



## Sinn Féin - Changing the face of local government >>

Sinn Féin has brought a new energy to Local Councils across Ireland. We are providing strong local representation and making a real difference. As the only all-Ireland party our aim, in the time ahead, is to have representation on every local Council in Ireland. We will use our mandate to advance the peace process, build for Irish unity and bring forward real social and economic change.

In the 22 years since Sinn Féin Councillors were first elected to local authorities in the north the face of local government, in many areas, has been transformed. Sinn Féin is leading the way in:

- › Delivering quality services to all on the basis of equality
- › Promoting power-sharing and ensuring fairness in the allocation of Chairs and Deputy Chairs on Councils, Council Committees and in representation on external bodies
- › Tackling discrimination within Councils and across society
- › Providing civic leadership – in bringing forward positive proposals on promoting equality, tackling discrimination and sectarianism, challenging racism and promoting good community relations and on remembrance
- › Strong local representation – Sinn Féin Councillors have led the way in working with communities across the north to bring about change and to ensure that Local Councils deliver for local people
- › Responsibility, innovation and vision – Sinn Féin Councillors have acted in the best interests of all those they represent in bringing forward innovative solutions to difficult issues, campaigning for employment and tackling social exclusion and fighting against the privatisation agenda and unjust double taxation like water rates
- › All-Ireland integration – Sinn Féin Councillors are part of an all-Ireland team. We launched a series of major initiatives this year to advance this work including our campaign for a Green Paper on Irish unity and a campaign to bring forward and implement plans for the integration of services, developments and infrastructure throughout the border region

Despite the progress that has been made, much more needs to be done. The sectarian hatred, which greeted the first wave of Sinn Féin Councillors, is still evident in areas such as Newtownabbey Council where Briege Meehan is the sole Sinn Féin Councillor. Also in Lisburn, Ballymena and Castlereagh the Councils operate as Belfast did in the past. They are closed shops where nationalists are excluded. Sinn Féin is about changing all of that.

Sinn Féin wants to see local democracy strengthened and brought closer to the people. We want to see equality principles and a framework of checks and balances – similar to the Good Friday Agreement – to ensure that the unionist abuses of the past are not repeated. We want to see greater all-Ireland integration in the work of Councils, particularly in the Border Region. We want Local Councils to be radical, effective and accountable.

**Help us to change the face of Local Government in Ireland.**

**Vote Sinn Féin on May 5th.**

## Sinn Féin – Ag Athrú an Rialtais Áitiúil »

Tá fuinneamh úr curtha isteach sna Comhairlí áitiúla ar fud na hÉireann ag Sinn Féin. Tá muid ag cur ionadaíochta láidre ar fáil agus ag déanamh difríochta. Is í aidhm an pháirtí seo, an t-aon páirtí uile Éireannach, go mbeidh ionadaíocht againn ar gach Comhairle áitiúil in Éirinn amach anseo. Bainfidh muid úsáid as ár sain-ordú chun an próiseas síochána a thabhairt chun chinn, chun oibriú ar son Aontú na hÉireann agus chun fíor-athraithe sóisialta agus eacnamaíochta a sholáthar.

I rith an 22 bhliana ó toghadh Comhairleoirí Shinn Féin don chéad uair ar na húdaráis áitiúla sa Tuaisceart tá dreach an rialtais áitiúil athraithe san iomaí bealaí. Tá Sinn Féin sa tús cadhnaíochta:

- › agu cur luach-sheirbhísí ar fáil do cách ar bhonn comhionannais
- › Ag cur chun chinn polasaithe um roinnt na cumhachta agus ag cinntiú cothromaíocht i ndáileadh amach na gCathaoirleachtaí agus Leas-Chathaoirleachtaí ar Chomhairlí, ar Coistí na gComhairlí agus in ionadaíocht ar comhlachtaí seachtracha.



- › Ag tabhairt faoi idirdhealú laistigh na gComhairlí agus ar fud an tsochaí.
- › Ag soláthar ceannaireachta pobail – ag tabhairt moltaí deimhneacha chun tosaí ar comhionannais, ag tabhairt faoi idirdhealú agus seicteachas, ag tabhairt an dúshláin do chiníochas agus ag saothrú ar mhaithe dea-ghaoltas pobail agus cuimhneacháin.
- › Ionadaíocht áitiúil láidir – bhí Comhairleoirí Shinn Féin chun tosaí i gcomh-oibriú le pobail áitiúla ag cinntiú athraithe agus ag cinntiú go mbeadh Comhairlí Áitiúla ag freastal ar an phobal áitiúil.
- › Freagracht, nuaíocht agus fis – d'oibrigh Comhairleoirí Shinn Féin ar mhaithe na ndaoine a bhfuil siad mar ionadaithe dóibh ag tabhairt réiteach úr d'ábhair deacra, ag dul i mbun feachtais fostaíochta, ag tabhairt faoi imeallú sóisialta agus ag troid in aghaidh rátaí uisce.
- › Comhtháthú uile-Éireannach – tá Comhairleoirí Sinn Féin mar chuid d'fhoireann Uile Éireannach. Sheol muid sraith mór-thionscnaimh i mbliana chun ár gcuid oibre a thabhairt chun chinn, ina measc-san Páipéar Glas ar Aontú na hÉireann agus feachtas chun pleananna a ullmhú agus a fheidhmiú i gcomhair comhtháthú seirbhísí, forbairtí agus bonneagar ar fud réigiún an teorainn.

In ainneoin an dul chun chinn atá déanta tá a thuilleamh le déanamh. Tá an gráin a d'fháiltigh an chéad buíon de Chomhairleoirí Shinn Féin le mothú go fóill in áiteanna cosúil le Comhairle Bhaile Nua na Mainistreach ina bhfuil Briega Meehan ina Comhairleoir aonair Shinn Féin. Agus feidhmíonn na Comhairlí i Lios na gCearrbhach, Baile Meánach agus Caisleán an Rí díreach mar a d'fheidhmigh Comhairle Cathair Bhéal Feirste roimhe seo. Siopaí dúnta a fhágann náisiúnaithe imeallaithe atá iontu. Tá sé i gceist ag Sinn Féin sin a athrú.

Tá Sinn Féin ag iarraidh go dtreiseofar daonlathas áitiúil agus go mbeadh sé níos cóngaraí don phobal. Tá muid ag lorg prionsabal comhionannais agus córas le triallacha agus comhardaithe – amhail Comhaontas Aoine an Chéasta – a chinnteoidh nach ndéanfaí arís drochíde Aontachtóireachta mar a rinneadh tráth. Tá muid ag iarraidh comhtháthú in obair na gComhairlí, i réigiún an teorainn ach go háirithe. Tá muid ag iarraidh go mbeidh na comhairlí idir radacach, éifeachtach agus freagrach.

**Cuidigh linn dreach an Rialtais Áitiúil in Éirinn a athrú. Vótáil Sinn Féin ar 5 Bealtaine.**

## Executive Summary ››

Sinn Féin supports a strong system of local government, which is accountable, democratic, properly financed and has the maximum amount of powers devolved to it.

### ›› The Review of Public Administration

Sinn Féin is building for Irish unity and independence and we believe that as part of any new political arrangements we must maximise local democracy.

- › Sinn Féin believes that there is an urgent need to reform the Public Administration system in the Six Counties. Locally elected and accountable public representatives on the Executive should take final decisions on the make up of local government, and on the shape of public administration
- › Local government structures must ensure democratic accountability and be based on equality principles and have strong checks and balances to ensure no abuse of power
- › The re-configuration of public administration must remove unelected quangos and develop local democratic control and co-ordination.
- › Local councils should take the central role in community planning and in developing meaningful partnerships between local government, communities and statutory agencies in areas such as health, education, water and sewage services and roads infrastructure
- › All functions transferred to councils, as a result of the Review of Public Administration currently underway, should have adequate resources attached
- › Councils should have the same boundaries as other public bodies (co-terminosity) such as health boards, to help in the co-ordination of all services in their areas
- › The elimination of inequality in the provision of council services and in the delivery of services throughout council areas
- › Legislation to ensure fairness in the allocation of Chairs and Deputy Chairs on Councils, Council committees and nominations to external bodies for elected representatives should be introduced
- › The participation of civic society should be provided for at all levels of administration



## ›› **Delivering quality public services**

Sinn Féin Councillors will:

- › Continue to argue for the highest quality public services
- › Campaign for the reform of the rate system
- › Oppose the creeping privatisation of public services
- › Ensure that service provision is developed in accordance with public need
- › Ensure that services provided by the community sector are protected and enhanced

## ›› **Civic leadership:**

Our councillors will provide civic leadership on:

- › The delivery of high quality and efficient public services, which achieve the best value for money for ratepayers and citizens
- › Full transparency in how rates are set and spent and consultation with local residents
- › Promoting reconciliation at council level and in local communities

- › Campaigning for the establishment of Public Service Centres, such as those run by Donegal County Council, as one-stop shops for the delivery of services and information.

- › Strategies to increase the participation of women in the political work of Councils

## ›› **Irish unity**

In building for Irish unity Sinn Féin will:

- › Campaign for the Irish government to begin preparations for the re-unification of Ireland including bringing forward a Green Paper on Irish unity
- › Bring forward plans for the integration of services and infrastructure throughout the Border region
- › Support and ensure the implementation of the cross-border commitments outlined in the Regional Development Strategy (Six Counties), the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Area (26 Counties) and the Common Chapter of the Good Friday Agreement
- › Ensure that EU Funds are used to create maximum social and economic benefit for the Border Corridor

## ›› Economic and social regeneration

Sinn Féin Councillors will campaign for:

- › Greater resources for economic development, tourism promotion and arts, culture and heritage
- › Sustainable and strategic development of these areas
- › An all-Ireland dimension to social and economic regeneration
- › The creation of high quality jobs and appropriate skills training
- › Targeting Social Need to be a statutory requirement to ensure that resources are skewed on the basis of need.

## ›› Community safety

Sinn Féin is committed to:

- › The establishment of an accountable and representative Police Service
- › Empowering communities to challenge anti-social and criminal behaviour and foster mutually inclusive and supportive neighbourhoods
- › Campaigning to eradicate poverty and disadvantage which sustains anti-social behaviour

- › Supporting programmes that facilitate genuine reconciliation between offenders, perpetrators and the community such as community restorative justice programmes to break the cycle of re-offending
- › Securing proper resources for community based initiatives to deal with the problems of community safety and anti-social behaviour

## ›› Building Local Communities

Sinn Féin is campaigning for:

- › Community Development to be made an area of co-operation under the North-South Ministerial Council
- › A continuation of EU Social and Regional Funds, and in particular the Peace Programme to continue post-2006
- › Mainstream funding for the community and voluntary sector
- › The retention and enhancement of community-based services, which are vital to maintaining and developing social cohesion
- › Greater community involvement in the decision-making process undertaken by councils and other public bodies



- › Local partnerships between community and statutory organisations, to be participative, accountable and effectively resourced

### ›› **Irish language**

On Local Councils Sinn Féin will campaign for:

- › Irish Language Officers to be appointed to local councils to spearhead and provide support for Irish Language projects, in line with the highly successful approach adopted by Newry & Mourne Council
- › The promotion of economic and employment opportunities for Irish Language speakers. This is an increasingly important issue given the growing number of young people being educated through the medium of Irish
- › Local Council funding for cultural and tourism initiatives, through Irish
- › The active promotion of Irish street and road signs
- › Signs on Council buildings, including leisure centres and public amenities, to be bi-lingual
- › The retention and use of townland names as part of the postal address system

### ›› **Rural Regeneration and Agriculture**

Sinn Féin is calling for:

- › A significant increase in the number of new house building allocations for rural areas
- › Planning applications from rural families to be treated more sympathetically than at present
- › All councils to come together to make a case to the European Commission to have the Beef Export Ban lifted
- › Removal of 'UK' status from food exports from the North
- › Pressure on DARD to increase, up to 60%, the financial assistance available to farmers under the farm waste management scheme
- › Services to farm families, especially small farms, to assist them to maximise family income through work on and off the farm
- › The creation of Rural Advice Bureaus
- › All councils to give financial support to the Rural Women's Network

## » Supporting ethnic minorities

Sinn Féin elected representatives will work for:

- › An inclusive and multicultural Ireland
- › A progressive, human rights based, anti-racist immigration policy
- › All Local Councils, Councillors and Officers to sign up to an anti-racist charter
- › Penalties to be imposed upon any Councillor or official who engages in racist or sectarian behaviour or uses racist or sectarian language
- › The speedy implementation of the recommendations of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Travellers
- › A Good Practice Guide to be developed and implemented for all Traveller service providers, including local councils
- › Local Councils to fund initiatives to encourage participation from ethnic minorities in the political process and there should be council representation on ethnic community support groups

## » Local government and the EU

Sinn Féin councillors will campaign for:

- › Dedicated EU officers for each District Council to develop Council EU policy and attract additional resources
- › Greater scrutiny of EU directives at a local government level
- › Greater co-ordination between council funds and those of EU funding bodies
- › Pro-actively developing links with councils in the 26 Counties to enhance cross border social and economic integration and maximise available EU funds for such purposes
- › Building links with council areas across the EU who share similar problems and concerns

## » Environment

Sinn Féin is demanding:

- › Investment from central government funds to bring water treatment plants up to the standard required by EU Directives
- › An all-Ireland campaign of public, political, legal and diplomatic pressure to force the complete closure of Sellafield



- › A properly resourced and effective waste management strategy – based on waste reduction, re-use and re-cycling
- › The rejection of any form of incineration, as a means of disposing of domestic, industrial or agricultural waste
- › An audit of all existing mobile telephone base stations and antennae, leading to a system of adequate control over radio frequency fields generated and the establishment of physical exclusion zones around such stations
- › The speeding up of the introduction of blue bins – as the first phase of a successful recycling strategy that has raised recovery rates from 3% to 20%
- › Major retailers to reduce packaging
- › The introduction of the plastic bag levy on an all-Ireland basis

### ›› **Water charges & Privatisation**

Sinn Féin Councillors will:

- › Campaign for the modernisation and transformation of public utilities
- › Oppose the proposed imposition of the unfair double tax on water

- › Continue to strive to reverse the privatisation strategy, which is at the core of the RRI policy negotiated by David Trimble and Mark Durkan with the British treasury, and which continues to be the preferred route for direct rule policy makers

### ›› **Tackling the housing crisis**

Sinn Féin demands:

- › The Housing Executive should play a leading role in the building and supply of social housing
- › The registration of all private landlords.
- › An end to discrimination in the allocation of housing
- › The extension of the house sales scheme and the removal of reductions in incentives to buy
- › A complete overhaul of the planning service
- › An enforceable framework limiting the density of houses of multiple occupation in urban residential areas

## ›› Health for all is a local issue

- › To ensure public accountability, Health Boards should have representation from the Local Council and these elected representatives must be full, voting members of the Board
- › Sinn Féin representatives will seek to ensure that 'Investing for Health' partnerships meet meaningful targets to address health inequalities and improve the health and well-being of communities
- › Through their presence on Council Committees and external bodies, Sinn Féin representatives will seek to use their influence to enhance policies on health service delivery taken by Boards and Trusts

## ›› Education

Sinn Féin is committed to:

- › Opposing cuts to vital frontline services
- › Enhancing and developing healthy school meal programmes
- › Protecting and maintaining finance for specific and special educational needs
- › Safer play and recreational areas for children and young people
- › Maintaining library services

- › Maintaining rural schools, particularly through supporting sustainable rural communities

## Achoimre Feidhmeannach ››

Tacaíonn Sinn Féin le córas láidir de Rialtas Áitiúil, atá freagrach, daonlathach, maoinithe go cuí agus a bhfuil an t-uasmhéad cumhachta díláraithe air.

### ›› Athbhreithniú ar Riarachán Poiblí

Tá Sinn Féin ag obair ar son Aontú na hÉireann agus neamhspleáchas, agus creidimid go gcaithfear daonlathas áitiúil a uasmhéadú mar chuid d'aon scrúithe nua polaitiúla.

- › Creideann Sinn Féin go bhfuil géarghá ann do leasú an Chórais riaracháin poiblí sna Sé Chontae. Ba chóir go mbeadh ionadaithe tofa, freagrach, áitiúla san Fheidhmeannas i mbun na gcinneadh deireannacha ar chomh-dhéanamh rialtais áitiúil agus ar chruth an riaracháin poiblí.



- › Ní mór go gcinnteoidh struchtúir an rialtais áitiúil freagracht daonlathach agus iad a bheith bunaithe ar phrionsabal comhionannais le triallacha agus comhardaithe láidre a chinntíonn nach bhfuil droch-úsáid na cumhachta.
- › Ní mór go scoirfí na samhail-eagraíochtaí neamh-rialtais (nó quangos mar a tugtar orthu) mar chuid d'ath-dhearadh an riaracháin poiblí, agus ceannas agus comhordú daonlathach áitiúil a fhorbairt.
- › Ba chóir go mbeadh ról lárnach i bpleanáil pobail agus i bhforbairt páirtnéireachtaí úsáideacha idir rialtas áitiúil, pobail agus na gníomhaíochtaí reachtúla i seirbhísí sláinte, oideachais, uisce, séarachas agus bonneagar na mbóithre.
- › Ba chóir go mbeadh a dhóthain d'acmhainní ar fáil ag na feidhmeanna uile seo atá aistrithe chuig na comhairlí, mar thoradh an athbhreithnithe.
- › Ba chóir go mbeadh na teorainn céanna ag na comhairlí a's atá ag na comhalachtaí poiblí eile (comh-theorainneachas) mar shampla na bordanna sláinte, chun cuidiú le comhordú na seirbhísí uile ina gceantair.
- › Go ndíothófaí mí-ionannas trí sholáthar seirbhísí comhairle agus i seachadadh seirbhísí tríd ceantair na gcomhairlí.
- › Ní mór go mbeadh dáileadh cothrom i measc na n-ionadaithe tofa de rólanna comhairle agus ainmniúcháin do ghrúpaí seachtracha
- › Ba chóir go mbeadh ról ann ag gach leibhéal den riarachán poiblí do rannpháirtíocht an tsochaí sibhialta.

### ›› **Ag seachadadh luach-sheirbhísí poiblí**

Beidh Comhairleoirí Sinn Féin ag:

- › troid ar son na luach-sheirbhísí poiblí is fearr
- › dul i mbun feachtais do leasaithe chórais na rátaí
- › seasamh in aghaidh príobháidiú na seirbhísí poiblí
- › cinntiú go ndéanfar forbairt ar sholáthar seirbhísí de réir mar atá riachtanais an phobail
- › cinntiú go ndéanfar cosaint agus feabhas ar na seirbhísí a sholáthraíonn an earnáil pobail

Ag soláthar ceannaireacht poiblí ar:

- › Seachadadh luach-sheirbhísí poiblí éifeachtacha d’ard-chaighdeán, a ghnóthaíonn luach an airgid do shaoránaigh agus íocóirí rátaí. Seasamid in aghaidh príobháidiú seirbhísí poiblí.
- › Tré-dhearcacht i ndéanamh agus i gcaitheamh na rátaí agus próiseas comhairle leis na háitreoírí áitiúla.
- › Reachtaíocht a chinntíonn cothromaíocht i ndáileadh amach Cathaoirleachtaí agus Leascathaoirleachtaí na gComhairlí, Coistí na gComhairlí agus ionadaíocht ar ghrúpaí seachtracha.
- › Feachtas i gcomhair bunú Ionad Seirbhísí Poiblí, amhail an tIonad a riaráil Comhairle Contae Dún na nGall, mar ‘siopa aon stop’ seachadadh seirbhísí agus eolais

### ›› **Ag tógáil Aontú na hÉireann**

- › Feachtas chun go dtosódh an Rialtas Éireannach ag ullmhú do athaontú na hÉireann, foilsíú Pháipéir Glas um Aontú na hÉireann san áireamh.
- › Pleanáil a thabhairt chun chinn i gcomhair comhtháthú seirbhísí agus bonneagar ar fud réigiún an teorainn.

- › Tacaíocht a thabhairt do na geallúintí tras-teorann ar leagadh síos sa Straitéis um Fhorbairt Réigiúnda (6 Chontae), Treoirlínte Pleanáil Réigiúnda um Cheantar an Teorainn (26 Chontae) agus an Chomhchaibidil, agus ag cinntiú go gcuirfí i bhfeidhm na geallúintí sin.
- › Cinnte a dhéanamh de go gcaithfear Foinsí an AE ins an chaoi a’s a cruthaíonn siad an t-uas-tairbhe sóisialta agus eacnamaíochta do Chonair an Teorainn.

### ›› **Athnuachan Eacnamaíochta agus Sóisialta**

Beidh Comhairleoirí Sinn Féin i mbun feachtais i gcomhair:

- › Acmhainní sa bhreis i gcomhair forbairt eacnamaíochta, feabhsú turasóireachta agus ealaín, cultúr agus oidhreachta.
- › Forbairt straitéiseach agus inbhuanaithe des na gnéithe seo.
- › Gné Uile-Éireannach d’athnuachan sóisialta agus eacnamaíochta
- › Cruthú postanna ard-luach, agus oiliúint fóirsteanach de scileanna
- › Ag déanamh riachtanas reachtúil de Dhíríú ar Riachtanais Sóisialta agus ag cinntiú go bhfuil na hacmhainní claonta chuig an riachtanas sin.



## ›› **Sábháilteacht an Phobail**

Tá Sinn Féin geallta do:

- › Bunú Seirbhís Póilínteacht freagrach agus ionadaíoch
- › Cumhacht a thabhairt don bpobal in aghaidh iompair coirpigh agus frith-shóisialta.
- › Ag tacú le scéimeanna a éascaíonn fíor-athmhúintearas idir ciontóirí agus an phobal, mar shampla Ath-shealbhú Córa sa Phobal.
- › Ag cinntú go mbeidh a dhóthain d'acmhainní ar fáil ag tograí pobail chun déileáil le sábháilteacht an phobail agus iompar frith-shóisialta.

## ›› **Athnuachan Tuaithe agus Talmhaíochta**

Tá Sinn Féin ag éileamh:

- › Méadú suntasach ar líon na dtithe nua le tógáil i gceantair thuaithe
- › Go bpléifear iarratais phleanála ó theaghlaigh thuaithe ar bhonn níos tuisceanaí amach anseo ná mar a pleitear i láthair na huairé iad.

- › Go scoirfí ó Stádas 'UK' ar bhia a easphortálar ó na Sé Chontae
- › Tacaíocht ó na Comhairlí uile go dtógfaí cás do Choimisiún na hEorpa go scoirfí an Cosc ar Easportáil na Mairteola;
- › Brú a chur ar an Roinn Talmhaíochta agus Forbairt Tuaithe go méadófaí, suas go 60% an cúnamh airgid atá ar fáil do fheirmeoirí faoin scéim um bhainistiú dramhaíola feirme
- › Seirbhísí do theaghlaigh feirme, agus feirmeacha beaga ach go háirithe chun cuidiú leo a gcuid ioncaim a uasmhéadú tríd obair ar agus as an fheirm;
- › Ionadaíocht a dhéanamh do chruthú Ionaid Comhairle
- › Ionadaíocht a dhéanamh leis na comhairlí uile go dtabharfaí tacaíocht airgeadais do Ghréasán na mBan

## ›› **Ag tacú le Mionlaigh Eitneacha**

Oibreoidh ionadaithe Sinn Féin chuig an cuspóir:

- › Go síneoidh gach Comhairle Áitiúil, Comhairleoir agus Oifigeach Cáirt Frith-chiníoch.

- › Go gcuirfeadh pionós ar chomhairleoir nó oifigeach a úsáideann iompar nó caint chiníoch.
- › Go dtabharfaí i bhfeidhm gan mhoill moltaí an Mheithil Oibre um Chuimsiú Lucht Siúil.
- › Go ndéanfaí forbairt agus feidhmiú ar Threoir Dea-chleachtais do sholáthróirí seirbhísí don Lucht Siúil, comhairlí áitiúla ina measc
- › Go n-íocfadh Comhairlí áitiúla tograí ina mbeadh rann-pháirtíocht pholaitiúil ó mhionlathaithe eitneacha agus ba chóir go mbeadh ionadaíocht ó chomhairleoirí ar ghrúpaí tacaíochta don phobal eitneach.

### ›› Rialtas Áitiúil agus an AE

Beidh comhairleoirí Sinn Féin i mbun feachtais i gcomhair:

- › Oifigigh AE sainithe do gach Comhairle Ceantair chun polasaithe an AE an Chomhairle a fhorbairt agus chun acmhainní breis a tharraing anuas
- › Mionscrudú níos géire ar threoracha an AE ag leibhéal an rialtais áitiúil
- › Níos mó comhoibriú idir maoiniú na gComhairlí agus comhlachtaithe maoinithe an AE

- › Ag forbairt nascanna le comhairlí sna 26 Chontae chun comhtháthú sóisialta agus eacnamaíochta tras-teorann a fhorbairt agus chun maoiniú an AE chuige sin a uasmhéadú

- › Nascanna a thógáil le ceantair Chomhairle trasna an AE a mbíonn na fadhbanna céanna acu agus atá ag comhairlí áitiúla.

### ›› Timpeallacht

Tá Sinn Féin ag éileamh:

- › Infheistíocht cuí ó fhoinsí an rialtais lárnaigh a bheadh riachtanach lenár bhfearais leigheasú uisce a fheabhsú go dtí an chaighdeán atá leagtha síos ag treoracha an AE.
- › Feachtas uile-Éireannach de bhrú poiblí, polaitiúil, dleathúil agus taidhleoireachta chun Sellafield a dhúnadh.
- › Straitéis éifeachtach um Bhainistíocht Dramhaíola a bhfuil an maoiniú fóirsteanach ann dí agus atá bunaithe ar laghdú dramhaíola, ath-úsáid agus athchúrsáil
- › Diúltú do loiscneoirí mar bhealach chun chur dinn dramhaíl tí, tionsclaíochta nó talmhaíochta.



- › Iniúchadh ar gach bun-stáisiún agus aeróg guthán póca, agus sin ag treoiríú chuig córas ina bhfuil smacht cuí thar na tonnta raidió atá ginithe agus go mbunófaí ‘ceantair imeallaithe’ timpeall a leithéid de stáisiún.
- › Tapaigh seachadadh na gabhdáin ghorma mar an chéad chéim i straitéis athchúrsála atá i ndiaidh rátaí athshlánaithe a mhéadú ó 3% go 20%
- › Spreagadh a thabhairt do na mór-cheannaithe a g cuid phácaistiú a laghdú
- › Leathnú amach an táille ar mhálaí plaisteacha ar fud na hÉireann
- › Leanfaidh Sinn Féin lena n-iarrachtaí deireadh a chur leis an straitéis phríobháideachais, polasaí atá ag croí an pholasaí RRI a ghnóthaigh David Trimble agus Mark Durkan le Ciste Stáit na Breataine agus atá á fhidhmiú fós ag na rialtóirí díreacha.

### ›› **Ag tabhairt faoi ghéarchéim na tithíochta**

Éilíonn Sinn Féin:

- › Go mbeadh an Feidhmeannas Tithíochta sa tús cadhnaíochta i dtógáil agus i soláthar tithíocht sóisialta

- › Go mbeadh clárú de gach tiarna talún príobháideach.
- › Go mbeadh deireadh le h-idirdhealú i ndáileadh tithíochta
- › Go gcuirfí leis an scéim um dhíolachán tithíochta agus go scoirfí leis an laghdú i spreagadh chun ceannach.
- › Go ndéanfaí athbhreithniú iomlán ar an seirbhís phleanála
- › Go mbeadh deilbh infheidhmithe a theorannódh dlúthú tithíochta iol-tionónta i gceantair chónaithe uirbeacha.

### ›› **Is ábhar áitiúil í sláinte do chách**

- › Ionas go mbeadh freagracht poiblí ní mór go mbeadh ionadaíocht ag an Chomhairle Áitiúil ar an Bhord Sláinte agus go mbeadh na hionadaithe tofa seo ina mbaill iomlán, le cead vótála, ar na boird.
- › Beidh ionadaithe Sinn Féin ag saothrú chun cinntiú go mbíonn na Páirtnéireachtaí um Infheistíocht i Sláinte ag baint amach a dtairgídí fiúntacha chun na mí-dhiongbháiltí sláinte a laghdú agus leasa an phobail a leasú
- › Bainfidh ionadaithe Shinn Féin feidhm as a mballraíocht ar Choistí na gComhairlí

agus comhlachtaí seachtracha chun tionchar a imirt ar pholasaithe na mBordanna agus na n-lontaobhais um sholáthar seirbhísí sláinte.

## » Oideachas

Tá Sinn Féin geallta le:

- › cur i gcoinne ar ghiorrúcháin ar sheirbhísí an líne tosaí
- › feabhsú agus forbairt béilí scoile sláintiúla
- › Cosaint a thabhairt agus buanú a chur l'airgeadais i gcomhair sain-riachtanais oideachas speisialta
- › Ionaid súgartha agus só níos sábháilte do dhaoine óga
- › Buanú seirbhísí leabharlainne
- › Buanú scoileanna tuaithe, ach go háirithe le tacaíocht a thabhairt do phobail tuaithe inbhuanaithe.

## » An Ghaeilge

Ar na Comhairlí beidh Sinn Féin ag obair ar son:

- › Oifigigh Ghaeilge le ceapadh ar Chomhairlí áitiúla chun tionscnaimh Ghaeilge a thabhairt chun chinn, amhail an cur chuige ráthúil a lean Comhairle an Lúir agus Modharna

- › Deiseanna Fostaíochta agus eacnamaíochta a chur chun chinn do chainteoirí Gaeilge. Tá sé seo thar a bheith tábhachtach nuair a cuimhnítear ar líon mór na ndaoine óga atá ag fáil oideachais trí Ghaeilge
- › Maoiniú na gComhairlí áitiúla i gcomhair tograí cultúrtha agus turasóireachta as Ghaeilge.
- › Tacaíocht gníomhach do chomharthaí sráide agus bóithre as Gaeilge.
- › Comharthaíocht dhá-theangach, Gaeilge agus Béarla le crochadh ar foirgnimh uile de chuid na comhairlí, sólanna, agus áiseanna poiblí san áireamh.
- › Coinneáil agus úsáid na logainmneacha bailte fearainn mar chuid den seoladh post.



## Transforming Local Government ››

Sinn Féin supports a strong system of local government, which is accountable, democratic, properly financed and has the maximum amount of powers devolved to it.

### ›› Review of Public Administration

Sinn Féin believes there is an urgent need to reform the Public Administration system in the Six Counties. The current system of 26 councils with limited powers and literally hundreds of unelected quangos means that the electorate has very little control over many decisions that affect their lives. In significant areas of public service provision there is a clear democratic deficit. At present councils are responsible for less than 5% of the public spend in the Six Counties.

Two principles need to underpin the outcome of the Review of Public Administration. It must bring about true democratic accountability and it must be based on strong checks and balances to ensure there is no abuse of power as continues to exist on a number of councils where unionists are in a majority or as witnessed in the brown envelop culture of establishment parties in the 26 Counties.

In relation to the number of councils and councillors we must ensure that there is:

- › Strong and effective local representation
- › Equality of representation
- › Economies of scale to deliver high quality services
- › Value for money

### ›› Increased powers for Local Government

Sinn Féin is opposed to unelected and unaccountable quangos. The re-configuration of public administration must take power away from such bodies and develop local democratic control and co-ordination. In the short term we are proposing an increase in democratic representation to ensure that all boards have a majority of non-executive elected representatives.

This means that local councils should have a greater role in

- › Community planning
- › Health
- › Education
- › Roads Infrastructure

- › Developing meaningful partnerships between local government, communities and statutory agencies

Sinn Féin is calling for councils to have the same boundaries as other public bodies (co-terminosity) such as health boards, so that councils can have the power to co-ordinate all services in their areas through community planning. And all functions transferred to councils, as a result of the Review, should have adequate resources attached.

Councils should be at the centre of community planning, having the power to ensure that whatever is agreed in a community plan is actually carried out by the responsible agencies.

Sinn Féin believes that locally elected, and accountable, public representatives on the Executive should take final decisions on the make up of local government, and on the shape of public administration.

### ›› Fair and transparent Local Government

The new public administration system needs to be fair, democratic and transparent.

There must be robust statutory measures to ensure equality of representation and of service delivery. Sinn Féin has already

secured a commitment from the British government that there will be statutory equality provisions. We are currently pushing to ensure these are as robust as possible.

Sinn Féin is determined that:

- › There can be no gerrymandering of council boundaries
- › There is equality in the provision of both council services and in the delivery of services throughout council areas
- › There is a fair and equitable distribution of council positions and nominations to external bodies for elected representatives
- › The ability of people to meaningfully participate in decisions concerning their local area is built into the administration structures
- › The participation of civil society needs to be built in at all levels of administration

### ›› Stronger working relationships between Councils throughout Ireland

The provision and delivery of quality services and value for money will depend on stronger working relationships between councils. The new councils require the freedom to co-operate and integrate with councils in the 26



Counties to the extent that their local electorate mandates them, without hindrance from the British government.

Sinn Féin believes that councils should be able to:

- › Support the development of significant projects between councils, particularly in infrastructure, economic and social regeneration, tourism, environmental protection and waste management.

## Delivering Quality Public Services ››

The primary function of District Councils is to provide quality public services. Waste management, street cleaning, building control, leisure provision, parks and play areas are just some of the services that councils deliver.

Sinn Féin believes that such services must be provided on the basis of equality, excellence and value for money. Our Councillors have been at the forefront of the demand for the highest quality services, provided to all citizens, by well-treated and well-motivated staff.

It is also vital that local councils co-ordinate the provision of their services with government departments whose responsibilities overlap with those of the council. Again, Sinn Féin has been to the fore in arguing for joined up government and greater co-ordination between all levels of public service.

There is little doubt that the present Rate System for funding local government is outdated and unequal. Sinn Féin believes that this system is in need of radical reform. We want to see an extensive public consultation with ratepayers, community organisations, trade unions and employers. The fixing and expenditure of the rate needs to operate in an open and transparent fashion so that the public knows why it is paying and what their money is being spent on.

Sinn Féin Councillors will:

- › Continue to argue for the highest quality public services
- › Campaign for the reform of the rate system
- › Oppose the creeping privatisation of public services

- › Ensure that service provision is developed in accordance with public need
- › Ensure that services provided by the community sector are protected and enhanced

## Providing Civic Leadership »

There have been many historic changes in Local Government over the last five years. Alex Maskey became the first republican mayor of Belfast, Anne Brolly was the first woman and first republican to be elected Mayor of Limavady and Gearóid Ó hÉara is coming to the close of a very successful term as the Mayor of Derry. Our Mayors and Chairs have shown, by example, that these offices can be used both symbolically and in practical terms, to set the political agenda.

In these and other Councils where Sinn Féin has held leadership positions – Dungannon, Magherafelt, Fermanagh, Newry and Mourne, Strabane, Cookstown, Omagh, and Armagh - our priorities were and continue to be:

*Delivering quality public services, strong local representation, equality, reconciliation, inclusivity, openness and fair play*

We have sought to use these positions to advance the work already being done to bring the diverse and different sections of our community closer together. We have introduced systems to ensure the fair allocation of Chairs and Deputy Chairs in all those councils where we have sufficient representation to do so. And last year Sinn Féin Mayors and Chairs came together to launch a Civic Day of Remembrance for all those killed through conflict.

In Belfast Alex Maskey, through his engagement with the unionist community across Belfast showed that republicans were genuine in their determination to reach out to the unionist community.

Francie Molloy has been President of NILGA (NI Local Government Association) for the past year, providing leadership during the ongoing Review of Public Administration.

Gearóid Ó hÉara as Mayor of Derry has championed regeneration initiatives, led the city's Civic Day of Remembrance and prioritised social inclusion and equality.

Anne Brolly as Mayor of Limavady ensured that with respect to the flying of flags, Council Buildings were neutral in line with the Good Friday Agreement.



Jarlath McNulty on Strabane District Council through his work on the Employment Task Force has shown what can be achieved

Barry McElduff on Omagh District has ensured that the Council is a welcoming place for all those in the community.

Pat O’Rawe as Mayor of Armagh widened the debate about what could be achieved through the integration of services and infrastructure along the Border

Gerry McHugh in Fermanagh prioritised the needs of farming families and rural regeneration

Sinn Féin leaders in Local Government will work for:

- › The delivery of high quality and efficient public services, which achieve the best value for money for ratepayers and citizens. We will continue to oppose the privatisation of public services
- › Full transparency in how rates are set and spent and consultation with local residents
- › Legislation to ensure fairness in the allocation of Chairs and Deputy Chairs on Councils, Council committees and representation on external bodies
- › The establishment of Public Service Centres, such as those run by Donegal County Council, as one-stop shops for the delivery of public services
- › Establishing Youth Councils, such as those which operate in Fermanagh and Derry – to shadow the work of the Local Councils
- › Ensuring that all Council buildings have suitable environments for staff, Councillors and the public with equality or neutrality in relation to flags and emblems
- › Promoting reconciliation at council level and in local communities
- › Working with the community to end racist attacks
- › Empowering local communities - Councils to introduce mechanisms to involve those who currently have no voice, in the decision making process of the Council
- › Strategies to increase the participation of women in the political work of the Council through community initiatives, electing women into key positions and promoting gender equality. We also support the setting of strict targets with set deadlines to redress the under representation of women in local government

- › Ensuring that Councils promote family friendly work practices
- › Working to ensure that councils fully implement the Barcelona Declaration, which commits local authorities to promote disability awareness and to ensure that people with disabilities have full and equal access to facilities and resources, and that their special needs are met.

## Building Irish unity »

In 2005 Sinn Féin brought forward a series of major all-Ireland initiatives including a campaign for a Green Paper on Irish unity and a campaign to bring forward and implement plans for the integration of services, developments and infrastructure throughout the border region.

The Border has had an ongoing negative social and economic impact on communities. British and Irish government discrimination, inadequate representation and poor planning have ensured that the Border Corridor is less developed and growing more slowly than the rest of the economy north or south. It is also poorly serviced by bus and rail links, the energy infrastructure is not capable of supporting significant economic and social

development, the agriculture sector is in difficulty, and despite having excellent natural resources, the proportion of tourist expenditure in the border corridor area is extremely low and falling in many areas.

In 2003 Sinn Féin brought forward a document 'Re-unification through planned integration', which set out innovative solutions to these problems and this is already impacting on debate and planning at local government level.

It is clear that only co-ordinated cross border integration that creates common systems and shared infrastructure and services will deliver the balanced development needed for people living and working within the Border Corridor.

The need for greater cross-border integration will require local government councils and departments working together for the benefit of all communities.

Sinn Féin, as the only all-Ireland party with a dedicated cross-border strategy and councillors in every county in the Border Corridor area, is ideally placed to develop the dynamic cross-border links that are essential for the development and long-term prosperity of the border region.



Sinn Féin Councillors will:

- › Use our political strength to promote dynamic and productive cross-border links between Local Councils and Departments to deliver cross-border integration
- › Support and ensure the implementation of the cross-border commitments outlined in the Regional Development Strategy (Six Counties), the Regional Planning Guidelines for the Border Area (26 Counties) and the Common Chapter of the Good Friday Agreement.
- › Work to secure resources and link up the local and regional development strategies on both sides of the border into Integrated Area Plans for each of the three Border Corridor Areas (North West, Central, Eastern).
- › The Integrated Area Plans will also tie in all areas of co-operation outlined in the Common Chapter (Energy, Communications and Electronic Commerce, Human Resource Development, Agriculture and Rural Development, Tourism, Transport, Environment, Education, Health)
- › Lobby and campaign to remove the legislative, policy and institutional impediments to cross-border integration.
- › Work with local communities and the socially excluded to ensure that the process of cross-border integration is an inclusive one
- › Create a “Community for Integration” and a common vision for the Border Corridor by developing relationships with other political parties and the social partners.
- › Ensure that EU funds are used to create maximum social and economic benefit for the Border Corridor
- › Continue to provide quality representation for the Border Corridor Areas on Councils, on the Cross-Border Corridor Groups and other regional groupings.
- › Support and promote research that will inform and enhance cross-border policy development and the delivery of services.

## Creating Safer Communities >>

Everyone has the right to feel safer in their own homes and within their communities. It is important to invest in initiatives aimed at improving road safety, better lighting and safer streets, home safety, and safer play areas that create safer communities.

At the heart of Sinn Féin's commitment to creating safer communities is :

- › Empowering communities to challenge anti-social and criminal behaviour and foster mutually inclusive and supportive neighbourhoods
- › Campaigning to eradicate the poverty and disadvantage which sustains anti-social behaviour
- › Building practical opportunities for all our young people to participate as equal citizens in the lives of our communities
- › Supporting programmes that facilitate genuine reconciliation and reparation between offenders, victims and local communities, such as community restorative justice programmes to break the cycle of re-offending
- › Accountable, effective and properly resourced partnerships between statutory agencies, public authorities and local communities
- › Creating a truly new beginning to policing and justice, with a policing service, which is democratically accountable, representative, routinely unarmed and free from partisan political control.

Community-based diversionary and educational programmes, particularly for young offenders, are showing the way forward in challenging criminal and anti-social behaviour. Community-based initiatives are not only important in building grassroots capacity to create safer communities, they also present the basis for mending relationships between persistent offenders and the communities they come from.

Sinn Féin has serious concerns about the use of new Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) by Councils, the Housing Executive and the PSNI. As with the use of CCTV, there is growing evidence that these methods do not reduce criminality or create safer communities, while failing to safeguard human rights.



Sinn Féin councillors will work to secure support for:

- › Community household security schemes
- › Community-based anti-car crime programmes
- › Traffic calming schemes in residential areas
- › Provision of safe play areas and facilities for young people
- › Strategic programmes for drug and alcohol awareness and the regulation of solvents
- › Neighbourhood planning to create safer communities with better road crossings, improved street lighting, and night-time transport initiatives
- › Effective restrictions upon the sale and use of fireworks and also on so-called recreational vehicles

Sinn Féin has put policing and justice at the very core of negotiations with the Irish and British governments. We have made significant progress especially through negotiations. Critical to a new beginning to policing and justice is the transfer of powers to Ireland through a local Assembly and Executive, and into an all-Ireland context through all-Ireland institutions. Only in this way can the stranglehold of British

securocrats on policing and justice powers be broken and a new vision of policing on this island be achieved.

## Economic and Social Regeneration ››

District Councils now have a responsibility and budget allocation for aspects of social and economic regeneration, in particular, economic development, tourism and arts, culture and heritage.

Sinn Féin believes that these functions of District Councils must be developed and expanded. In particular, greater resources must be allocated to developing these areas of council activity to ensure that all council areas maximise the regeneration potential offered.

Economic development needs to focus on job creation in indigenous industry and quality social and commercial services. Particular attention should be placed on developing small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and social economy projects. Sinn Féin also believes that such programmes must prioritise Targeting Social Need areas, isolated rural communities and inner city areas.

Tourism must be developed in a strategic and sustainable way. It must focus on creating high quality, long-term tourist activity that improves the lives of local people while attracting more tourists.

Arts, Culture and heritage, like tourism, needs to focus on improving the quality of activity for local people while providing additional interest for tourist visitors.

Increased investment is required in providing greater access to the arts, the development of community arts and festivals and the protection of our built and environmental heritage.

Sinn Féin Councillors will campaign for:

- › Greater resources for economic development, tourism promotion and arts, culture and heritage
- › Sustainable and strategic development of these areas
- › An all-Ireland dimension to social and economic regeneration
- › The development of such programmes in consultation with local communities
- › The creation of high quality jobs
- › Targeting Social Need to be a statutory requirement to ensure that resources are skewed on the basis of need

## Building Local Communities ››

Sinn Féin is a grassroots party. We are committed to building grassroots services with sustainable, mainstream funding, a strong community infrastructure and community leadership. Sinn Féin is the only political party working with community and voluntary sector organisations across the 32 counties to build local communities.

At a national level, Sinn Féin has argued for Community Development to be made an area of co-operation under the North-South Ministerial Council. Our party has led the demand for the establishment of an all-Ireland Civic Forum, as enshrined in the Good Friday Agreement. In Europe, Sinn Féin has championed the cause of the Community and Voluntary sector, arguing with others for a continuation of the EU Social and Regional Funds, and in particular the Peace Programme to continue post-2006. Our party is leading the call for a future stream of EU funding and for a funding framework to faithfully reflect the needs of local communities, and the dynamics of the Peace Process at this time.

Sinn Féin is campaigning to have mainstream funding for the community and



voluntary sector. Our party is challenging the mismanagement of policy and funding relating to the community and voluntary sector by public bodies, especially government departments. Impending threats to community services will adversely impact across the Six Counties. Sinn Féin believes the retention and enhancement of community-based services are vital to maintaining and developing social cohesion.

At a local level Sinn Féin Councillors will:

- › Encourage grassroots services and amenities and work inside and outside councils in partnership with local community providers.
- › Campaign for greater community involvement in the decision-making process undertaken by Council and other public bodies
- › Work to ensure the policies, functions and services of all public bodies are rigorously equality-proofed to promote the outcome of equality
- › Promote local partnerships between community and statutory organisations, that are participative, accountable and effectively resourced
- › Advocate that resources be skewed towards those areas, groups and communities who are most disadvantaged in this society
- › Challenge discrimination by public bodies and actively pursue an anti-racist and anti-sectarian agenda that promotes a vision of national reconciliation
- › Argue for community advice services to be properly resourced
- › Support the development of an anti-poverty strategy throughout the Six Counties, to be integrated into a 32 county-wide strategy to combat poverty and inequality.

Empowering communities is the best way to build strong communities. That belief will continue to distinguish Sinn Féin's approach to the community and voluntary sector from other parties.

## Irish Language »

Sinn Féin has been to the fore in working with Irish language activists and local communities in promoting the importance and safeguarding the position of the Irish Language and culture.

Sinn Féin was instrumental in bringing about the establishment of Foras na Gaeilge, the all-Ireland body responsible for promoting the Irish language, and has been pressing the Irish and British governments for an increase in its funding.

Following high level lobbying and campaigning, the British government ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages for the Irish language in 2001. Our councillors will ensure that local authorities take a dynamic approach to the implementation of the Charter and ensure that services provided to Irish speakers are developed further. Sinn Féin will also continue to seek the introduction of an Irish language Bill for the Six Counties.

On Local Councils Sinn Féin calls for:

- › Irish Language Officers to be appointed to local councils to spearhead and support Irish Language projects, in line with the highly successful approach adopted by Newry & Mourne Council

- › The promotion of economic and employment opportunities for Irish Language speakers. This is an increasingly important issue given the growing numbers of young people being educated through the medium of Irish
- › Local Council funding for cultural and tourism initiatives through Irish.
- › The active promotion of Irish street and road signs
- › Signs on Council buildings, including leisure centres and public amenities, to be bi-lingual
- › The active promotion of Townland names, particularly in the naming of new housing developments
- › The awarding by local councils of Irish Language bursaries to young people to study in Gaeltacht areas
- › The publication of local council materials, including forms, in Irish in line with the EU Charter on Minority Languages
- › All Local Government campaign information for schools to be provided in Irish for the Irish Medium Education Sector
- › Continuing support for the recognition and development of a Gaeltacht Quarter in West Belfast and other areas where the demand may arise



## Local Government and the EU ››

The European Union is having an ever-greater impact on the work of local government. Whether with respect to environmental policy, staff protections and health and safety regulations, the EU is more important than ever.

The EU can provide local councils with additional sources of revenue for cross-border development, economic development and cultural activity.

The EU, through its Peace & Reconciliation Funding programme is also a significant source of funds for social inclusion and reconciliation programmes. Local councillors have an important role in the management bodies for these funds, as well as insuring that Peace Council funds compliment and enhance those funds from Europe.

The European Committee of the Regions provides a forum for the promotion of local interests at the heart of the EU. Sinn Féin will seek to gain representation on that body and work to promote the interests and needs of local authorities across Ireland.

Sinn Féin Councillors will:

- › Argue for dedicated EU officers for each District Council to develop council EU policy and attract additional resources
- › Call for greater scrutiny of EU directives at a local government level
- › Ensure greater co-ordination between council funds and those of EU funding bodies
- › Pro-actively develop links with councils in the 26 Counties to enhance cross border social and economic integration and maximise available EU funds for such purposes
- › Actively work to build links with council areas across the EU who share similar problems and concerns

## Supporting ethnic minorities ››

Sinn Féin is committed to tackling all forms of racism and building an inclusive and multicultural Ireland. We brought forward an anti-racist charter in Councils where we are represented. We opposed the racist citizenship referendum introduced by the

Irish Government and are campaigning against the policy of forced deportation. We have been campaigning for a progressive, human rights based, anti-racist immigration policy.

As part of this work in March 2005 Sinn Féin hosted a delegation of ethnic minority community activists from Ireland, at the European Parliament in Brussels. Sean Clarke on Omagh District Council recently organised a Civic Reception for ethnic minorities. Sinn Féin on Belfast City Council and in Lurgan have led the way in reaching out to and working with members of ethnic minority communities on a range of issues.

The Good Friday Agreement demands that local authorities play an active and positive role in combating racism within our society. But too many councils are still ignoring their responsibilities to citizens from ethnic minority backgrounds and failing to properly address issues such as intimidation, discrimination in employment, education and inadequate health provision.

Sinn Féin supported the transfer of responsibility for Traveller accommodation from Local Councils to the Housing Executive. However for this transfer to really benefit Travellers, proper resources needs to be immediately put in place.

There should be no further delay in implementing the recommendations of the Promoting Social Inclusion Working Group on Travellers.

A Good Practice Guide should be developed and implemented for all Traveller service providers, including local councils.

In the coming council term Sinn Féin will campaign for:

- › All Local Councils, Councillors and officials to sign up to an anti-racist charter.
- › Penalties to be imposed on any councillor or official who engages in racist or sectarian behaviour or uses racist or sectarian language
- › All Good Relations Committees dealing with the issue of sectarianism to expand their role to combat racism also.
- › Council funded Community Relations Officers should expand their work to deal with racism in society as well as sectarianism.
- › Council Buildings to display symbols promoting the ethnic diversity which exists in our society.
- › Local Councils to fund initiatives to encourage participation from ethnic minorities in the political process and for council representation on ethnic community support groups



## Rural Regeneration >>

Planning is crucial for the future sustainability of rural communities. There has been a legacy of bad planning policy particularly in councils West of the Bann. This legacy has been reinforced by the recent woefully inadequate allocations of new houses allowed to be built in rural council areas from now until 2015. If current Department of Regional Development allocations are maintained, they will lead to massive increases in rural house prices and an exodus of young people unable to afford a home in their local area.

Sinn Féin is calling for:

- › A significant increase in the number of new house building allocations for rural areas
- › Proper consultation between local councils, rural communities, farmers and environmental campaigners on any new legislation pertaining to rural development.
- › New rural development regulations to be implemented and delivered in a way acceptable to local government and taking into account all Ireland structures.
- › Planning in rural areas, should also take into account the need to increase the

viability of rural towns and villages, by clustering future developments in townlands, villages and towns.

- › Planning applications from rural families to be treated more sympathetically than at present.
- › The criteria used in calculating eligibility in terms of livestock units needed for a farm to be viable be redrawn, taking into account the change in farming to a part time basis

Sinn Féin believes that the core objectives of any rural development programme should:

- › Create a co-ordinated programme that links agriculture, enterprise, environment, culture, health and education and social services strategies into a comprehensive integrated rural development programme
- › Create the conditions where rural communities themselves can rebuild their local economies
- › Ensure that everyone has a dignified standard of living, access to proper education, housing and health resources

- › Seek support from all councils to make a case to the European Commission to have the Beef Export Ban lifted
- › Promote all-Ireland integration of the agri-food industry and agricultural services
- › Establish an all-Ireland food promotion agency
- › Put pressure on DARD to increase, up to 60%, the financial assistance available to farmers under the farm waste management scheme
- › Support social infrastructure
- › Facilitate integrated services to rural communities
- › Support an all-Ireland strategy to promote animal health and consumer confidence
- › Bring forward a strategy supporting the role of women in rural development and for the provision of proper childcare in rural areas to enable women to access training and employment
- › Lobby all councils for financial support to be given to the Rural Women's Network
- › Promote sustainable agricultural, fisheries and forestry programmes that are environmentally sensitive

Sinn Féin is also seeking to establish a Rural Advice Bureau (RAB) within each council area to:

- › Assist farmers with stress related issues, and interfacing with government departments
- › Offer services to farm families, especially small farms, to assist them assess how to maximise family income through work on and off the farm
- › Development of a food safety strategy

## Environment ››

Sinn Féin has a zero waste policy. Rather than trying to find ways to dispose of waste by burying it or burning it, efforts should focus on minimising the amount of waste produced and on recycling the waste that does exist.

We are opposed to the use of incinerators for waste management. Rather than ridding us of pollution, they concentrate it, making it more dangerous. Incinerators need large amounts of waste to remain viable.

Therefore, using incinerators removes the incentive to reduce, reuse and recycle and encourages us to keep on wasting precious natural resources.



There is a real urgency to put in place a robust and realistic funding plan to provide the necessary infrastructure needed to meet our responsibilities. If we are to move away from landfill then there has to be tangible investment put into waste management technologies such as in vessel composting, anaerobic digestion, and state of the art waste separation centres and the development of more civic amenity sites.

The failure of the Department of the Environment (DoE) to progress a coherent and sustainable waste management plan for the Six Counties is unacceptable. The pedestrian approach to this issue can only lead many to the conclusion that the British Government, like the Irish Government, are predisposed towards incineration of municipal waste.

Sinn Féin is concerned that the DoE appears happy to wait until the last moment before using the threat of huge fines from Europe, that will hit councils and ratepayers, before presenting incineration as the only solution.

Clear lines of responsibility for the provision of local infrastructure by councils need to be identified with clarification about how much of this local infrastructure will be funded from local rates, with a firm commitment to an adequate level of central Government funding.

Successive British Governments also have deliberately deprived the North's water and sewerage infrastructure – particularly West of the Bann – of adequate investment. As a result, our water quality has deteriorated, to the extent that it is in danger of infringing European Water Quality Standards.

At a national level Sinn Féin is demanding:

- › Sufficient investment from central government funds to bring water treatment plants up to the standard required by EU Directives
- › An all-Ireland campaign of public, political, legal and diplomatic pressure to force the complete closure of Sellafield
- › A properly resourced and effective waste management strategy – based on waste reduction, re-use and re-cycling, at all levels in the waste production stream
- › The rejection of any form of incineration, as a means of disposing of domestic, industrial or agricultural waste
- › An audit of all existing mobile telephone base stations and antennae, leading to a system of adequate control over radio frequency fields generated and the establishment of physical exclusion zones around such stations

Sinn Féin councillors will work to:

- › Speed up the introduction of blue bins – as the first phase of any successful recycling strategy that has raised recovery rates from 3% to 20%.
- › Challenge blockages in the planning system to proposals for anaerobic digesters and other alternative treatment methods
- › Develop economies of scale by building on the work of Arc 21 and SWaMP to deliver alternatives to incineration and landfill, and to develop greater cross-border partnerships
- › Continue to build broad based opposition to municipal waste incinerators in conjunction with other council areas and campaign groups such as the campaigns involving Sinn Féin councillors in Meath, Louth and Newry and Mourne Councils and in Dungannon, Armagh, Omagh and Monaghan Councils
- › Encourage councils to use their powers of procurement to promote minimum waste products
- › Push for the closure of land fill sites that have not been properly engineered to minimise the danger of contamination

Pollution is no respecter of borders. Waste management is a matter for everyone on this island. Sinn Féin calls for the implementation of an all-Ireland waste management plan. Sinn Féin has argued for the introduction an all-Ireland Environmental Protection Agency with full powers to ensure joined up government throughout this island on this vital matter.

Ireland can meet international responsibilities on waste management and can do so without poisoning our land, waters and our people. However, it will take resolute action now on an all island basis tackling wasteful production techniques, excessive packaging and by providing citizens with the necessary infrastructure to return waste for reuse or recycling.

Sinn Féin believes that we need to develop markets for recycled materials on an all-Ireland basis, and to identify those materials which are best suited to local markets, particularly for our dry recyclables such as paper, plastics, glass and cardboard, as it makes no financial or environmental sense to transport these products out of the island.

Sinn Féin will also:

- › Encourage major retailers to reduce packaging



- › Call for the introduction of the plastic bag levy on an all-Ireland basis
- › Demand the introduction of a chewing gum levy, which will enable local authorities to effectively clean our streets
- › Argue for waste management and sustainability to be part of the education curriculum on an all-island basis
- › Urge government policy guidelines on the use of crushed glass as an aggregate in the construction of roads

## Water Rates ››

The development of our infrastructure must be guided by the need for the modernisation and transformation of public utilities. The deficit facing the Six Counties in relation to water and sewage treatment is a direct result of neglect and under-investment by successive British administrations. The current administration now expects us to pay the costs of this long-term negligence. This is unacceptable.

Sinn Féin has launched a vigorous campaign to resist the introduction of an additional water rate, and will work with others to ensure that this double taxation never sees the light of day. We are already paying for

water through our domestic rates.

Sinn Féin will continue to strive to reverse the privatisation strategy, which is at the core of the Reinvestment & Reform Initiative policy negotiated by David Trimble and Mark Durkan with the British treasury, and which continues to be the preferred route for direct rule policy makers.

## Tackling the Housing crisis ››

There is a crisis within the housing sector. There is not enough social housing being built to meet demand. Waiting lists are growing and within rural communities there is a growing problem in relation to the unfitness of housing.

Access to affordable decent housing is a basic human right. Sinn Féin has a strong track record in relation to housing.

But, unless there is a radical rethink about meeting the demand for social housing there will continue to be increases in homelessness and increased pressure on Housing Executive waiting lists.

Since the Housing Executive was stripped of the power to build and supply social housing in 1999 the situation has deteriorated.

Sinn Féin has:

- › Called for the Department of Social Development to be stripped of housing power because it has failed to deliver an effective social house-building programme
- › Led the demand for fundamental changes in the provision of social housing.
- › Argued for the Housing Executive to be allowed to take the lead in the building and supply of social housing
- › Questioned the role of housing associations as the main supplier of social housing when it is clear that they are failing to meet targets for the supply of social housing year on year
- › Called for a review of the housing selection scheme, which has condemned many people to lengthy periods in hostels and on waiting lists with out any hope of being housed

Sinn Féin believes that we require 70,000 new social homes by the year 2025. Meeting these targets requires a new approach. We believe that the use of Housing Associations, who have consistently failed to meet their supply targets, is an abdication

and back-door route to the privatisation of supply of social housing.

Sinn Féin also wants changes to the way private property owners operate. We want to see:

- › The effective registration of all private landlords
- › The establishment of a proper framework on the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants.
- › Stronger legislation to deal with unscrupulous property owners who charge inflated rents for rundown homes.

Housing Executive figures for Belfast show that in the allocation of housing that nationalists are under-allocated by 16% while unionists are over allocated by 21%. Across the north, this differential of nationalist under representation in housing allocation is repeated with allocation to unionists of Housing Executive homes showing an over-representation of 7% compared to an under-representation of 5% for nationalists. These figures point to a very significant 'waiting list' differential that is unacceptable. There is a significant and disproportionate housing need within the Nationalist community that is not being addressed.



Proposals in the Belfast Metropolitan Area plan drastically underestimate social housing need. Sinn Féin objected to housing growth indicators published by the Department of Regional Development because they would create a huge shortfall in housing supply, particularly in urban areas and West of the Bann. While the figures have been revised Sinn Féin continues to campaign against all forms of housing discrimination.

Sinn Féin believes that a complete overhaul of the planning service is required because:

- › It is unable to effectively deal with today's planning issues
- › It is undemocratic in its make up
- › Local government must have a greater role in community planning

Sinn Féin priorities include:

- › The extension of the house sales scheme and the removal of the reduction in incentives to buy.
- › An enforceable framework limiting the density of houses of multiple occupation in urban residential areas.
- › The need for major housing developments to be open to democratic and community scrutiny to ensure they adhere to a

sustainable community model.

- › Legislation to ensure that sustainable development clauses are incorporated in future developments.
- › The re-population of inner cities and town centres as a way of tackling the serious problem of housing especially amongst young people, and supports, for example, residents plans for mini sustainable villages in Belfast city centre.
- › Proposals to tackle the growing problem of inflated house prices across the north, and call for subsidies for first time buyers to allow them to compete fairly.
- › A study of the causes of the increasing level of mortgage defaults especially amongst the young.
- › A proper policy for the provision of affordable housing.

## Health >>

The delivery of high quality health services is hugely important to people across society. However at present local government is removed from a meaningful role as elected representatives are excluded from Health Boards. It is vital that the Review of Public Administration address this in a meaningful way. To ensure public accountability, Health Boards should have representation from the Local Council and these elected representatives must be full, voting members of the Board

Sinn Féin representatives will seek to ensure that 'Investing for Health' partnerships with all statutory agencies meet meaningful targets to address health inequalities and improving the health and well-being of communities.

At local government level, Sinn Féin representatives will commit themselves to ensuring that urban and rural communities will have the right quality, accessible health and social care services and we will actively seek a reduction in the many levels of management and administrative structures that presently exist within the health service.

Through their presence on Council Committees and external bodies, Sinn Féin representatives will seek to use their influence to enhance policies on health service delivery taken by Boards and Trusts on matters which may impact on the provision and delivery of local services and will seek to establish greater co-ordination between existing health bodies and local councils.

Given the central role of local government in relation to public health issues, we will urge greater co-operation between Councils, and between councils and other statutory and government agencies, to secure increased awareness of public and environmental health matters and enhanced spending on preventative actions.

Sinn Féin representatives will also use their positions within local councils to oppose the use of Public/Private Partnerships and Private Finance Initiatives within health and social services.



## Education ››

Sinn Féin believes that Education Library Boards, should have a majority of non-executive elected representatives to ensure transparency and accountability.

Sinn Féin is committed to:

- › Opposing the introduction of cuts to vital frontline services
- › Enhancing and developing healthy school meals
- › Protecting and maintaining finance for specific and special educational needs
- › Safer play and recreational areas for children and young people
- › Maintaining library services
- › Maintaining rural schools, particularly through supporting sustainable rural communities.
- › The creation and extension of Education Action Zones.