion was invested under Sinn Féin in a major upgrade of the North's water and sewerage infrastructure benefiting almost one million households and businesses. This has improved drinking water quality, protected the environment and supported the local economy.

The Fine Gael/Labour government knows what was achieved in the north. Since January 2012 it has been in contact with the Department for Regional Development and NI Water exploring all of these matters. However, despite seeing how best practice and putting citizen's needs first is delivering efficient water and sewerage services, Fine Gael and Labour have chosen to impose an unfair household water charge on families anyway.

Households will receive their first bills in January 2015.

Sinn Féin believes that households already pay for these services through their income tax. Citizens should not be forced to pay twice.

Sinn Féin is campaigning vigorously both in Leinster House and across the state to resist any introduction of household water charges now or in the future.

However, Sinn Féin in Government will commit to reverse these household charges if they are not stopped.

Is mise



Gerry Adams TD

Background Summary | Achoimre Cúlra

Almost two million households are being forced by this government to pay twice for water and sewerage services when they already pay once through their income tax. Domestic household water charges take effect from 1st October 2014 with households receiving bills through the door in January 2015.

This is unfair and unacceptable. Families need a break.

The Water Services Act 2013 legislation established a new semi-state company, Irish Water - Uisce Éireann within the Bord Gáis Group. From 1st January 2014 this new water company assumed responsibility for the delivery of water and sewerage services from the 34 county and city councils. These functions will transfer from councils on a phased basis between 2014-17. The Councils will deliver services under service level agreements with Irish Water. The company will be responsible for billing households and installing water meters.

Sinn Féin have opposed these new changes thus far by making both a formal written submission to the public consultation exercise on so-called Water Reform carried out by the Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government at that time, Phil Hogan TD in early 2012. We also put forward amendments to the Ministers legislation when coming through the Dáil, and when rejected, Sinn Féin voted against the new legislation in its entirety. We did so because we believe that it does not serve the best interests of households, taxpayers and consumers, but serves to only cripple families further who are already struggling to survive against this government's harsh austerity policies of unfair cuts and taxes.

The cost of the new governance model in the form of Irish Water will be carried entirely by the consumer and taxpayer. Initial set-up costs for Irish Water are €180m alone.

Yet, despite this being the case the consumer voice is the only stakeholder not to be represented around the decision-making table in how Irish water intends managing, financing and delivering water services now and in the future.

Those who are currently at the decision-making table, include the Department, Bord Gáis, Commission for Energy Regulation and the Environmental Protection Agency. The absence of any independent statutory

consumer representation is a deliberate failure by this government who have chosen to ignore the need for such a voice who can speak up in order to protect the interests and welfare of taxpayers.

We fully support the need for continuing capital investment in the upgrade of our water and sewerage infrastructure. This includes a regulatory regime which can meet EU standards which achieves safe, clean drinking water, treatment of waste water and prevents risk of pollution to inland waterways, coastal areas and prevents flooding.

Irish Water as a self-financing utility faces widespread popular opposition because they are considered to be unaccountable. The Commission for Energy Regulation has reviewed the submission from Irish Water in relation to costs over the regulatory review period, which runs from 1 October 2014 to the end of 2016. The CER are therefore allowing revenue for Irish Water of €2,078m.

Their income for 2015 will be generated from a number of sources including, exchequer subvention, commercial borrowing and equity investment, non-domestic charges estimated to generate €230m, and loan finance up to €539m from the National Pension Reserve Fund to finance the roll-out of domestic metering of which they have been advanced €250m so far. And, most importantly from household water charges expected to generate €300m in 2015.

Already €180m of taxpayer's money has been spent establishing Irish Water., including €134k on a new logo and €50m on the use of external consultants, so far, with another €35m to be spent by 2015.

Governance | Rialachas:

- » Irish Water must be directly accountable to the Minister and both should be accountable to the Houses of the Oireachtas.
- » Compel Irish Water to have its annual accounts audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General and ensure an open and transparent approach going forward.
- » Ensure that the Board composition of Irish Water is fairly balanced to represent the economic, environmental and societal and community interests which serve both the public utility and the public interest - including the workforce.
- » Establish a water stakeholder's partnership contract which agrees the roles, functions and protocols of the various principal stakeholders involved in the water reform process.
- » Give a ministerial direction in writing to the Board of Irish Water requiring management to seek approval for the use of external consultants in order to prevent excessive spending. Such action can be facilitated under part 4, section 32 of the Water Services Act 2013.

Funding | Maoiniú:

- » The financing of water and sewerage services must be underpinned by the principles of fairness, affordability and sustainability.
- » The Government should abandon plans to introduce domestic household water charges.
- » The roll out of metering should be stopped and the €539m loan finance from the National Pension Reserve Fund redirected towards the capital investment programme, including fixing the massive leakage problems and interruption to supply across the state which in 2012 averaged 39.9%.
- » Funding should be generated through mixed income of which the majority is through public subsidy from the Government, in addition to non-domestic charges, commercial borrowing and equity investment.

Delivery | Seachadadh:

- » There should be no duplication of services being delivered by Irish Water and Local authorities in the future.
- » Irish Water must put customers first. Citizens hold valid suspicions in regard to the government's water reform process to date which must be addressed.
- » A state-wide audit of assets and infrastructure is required to determine the exact portfolio within public ownership.
- » Deliver on immediate capital investment to upgrade local infrastructure and fix the huge leakage problems and interruption to supply across the state estimated to be around an average of 39.9%. This will conserve water, bring about greater efficiency and will save costs longer term.
- » Stakeholder engagement is critical to the successful delivery of services. Irish Water must act in an open, transparent and accountable way by engaging with legislators and the Houses of the Oireachtas, consumer representatives, voluntary and community sector, business sector and customers. The Customer Charter agreed between both Irish Water and the Commission for Energy Regulation must be fulfilled.
- » We strongly advocate co-operation and implementation in the delivery of our water and sewerage services for mutual benefit on an All-Ireland basis under the aegis of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC). We must value our water nationally and protect what is a precious resource for all life functions and economy on the island of Ireland.

