

# A VIBRANT CAPITAL

Fianna Fáil Proposals for a Better Dublin



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# Introduction

Dublin is the economic, cultural and political heart of Ireland. The County Dublin population is 1,273,069, while the population of the Greater Dublin Area is 1,804,156. This accounts for 39% of the State's population. The Greater Dublin Area's population is expanding rapidly, and it is estimated by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) that it will reach 2.1 million by 2020.

## When Dublin works, Ireland works.

Ireland's economy depends heavily on the growth and development of the Dublin region. Dublin generates over 48% of national GDP and contains 63% of all Information and Communications Technology jobs in Ireland. It also receives 86% of the total Foreign Direct Investment in the financial services sector in this country.

The economic wellbeing of Dublin is central to the wellbeing of the Irish economy as a whole.

As a country, we need to ensure that Dublin remains a great place to live with a high quality of life.

Dublin must have the ability to compete on a global level for investment and the talented workforce required to drive innovation and growth forward. Dublin must continue to be a welcoming city for investment, tourists and locals alike.

Fianna Fáil, a party that has been at the forefront of building and renewing our capital socially, economically and physically, proposes a number of focused radical ideas. Our Councillors will work very hard to implement the ideas outlined below.

These ideas will ensure that the City of Dublin works for the People of Dublin.

Dublin has had ten years of Fine Gael/Labour controlled Councils. Their decisions have resulted in a drastic decline in the provision of social housing, leading to unmanageable housing waiting lists and a rapidly increasing homeless population. They have failed to protect Dubliners from an unfair and unsustainable property tax regime. They have presided over the financially and socially irresponsible privatisation of waste disposal services.

Fianna Fáil in the Dublin Councils will continue to fight for a better Dublin which serves its citizens. We will be a constructive voice for Dubliners on the issues which matter to them.

# Better Government for Dublin

## Local Property Tax (LPT)

Fine Gael justified the LPT by saying that 80% of the tax would be reinvested directly back into local communities. This promise is now reversed. The money collected will now go directly into the exchequer instead of being invested back into local communities.

Fianna Fáil commits to ensuring that 80% of the revenue raised through the Local Property Tax will be granted to the local authority in which the property tax is collected. We believe that local government should benefit from local charges and guarantee the local services for local communities.

House owners across the country are facing a doubling of their property tax this year. This is particularly unfair for homeowners in Dublin. This is the wrong time for doubling the tax as there are up to 450,000 home owners who have difficulties paying their monthly mortgage and 100,000 are already in arrears of 90 days.

Compared to the rest of the country, Dublin homeowners are paying higher levels of property tax for houses which are the same size. This will result in Dubliners paying 5 times more for services than people outside of Dublin.

Fianna Fáil put forward alternative tax proposals in advance of Budget 2014 that would still allow Ireland to reach budgetary targets without putting pressure on those who can least afford it.

- We are against the doubling of the property tax.
- We will mandate all our council members to vote for it to be reduced by 15% when this power is available to them in September 2014.
- We will also vote against any increase based on new house valuations.
- We will ensure that money raised will be reinvested into local communities.

## Directly Elected Executive Mayor and Assembly

Fianna Fáil proposes that the governance of Dublin be enhanced through the creation of a directly elected mayor for the Dublin area as well as an assembly of members who are elected for a five-year term.

This model will be similar to that of the Greater London area. The mayor and assembly will be responsible for transport, planning and development, housing,

economic development and regeneration, culture, health inequalities, and a range of environmental issues including climate change, biodiversity, ambient noise, waste disposal and air quality.

The mayor will also have to agree the budget for the Dublin area each year as approved by the assembly.

## Embracing the Villages

Fianna Fáil wants to embrace the villages which make up Dublin. Much of Dublin's suburbs are made up of unique and previously separate villages with their own history and traditions.

Dublin City Council should recognise this with new village plans to enhance the uniqueness of each village. Clontarf, Clondalkin, Rathmines, and Ringsend should be encouraged to preserve their individual sense of identity. Welcome signs should be erected for each village if not already present.

Voluntary community councils should also be established which would advise the new City Mayor and Assembly on any actions which are to be taken in their areas.

## Vacant Sites Levy

Fianna Fáil will propose the introduction of a levy on vacant land in Dublin City Centre to encourage development and economic growth on derelict and vacant sites in the inner city.

The number of vacant buildings in Dublin has increased by nearly 60 per cent in just four years. It is time to reverse that trend. We have also outlined a number of other comprehensive policy proposals in our "Streets Ahead" policy document which will enhance and rejuvenate the centres of our towns and cities if implemented.

## Water Charges

Fianna Fáil will not support the implementation of water charges where the security and quality of water supply in Dublin is in doubt. Any imposition of charges must be done in a fair way which recognises the differences in ability to pay in Dublin.

Water for consumption must be kept to the highest quality. The Councils in Dublin must be engaged in a meaningful way when plans are being considered by Irish Water.

# A Dublin of Commerce

## A New Commercial Rates System

Fianna Fáil believes that the Government should examine how business rates can better support small businesses and independent retailers. We believe local authorities in Dublin should use new discretionary powers to give business rate concessions to new local businesses.

Commercial rates should work for business by revamping the current valuations system with a strong self-evaluation program to accelerate the revaluation of property. This would reflect the real value of commercial properties.

We would support the introduction of an inability to pay clause in the commercial rates system to give breathing space to struggling businesses. We also support the deleting of the subsequent occupier clause and believe this should be applied retrospectively in order to encourage greater take up of vacant spaces.

## An IFSC for Intellectual Property and Innovation

Fianna Fáil is proposing the creation of a new authority to coordinate and enhance the already burgeoning ICT and innovation sector in the Grand Canal Dock area. This authority would have a specific focus on creating an Intellectual Property and Licensing world centre in Dublin. This authority would cater for the needs of the multinational companies already established here and attract new firms to Ireland's "Silicon Dock" who want a central world location to establish intellectual property rights and trade licenses.

The authority would also support and coordinate new small and medium sized innovation hubs in their initial phase of expansion.

## Review Parking Fees and Clamping Strategy

Fianna Fáil believes that parking fees and clamping strategy in Dublin City Centre and in the main urban areas such as Dún Laoghaire and Swords must be reviewed. A more consumer-friendly approach must be taken.

Most areas of Dublin City Centre charge exceptionally high hourly rates for parking. High hourly rates are driving commercial footfall towards suburban shopping centres and resulting in many vacant units in the central business district of Dublin.

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Flexibility and incentives to attract people back into towns must be at the heart of Local Authorities' parking strategies. Fianna Fáil believes that parking charges should be substantially reduced or eliminated altogether on certain evenings of the week (such as Thursdays) and at weekends.

## Cleaning the Liffey

Fianna Fáil proposes that the Liffey, as the central focal point of the city, should reflect Ireland's environmentally friendly and green image. Efforts should be made to improve the water quality in the Liffey in order to encourage water sports in the city centre.

A plan should be put in place for the Liffey to be maintained to a high level by Dublin City Council. It is vital that the natural and commercial value of the Liffey is recognised and embraced. This would result in tourism and other social benefits.

# Creating a More Caring Dublin

## Social Housing

The right to a home is a key part of Fianna Fáil's vision for the future of housing in Ireland. One of the central tasks of the Dublin local authorities is the provision of social housing and laying out development plans to facilitate sustainable construction. Social housing waiting lists are currently spiralling out of control.

Despite the escalating demand due to demographic shifts and household fragmentation, private housing supply is under significant pressure due to the collapse of activity in the construction sector.

While employment levels have plummeted, house prices and rent levels have escalated in Dublin, forcing out many households. Fianna Fáil is committed to maintaining Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 to ensure the 20% social dividend is fully realised in future developments. We also commit to launching a new social housing construction programme which will be financed through the National Pension Reserve Fund.

The new housing building program must be drawn up by the Department of the Environment in consultation with each Dublin local authority based on demand. The housing program must reflect the diversified nature of demand, ranging from single member households to elderly couples.

The National Assets Management Agency must ensure that, where suitable, housing currently contained in its Dublin portfolio must be considered for social housing projects as a social dividend.

We believe the Housing Adaptation Grant should be fully restored to provide a much needed stimulus for small builders and give apprentices the opportunity to complete training in various trades. This will also help avoid a skills deficit in future years. The waiting times for this grant are unacceptable and must also be addressed.

## Community Housing

Fianna Fáil commits to promote the "Dublin House" project which promotes the potential of small-scale residential development in inner city and inner suburban areas. This project is aimed at people who want to create a home for themselves and their children in the city.

This project should be expanded throughout the city, encouraging families to live work and play in the city centre. The Council should also evaluate the possibility of house swaps between commuters who work in the city and older families who may want to move to suburban areas.

## Homelessness Strategy

Fianna Fáil will provide the resources, legislation and staff necessary to tackle homelessness in the capital. Over 100 people sleep rough in Dublin on any given night.

This problem, given full political attention, can be solved. Fianna Fáil believes that Dublin City Council must review its strategy to tackle the causes of homelessness and provide long term solutions. This strategy must be developed by all parties involved in the homeless service provisions. The reviewed strategy must assist those at risk of homelessness and concentrate on prevention. Any solution to this challenge necessitates a significant increase in new local authority housing.

## Dublin Together

Fianna Fáil believes the Dublin Councils should seek to establish a volunteer coordination service, entitled “Dublin Together”, to mobilise volunteers and connect people, information and services, in order to build a strong greater Dublin volunteering community. This service would offer all charities in the city and county a central coordination unit to make calls for volunteers and coordinate voluntary services within the city.

# Enhancing the Cultural Experience

## Our National Museums

Fianna Fáil believes the maintenance of free access to all museums run by the National Museum of Ireland should continue in order to ensure Ireland's treasures and historical artefacts are available for all. This is particularly beneficial to tourism in Dublin where many of these museums are located.

## Reinventing our Libraries

Fianna Fáil believes that Dublin City's Library services need to be funded at a level that will enable them to reinvent themselves as more broadly based cultural and educational community resources.

Current funding could have been greatly improved if this Government had not diverted the Property Tax away from local services. Libraries should also be outlets for other municipal cultural assets such as the extensive collection of the Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery.

## A North Centre City Cultural Hub

Fianna Fáil supports the initiation of a bold and imaginative Centenary project to transform the GPO and Moore Street sites into a museum of Irish political and military history and a 1916-1922 interpretive centre.

This complex could form a central link in a cultural route connecting the Municipal Gallery, Writers Museum and Gate Theatre cluster around Parnell Square to the Smithfield / Collins Barracks cultural and museum facilities.

## A Permanent Dublin Civic Museum

The entrepreneurial success of The Little Museum of Dublin has underscored the need for a permanent civic museum of Dublin to house the scattered collections of the city's historic artefacts and the significant amount of 20th century material now available. Fianna Fáil will continue to support The Little Museum as it develops into the future.

## Lifting the Burden on Sports Clubs

Fianna Fáil propose to alleviate the commercial rates burden on sports clubs in

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Dublin by proposing changes to current legislation to ensure that sporting clubs only have to pay commercial rates on the commercial parts of their property.

Non-commercial parts of the property such as sports halls, dressing rooms and training rooms will not be included in the calculation of these rates. This proposal will allow sports clubs to use their membership fees and revenues raised to improve their clubs facilities and focus on their primary activities.

## **Parks and Recreational Spaces**

Fianna Fáil commits to protecting and improving Dublin's parks and green spaces. We believe that these parks and green spaces add huge value to the city and county and must be preserved and improved. Local authorities in Dublin should look to increase the quality of park space in Dublin and examine whether it is possible to increase the number of parks in the city and county. Extra playing pitches and leisure facilities should form a central part of any expansion of residential or commercial development in Dublin.

# Getting Dublin Moving

## Rapid Public Transport

The construction of bus rapid transit lines to service areas currently not within Luas or DART catchment areas is a central priority for Fianna Fáil. Bus rapid transit is a cost effective way of providing reliable, regular and cheap public transport in the city and county.

The construction of an Airport/Swords link via the city centre should be prioritised. Work should commence on the Blanchardstown to UCD route and the Tallaght to Clongriffin route as soon as possible. Other high passenger routes should also be considered to link the suburbs with a rapid and frequent city centre service.

## DART Underground

The construction and completion of DART Underground would create a lasting positive impact on Dublin for many decades to come. Fianna Fáil believes this project must be progressed to guarantee the future prosperity of the city.

Fianna Fáil understands the current financial constraints facing the exchequer, however, using a mixture of EU, public and private funding, the DART Underground could become a reality within a decade. This €2.6 billion project must be a priority when available resources allow.

Fianna Fáil will also seek to restore higher capacity and increased frequency DART services to respond to the increasing demand. We will also seek to examine how best to integrate commuter rail services and decrease the commuting times of those living outside the M50.

## Cycling Future

Fianna Fáil wants to dramatically expand the number of Dublin Bikes stations across all parts of the city and its suburbs. Our plan would also extend the docking places on all stations in the city centre.

Fianna Fáil is also committed to the development of segregated cycle lanes from traffic, introducing a database of bike serial numbers for cyclists to register their bikes and creating secure bike depots across the city which will help reduce the number of bike thefts.

We will prioritise delivery of the S2S (Sutton to Sandycove) cycleway and extend it out to Howth. We also fully support the establishment of the strategic cycle greenways in Greater Dublin.

## **Upgrade East Link Bridge**

The East Link Bridge has become increasingly congested and restricts further growth on the east side of the city. Given that all toll revenues will revert to Dublin City Council from 2016, the bridge should be upgraded with two lanes in both directions. The roads linking the bridge to the Dublin Port Tunnel and Ringsend should also be upgraded.

The potential of the Dublin Port Tunnel is currently not being realised. The Dublin Councils should examine what actions could be taken in consultation with the Port Tunnel operators to see how to increase usage of this major piece of infrastructure. A review of the toll structure may be an element of this review.

## **Increased Pedestrianisation**

Fianna Fáil will seek to examine proposals to expand the pedestrianised areas in Dublin city centre. We believe that streets which do not heavily impact on the traffic flow within the city should be considered for pedestrianisation.

Streets such as Molesworth Street, certain sections around Merrion Square, Mountjoy Square and Parnell Square which would embrace the best elements of Dublin's Georgian architecture should be considered in this regard.

# Making Dublin Safer

## Dedicated Dublin City Centre Public Order Unit

Fianna Fáil proposes the creation of a dedicated Dublin City Centre Garda Síochána Public Order Unit to combat drug dealing and anti-social behaviour on the capital's main commercial streets.

This unit would be instructed to focus specifically on public order and anti-social behaviour and would have its own dedicated support team and management structure within An Garda Síochána. This unit would be present and visible on Dublin's main streets 24/7 and have its membership numbers ring-fenced from all other Garda units.

## Introduction of Dublin Community Courts

Fianna Fáil believes that now is the time to establish Community Courts in the capital to deal with low level offences such as vandalism, shoplifting and drug use. These courts would follow the model already in use in Britain, Australia and Canada, where the focus is on a problem-solving approach to local crime, safety concerns and restoring the community.

These courts would involve input from the local community and local businesses. Community Service Orders handed down by these courts would ensure that the offender would give back to their community by carrying out work in the area where the offence took place.

## Dublin Transport Police

Fianna Fáil will examine the concept of establishing a Dublin Transport Police unit which will be responsible for enforcing the law on all public transport services in Dublin. The majority of this funding would be sourced through the public transport operators themselves. The powers of the Transport Police will reflect the powers of An Garda Síochána with specific limits as to jurisdiction.

## Unified Dublin Fire Brigade and Ambulance Service

Fianna Fáil fully supports the retention of the Dublin Fire Brigade and Ambulance Service. It is clear to everyone that the Dublin Fire Brigade Ambulance Service provides an excellent service. There are over 800 highly skilled and committed Firefighter-Paramedics and Advanced Paramedics currently protecting over a million citizens of this state. Fianna Fáil will fight to retain this service which has served Dubliners so well.







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