



INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE | ÉIRE NÍOS FEARR

ALTERNATIVE BUDGET 2017

INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE

Capital investment in homes, hospitals, roads, flood relief and water

Ireland is at a crossroads. We need serious capital investment yet the minority Fine Gael/Independent government is committed to cuts in taxes and the further privatisation and downgrade of essential services. The current level of public investment is simply too low to provide the housing, the services and the infrastructure that is so desperately needed.

The need for public investment has been highlighted by groups and organisations as diverse as IBEC, ESRI, NERI, TASC, the EU Commission, the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council and Social Justice Ireland.

The Government's Capital Investment Plan puts capital investment at just 1.9 percent of GNP in 2017. Given almost ten years of underinvestment and unmet demographic pressures, this shockingly low level of capital investment is reckless and unsustainable.

Sinn Féin is committed to a sustainable capital investment programme, one that sees housing, health, education and transport as essential social and economic pillars. Our plan is equivalent to 2.5% of GNP for 2017. This is the base from which to rebuild our society after the devastation of Fianna Fáil's bank bailout and Fine Gael and Labour's austerity agenda.

This investment programme will help create an additional 23,500 jobs next year, not including jobs that will be created in the local economy as a result of our other budget measures. It will also sustain economic growth into the future.

HOUSING: DELIVERING 7,066 SOCIAL HOMES COST €491 MILLION

In 2017 Sinn Féin is committing to delivering 7,066 homes through local authorities and approved housing bodies. More than doubling the output of real social housing on the government's expected output in 2016.

Increase capital funding to local authorities 4,000 units - €315 million

We will increase capital funding to local authorities in 2017 by €315 million, bringing the total allocation to €843 million, to deliver 4,000 units through an ambitious programme of acquisitions and new builds.

Funding to the Housing Agency 1,066 units - €140 million

We will allocate €140 million to the Housing Agency to purchase, on behalf of local authorities, 1,066 units in the possession of banks and not currently on the open market.

Voluntary Housing sector 2,000 units

We will work with the National Council of Social Housing to develop and coordinate a fund of at least €360 million from the Irish League of Credit Unions and other non-State sources to provide 2,000 units via the voluntary housing sector.

Sinn Féin is committed to increasing the delivery of real social housing to an average of 10,000 units a year every year until the State has a sufficient supply of social housing to meet current levels of demand.

Traveller Accommodation - €36 million

Following the Carrickmines tragedy and the ongoing underprovision of adequate, secure and culturally appropriate accommodation for travellers, Sinn Féin is committed to restoring the traveller accommodation budget to its 2008 level of €40 million. We will achieve this by increasing the allocation by €36 million in 2017.

EDUCATION COST €179 MILLION

Significant and sustained capital investment is required to reduce class sizes in schools, modernise our educational facilities and ensure our third level sector compares well internationally.

Prefab Replacement Scheme - €10 million

Over 200 schools across the State own or rent prefabricated accommodation. The government has committed to replacing all prefabs with permanent accommodation under the Programme for Government but this will not commence until 2019. Sinn Féin proposes an initial outlay in year one of €10 million to allow this to proceed.

Investment in IT Infrastructure - €30 million

In order to implement the digital strategy, Sinn Féin will invest in wireless connections to schools and establish a grant for schools to apply for funding to purchase or maintain IT equipment.

Increase in Summer Works Scheme - €20 million

Sinn Féin will increase the funding available to schools to complete necessary and immediate works during the summer months. We are proposing an increase from €40m to €60m.

Additional Classroom Accommodation - €60 million

Sinn Féin will provide an additional investment in the construction of new schools and the reduction of class sizes.

Third Level - €40 million

Sinn Féin will provide additional funding for the minor works grant and equipment renewal at third level.

Curriculum Reform - €9 million

Sinn Féin will allocate funding for the practical requirements of Junior and Leaving Cert reform specifications – in particular IT and equipment for science and practical subjects.

Further Education - €10 million

Sinn Féin will allocate a capital budget to the Further Education Sector in order to improve or construct campus and training centre equipment and infrastructure and to carry out necessary works to bring former FÁS centres in line with Health and Safety requirements to deliver the Further Education Strategy.

HEALTH COST €150 MILLION

20 year capital programme for our health service

In government, Sinn Féin will carry out a full review on which to base a 20-year capital programme for our health service. Overall, much investment will be required to compensate for years of underinvestment by successive governments.

Building on Recovery insufficient

The capital investment in health proposed by the government in 'Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016 – 2021' is grossly insufficient. Between 2008 and 2013 public capital expenditure on health was cut by 45%. Under the government's plan, capital investment in health will not even recover to its 2008 level by 2021.

Increase capital investment in health - €150 million

It has been estimated that 75% of the Capital Allocation for Health through to 2021 will be needed for just five major projects. Yet minor works, routine maintenance and refurbishments are required across the entire system, not least to comply with HIQA standards. And capital spending in this area cannot be confined to construction alone.

Funding is also overdue and badly needed for ICT (e-health strategy), diagnostics (including in the community) and equipment.

For Budget 2017, Sinn Féin proposes an additional €150 million in capital investment in our health system above that proposed by the current government

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COST €117 MILLION

Investing in regional and local roads - Cost €100 million

Our regional and local road network is slowly disintegrating. Over half of all secondary roads recently surveyed were found to be in a significant state of disrepair. This trend needs to be reversed.

For too long rural communities have dropped down the priority list. This investment would go some way to addressing that imbalance and giving rural communities across the state roads that are fit for purpose and that will stand the test of time and weather.

The government's allocation for regional and local roads in 2016 is €254m. Sinn Féin would increase this by €100m, giving a total investment of €354m.

Wheelchair access for public bus stops - Cost €10 million

Access to transport can mean the difference between inclusion and exclusion for people with disabilities. Sinn Féin is committed to using a combination of tax incentives, accessibility clauses in public procurement contracts and direct investment to promote transport inclusion. Alongside the €12.5 million scheme to refund VRT/VAT to taxi drivers who purchase wheelchair-accessible vehicles, we are proposing a capital investment of €10 million to make all bus stops wheelchair accessible. This is another important step on the road to inclusion.

Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Capital Programme - Cost €7million

Ninety harbours, mooring and piers benefited from the Local Authority Harbour Development and Marine Leisure programme in 2016 in counties Clare, Cork, Donegal, Galway, Kerry, Louth, Mayo, Sligo, Waterford, Wexford, and Wicklow. The funding paid for repairs, dredging, resurfacing, extensions, improvements and replacements.

We propose an additional €7 million to the Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Capital Programme. This is a 39% increase on 2016 funding.

NORTH/SOUTH PROJECTS COST €20 MILLION

A5 Upgrade - €10 million

Sinn Féin recognises the value of all-Ireland infrastructure and cooperation. We are determined to ensure that the commitment to the A5 Dublin-Derry road project is delivered on. For that purpose, we propose an additional €10 million be allocated to this project.

Narrow Water Bridge - €10 million

The Narrow Water Bridge would link the Cooley Peninsula in County Louth with the Mourne District in County Down, benefiting local and cross-border economies, including tourism, and creating employment opportunities in the region.

FLOOD RELIEF WORKS COST €49 MILLION

This state has seen significant flooding in recent years causing considerable damage to homes, businesses and roads across the state. Cities, towns and villages have been left vulnerable due to inadequate flood defences. The 2016 budget for expenditure on capital flood relief works in 2016 is €52.561m. This is woefully inadequate. We recommend an additional €49m allocated to these works to provide better flood protection to families, homes, businesses and communities.

UPGRADING WATER UTILITIES COST €200 MILLION

An ambitious capital investment programme funded through general taxation must bring our water and sanitation services up to adequate standards.

Sinn Féin will increase capital investment in upgrading the water and sanitation system by an additional €340 million in 2017, bringing the total to €873 million. This will be achieved through an additional €200 million in direct capital investment from revenue and the re-profiling of €140 million of unspent water meter funds. The additional funding would be invested in projects targeted at meeting the State's commitments under the Urban Waste Water Directive and the Water Framework Directive.

ARTS, HERITAGE AND THE GAELTACHT COST €15.75 MILLION

Sinn Féin recognises the multiple benefits from investment in the arts, heritage and the Gaeltacht, which enhances tourism, job creation, our national language and the cultural quality of life and wellbeing of all our citizens.

Funding increase for Heritage (including funding for Moore Street) - €5 million

Given its role in preserving heritage sites such as Moore Street and promoting heritage and activity tourism, the Heritage division capital budget is a key element of investment strategy.

Funding increase for National Cultural Institutions investment programme - €2 million

For example, the National Library of Ireland has a genealogy division and frontline service. It is a key tourist and visitor centre in terms of future growth in numbers.

Allocation increase for Film Board - €3.75 million

The increased grant allocation of €3.75 million to the Film Board will increase support to films by more than one third.

Funding increase to Gaeltacht Division - €5 million

Údarás na Gaeltachta plays a crucial role in providing stimulus through job creation in rural areas of acute disadvantage. Údarás funding was slashed by Fianna Fáil from €26 million to €6 million, and the Fine Gael-Labour Government reduced it further. We would increase funding by €5m from its current low base.

SPORT COST €4 MILLION

Sinn Féin recognises the importance of sport to our mental and physical health, community and inclusion. Sports clubs across the State were suspended in limbo well into the summer of 2016, waiting to see if the Minister would release funds under the Sports Capital Programme. Sinn Féin believes this grant must be annualised and the allocation for 2017 increased by €4 million, a 14% increase on the 2015 figure.