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Sinn Féin

SINN FÉIN LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
MANIFESTO 2019



Sinn Féin

EQUALITY

RIGHTS

IRISH UNITY

**COMHIONANNAS | CEARTA
AONTACHT NA HÉIREANN**



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Sinn Féin councillors are delivering real change for communities across Ireland every day.

Nobody works harder for the people and the communities we represent, whether it is delivering community infrastructure and facilities; making cities, towns and villages better places to live, or defending people's rights.

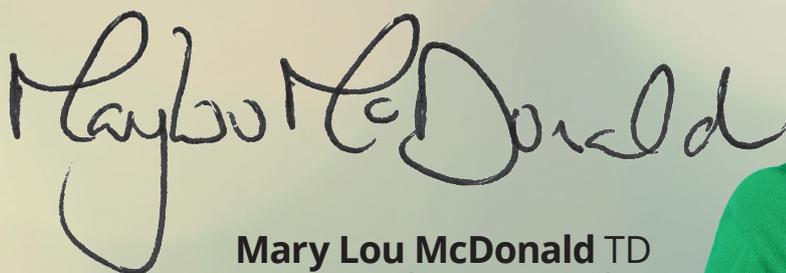
Sinn Féin has stood with those campaigning for equality. We have stood up for Irish language rights, the rights of the LGBT community and we have defended workers' rights.

We have worked on a cross-community basis to build a better and more inclusive future for all.

Sinn Féin Councillors are on the side of the people, of workers, of struggling families. In these elections Sinn Féin is asking for a renewed mandate to deliver greater equality and social progress.

Is ionann vótáil do Shinn Féin agus vóta a chaitheamh ar son comhionannais, cearta agus Éire Aontaithe.

Working together, North and South, Sinn Féin will deliver a United Ireland based on equality and social justice for all.



Mary Lou McDonald TD
UACHTARÁN SHINN FÉIN



In this election we need to stand strong – for equality, for integrity and for respect.

We need to continue to stand up to the DUP.

We need to stand against arrogance, sectarianism, homophobia and racism.

To stand in opposition to the disastrous Brexit agenda being forced on our island.

We have an opportunity to show the world that Ireland is moving beyond partition – that Irish Unity is the best guarantee of our future political and economic prosperity.

Ireland is now in an historic period of political and constitutional change during which the future relationships on and between these islands will be shaped for generations to come.

A referendum on Irish Unity is part of the Good Friday Agreement. It was agreed by an overwhelming majority of voters in 1998.

Sinn Féin's objective is a New Ireland – a place for all our people in all our diversity. A place where there is equality for all and rights for all. A shared Ireland.

A United Ireland of shared prosperity and equal opportunity.

This New Ireland will be a welcoming house, a warm home for every citizen.

Unionists, especially, must have the same sense of ownership and place in a New Ireland as everyone else.

Sinn Féin is working to achieve a referendum on Irish Unity in the next short number of years.

Be part of that change. Be part of building a new and better future.

Sinn Féin is the only party working nationally and delivering locally.

On May 2nd, vote Sinn Féin.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle O'Neill". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

**Michelle O'Neill MLA
LEAS UACHTARÁN SHINN FÉIN**





RIGHTS & EQUALITY

Sinn Féin wants to see a rights-based society, a society where differing cultures and traditions are respected and upheld. People should not be discriminated against because of the colour of their skin, their nationality, their age, their religion, the language they speak, whether they are disabled or not or because of their sexual orientation.

We are conscious that human rights protections are under threat from a British government which is intent on removing the protections of the Human Rights Act 1998. The Human Rights Act has been described as, the promise of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights made law, incorporating the rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Sinn Féin will work to ensure that the people of the north can have the protections set out in international law.

One such protection is the right of families to know the circumstances in which their loved ones died. The British Government has sought to cover up its role in the deaths of many Irish citizens and is seeking to introduce an amnesty for those it directed to carry out such killings. Sinn Féin will continue to oppose the British Government's policy on this issue and demand that the Legacy mechanisms agreed at Stormont House are implemented in a human rights compliant manner.

Councils have a role to play in helping to ensure that peoples' rights are defended and protected. Unfortunately, some councils, for a myriad of reasons, not only fail to uphold and protect peoples' rights but actively discriminate against them. They have sought to silence councillors who do not hold the same view as themselves. Nationalist and unionist councils are at polar opposites when it comes to promoting rights and equality. Sinn Féin on all councils will fight for people's rights and oppose discrimination.

This year marked the 70th anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights. Fundamental rights are for everyone. Respect for equality is not an option it's an obligation.

Sinn Féin believes that councils must respect the spirit and substance of the Good Friday Agreement based on; 'principles of full respect for, and equality of, civil, political, social and cultural rights, of freedom from discrimination for all citizens, and of parity of esteem and of just and equal treatment for the identity, ethos and aspirations of both communities'.

Sinn Féin want rights to be a reality in people's lives. The protection of rights is central not just to a fair society but also to building a place where people can 'prosper, enjoy their freedoms and live their lives free from discrimination.

Sinn Féin on all councils will work to instigate a Rights Charter under which councils will commit to protect the rights of all citizens within their respective areas.



REGENERATION

Councils are our most localised form of electoral democracy, making decisions that impact upon your life, the life of your family and your community.

Councils, using their regeneration and community planning powers, in conjunction with Executive Departments, have the potential to play an important role in the social and economic regeneration of their areas.

Council purchasing power should be harnessed for public good. Contracting out Council services to the lowest cost tenders undermines the quality of public services and creates a race to the bottom on workers' pay and conditions. Services should instead be delivered in a way that maximises social, economic and environmental well-being.

Councils must make it their duty to promote Social Value and ensure that it is central to procurement and commissioning of services.

Councils should also promote Social Value by maintaining a public register of all Third Sector groups within their council areas.

Sinn Féin believe that whilst the shape and form of regeneration will vary across Councils, due to their geographical locations and urban/rural makeup, the most successful regeneration policies will be those that have maximum involvement by local people.

Working in partnership and involving local people in the co-design of services will help ensure Councils are able to deliver a first-class service that will meet the needs of their constituents.

As part of community planning Sinn Féin believes that Councils need to take account not just of the services that local communities need but of historical patterns of underinvestment so as to ensure that the planning and delivery of public services is done on the basis of objective need.

Councils need to have a clearly mapped out plan as to how they will deliver regeneration, not just of services for local people but also as to how they can help build the local economy either through job

creation or tourism.

Resourcing locally based tourist projects, particularly local social economy enterprises and promoting cultural tourism will help to create jobs, particularly in disadvantaged communities.

They can also serve to act as a magnet for visitors who will help boost the local hospitality sector.

Sinn Féin believes that regeneration also needs to focus on retaining our young people and their skills. Whilst many of our young people study at home, or even those that travel for their education, they can be attracted to stay or return if they believe that there is a prospect of a good job at home. Therefore, Council regeneration plans need to focus on both up-skilling local people whilst also encouraging co-operation between local employers and students through Apprenticeship initiatives and Innovation vouchers.

In seeking to create and build social and economic regeneration Sinn Féin recognises that there is an unequal relationship between Councils and Executive Departments and this is particularly true when it comes to budget commitments. This difficulty is further exasperated by the continuing austerity agenda being pursued by the British government which has seen relentless year on year real term cuts to the Block Grant.

Sinn Féin is committed to a new partnership with Local Government which ensures that the financial obligations of regeneration are shared more equally.

Sinn Féin is committed to further reviewing the potential of the de-centralisation of Executive Departments as part of a programme of balanced economic regeneration.

We support Inclusive Growth Deals in Belfast and the North West. These Deals will support key infrastructure, tourism and innovation projects and ensure that the most deprived communities share in the benefits of growth. SF also wants to see Economic Planning being developed across the north.



HOUSING

Sinn Féin believes that housing is one of the most fundamental human needs as it provides; shelter, comfort, security, dignity, privacy and the foundations for family life. It is essential that everyone has a home that is affordable and suited to their needs. This requires a healthy mix of owner-occupation, private renting, and social housing. However, a lack of social housing has created an unbalanced housing system.

Consequently, over 37,000 households are on the waiting list for social housing, 24,000 are in housing stress, and 12,000 are homeless. The lack of social housing has also shifted demand onto the private sector, pushing up prices and reducing the affordability of home ownership and private renting. In order to promote affordability across the housing sector Sinn Féin believes that the social housing stock must be substantially increased with the Housing Executive returning to building homes.

In addition, the Housing Executive needs to examine its methodology for calculating the number of new homes that are required each year. The supply of land and its allocation to meet local demand for housing is paramount. Sinn Féin believes that Councils have an important role to play in addressing the housing crisis that exists. This can be done through Land Zoning and Developers Contributions.

Through the use of Local Development Plans, Councils can designate areas, not just for housing but also for social housing. The designation needs to be done in line with real demand and once designated, Councils should not provide for a change of use. Any new housing development must include community infrastructure and local amenities. Sinn Féin believes that private housing developments should include a percentage of social and affordable housing in a way that is tenure blind and inclusive.

The concept of a “Positive Return” could capture both the need for a developer to make a reasonable return while at the same time recognising the social value of contributions that advance the wellbeing of our society. Sinn Féin support the protection of existing residential accommodation which should include recognition of the communities and neighbourhoods that have existed for generations. These local neighbourhoods need to be incorporated into any regeneration opportunities, for example; parking permits, entrances and exits and local amenities. Sinn Féin believes that Councils must also guard against the potential for cramming and overshadowing existing communities and neighbourhoods.



ENVIRONMENT

Tackling climate change is a priority for Sinn Féin. Major efforts will be made in all councils to reduce the carbon footprint and we will be fully supportive of renewable energy alternatives.

Investing in the built environment, making the area not just an attractive place for local people to live, also has the benefit of making the area an attractive place for investment. Investors are attracted to areas which have a high quality of life standard with access to amenities.

Sinn Féin believes that councils have an important role in protecting our environment. We want to see a movement away from the burning of fossil fuels to a cleaner and greener environment.

One of Sinn Féin's major efforts in all councils will be to tackle the issue of climate change and help reduce the carbon footprint and we will be fully supportive of renewable energy alternatives.

We want to see councils adopt carbon neutral heat sources for

any new council buildings and undertaking to retro fit older buildings. They should also remove single use disposable plastics from their offices and facilities.

Taking steps to protect the environment would also allow councils to play a part in creating jobs and generating an income that helps offset rate increases.

That direct financial investment in the environment should also be backed up by councils calling on the local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee to desist from investing in fossil fuel companies.

Waste can be a valuable commodity and Sinn Féin wants to see councils use the best re-cycling model in terms of efficiency, viability and economically.

We want to see councils proactively pursuing the three R's when it comes to dealing with waste, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle, so as to reduce the amount spent on landfill as well as generating an

income from the waste.

One such approach would see councils adopt a kerb box scheme alongside the blue bins. Rather than councils paying for landfill or paying companies to take away and process our waste, we want to see councils creating a circular economic model using their statutory obligations for the management of waste to create local jobs and an income stream.

Rather than giving the resource away, the retention of valuable processed recyclable products provides each council area with the opportunity to create local employment whilst generating a sustainable income from the sale of recyclables.

Sinn Féin is committed to protecting local communities and the environment from the harmful effects of chemical and nuclear waste. This is evident by our continued opposition to the use of cyanide in gold mining and the dumping nuclear waste materials, which is harmful to the environment and people's health.



WORKERS RIGHTS

LIVING WAGE & ZERO HOUR CONTRACTS

Sinn Féin is committed to improving the lives of workers. In a local context this means ensuring that our Councils practice and promote fair and equitable working arrangements.

The Tory austerity agenda coupled with high living costs, low wages and reductions in benefits have left many families living in poverty.

The British governments so called living wage of £8.21 continues to leave many families still living in poverty.

Sinn Féin wants to see all Councils become, Accredited Living Wage employers, paying the Living Wage and desisting from using Zero Hour Contracts for staff.

We also want to see Councils ensuring that financial support and procurement contracts are awarded to groups that are Living Wage Employers and who avoid using Zero Hour Contracts.

The Living Wage of £9.00 per hour, set by the Living Wage Council, is about effectively meeting the needs of workers, ensuring that they can enjoy a family life with dignity, free from the threat of poverty and food banks.

Sinn Féin also seeks to safeguard workers through banning Zero Hour Contracts which have created insecurity and uncertainty for workers.

Zero Hour Contracts remove a worker's right to have guaranteed hours, whilst placing expectations on workers to be readily available for work.

For workers these contracts result in numerous grievances such as job insecurity, low wages and a lack of career development. Such contracts are also disruptive to family life given their sporadic nature.

Sinn Féin Councillors have led and will continue to lead the fight to ban these exploitative contracts.

In 2018 Sinn Féin Councillors in Belfast City Council proposed and passed a motion on banning Zero Hour Contracts. This motion proposed that the Council phase out Zero Hour Contracts and replace them with "banded hour" contracts.

Banded Hour contracts would give more clarity and certainty to workers as they provide guarantees on their minimum and maximum working hours.

The motion also called on local Businesses to take responsibility to ensure that they also phase out Zero Hour Contracts.

Whilst this motion was initiated in Belfast it will be adopted and endorsed by our Councillors across the North.

Through these initiatives Sinn Féin believes that Councils, investing the rate payers money can help alleviate poverty and disadvantage and to make all council areas better places work in.

Councils also have the power to adjust the Sunday Trading Hours. Sinn Féin has previously opposed the issue of large retailers to be able to compel workers to work longer hours on Sundays. This remains our position, as it seems to achieve the fairest outcome for workers who wish to work or not and for small retailers who rely on Sunday trading hours for their survival.



AN GHAEILGE

THE IRISH LANGUAGE

Sinn Féin is committed to the promotion and use of the Irish Language in public and private life. We are committed to its protection in legislation and to the implementation of an Irish Language Act in the 6 counties.

Sinn Féin is also committed to using our political strength to ensure local government councils deliver services and protections to fulfil the rights of Irish speakers.

This includes the implementation of existing international and domestic commitments; such as those outlined in: The European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages; The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities; The Good Friday Agreement; The St. Andrew's Agreement; and The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Sinn Féin believe that local government must proactively deliver the 'resolute action' promised in The Good Friday Agreement. Local councils should deliver Irish Language provision in a planned and strategic way; in co-operation and consultation with the Irish Language Community and Irish Language agencies.

THIS 'RESOLUTE ACTION' SHOULD INCLUDE:

- **An Irish Language Policy in each council**
- **An Irish Language Development Officer in each council**
- **Service provision through the medium of Irish**
- **Adequate resourcing for the promotion, visibility and learning of the Irish Language within each council**
- **Action plans to tackle prejudice and promote tolerance regarding the Irish Language**
- **Proactivity to prevent discrimination and to protect Irish Language provision regardless of councils' political make-up**
- **A uniform Street Naming Policy across local government that facilitates citizens who wish to use Irish Language or bi-lingual street names. We affirm the view that this should be based on the wishes of 50% + 1 of respondents, partaking in a survey carried out by local residents or by a survey conducted by council.**

Sinn Féin are firmly of the view that the Irish Language belongs to all. It is not a threat to anyone or to any community. It is a resource for our society, and local government, to promote understanding, respect and equality.

Irish language speakers have rights – as citizens and as ratepayers. Local government must uphold, promote and defend these rights.



COMMUNITY POLICING

Local police must consistently work with local communities as such a strong working relationship is at the core of good policing throughout the island.

While PSNI has made progress in working with other statutory agencies such as health boards and social services in order to provide better outcomes for vulnerable people, we are concerned that the police are not properly engaging with local communities and community organisations to find local solutions to problems.

Adequate resources need to be provided for local / neighbourhood policing and local police to remain in their area on a much longer basis, in order to allow them to build and maintain the necessary relationships.

The new community planning powers for councils must also be used to provide a bottom up approach to policing and community safety.

Effective policies to reduce crime – the ones that have the capacity to deliver community safety in the longer term – focus on prevention. Some of these measures will go beyond policing into wider policy areas such as health, justice, education and the economy.

WE NEED A POLICING SERVICE THAT

- engages pro-actively, routinely and continuously with, and is responsive to the needs of the diverse communities it serves
- views communities as an important and vital asset in assisting with policing and community safety solutions working in partnership with the police.
- has 'policing with the community' as its core principle with solutions co-designed between communities and police

SINN FÉIN HAS

- Actively worked in our local areas on community safety issues such as rural crime, drugs, anti-social behaviour and the safety of older people
- Tackled local policing priorities through working in partnership and joint problem solving with both community and public sector organisations
- Worked to engage and involve young people on community safety issues
- Promoted community-driven projects and priorities
- Monitored police performance and provided, when necessary, robust challenge

SINN FÉIN WILL

- Scrutinise PSNI plans to ensure they protect frontline policing
- Ensure the Patten model of policing is defended and developed
- Continue to develop community and multi-agency partnership working with the police other statutory agencies and community organisations
- Continue to challenge any inappropriate police behaviour and any failure in duty
- Ensure local policing priorities are reflected in the area community plan, and that plans are developed from the bottom up
- Continue to work with the local Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs)
- Identify and deal with barriers to community confidence in policing



RURAL COMMUNITIES

Sinn Féin believes that rural communities, farmers and rural dwellers, are at the heart of our society. They are an integral part of protecting our ecology as well as ensuring that not only do we have high standards of food available locally but also through their efforts we have a thriving agri-food sector. That sector is a major employer locally as well as a leading contributor to the growth of the economy.

In the current political context rural communities are facing a very uncertain future with threats to their livelihoods because of Brexit and the loss of European funding.

Sinn Féin understands that decisions made at a council level can have a significant impact upon the future social and economic sustainability of our rural communities.

Sinn Féin councillors will ensure that all councils fully and comprehensively meet their statutory duties under the Rural Needs Act 2016. Rural proofing must be a central consideration of council policies and decision making. The process must be accountable, transparent and enforceable to ensure the appropriate weight is given to the rural voice in meeting their social and economic needs.

The sustainability of our countryside depends on people and families being able to reside there. Sinn Féin wants to see a review of strategic planning policy PPS 21 in order to ensure that it is meeting the demand for rural housing while protecting the open countryside and the environment.

Sinn Féin wants to see councils with large rural areas and communities working together for the overall betterment of those communities. We want councils to demand that future funding for rural communities will continue to entail elements of current funding. It is vital that payments for areas of Natural Constraint are continued, that the Common Agriculture Payment architecture is retained and that the Local Area Groups (LAGs) are part of the delivery mechanism for future financial packages.

Sinn Féin wants to see councils establish an agriculture committee which will seek to work together with others across the island. We believe that part of their work should be the establishment of an All-Ireland Rural Parliament bringing together representatives of the food producers as well as others representing the rural voice, to ensure that the needs of rural communities are not just heard but acted upon.



RURAL BROADBAND

Broadband has become a vital component of 21st century living.

Sinn Féin has long argued for the regional imbalance which exists in the north of Ireland to be addressed. Major projects like the A5 and A6 will bring huge benefits to those rural communities west of the Bann, not only in terms of road safety but economic benefits also. However, our digital infrastructure is just as important and the deficit that has developed between urban and rural communities needs to be addressed.

The need for adequate speeds of broadband ranges from accessing public services online, children and students needing it for homework, shopping online, putting in business orders and paying wages. It is important for the rural home but equally as important for our rural economy and the many small and medium businesses spread throughout our rural towns and communities.

Currently there are over 100,000 premises across the north of Ireland that cannot get access to adequate speeds of broadband over 30mbps or more, which is accepted as a baseline for a modern connection. In the 21st Century this isn't acceptable and what is even more startling is that some areas cannot reach speeds of 3mbps.

The Council areas of Fermanagh and Omagh, Mid Ulster, Newry Mourne and Down along with Causeway Coast and Glens register as having some of the poorest broadband speeds on the island or Ireland. 19% of premises in Fermanagh and Omagh cannot reach speeds of 10mbps.

Sinn Féin recognises that through the Department for Economies new broadband investment "Project Stratum", the aspiration is to reach 98% of premises with future proofed broadband of speeds over 30mbps within the next 5 years. That will mean many of those premises with poor speeds in parts of our rural council areas will be targeted by this intervention.

However, through our Councils Sinn Féin will continue to engage with Ofcom and the Department for Economy to push for adequate levels of broadband in those areas worst affected by poor speeds. Each home has the right to request that they get access to at least 10mbps under the Universal Service Obligation.

We see potential through our Councils to increase co-operation with service providers and the service regulator. Our Council areas are best located to highlight the areas in need and assist with future intervention also.



CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Sinn Féin is committed to ensuring that the cultural rights of all within our society are protected. We will work to ensure that councils make decisions that take account of the fact that different sections of our society have different cultures and also that they celebrate their culture in their own way. There can be no discrimination against any section of our society.

Sinn Féin recognises the important role that arts and culture plays within our society. Community arts plays a massive role and we therefore recognise the importance of its continued funding and would call for greater funding to be made available for these programmes. The importance of community arts is not simply about art and culture, it is also about tackling poverty and isolation. Community arts brings culture, arts and sports to the most disadvantaged areas in our society and also plays an important role in job creation.

Council also has a role to play in ensuring our local talents have as much a chance and support to achieve success and make a career for themselves from their artistic talents. Councils should continue to promote apprenticeships and funding opportunities for our young local artists. Sinn Féin seeks to protect the most vulnerable in society and believes that one way in achieving this is by offering realistic opportunities to our local artists. These programmes if funded correctly will help tackle poverty and isolation amongst our most vulnerable in society.

Sadly, it has become a reality for many that the opportunity to enjoy their culture and traditions cannot be realised because of a digital divide on the island. Sinn Féin has been to the fore in fighting to ensure that those, as TV licence payers, have proper access to their culture and traditions.

Sinn Féin believes that the lack of GAA coverage shown by the BBC is nothing short of discrimination towards those who enjoy gaelic sports, particularly when other major and minor sports receive widespread coverage.

We believe that all councils, acting in the interests of everyone that they represent should adopt a position of pressing the broadcasting authorities to bring this discrimination to an end.

There is also an issue of pressing the relevant stakeholders on the issue around digital Geo-Blocking of sporting and other programmes in the North. Viewers in the north are part of the island as a whole and tv stations such as RTE have a responsibility which is enshrined within their contract to broadcast their services across the island of Ireland. Sinn Féin believes that all councils should be pressing for the end of geo-blocking.

At the end of 2018, Belfast City Council launched their Mayors charter of rights which aims at protecting all citizens' rights including their cultural rights living in that particular council area. Following on from this very important initiative Sinn Féin will aim to roll this charter out across all other council areas.



A UNITED IRELAND

Sinn Féin will build a new, agreed and united Ireland based on justice, fairness and equality. In an Ireland of equals, Sinn Féin is committed to building a prosperous and inclusive society.

Across Ireland, the work of all Sinn Féin councillors will be guided by the drive toward Irish Unity.

The Brexit crisis has created unprecedented political uncertainty across the entire island. Irish citizens in the north who voted to remain must not be dragged out of the EU against their wishes. Sinn Féin will promote cooperation across councils north and south, to ensure that the democratic wishes of the people of the six counties are upheld.

As a result of Brexit, Ireland has been presented with a unique political opportunity to end the trauma of partition and to build an equitable and just society that serves the needs of all its citizens. Sinn Féin will press forward with the campaign for a Unity Referendum, lead and promote national and

international conversations on Irish unity and begin the practical planning for the final reunification of our country.

A partitioned economy has not served the people of Ireland well. Sinn Féin is committed to the development of an all-Ireland economy in which we will build upon existing cooperation and integration of services across the islands, in particular in the areas of health, education, transport, agriculture and tourism.

All – Ireland planning for health will produce better outcomes as services are shared and developed in an efficient manner. An all – Ireland education system will allow the sharing of resources and expertise across the island, strengthen research and development and contribute to the growth and sustainability of the all – Ireland economy. A united Ireland with a modern and efficient transport system will move people, goods and services across the island building political, economic and social capital among all citizens. An all – Ireland agricultural industry

will reduce the obstacles and red tape of working within two separate jurisdictions. As a world – class tourist destination, a united Ireland will see all regions, north and south, reach their full potential by creating employment and economic opportunity.

SF will seek to build cross border partnerships in further and higher education using the MOU between Letterkenny IT, North West Regional College and Ulster University Magee as a model for effective cooperation.

Particularly in border regions we will seek to develop partnership working to benefit citizens north and south.

Presidential voting rights for all citizens of Ireland will be high on the agenda for all Sinn Féin activists. Sinn Féin will continue to lobby the Irish government to hold a 2019 referendum on the extension of Presidential voting rights to citizens living in the north (and abroad), so that we grant a voice to all Irish citizens as we work together to influence and shape the character of a united Ireland.



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