



*"When you have cut down the last tree and polluted the last river,
you will know that you cannot eat money"*

Green Party Manifesto

Assembly Election 2007

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Meeting the Challenges - Seizing the Opportunities

The Green Party in Northern Ireland, is working towards a society which values local empowerment, where the diversity of all human and natural life is respected and where decisions are made compassionately, with integrity, and at the most effective, community-based level of democracy.

The Good Friday Agreement, and the joint referenda which gave it effect, provided for the balanced constitutional change which the Green Party has campaigned for since its foundation. We remain whole-heartedly in support of it. It represents the best, perhaps the only chance, for achieving a lasting resolution to conflict here in Northern Ireland and between us and the United Kingdom. We recognize that the Agreement is far from perfect, notably insofar as it has helped to trap our people in a sectarian headcount. Nevertheless, for now, we believe that the search for the perfect should not become the enemy of the good.

We recognise that the main concerns of the Agreement are its lack of clarity with regard to social justice and equality, police reform, de-commissioning and de-militarisation.

The Green Party is as eager, and as ready as ever, to play its full part in rising to the ongoing challenges of implementing and reviewing the Agreement to ensure that it continues to provide the cornerstone of a new society in Northern Ireland. We are equally committed to the enhanced role of the Civic Forum and the essential role of active citizens who will ultimately act as the final guarantee of a vibrant, just, inclusive and non-violent democracy.

Working with the Assembly and the Executive, we must create, not just meaningful jobs, but the means to get to those jobs; not just new high tech industries, but more hospital beds, more housing and an end to hospital and housing waiting lists. The basics of life: clean air, water and food are in limited supply. A new respect must be found for human rights and diversity, for life-long education, and for the fledgling democratic process itself. Violence, militarism and paramilitarism must be opposed and the United Nations must be supported as the primary forum for the protection and promotion of the Earth and its inhabitants.

If ever Northern Ireland needed a change in political thinking, it is now. With a good, if imperfect, set of political institutions established to facilitate peaceful relations between communities, on the island, and between the islands of Ireland and Britain, it is time to move on and deliver the fruits of real peace and security for all.

Progress has been measured by the quantity rather than the quality of economic activity, which ignores the growing gap between rich and poor and remains apathetic to the long-term side effects of dumps, pollution and habitat destruction.

The Cost of Economic Growth

It is cold comfort for the government to declare that the economy is growing. For most people this means longer travelling distances, more cars on the road, rising house prices and higher childcare costs as both parents are forced into the labour market to finance huge mortgages. Tales of progress are recited alongside shameful statistics about homelessness, child poverty, domestic violence and a proliferation of street crime.

A Need for Green Politics

Low voter turnout and young people's apathy towards politics is a very worrying trend. It reflects a basic cynicism and mistrust created not just by corrupt politicians and corrupt politics, but by arrogant politicians who ignore public opinion

(the former Environment Minister Dermot Nesbitt, once in office, became an apologist for Sellafield and BNFL) and who renege on Manifesto promises to the electorate (None of the political parties in the current Assembly has called for an independent Environmental Protection Agency for Northern Ireland as part of the reform of public administration).

There is a need for a new politics, which seeks to inspire and put credibility back into the political process while also setting out how humans can live well without destroying the natural world. There is an urgent need for Green Politics.

Economics as if People Mattered

Quality of Life is suffering. Despite rapid economic growth, we still have great poverty, inequalities in access to education and healthcare, illiteracy, homelessness and a sharp deterioration in our living space.

Finance

Tracking Quality of Life

Measuring the amounts of money being spent in the form of gross national product and gross domestic product fails to differentiate between money spent on improving life and money spent repairing damage. New tracking measurements to monitor changes in quality of life, community development and environmental well-being are essential. The Environmental Audit Committee at Westminster has begun to examine such initiatives and opened a discussion with the Treasury. It is time for the Northern Ireland Assembly's Department of Finance and Personnel to make green accounting a cornerstone of the Executive's delivery of the Programme for Government and the annual budget process.

Financial incentives and sanctions are needed to direct investment into creating an equitable, stable and sustainable society, particularly in the areas of healthcare, childcare, housing, education, and environmental well-being.

The fraudulent behaviour of some financial institutions demands radical reform of the financial sector. Legislation promoting comprehensive financial responsibility will be a priority for the Green Party in Government.

The Green Party will introduce a range of financial measures to ensure eco-friendly economic policies, more social banking and investment, greater investment in local government and true equality in earning power. Supporting the social economy has never been more important in Northern Ireland. The social economy model offers a perfect win-win solution to the upcoming crisis in parts of the voluntary and community sector.

In the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Green Party will work to

Ensure that HM Treasury in London transfers the bias in the collection of taxes from taxes on income to eco- taxes. This will mean different - not more - taxation;

Weight expenditure on transport in favour of public transport, non-private motor car use, pedestrianisation, and cycleways;

Legislate to confer favoured status on a non-profit directed financial sector, e.g. the Credit Union Movement;

Introduce a 5% Social Solidarity Levy on the profits of banks and financial institutions;

Ensure that ethical investment is adhered to in all areas of government activity, including the Northern Ireland Assembly, its Commission and Secretariat e.g. the Assembly pension scheme;

Increase expenditure on Community Development;

Lobby to improve fiscal measures to assist parents who wish to care for their own children;

Social, Community and Family Affairs

Social Welfare Reform Incorporating a Refundable Tax Credit (RTC)

The Green Party will continue to work towards an enhanced Refundable Tax Credit system. This will provide adequate income guarantee for all and will help avoid many of the negative side effects inherent in social welfare payments.

Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Ensuring Responsible Trading

Lessening reliance on multinational investment and building sustainable small and medium sized enterprises is a major plank of Green Party policy. We will initiate tax-free dividends for entrepreneurs to lessen over-dependence on multinational investment and to encourage local enterprise and productivity.

The Green Party believes that international trade and investment should be carried on within a shared global responsibility to ensure prudent consumption of resources.

The Green Party wants Northern Ireland to develop an ethically-based trade policy that respects the environment and human rights. The Green Party supports reform of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to ensure transparency and participation by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other representatives of civil society. Reforms must also ensure the removal of WTO's negative attitude to national environmental and human rights standards as barriers to trade.

Transnational Corporations (TNCs) now control over two-thirds of all international trade and most international investment. The Green Party supports the concept of a UN Convention on Corporate Accountability, that would be legally binding and enforced in the global market place.

Strengthening Employment and Training

The Green Party will continue to support the social economy through continued support for Community Employment as well as the more recently introduced Social Economy Programme.

Protecting Workers

To protect the rights of workers, the Green Party will:

End the abuse of young people in employment and encourage longer participation in full-time education;

Introduce legislation, in consultation with the unions, to encourage tele-working and home working;

Introduce paid paternity leave.

Making Industry Responsible

Industry must bear the costs of protecting the environment against its activities. A rigorous implementation of the polluter pays principle would minimise waste and pollution as well as ensuring that prices more fully reflect their true industrial costs.

The Green Party proposes the establishment of a Commission on Sustainable Business to identify business-friendly ways of promoting sustainability.

Serious consideration will be given to requiring all legally incorporated bodies with a turnover above a set limit to conduct an annual environmental audit as a matter of course. The Party supports current efforts at the European Union to introduce a Directive on environmental management systems.

The Party believes that only a robust and independent Environmental Protection Agency in Northern Ireland will be capable of ensuring full enforcement of current European Directives as they apply to business in Northern Ireland.

Consumer Protection

The Green Party will introduce new powers for the consumer protection office, enhancing the office's role in promoting sustainable consumption and fair trade. We believe that a key tool in this process will be the availability of information about products and services.

The party will work to:

Introduce consumer legislation to tighten regulations on the labelling of goods, particularly in the food industry;

Halt the fluoridation of our water;

Establish a public information programme to ensure that consumers are made aware, not only of their rights, but also of the need to take on ethical and environmental considerations when making consumer decisions;

Introduce a ban on toy advertisements and advertisements for junk food.

Science and Technology

The Green Party wants to see an innovative economy that develops and promotes appropriate technologies that serve people, promote self-reliance, and protect nature. However, the destructive potential of science and technology cannot be ignored. The party will encourage diversification and conversion in the defence industry.

The Party is keen to support community-based control and ownership of new initiatives in renewable energy technology development. Incentives to promote independent funding of such initiatives will be supported.

Sustainable Technology

The Green Party will :

Initiate research and development which contributes to sustainability, such as organic farming, recycling technology and alternative energy sources (eg. Wind, biomass, wave);

Ensure that the Precautionary Principle applies to any technologies, such as the growing of genetically modified crops, shown to have the potential to cause damage to people or the environment;

Promote and resource information technology with necessary infrastructure as a means of democratising society, improving access to information, and providing a mass tool of education;

Genetic Research

The artificial alteration of the genetic make-up of organisms, including ourselves, presents many challenges and opportunities .

The Green Party welcomes the opportunities that genetic modification technology, properly applied, could offer for the alleviation or cure of disease; for the study of genomes of all organisms for the benefit of humans, animals and the biosphere; and for the development of an agriculture which is sustainable, low in chemical, energy and pesticide input, and which is applicable to small farmers world-wide.

However, the Green Party calls for:

The establishment of a GM Regulator;

A moratorium on further releases of GMOs into the environment;

Independent testing, to pharmaceutical standards, of products derived from GMOs.

Ensuring Social Justice

The Green Party believes that the most efficient way of providing quality of life for all is to minimise the gap between rich and poor and to improve accessibility to community services. Social justice is a cornerstone of the peace building process in our communities.

Health and Children

New Structures

A Green health service will focus on community care provided for by local community health services. These services will be adequately funded and represented within the context of the reformed Public Administration. There will be a new emphasis on the prevention of disease and ill health.

Greater Transparency

There must be greater transparency and accountability in the health area, not least in the role of the pharmaceutical industry and its considerable influence on the National Health Service. The Green Party will create a Health Ombudsman Office with remit to investigate environmental health risks as well as disputes concerning the provision of health care. In addition, accountable health service managers will be employed to make best use of available resources.

Health impact assessments will be mandatory and will be independently conducted whenever a new potentially hazardous industry is planned. In addition, research will be conducted into baseline levels of dioxins, PCBs, Fluorides, etc.

Choices for the people will not be made by the State. Enforced mass medication such as the fluoridation of the water supply will be stopped. In addition, immunisation programmes need to be constantly monitored, not just for effectiveness in reducing a particular disease but also for adverse health effects, so that parents can make informed decisions about their children's health.

An alternative regulatory system is needed to regulate the introduction and use of alternative therapies. At the same time, alternative medical practitioners must conform to recognised standards of qualification.

Catering for Special Needs

Catering for the needs of certain groups within society requires changes in attitudes and in the provision of services.

We support:

New Disability legislation that incorporates the principle of needs and rights - based assessment in consultation with disability groups.

The removal of mental illness as a taboo subject in our society and a recognition of the role that alternative health practices can play in the treatment of mental illness;

The expansion of domiciliary services and community healthcare to assist the elderly, chronically sick, and physically or mentally disabled to be cared for in the home rather than in institutions, and to provide support structures for those who are carers in the home;

The promotion and extension of the hospice movement;

Womens choice of home or hospital/nursing home birth and extended paternity leave to complement maternity leave;

A focus on childrens health needs, with particular reference to the link between poverty and ill-health;

Particular attention to the health needs of the Travelling community;

The belief that drug abuse must be treated as a health as well as a justice issue.

The investment of more money and resources into getting addicts completely of drugs.

The targeting of alcohol abuse

Ensuring Childrens Rights

Government policy must be more child-centred and there are needs for radical reforms in childcare and in residential care, areas depended upon by some of our most vulnerable children. The Green Party supports the legislation for a Children's Commissioner in Northern Ireland.

The Green Party:

Initiate a Charter of Rights for Children based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and greatly strengthen the National Childrens Strategy;

Increase support to home-based childcare;

Ensure that a range of childcare facilities are put in place prioritising access and affordability for those living on low incomes;

Ensure that all pre-school children from the age of three will have access to free pre-school education;

Include the provision of play areas and sports facilities as integral criteria in planning controls.

Education

From the Cradle to the Grave

The Green Party believes in education for the whole community for the whole of life. Education should not be market-led but should fulfil our individual needs - practical, creative, spiritual, intellectual, physical - as well as the needs of the broader community. The Green Party supports the proposed abolition of the 11+ and the associated system of secondary and grammar education.

Equal Opportunities for all

The education of those with disabilities will, wherever possible and with adequate resources, be mainstreamed in the regular education system and relevant teacher training skills will be provided.

Finally, we will give more state support and encouragement to the movement to educate children in the home.

Pre-School Structures

Pre-school education urgently requires the provision of comprehensive childcare structures with the needs of the child and the parent, not of business, being the primary focus. Fiscal policy should be directed towards assisting one parent to remain at home with children, if they so wish.

Third Level Maintenance

All tuition fees will be abolished in third level colleges.

More investment will be made in purpose-built and on-campus student housing, incorporating 'green building' techniques and renewable energy.

Every student parent will be provided with adequate childcare facilities and subsidies.

Adult Education

The Green Party:

Encourage more women to take up apprenticeships,

Provide proper childcare facilities as a necessary pre-requisite for participation in life-long learning programmes;

Ensure that self-learning cooperatives such as the University of the Third Age and Active

Retirement Groups will be accommodated and given financial assistance.

Irish and Ulster Scots Languages

We strongly welcome the growth of the Gaelscoileanna movement and will ensure that it is better resourced so that the movement can develop at second and third level as well as through adult education.

The Green Party also supports the developing infrastructure for the Ulster Scots speakers, including an Ulster Scots Academy.

Housing

Successive governments have failed in their basic duty to provide adequate accommodation for people.

The Rental Sector

Lack of security of tenure and low standards of some accommodation will be assisted by a phased increase in statutory minimum notice to quit and an introduction of incremental increases based on length of tenure.

Effective Land Use

We will ensure the siting of developments and the use of high plot ratios near transport links and the development of mixed estates, in terms of both private and social housing and in house size.

We will vigorously support legislation to counteract land speculation and speed up the provision of affordable housing.

We will introduce a Windfall Levy on increases in value on development land caused through rezoning to benefit local communities.

Sustainable Housing Development

Planning permissions will require all new housing developments to have adequate facilities, including play areas. Housing schemes will have to provide a mixture of housing sizes and tenures. We will encourage more mixed residential/commercial developments in inner city areas.

Increased subsidies will be provided to promote energy-efficiency and energy rating will be introduced to all homes. The eco-villages movement and cooperative housing projects will receive strong support.

Much greater subsidies will be provided towards non-profit housing organisations, local authority shared ownership schemes, schemes which promote housing renovation and refurbishment, and self-build schemes.

Programmes for rural resettlement will be encouraged through partnership with voluntary bodies. We will also promote such methods as shared ownership and ecological self-build housing.

Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Existing Housing Executive accommodation, with energy conservation as a major ingredient, will be upgraded in order to achieve suitable accommodation with less new construction.

Improvements in low demand estates will be prioritised. Local authority estate management systems, which deal with problem tenants, will be improved. The current system of local authority loans will be extended to those on low-income.

Housing for our most vulnerable citizens

Housing for people with disabilities will be integrated into as many housing schemes as possible. The prospective buyers of such housing will be actively involved in its design and planning.

A regional plan for a network of halting sites will be drawn up in consultation with Travellers. This will be backed by legislation to oblige local authorities to provide those sites.

There is an urgent need for an increase in emergency accommodation for our growing number of homeless. The Green Party will establish an emergency response service for homeless people similar to the freephone associated with Childline. In addition, we will increase funding and support for groups working with the homeless.

Balancing Nature with Human Activity

Environmental Protection

Protecting our environment will form an integral part of everything the Green Party will do in Government. The policies we advocate for each Government Department are fully connected with environmental concerns and are integral to any attempts to improve Quality of Life.

Environment and Local Government

Spatial Planning Strategy and Guidelines

It is essential that there is a comprehensive framework for planning and sustainable development in Northern Ireland. The Green Party will ensure that the regional plan for development ('Shaping our Future') is implemented incorporating policies for sustainable development.

Environmental Action Plan

In Government, the Green Party will :

Seek the appointment of a Junior Minister with responsible for cross-government implementation of sustainable development and sustainable development proofing of all policy initiatives, from pre-consultation stage through to legislation;

Create a robust and independent Environmental Protection Agency, making it stronger and more effective than the current Environment and Heritage Service, which notionally serves as our current EPA;

Ensure that local authorities, in co-operation with NGOs, draw up plans for sustainable development and sustainable transport plans;

Put in place a regional Zero Waste Management Plan with specific targets for comprehensive recycling and waste reduction programmes on a local basis;

Mainstream Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) , i.e. extend the responsibility of producers for the environmental impacts of their products through the entire product life cycle, especially for their take-back, recycling, and disposal;

Oppose all plans for incinerators and superdumps;

Introduce regulations limiting the size and duration of waste disposal facilities and insist on the pre-treatment of any disposed waste;

Examine the role and functions of the Department of the Environment's radiological protection arm, and ensure that it develops policy independently of London departments e.g. in the area of Sellafield policy;

Establish a regional regulatory body responsible for monitoring and controlling the risks posed by electro-magnetic radiation, fulfilling international obligations;

Require local authorities to draft and implement Water Quality Management Plans for their rivers, lakes, harbours and bays and insist that EU drinking water and bathing water standards are rigorously met;

Increase funding at Invest Northern Ireland for Cleaner Production Programmes to ensure that clean production is at the heart of all water plans, catchment-based initiatives and river basin plans;

Introduce greater fines and other penalties for water pollution and increase the powers for bodies licensed to prosecute;

End the fluoridation of local authority drinking water supplies;

Insist on strict implementation of the Polluter Pays principle in all aspects of environmental legislation.

Nuclear Power

The Green Party will:

Use all international agreements and diplomatic opportunities to close MOX, the THORP and Sellafield reprocessing plants and to halt the transport of spent nuclear fuel through the Irish Sea.

Insist that decommissioning of Sellafield and all British nuclear plants must commence immediately;

Make full use of the Anglo-Irish conference to have the Sellafield issue raised as a primary issue of concern; The Green Party opposes the use of DEFRA as the Secretariat on nuclear issues servicing the North South Ministerial Council on Sellafield issues;

Work for a sustainable, non-nuclear EU energy policy to replace the present pro-nuclear focus of the Euratom Treaty, and seek to amend the Treaty to oversee the safe decommissioning of nuclear plants and safe disposal/storage of nuclear waste.

Climate Change and Northern Ireland

It is now clear that the Earth is in the grips of dramatic weather changes and that global warming is occurring at levels far greater than predicted. The Green Party will work to accelerate current research and policy development on climate change in Northern Ireland, including work on regional impacts and mitigation measures.

The Green Party will:

Support a fiscally neutral carbon tax on the industrial uses of energy;

Ensure fuel tax is spent on public transport and other energy conservation measures;

Ensure that some of the monies from eco-taxes are directed to measures to counteract the effects of climate change;

Promote wind, wave, biomass and solar energy;

Expand R & D into all renewable sources of energy;

Set a target of 20% of electricity production through renewable resources by 2010;

Ensure that building regulations and building construction are ecologically based;

Support increased afforestation, favouring the planting of deciduous, hardwood forests.

Maintaining Our Communities

Green policies will ensure that Northern Ireland can be a modern, vibrant and progressive society. It is possible to feed nations, transport large numbers of people and goods, build communities or harness vital energy supplies without destroying or squandering resources for future generations.

Public Enterprise

Transport - Getting Around without Costing the Earth

We propose a Regional Sustainable Transport Authority whose duties will include the implementation of transport development within the regional development strategy. We will give district councils the responsibility and resources for preparing Sustainable Transport Plans, including traffic reduction measures, for their area. This will include setting targets for public transport, and ensuring proper levels of service provision.

The Green Party will:

Provide significant funding for public transport;

Bring in provisions to ensure safer driving and fewer road deaths especially among young men (18-24 years);

Ensure proper maintenance and upgrading of existing roads with bypasses only as required;

Implement a safe routes to school policy;

Work towards the provision of light rail for all urban centres;

Put in place a 30 kph [20 mph] speed limit on residential roads;

Promote taxi schemes in rural areas fully integrated into rural transport projects.

Energy

There is an immediate need for alternative, renewable energy sources, here in Northern Ireland and globally.

We will promote a renewable/ indigenous energy plan, with targets and timetables for implementation. The aim will be to achieve 20% of electricity production through renewable sources by 2010.

We will ensure that the national grid is modernised to use underground cabling in isolated areas in order to allow more wind power to be harnessed offshore as well as on land. In addition, local Rural Energy Partnerships will be developed to facilitate community - owned wind turbines.

Agriculture, Food, and Rural Development

The Green Party believes that the future of agriculture must move in the direction of clean, safe food. The food we eat should be seen as the primary source of health care. If we produce and eat healthy food we will reduce ill health and so decrease the cost to our health service.

The Green Party will:

Introduce a Rural Development Bill promoting sustainability and quality of life in rural communities;

Assist the registered organic certification bodies and farming organisations with research and funding;

Set targets for rural acreage to be organically converted;
Develop local food economies to support local farmers;
Use set aside land, depending on soil suitability, for growing sustainable forestry or a short rotation biomass crop such as rape seed for biofuel;
Ensure Northern Ireland and the island of Ireland becomes a 'GM-free zone';
Ensure there is no patenting of seeds;
Improve the effectiveness of the enviro-agriculture schemes;
Initiate an integrated strategy to combat agricultural pollution;
Encourage more young people in farming.

Farm animals

The intensification of agriculture has led to animals being transported over long distances, compromising their health and welfare. The answer lies in less intensification of agriculture, tiered payments for farmers and a policy of producing safe food in a quality environment.

In terms of the treatment of farm animals, the Green Party will:

Reform the Common Agricultural Policy to favour humane, healthy farming;
Phase out all long distance transportation of animals;
Promote local abattoirs and value added meat processing to minimise live animal transportation;
Phase out the sow stall system and the use of battery cages for hens;

For all animals, the Green Party will:

Introduce legislation outlawing any activities where animals are set against other animals, such as hare coursing, fox hunting and stag hunting;
Provide funding for research into alternatives to animal testing;
Oppose any attempt to patent animal life forms;
Provide additional support to agencies promoting animal welfare, such as the Irish Seal Sanctuary.

Marine and Natural Resources

The fact that Northern Ireland is part of an island presents us with immense economic opportunities, not just in terms of fisheries, but also in the development of renewable energy, mercantile shipping and tourism.

In order to promote Northern Ireland's living marine resources in an environmentally sustainable way, the Green Party will:

Promote sustainable fishing by favouring small-scale, less environmentally damaging vessels and fishing methods, and by applying more stringent penalties to illegal fishing;
Designate Marine Protected Areas around the coast, with the involvement of all user groups, to allow regeneration of stocks and conservation of wildlife;
Renegotiate the EU Common Fisheries Policy;
Press for a moratorium on all whaling internationally and promote ecotourism instead;
Ensure that the development of offshore gas and oil resources is under tight State control.

Forestry

The Green Party seeks environmentally balanced forestry policies that support local communities while enhancing our environment.

The Green Party will:

Ensure that all forests are internationally accredited for sustainability;

Tourism, Sport and Recreation

Eco-tourism is a growing area that must be encouraged.

The Green Party will:

Place increased emphasis on activity holidays such as walking and cycling, cruising and sailing, educational/study tours and special interest holidays;

Promote carefully planned development of the walking ways of Ireland North and South;

Promote the restoration of ancient castles/historic houses throughout the country;

Shift the emphasis away from interpretive centres in wilderness areas to more appropriate urban locations.

Sport

The twin aims of our sports policy are to increase community participation in sport, while at the same time ensuring that our top sports people can compete to their potential at the highest level.

The Green Party will:

Greatly increase funding in sport, with a particular provision of facilities for young people;

Ban sponsorship by alcoholic drinks companies.

Support initiatives to encourage cross-community reconciliation and cooperation using sport e.g. the Derry City FC project.

Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and Ulster-Scots

Arts

We consider cultural expression and engagement as basic human rights and will prioritise funding for arts, culture and heritage for both the high and popular arts levels.

Funding must enable the arts to flourish at all levels. In order to ensure this, funding will be channelled through the Arts Council so that arts can be planned for on a regional and local basis. The Arts Council will be given a new brief to encourage environmental communication, drawing on local cultural and communication initiatives.

The Green Party will:

Establish Local Arts Boards to complement Arts Council activities;

Support the promotion of a vibrant living European and Northern Irish film industry and endeavour to ensure positive discrimination so that not just imported blockbusters get distribution.

Gaeltacht

Is mian linn go leanfaidh an seasamh fábharch i leith na Gaeilge. Cuirfimid fáilte roimh fhoilsiú Bhillle na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Comhionanna), 2002, agus cuirfimid i bhfeidhm é leis na hacmhainní a bheidh de dhith air. Is cuspóirí dúinn iad, fás na nGaeltachtaí, foirmeacha a bheidh dhátheangach and pacáistíocht, lipéidí and foilseacháin stáit a bheidh as Gaeilge and as Béarla taobh le taobh.

Tugaimid lán-tacaíocht do bhorradh na Gaelscolaíochta ag gach leibhéal, daoine fásta san áireamh. Spreagfaimid forbairt TG4, RNG and na mean Gaeilge mar áiseanna riachtanacha do lucht na Gaeilge.

Ulster-Scots

The Green Party will support the promotion of the Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture.

Archaeology

Archaeology is a significant part of Northern Ireland's cultural heritage and environment and requires a much more proactive, better resourced policy.

Protection of Wildlife and Habitat

The Green Party is committed to the protection of our areas of outstanding natural beauty and sites of special scientific interest. The Party will work to ensure a robust implementation of the new ASSIs legislation. Furthermore

The Green Party will:

Support a Biological Records Centre in the Republic of Ireland and where important data from NGO wildlife groups and from Environmental Impact Assessments can be pooled and properly resourced; The Party will propose that the Centre collect data on an all-island basis;

Apply environmental assessment procedures to plans or projects that are likely to affect the integrity of protected sites;

Justice, Equality & Law Reform

A Considered Response

The Green Party will focus on the reasons for crime instead of dealing simply with the consequences. We will place a greater emphasis on social and economic measures as a means of fully restoring public security. Those who advocate a war on crime only help institutionalise the crime culture by continually ignoring underlying causes. The Party supports the development of a community restorative justice infrastructure and district policing partnerships with meaningful community participation.

Improving our Prison and Court Systems

The Green Party will push for thorough improvements in the prisons so that the dignity and human rights of detainees are respected. We feel confident that this will help reduce the number of prisoners re-offending.

The Green Party will support the move to have criminal justice come under the control of the Northern Ireland Executive and:

Push for an examination of the legal statutes so that imprisonment is not imposed for petty crimes;
Place greater emphasis on the restitution of victims of crime;
Focus on alternatives to prison for convicted offenders;
Give greater funding to the Probation and Welfare Service
Allocate resources to the most deprived areas of major towns and cities to break the cycle of poverty-drugs-crime; there will be a special focus on 'flashpoint' areas in urban areas blighted by sectarian violence;
Ensure a greater focus on domestic violence and the victims of domestic violence;

Equality: Gender Rights

The Green Party believes that Northern Ireland can only benefit from a true gender balance in all aspects of life. We also believe that equality must encompass increasing life choices for all, enabling all individuals to pursue fulfilling careers and lifestyles.

In the present economic climate, women are now being actively encouraged into the work-force. The wage gap between men and women remains, and women are disproportionately employed in part-time occupations.

Women must be represented fairly in political life, at the levels where real decision-making is made.

The Green Party will work to ensure that there is an increase in the numbers of women in decision-making civil service positions and similar management positions in semi-state bodies and state agencies.

Equally, discrimination against men in any forum cannot be tolerated. Men have equal rights to all jobs, membership of organisations, and support services.

With regard to the area of custody and access to children when a partnership or marriage has dissolved, the Green Party believes that legislation should be examined so that there is absolutely no possibility of gender based discrimination against men. In all cases, the best interest of the child must be viewed as paramount and decisions on access and custody should be based on that premise, regardless of possible gender based conceptions.

Gay and Lesbian Rights

The Green Party favours the strong use of anti-discrimination legislation to remove remaining discrimination against the gay and lesbian communities. We will monitor the use of Equality legislation to ensure that such areas as employment concessions for couples, and pension and inheritance rights are not compromised.

People with Disabilities

The Green Party will monitor and advocate the full rights of all those who live with disabilities.

Specifically, the Green Party will ensure that:

The entire public transport system is made accessible to all members of the community;
A Respite Care Policy is initiated in full consultation with disabled people and their carers;
There is increased funding for research into the causes of disabilities such as autism.

Travellers

The Green Party will appoint a Traveller Ombudsman.

Senior Citizens

We will work within all Government Departments to ensure that our society fully values the resource that is our senior citizens.

We will strongly support the work of organisations such as Age Concern.

Refugees/Asylum Seekers and Immigration

Ireland of the Welcomes?

Emigration has been a fact of Northern Irish life for generations. Immigration, on the other hand, is a new phenomenon for Northern Ireland. Growing numbers of people want to come to Northern Ireland to live and work.

Immigrants

The Green Party supports the development of an immigration policy based on the principles of sustainability and observance of humanitarian and human rights practices. Expertise will be drawn from a number of Government departments, business and trade unions, and development/human rights NGOs, as well as local and new ethnic communities. Policy guidelines will be written within a human rights framework, in particular European and UN Conventions on migrant workers.

Further measures to counter racism in Northern Ireland society will be funded and supported.

Northern Ireland and the Wider World

The Green Party sees Northern Ireland having a very unique and valuable role as an honest broker in non-violent conflict resolution. The negotiation of the Belfast Agreement and the role of civil society in peace building have generated valuable experiences for other societies trapped in ethnic conflict.

International Affairs

European Union

The Green Party strongly believes that the greatest achievement of the EU has been the creation of structures for the development of peaceful, mutually beneficial relations between states. However, we are firmly opposed to any measures towards the creation of a militarised and federal EU superstate.

We support the addition of new member-states to the EU, with social and human rights criteria being given greater weight than economic criteria. We will continue to be critical of the expansion of flexibility (enhanced cooperation) clauses and qualified majority voting into more and more areas of EU decision-making.

We will support the establishment of a standing committee on Europe at the Northern Ireland Assembly.

We will oppose a military Rapid Reaction Force, and encourage instead the establishment of a European Civilian Peace Corps (ECPC).

The Green Party will support:

Policies to strongly improve the budget of the UN;

Policies to bring the IMF, World Bank and WTO firmly back into the UN policy framework as envisaged in Articles 55 and 58 of the UN Charter;

Campaigns to relieve and cancel debts in the world's poorest countries.

The Developing World

The downside of globalisation is most clearly evident in the devastation to local economies and communities in the developing world. We believe the world's trading system is biased against the poorest countries, flooding their markets with cheap food while denying them access to the richest markets. The Green Party welcomes and supports the work of the Assembly's cross-party informal committee on development and will play an active role in implementing its recommendations.

The Green Party will work for the following:

The achievement of a 0.7% GNP allocation for Overseas Development Aid;

A halt to any further liberalisation of trade under the WTO regime until there is a comprehensive assessment of the impact of existing agreements under the WTO on developing countries;

The reform of CAP, stopping the dumping of subsidised produce on developing countries;

The cancellation of debt repayments from the 41 poorest countries.

The Arms trade and Northern Ireland

There has been a dramatic increase in exports of military equipment from Northern Ireland. The 'peace process' has been marked by the rapid development of defence industry-related activities in Northern Ireland.

The Green Party will oppose Northern Ireland Executive support for the further development of the arms trade, noting the Pledge of Office which all Ministers must make when they assume Executive authority. The Pledge contains a clear and unequivocal commitment to non-violence and the peaceful pursuit of conflict resolution.

A New Politics

Those with money have an inordinate influence on Northern Irish politics. The Green Party wants to break that link forever.
Green Politics is Clean Politics

Cleaning Up Politics

Corruption is defined as benefiting personally from public life. The Green Party believes that this definition needs to be widened to include the undue influence on policy and decision-making through donations. T

The Green Party believes that democracy is damaged by the private funding of politics. Therefore, we support an accountable limit on spending during and between elections to be paid from public funds.

Specifically, the Green Party will:

Ban corporate donations and allow personal donations no greater than £500 in any financial year;

Limit the amount of money spent between elections at both local and national level. If you limit only at election time parties/candidates will spend between elections;

Ensure that candidates in elections have to produce an up-to-date tax clearance certificate;

Ensure that expenses for public representatives are fully receipted.

Green Politics for Quality of Life

In Government the Green Party will:

Transfer the bias in the collection of taxes from tax on income to eco-taxes to fund better public services. This will mean different - not more - taxation.

Phase in a Refundable Tax Credit system to provide an adequate income for the least well off and to avoid many of the negative side effects in social welfare payments.

Work towards a decentralised health service, providing significant resources to local clinics and district hospitals and appoint a Health Ombudsman.

Direct fiscal policy towards pre-school and primary school education, aimed at eliminating early school leaving within four years.

Establish a regional network of community childcare centres, introduce fiscal policies to allow one parent to remain at home if he/she wishes, and provide proper play facilities as a key element of development plans.

Vehemently oppose all plans for incinerators and superdumps, putting in place a Zero-Waste Management Plan with local area emphasis.

Enhance the powers of the consumer council.

Support investment in public transport, and review funding for roads schemes;

Increase the availability of housing at affordable levels. Introduce legislation to provide security of tenure, reasonable rents and minimum standards of accommodation.

Aim to convert 30% of agricultural land to organic usage and ensure Northern Ireland and the island of Ireland as a whole, becomes a Genetically Modified Free Zone.

Support the work of the NIPS Ombudsman and reform of the police service to accelerate the normalization of policing in our communities, with community participation through partnerships;

Ban corporate donations in politics and pursue an end to the Dual Mandate (i.e. representation on district councils and the Assembly).

Insist that decommissioning of Sellafield and all British nuclear plants commences immediately.