



# DELIVERING FOR COMMUNITIES





# DELIVERING FOR COMMUNITIES

Delivering for communities is at the heart of everything we do in Fine Gael. From cities to towns, villages to rural communities, we're committed to delivering for you and your community.

Back in 2017, Fine Gael established the Department of Rural and Community Development with a full cabinet minister to ensure a voice for communities at the centre of government.

Fine Gael has led this department since its creation, introducing vital schemes to support communities right across the country.

Fine Gael's team of councillors, senators, TDs and MEPs are focused on helping to make our communities safer and stronger, healthier and more climate resilient as well as vibrant places in which to live, work, run a business, raise a family and grow older.

# DELIVERING FOR COMMUNITIES

Stronger, Safer  
Communities

Connected  
Communities

Healthy  
Communities

Age-Friendly  
Communities

Enterprising  
Communities

Climate Resilient  
Communities

## FINE GAEL

# DELIVERING STRONGER, SAFER COMMUNITIES

Fine Gael is committed to building stronger, safer communities across Ireland. We are determined to make our streets safer with more Gardaí on the beat, to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour and revitalise cities, towns, and villages.

We're introducing new Local Community Safety Partnerships which will replace the Joint Policing Committees and include a much broader range of stakeholders, including community organisations, state agencies, public representatives as well as members of An Garda Síochána. Each Partnership will develop its own Safety Action Plan, tailored specifically to the needs of their community.





## Gardaí:

We're increasing recruitment with more than 14,000 Gardaí - and more resources, including 3,500 garda vehicles and 575 garda bikes



## Community Safety:

We've introduced the Community Safety Innovation Fund to seize and re-invest the proceeds of crime back into communities with almost €9m distributed to date.



## New Partnerships:

Following three successful pilot programmes, Local Community Safety Partnerships are being introduced across the country with ring-fenced funding.

### Fine Gael will:

#### Gardaí

- Grow the size of An Garda Síochána and increase gardai in every county of the country.
- Roll out body worn cameras to every member of An Garda Síochána.
- Use facial recognition technology to help detect serious crime.
- Build modern garda stations.

#### Community Safety

- Ensure each community will have a Safety Plan designed for their area and the specific challenges of their communities.
- Drive community safety programmes and interventions that respond to local needs.
- Provide more front-line gardaí, increased Garda visibility and a wider range of policing services for people in their local area.

#### Safety Partnership

- Establish the new Community Safety Partnership model in every area in the country
- Implement new powers to roll out CCTV in key areas to improve public safety.
- Support An Garda Síochána to roll out a nationwide text alert initiative to allow for a new way to report issues directly to An Garda Síochána

## Stronger communities

Building stronger communities relies on targeted investment, both from government departments and Local Authorities, with the best results achieved by working together.

In Fine Gael, we're driven to support vibrant communities for those of all ages and in all parts of the country, ensuring no community is left behind.

Through the Department of Rural and Community Development, along with other key departments, we've introduced schemes and programmes – very often administered by city and county councils – that are making a positive difference nationwide.

TOWN & VILLAGE  
SCHEME

**€177m**

1,800+ projects

COMMUNITY  
ENHANCEMENT  
PROGRAMME

**€59m**

PUBLIC LIBRARIES -  
CAPITAL FUNDING

**€54m**

52 projects

OUTDOOR  
RECREATION AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
SCHEME

**€113m**

1700+ projects

COMMUNITY  
CENTRES

**€30m**

For 12 new centres

COMMUNITY  
CENTRES FUND

**€46m**

for upgrades to 860  
centres across the  
country

## Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF)

In recognition of a gap in support for larger, transformative projects, Fine Gael introduced the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) and the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF).

### RURAL

5 ROUNDS:  
**€577m**  
 for 245 projects

#### PROJECTS INCLUDE:

- Tipperary Town Regeneration
- Cahersiveen Community Waterfront Amenity
- Enniscrone Seafront Regeneration and Cliff Walk
- Limerick Greenway Hubs Development Project

### URBAN

3 ROUNDS:  
**€1.9bn**  
 for 400+ projects

#### PROJECTS INCLUDE:

- Dublin City Cultural Quarter
- Cork City Docklands Development
- Galway Council Transport Connectivity Project
- Waterford City Regeneration
- Letterkenny 2040 - Phase 1



## FINE GAEL

# CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

Since the last local elections, Fine Gael has worked hard to connect communities with investment in roads, walking and cycling infrastructure, public transport, as well as broadband.

Fine Gael is the only political party/group to support and deliver the National Broadband Plan (NBP). Under the NBP, we're bringing high-speed broadband to every home, business, school, farm and community in the country.

The NBP has also enabled us to facilitate remote and hybrid working with 'Connected Hubs', a national network of over 340 Remote Working Hubs in towns, villages and parishes all across Ireland. Vacant buildings such as old banks, courthouses and schools have been transformed to provide high-speed broadband and a modern office environment to allow people to work from their own locality.

Fine Gael re-opened the Local Improvement Scheme to upgrade roads used by communities and make them safer. To date, we've invested more than €170m delivering upgrades to more than 4,000 roads across the country.







## Roads:

Fine Gael has invested more than €5.75 billion in national, regional and local roads since 2020.



## Active Travel:

Since 2020, more than €1 billion has been invested to provide new footpaths, cycle lanes and greenways across Ireland.



## Broadband:

Fine Gael is delivering the National Broadband Plan with high-speed broadband now available to almost 250,000 NBP customers.

### Fine Gael will:

#### Roads

- Work to Ensure Local Authorities have the greatest level of discretion on which roads projects are prioritised and funded.
- Introduce a new road maintenance and safety fund, separate to the annual road building programme.

#### Active Travel

- Drive delivery of Active Travel, Safe Routes to School and Greenways programmes through our Local Authorities.
- Work with schools to avail of funding through the Safe Routes to School Programme.
- Promote a universal design approach in active travel, improve accessibility, in particular for older people and people with disabilities.

#### Broadband

- Ensure all Irish households and businesses will be covered by a Gigabit network no later than 2028
- Ensure all populated areas will be covered by 5G no later than 2030, and
- Deliver digital connectivity to all schools and broadband connection points.

## FINE GAEL

# DELIVERING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

The benefits of sport and physical activity for local communities is undeniable. Not only is sport and exercise key to people's physical and mental health, it's also the social heart of many communities across the country. Sport brings people together in a way that little else can, building a community spirit and fostering a sense of shared identity.

Local Authorities can continue to encourage this development, assisting the vital work carried out by sports clubs and groups, and reaching groups which have not shared in the benefits of physical exercise and sport. This is what we must prioritise, understanding the importance of instilling a lifelong love of physical activity at a young age.

In addition, Fine Gael is committed to delivering more healthcare and social care services in communities, closer to people. Expanding the range of services available to those who need them is key to enabling everyone in our communities live longer, healthier lives.





## Sports Capital Programme:

Through the Sports Capital Programme, we've allocated more than €1 billion to clubs and organisations around the country, including local authority sports projects.



## Outdoor Infrastructure:

We've invested more than €113m in 1,700 projects around Ireland, including walking trails, cycleways, greenways and blueways.



## Community Healthcare:

Through the Enhanced Community Care Programme and the Chronic Disease Management Programme, we've dramatically reduced the need for hospital admissions.

### Fine Gael will:

#### Sports

- Work with Local Authorities and Sports Partnerships to access funding sources such as the Sports Capital Programme
- Ensure all Local Authorities implement a Sports and Physical Activity Plan.

#### Health

- Expand the Chronic Disease Management Programme to include more patients leading to reduced hospital visits and better outcomes.
- Expand the community role of pharmacies, with more services provided

#### Health

- Transition to the Health Regions structure with more primary care centres and health services delivered through the centres.
- Ensure local GPs and other local healthcare providers have access to new eHealth Records

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## FINE GAEL

# DELIVERING AGE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

Communities should be places for people of every age and at every life stage. In Fine Gael we're committed to ensuring communities are designed for work, for recreation, for culture, for raising a family, for caring for loved ones, and for growing older.

A vibrant and healthy community is one where there's the right mix of infrastructure, including housing, childcare, recreation facilities, healthcare services, and other community services. We will support active communities where people can live with pride knowing that everyone is involved and catered for.





## Independent Living:

We've introduced and expanded supports for people to live securely and independently, including €12m annually for Seniors Alert and more than €382m in adaptation grants for older people and people with disabilities.



## Childcare:

Fine Gael introduced the National Childcare Scheme which supports all families with childcare costs. We're also supporting childcare providers and staff to meet increased demand for places.



## Recreation:

Playgrounds, parks, pitches and other recreational facilities are vital and bring health benefits. That's why we've allocated almost €3m to Local Authorities for playgrounds.

### Fine Gael will:

#### Older People

- Require Local Authorities to mandate its County Age Friendly Forum to audit existing policy and services.
- Ensure all Local Authorities develop 'right-sizing' policies.
- Review income limits and grant amounts for Housing Adaptation.
- Increase support for day care services and meals-on-wheels services.

#### Children

- Require Local Authorities to develop a local strategy to ensure the best start for every child in their area.
- Support the City/County Childcare Committees, often the first point of contact for parents and providers.
- Update planning guidelines to support the development of community childcare facilities.

#### Planning

- Ensure Local Authorities prepare and implement City/County Positive Ageing Strategies.
- Explore the potential of co-locating childcare, early-education and education facilities in the same developments.
- Audit the network of Family Resource Centres to ensure they're adequately funded and supported.

## FINE GAEL

# DELIVERING ENTERPRISING COMMUNITIES

Fine Gael backs business and enterprise. Enterprise and reward are core values of our party, and we believe that business-owners, entrepreneurs, and innovators should be supported at every step of the way.

The Covid-19 Pandemic was the most difficult challenge for businesses of all sizes and types and in every community in the country. Fine Gael stood by businesses, employers, and workers with an unprecedented support package of more than €48 billion.

While multi-national companies are crucial in an inter-connected world, 99% of businesses in Ireland are small-to-medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and are the backbone of local economies.





## Help with the Cost of Doing Business:

In addition to energy supports, we've introduced the Increased Cost of Doing Business Grant - a direct payment to almost 95% of businesses.



## Finance:

Along with personal tax cuts, we've reduced Capital Gains Tax to encourage investment, expanded credit guarantee schemes, and exempted more businesses from VAT.



## Enhanced Support:

We've expanded the Local Enterprise Offices and introduced new supports like the Online Retail Scheme, the Energy Efficiency Grant and apprenticeship grants for employers.



## Regional Enterprise Plans:

Working with stakeholders, we've launched nine Regional Enterprise Plans which build on the strengths of each region and are backed by €145m in funding.



## Rescue Plan:

All businesses can go through difficult times which is why we've introduced the Small Companies Administrative Rescue Process (SCARP) to make restructuring more accessible.



## Digital Transition:

We've launched the Digital Transition Fund to help businesses, particularly SMEs, innovate, reduce costs and expand.

# 15 POINT PLAN TO HELP SMEs





Fine Gael representatives and the Fine Gael Small Business and Enterprise Council have been meeting with SMEs across the country, listening to them and the challenges they face. On the basis of the feedback, we've developed a **15-point plan** to provide certainty and much-needed relief.

1. Fine Gael in government will guarantee any new measure is assessed for its impact on small business. We will call it the SME test.
2. We will increase the employer PRSI threshold to match the recent increase in minimum wage.
3. We will complete research on the impact of sick leave before any further increases.
4. Reopen the Increased Cost of Business (ICOB) Scheme until 29th May to give businesses a final opportunity to access this cash injection.
5. Then, we will launch a second phase of ICOB, with businesses in the hospitality and retail sectors receiving a second payment or double in the case of new registrations.
6. We will help you make your business more energy efficient by increasing the Energy Efficient Grant for small businesses to €10,000 and reduce how much a business contributes to just 25%.
7. We will launch the new online National Enterprise Hub for SMEs, as an online and over-the-phone one stop shop, to access information on the wide range of Government business supports available.
8. We will widen eligibility for the Trading Online Voucher to all sectors with up to 50 employees, and double the grant to €5,000.
9. We will double the maximum grant available for the Innovation Voucher Scheme from €5,000 to €10,000.
10. We will extend the Digital for Business Consultancy Scheme to all sectors with up to 50 employees.
11. We will increase the lending for Microfinance Ireland up to €50,000 from €25,000. This can be used for cashflow or expansion.
12. We will assist small and medium businesses with the cost of training their staff.
13. We will continue to support employers who take on an apprentice.
14. We will commit to unlocking the National Training Fund to assist small and medium businesses.
15. We will launch new 'Ireland's Best Emerging Entrepreneur Programme' to encourage entrepreneurship and startups in underrepresented groups.

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## FINE GAEL

# DELIVERING CLIMATE RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

Climate change is the biggest challenge facing us. We are rising to the challenge. Fine Gael in local government will lead, by helping and supporting people to make the changes needed. We will leave no one behind. Climate action must be fair and equitable.

Adaptation is crucial. Unfortunately, we are already seeing some of the consequences of climate change in various parts of Ireland. We must protect communities most at risk, including those impacted by flooding.

There are huge opportunities too in taking action. We will continue to ensure our communities feel the benefits of large- and small-scale renewable energy projects for example, both financially and in their local area.





## Flood Protection:

Since 2019, more than €219m worth of flood protection projects have been completed, saving 12,000 properties to date and saving €1.9bn in damage.



## Electrifying Transport:

Fine Gael introduced the EV Public Charger Grant for Local Authorities, complementing the SEAI grants for householders, including for home-chargers and electric vehicles.



## Water & Wastewater:

Good water management is vital for the environment development. We're investing more than €5.35bn in our water and wastewater supply and network between 2020 and 2024.

### Fine Gael will:

#### Climate Action

- Work with Local Authorities to develop demonstrator hubs for people to learn more about climate action options.
- Mandate Community Benefit Funds from large-scale renewable projects.
- Support the development of more Sustainable Energy Communities.
- Require Local Authorities to prepare local Circular Economy Strategies.

#### Energy Efficiency

- Ensure Local Authorities retrofit social homes.
- Install PV/solar panels on all public buildings.
- Ensure privately-owned homes have the option of being included in retrofitting of council homes.
- Allocate additional government funding to enable Local Authorities to speed up the replacement of public lighting.

#### Transport

- Examine how Local Authorities can assist people living in apartments to access EV charging.
- Prioritise community engagement in the delivery of active travel infrastructure.
- Set targets for the delivery of public EV charging points.
- Explore the responsible use of personal powered transporters (e.g., e-scooters).

**FINE GAEL** 



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