



**FIANNA FÁIL**  
THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

# CANVASSERS' GUIDE

ELECTION 2011

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## Introduction

This election will be one of the most important in our nation's history. We face a choice between Fianna Fáil's commitment to tackle our problems head-on, or of going the road of cynical politics as usual offered by Fine Gael and Labour.

Over the coming weeks, Fianna Fáil representatives, candidates, and members will be engaging with members of the public about our plan for recovery, and will be listening to people's concerns and hopes for the future.

As you do this, it is important that you are aware of the actions this party has taken while in government. This guide has been prepared with that in mind. It explains what we have done in key policy areas.

**The problems Ireland confronts today are too serious for politics as usual. We in Fianna Fáil will fight this election on the basis of a clear and honest plan which will:**

- **Restore the economy,**
- **Create jobs, and**
- **Deliver reform.**

**In contrast, the opposition parties are engaged in a deeply cynical campaign of constant criticism. They believe that a combination of populist rhetoric and soft-option policies represents a credible solution. It does not.**

That will be our message to the electorate in the upcoming campaign. We hope that you will help us to spread it in the coming weeks, and we hope that this guide assists you in that task.

## **1. Our Key Achievements in Government**

**Key fact:** Despite our current difficulties, the last 14 years have seen a transformation in the facilities, outlook and expectations of Ireland. Those who deny this are not being honest with the electorate.

### **We have secured historic progress in the North:**

We have overseen historic developments including the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 and the Hillsborough Agreement in February 2010 which helped bring peace and stability to the North, opening the door to a new era of cross-border progress and potential.

### **We have succeeded in making Ireland Number 1 in the world for jobs created by Foreign Direct Investment:**

FDI supports approx 240,000 jobs directly and indirectly. Eight of the top 10 high-tech and pharmaceutical firms and 15 of the top 20 medical devices firms are based here.

### **We have ensured that Ireland remains a good place to do Business:**

Ireland is ranked 9th out of 183 countries in the world by the World Bank in terms of ease of doing business.

### **We have put policies in place to produce a Highly Skilled Workforce:**

The Irish labour force is among the best educated in the world - the share of population aged 25-34 with a third level qualification is higher than in the US or the UK, and is above the OECD average. We are ranked 4th in the world in terms of skilled labour and 6th for labour productivity.

### **We have invested in a world class Transport Network & Safer Roads:**

Over €8 billion has been invested in our road network since 1997. A new 750km national motorway network is now complete. We have significantly expanded rail services, including commuter services and have completed phase one of the Western Rail Corridor. Thanks to our strict enforcement of road safety legislation, we now have one of the best road safety records in the EU.

**We have delivered significant improvements in Health:**

We have made major strides in tackling cancer with survival rates for almost all types of cancer having dramatically improved. Our introduction of the workplace smoking ban has improved the health and quality of life of hundreds of thousands of people. We are constantly improving our Hospitals and A&E waiting times. Newsweek ranked Ireland 7th in the world for its Health system.

**We have invested in our Energy & Communications Infrastructure:**

We have overseen increasing liberalisation of the energy market which has driven down costs, including the creation of the single energy market. We have introduced a number of schemes to encourage energy efficiency and create jobs. And we have delivered a €223 million national broadband scheme – one of the first countries in the world to do so.

**We introduced ground-breaking legislation to crack down on Crime:**

The introduction of the anti-gangland crime legislation, anti-knife crime legislation, the Criminal Assets Bureau and the Headshop ban show that Fianna Fáil is serious about tackling crime head on.

**We have ensured that our Farmers, Fishermen, and Communities are supported:**

Fianna Fáil recognises the vital role that agriculture and the agri-food industry can and will play in this country's economic recovery, and especially in rural areas. Payment levels for all the main agricultural schemes have been maintained displaying Fianna Fáil's commitment to protect farming as a way of life. Fianna Fáil has always fought hard in the interests of our fishing and coastal communities, working within the EU to reform the inequities that Irish fishermen face under the Common Fisheries Policy.

## **2. Our Economic Strategy**

### **Q: What is our Economic Strategy and Plan for Recovery?**

The National Recovery Plan sets out our detailed map to stabilise and renew the Irish economy. Fianna Fáil has committed to implementing this Plan if in government. It contains a range of innovative measures to stimulate the economy and create jobs.

### **Q: What does the National Recovery Plan do?**

The Plan provides a blueprint for a return to sustainable growth in our economy. In particular it:

- Sets out the measures that will be taken to restore order to our public finances, and reduce the deficit to 3% of GDP by 2015.
- Identifies the areas of economic activity which will provide growth and employment in the recovery.
- Specifies the reforms the Government will implement to accelerate growth in those key sectors.

### **Q: Why do we have to make these adjustments?**

It is our duty to be straight with the people about where we are as a country economically and how we get out of here fix the public finances. We have no option but to balance our national budget. Every household is trying to do it. It is an essential step, however painful and the right thing to do.

### **Q: Won't budget adjustments kill off any potential recovery?**

No, the economy is projected to grow 2.75% on average over the 2011–2014 period.

## **Q: Why should people support this Plan?**

Our economy will recover. Detailed policy measures identified in the Plan will build on our strengths and develop other sectors to provide a balanced economy and employment. It is only by implementing a credible plan, and by Fianna Fáil presenting our Plan to the public in an honest way, that we can restore confidence, build the economy and generate jobs again.

**The opposition is not willing to set out real plans.**

**Fine Gael & Labour want to be in Government, but refuse to say what they will do.**

### **3. Is Our Economic Strategy Working?**

**Key fact:** Recent economic indicators provide hard proof that our policies are starting to work and that the real economy is stabilising and beginning to recover.

**Exports:** Irish exports in 2010 reached the highest level ever at €161 billion. This represents a growth of 6.7% on the previous year.

**Foreign Direct Investment:** We were recently crowned the number one in the world for jobs created by FDI. Almost 11,000 new jobs were created in 2010, more than double the number created in 2009. Eight of the top ten global technology companies and 15 of the top 25 medical devices firms are located here.

**Employment:** While unemployment is still too high, the situation is stabilising. And the Live Register was 30,000 lower in December than in August.

**Motor sales:** The car scrappage scheme introduced last year, and extended in December, has provided a major boost to the motor industry. New car sales have jumped by 55% in 2010 to 88,373. The increase in sales last year delivered an extra €109m in Government revenue and an increase of 3,500 in the number employed in our industry.

**Manufacturing:** The recovery in Irish manufacturing has finally started to translate into jobs. The NCB Purchasing Manufacturing Index, which measures the health of the manufacturing sector, saw an increase in jobs in December, for the first time since July.

**Open for Business:** Ireland is ranked 9th out of 183 countries in the world by the World Bank in terms of ease of doing business.

**Credit:** The Head of Credit Review Office has said that the situation in relation to credit was “continually improving.”

**Competitiveness:** Our competitiveness has improved by about 6% since 2005. Business costs including energy, private rents, office rents, services, construction and labour have all become more competitive. Both gas and electricity prices are now below the Euro average, and the cost of living has also fallen.

**Tax Returns:** Tax revenue at the end of 2010 exceeded our expectations by €700 million marking a clear stabilisation in the public finances.

**Economic Outlook:** For the first time since late 2007, both Gross Domestic Product and Gross National Product have increased in the same quarter – marking an important return to growth in the economy.

## **4. Our Jobs Plan, and the Opposition's Lack of One**

**Key fact:** Our number one priority is to create and maintain jobs – it is the driving force behind everything that we do.

### **Q: How will we get people back to work?**

- The best way to get people back to work is to get our house in order – we are doing this by fixing the banks, stabilising the public finances and improving our competitiveness.
- We are pursuing a number of pro-enterprise initiatives that will help businesses.
- Real progress is being made in the enterprise economy with exports and FDI showing great resilience.
- We are also taking action to help those out of work to get back into the labour market.

### **Q: What specific measures are we implementing to bring about Jobs growth?**

We have undertaken a number of key, strategic initiatives across a range of sectors to create new jobs and to get people back to work:

1. We have fought for and successfully maintained pro-jobs **corporation tax** of 12.5%.
2. We prepared a five-year integrated **plan for Trade, Tourism and Investment** which will generate 300,000 jobs, and boost exports by one third.
3. **Capital Investment:** At almost €35 billion, we are maintaining proportionally one of the largest capital investment programmes in Europe.

4. We are investing €6.5 billion next year through commercial semi-State companies and our **public investment programme** which will maintain over 65,000 jobs.
5. **Metro North** has been given priority as a major labour intensive capital project. This will create 6,000 direct and indirect jobs during the construction phase. It also has the potential to create and sustain 37,000 jobs. Labour is opposed to Metro North.
6. We have set up a €500 million **Innovation Fund** which will support enterprise development and job creation by drawing top venture capitalists to Ireland. The first tranche has attracted 23 expressions of interest.
7. **Enterprise Ireland** will help approximately 1,200 companies with research and innovation activities in 2011. It will also support 85 High Potential Start-Up companies in 2011.
8. €360 million is being invested in **research and innovation**, involving third-level institutions that will create jobs and new enterprises.

## **Q: What have we put in place to support Business?**

Among a range of measures we have implemented to support businesses are:

- **Adjusting the Minimum Wage:** Having introduced the Minimum Wage in the first place, we have adjusted the minimum wage in the last budget because expert analysis told us it was acting as a barrier to employment in labour intensive sectors like retailing and tourism, where many jobs have been lost.
- **The Employment Subsidy Scheme, Enterprise Stabilisation Fund, Employer Job (PRSI) Incentive Scheme, and Business Expansion Scheme** are all designed to help employers and support jobs.
- **Car Scrappage Scheme:** The car scrappage scheme is being extended for a further 6 months to 30 June 2011.

- **Credit:** The Government, via the Credit Review Office, is ensuring that AIB and BOI meet their commitments to provide a total of €12bn in extra lending to the small and medium businesses over the course of 2010 and 2011.

## **Q: What have we done to help the Unemployed?**

- We are doing everything we can to help those who have lost their jobs get back to work as soon as possible.
- The Skills Development and Internship Programme, Work Placement Programme, Tús, PRSI Exemption Scheme, and Community Employment Schemes are all Fianna Fáil introduced schemes dedicated to helping people get back to work.
- There will be in excess of 173,000 further education places and over 100,000 FÁS training in 2011.

## **Q: Why cut the minimum wage?**

- The high minimum wage was a barrier to employment in labour-intensive sectors like retailing and tourism, where many jobs have been lost.
- The minimum wage rose 55% from its original level in 2000 to €8.65 per hour. With prices charged by businesses falling, a minimum wage at this level is a barrier to employment, especially for the young.
- Labour and Fine Gael say they want Ireland to be more competitive yet they are opposed to a cut in the minimum wage.

## Opposition Proposals

**Fine Gael** claim that their plans are about jobs and growth. For all their bluster, their plans don't stand up to scrutiny.

- Fine Gael's jobs plan "New Era" is riddled with huge holes. It was dismissed by Michael Noonan as a "public relations add-on."
- Richard Bruton bizarrely admitted that their jobs plan is not really about growing employment.
- They have proposed setting up four new quangos at a time when the Government is rationalising agencies.
- Despite launching it amidst much fanfare, Mr. Noonan recently said that it is out of date.
- Their pre-budget submission does not mention continued investment in job creation and research agencies, IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and Science Foundation Ireland.

**Labour** talks about the need for a stimulus, and a jobs fund.

- The best stimulus in the world won't work if the fundamentals aren't in place. Labour's proposed adjustment of €4.5bn will not be enough to bring about sound public finances.
- They have provided very little information on their jobs fund. Where will the money for it come from?
- Labour's hypocrisy on this issue has been exposed recently - Eamon Gilmore said that he would put the Metro North project on hold despite the fact it will create 6,000 jobs in construction and has the potential to create 37,000 new jobs.
- They continue to refuse to outline credible solutions to create jobs.

## **5. The Public Finances and the EU-IMF Financial Package**

**Key fact:** This year we will borrow €19 billion just to keep the country afloat. We need to borrow the funds for vital public services such as schools, hospitals and public servants' salaries. Assistance from the EU & IMF will enable us to access these funds at a lower interest rate than we have been able to do on the financial markets.

### **Q: Why did we seek external assistance?**

The reason we had to seek external assistance is because the problems in our banking system simply became too big for this State to handle on its own. Our public finance problem was serious but we were successfully implementing a strategy to deal with it. However, the combination of the two resulted in circumstances where the entire Eurozone was under pressure.

### **Q: Has Fianna Fáil given up Irish national sovereignty with an IMF sell-out?**

No. To say Irish sovereignty has been compromised is irresponsible scare-mongering. As members of the European Union, and especially of the Eurozone, our decision making in many vital areas of economic interest has been shared since the beginning. Those who make these smears need to be asked: *Where do they propose to get the funding to pay for state services if they would refuse the EU-IMF loan?*

### **Q: Did we negotiate a bad/punitive deal with IMF / EU?**

- No. The interest rate we are paying is the best available.
- 'Punitive' describes the 8 or 9% we would have to pay to borrow now on the markets. This programme makes funds available to us at around 5.8%.
- Greece did not get a more favourable deal. In fact, Greece is now seeking our terms.

## **Q: Will this €85 billion loan cripple the country?**

Fianna Fáil doesn't buy into the idea peddled by the opposition that this country is 'banjaxed' or 'an economic corpse' as the Labour Party says.

- The last 14 years have seen a transformation in the facilities, outlook and expectations of our country. Those who deny this are not being honest with the electorate.
- The Irish people are a strong, proud and resilient people. By working together we can overcome our present difficulties.

We have already shown this by the actions that we as a country have taken so far:

- Since the middle of 2008 we have taken significant steps in response to the rapid deterioration in our public finances in order to stabilise the situation and return this country to a sustainable fiscal position.
- People want assurance and hope – we believe our Recovery Plan can provide this.

## 6. Restoring Our Banking Sector

**Key fact:** Our primary consideration in the Government's involvement in the banking system has been at all stages to protect, in the public interest, the financial and economic system of the State.

### **Q: Why did you guarantee the banks in September 2008?**

- Without a guarantee, the banks would have collapsed within days.
- Should we have allowed a situation where people could not access their salaries, their savings and let the ATM machines literally stop working overnight? That's the question Labour and those who now oppose the guarantee need to be asked.
- Central Bank Governor Patrick Honohan in his report concluded the collapse of the banking system would have resulted in "immediate and lasting damage to the economy."
- The guarantee has protected customers' deposits and allowed the banks to raise funds to lend on to businesses and households.
- We have already earned fees in excess of €1bn from the guarantee.

### **Q: Why was Anglo included in the guarantee?**

- Despite the opposition's claims to the contrary, Central Bank Governor Patrick Honohan in his report describes Anglo Irish Bank as systemically important. Anglo's collapse would have brought down the entire banking system.
- Anglo and Irish Nationwide are being wound down in an orderly way that minimises the cost to the taxpayer and keeps deposits safe.
- Had the State not injected capital into Anglo, depositors would not have been repaid in full. That means ordinary businesses, credit unions, pensions. We could not have allowed such an outcome. Anglo had more than €20 billion in Irish deposits.

- Anglo shareholders and subordinated bondholders have suffered large losses.

## **Q: What else have we done to sort out the banking problems?**

1. We have agreed to a downsizing and reorganisation of the banking sector, which will focus on strongly supporting the recovery of the economy.
2. We have radically reformed the financial regulatory system.
3. In return for injecting capital into our banks, the taxpayer is receiving a significant return in the form of shares and cash.
4. We are winding up Anglo Irish Bank in a way which minimises the costs to the taxpayer.
5. We set up NAMA.

## **Q: Why did we set up NAMA?**

We set up NAMA to remove the toxic loans from banks balance sheets.

- The discount or “haircut” on loans transferred to NAMA has been over 50%, much higher than the opposition predicted.
- The opposition refused to support NAMA and frequently described it as bailout for developers. This is simply not the case – developers need to repay their loans as before, and are fighting NAMA tooth and nail.

## **Q: What is the Opposition's approach to the banking problem?**

Fine Gael and Labour refuse to outline credible solutions to our banking problems:

- Fine Gael's new National Recovery or "miracle" whole-sale bank will supposedly get €2 billion in capital from the State and will be able to borrow €40 billion from ECB. This is nonsense, since the ECB demands collateral.
- The miracle bank would have to raise deposits, and these would almost certainly be funds that would be withdrawn from the current banks. Alternatively, the State would have to provide the miracle bank with €50-60 billion in bonds.
- It appears this proposal has been dropped in recent times by Finance Spokesperson Michael Noonan.

- Labour say they would set up a Strategic Investment Bank. Labour's model is based on a bank described as "Germany's dumbest".
- The funds that are lent to our banks must be drawn from deposits or international money markets.
- This would mean that the new Bank would be competing with our two established banks and the state for scarce funding.
- Labour refuses to outline how this bank would work.

## **Q: Why can't we "burn the bondholders"?**

- "Burning the bondholders" means defaulting on our debt.
- If Ireland defaults, we will not be able to borrow money to pay for nurses, teachers, gardaí or any other social services.
- At a time when the real economy has stabilised, unemployment is falling, and exports are growing strongly, it would be irresponsible to follow a course of action that would cause havoc to our economy.

## **Q: What are you doing to help those having difficulties making their mortgage repayments?**

- We have provided financial help to over 18,000 families through the Mortgage Interest Subsidy Scheme.
- We increased the advisory services provided through the Money Advice Budgeting Services.
- We introduced the statutory Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears for all lenders.
- We extended the moratorium on legal proceedings to 12-months.
- We refocused mortgage interest relief on those who bought their homes at the peak of the market with extensions up to the end of 2017. We reduced stamp duty in Budget 2011 which will facilitate trading down for some borrowers in difficulty.
- We will introduce a Deferred Interest Scheme for borrowers who are unable to pay full interest on their mortgages but are able to pay at least 66%.

## 7. Investing in Education

**Key fact:** We are committed to the protection of front line services, the maintenance of class sizes and the pupil teacher ratio at current levels, the provision of extra teachers at primary and post primary level to meet demographic needs, increasing training opportunities for young graduates and continued investment in higher education.

- **Getting Results:** Spending on education rose from €3.7 billion in 2000 to €8.5 billion in 2008, an increase of 128%. We now have the best educated workforce in the EU.
- **Investing:** We are committed to continued investment in education because it will enhance our competitiveness and future economic growth prospects. Overall expenditure must be reduced, but education services must be protected as far as possible. Numbers employed in education will increase from 93,700 in 2010 to 95,750 in 2014.
- **School Building:** Last year's school building programme committed to creating 23,500 school places in 20 new schools and 32 extended and refurbished schools. 85,000 additional permanent places will be delivered in new and existing primary and post primary schools under the revised Capital Investment Programme for 2010-2016.
- **Capitation Grant Increases:** The primary school capitation grant has increased from €81.26 per pupil in 2002 to €200 in 2010. While there will be a 5% reduction in capitation grant rates in 2011, it is only being reduced to 2008 levels for primary schools and 2007 levels for post-primary schools.
- **Special Needs Improvements:** We are still continuing to spend almost one ninth of this year's education budget, €1billion, on special needs education including the provision of 10,000 special needs assistants to help children with their care needs in schools nationally.

- **FÁS:** In 2011, over 173,000 participants will benefit from VEC interventions, while FÁS will deliver approximately 100,000 training places next year.
- **Higher Education Strategy:** We launched a strategy that will see the transformation of Ireland's higher education sector over the next two decades. The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 (The Hunt Report) has been endorsed by the Government as the future blueprint for the sector. This report ensures higher education will be central to economic development over the next 20 years.
- **Student Contribution:** While we have increased the student contribution fee from €1,500 to €2,000 in 2011, we will ensure low income families are protected. 43% of all undergraduates are currently in receipt of a student grant and these will not be impacted by any increase in student charges.

## 8. Improving Our Healthcare

**Key fact:** Our objective is to develop a world-class public health service. We have made major strides in tackling cancer, supporting mental health, and are treating more people than ever. Meanwhile, we have committed to ensuring reform of our health care structures and practices.

- **Cancer Care:** The National Cancer Control Programme, Breastcheck, Cervical Check have resulted in cancer survival rates increasing for all main cancers in Ireland. We are rolling out of the Rapid Access Prostate Cancer Diagnostic clinics in Dublin and Galway and setting up a Rapid Access Lung Cancer Diagnostic clinic in Dublin and rolling out cervical vaccine to students in first year.
- **Treating More Patients:** We are treating more patients than ever. Inpatient numbers have increased by 13% over the period 2000 to 2009. Under the National Treatment Purchase Fund we have ensured that over 165,000 patients have received care.
- **Primary Care Teams:** There are currently 286 “operating” primary care teams (Teams which are holding clinical team meetings on individual client cases and involving GPs and HSE staff).
- **Mental Health Strategy:** We have approved the ring-fencing of the proceeds of sales of psychiatric assets. In 2010 the HSE will dispose of surplus assets and reinvest an initial sum of €50 million in the development of a new mental health infrastructure.
- **Fair Deal:** Under “Fair Deal” we have set up a new nursing home support scheme. This will give financial support to people who need long term nursing home care.

- **Home Help & Home Care:** We are providing 12 million home help hours. This year 54,500 clients will benefit from a 30% increase since 2006. We are investing €138m in Home Care Packages which will benefit approximately 13,800 clients in 2011.
- **Disability Services:** Last year, investment in disability services represented 10.5% of the €14 billion health budget.
- **Childcare:** In 2010 we rolled out the free pre-school scheme which is benefitting 70,000 children a year. The National Childcare Investment Programme 2006 - 2010 is investing €575 million in childcare infrastructure creating up to 50,000 new childcare places.

## 9. Protecting the Most Vulnerable in Society

**Key fact:** Our clear priority is to protect the most vulnerable in our society. While we had to make adjustments in the Budget, the vast bulk of the progress we've made over the last decade has been protected.

- **Investing in Social Services:** Over the years 2000-2010, we trebled the Social Welfare budget: Social Welfare Expenditure in 2000 was €6.7billion; Social Welfare expenditure in 2010 was €20.9 billion. Over the last 12 years, at a time when the cost of living has gone up by 40%:
  - Pension levels have been increased by 120%
  - Unemployment benefit have been increased by 130%
  - Child payments have been increased by 330%
- **Protecting the Most Vulnerable in Society:** The ESRI has shown that the measures introduced over the past 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years have been progressive and have distributed the burden of adjustment fairly.
- **Protecting the State Pension:** We have significantly increased the State Pension over the past ten years and it is our view that the security this has brought to older people should be preserved.
- **Maintaining Comparatively High Rates:** Weekly personal rates of the main social welfare payments for people under age 66 were reduced by €8 (average 4.1%). Rates are still very high in comparison to our neighbouring countries.
- **Taking Necessary Action:** Failure to take action now in relation to the level of expenditure by the Department of Social Protection would mean that supports to pensioners, carers, people with disabilities and jobseekers, amongst others, would become increasingly unsustainable.

## 10. Investing in our Infrastructure

**Key fact:** During the boom, we built a top class transport infrastructure, sport and cultural facilities and educational sector. The stock of very high-quality physical infrastructure available now, and planned, will boost competitiveness and support economic recovery.

- **A World Class Roads Network:** We have completed the major inter urban roads programme, that is, 750 km of motorway linking Dublin with the principal cities in the country, reducing journey times, increasing the reliability of journeys and improving road safety.
- **Better Public Transport:** Having completed the roads programmes, this year more than €1.4 billion will be spent on vital public transport programmes, including the planning and procurement processes for Metro North and the Luas extension to Citywest which will be completed in 2011.
- **M50 Completed:** The Upgrade Scheme has transformed the M50 from a two-lane heavily congested road with toll barriers and signalled interchanges into a modern free-flowing motorway that has reduced journey times by up to 50%.
- **More, Better Rail Services:** We have significantly expanded rail services, including commuter services and have completed phase one of the Western Rail Corridor resulting in substantially increased capacity for passengers.
- **Road Safety** is a key priority and this commitment is underpinned by the third Road Safety Strategy 2007-2012. In 2009, we recorded the lowest number of road deaths on Irish roads - 241. Road deaths have dropped by more than 41% from 1999-2009. Garda statistics record 212 road fatalities in 2010, 26 fewer than 2009. December 2010's total of 10 fatalities was the lowest monthly figure recorded.

- **Safety Cameras:** A new network of safety cameras came into operation in early November 2010. The cameras are deployed in areas that have been identified as black spots. The announcement is a major milestone in our efforts to reduce the number of fatalities on our roads.
- **Broadband:** We have delivered a €223 million national broadband scheme to reach every part of Ireland – one of the first countries in the world to do so.

## 11. Cracking Down on Crime

**Key fact:** We are committed to tackling crime in all its forms from gangland crime to head shops to knife crime. Our actions in Government are proof positive of this.

- **Tackling Organised Crime:** The Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act 2009 gives significant additional powers to the Gardaí to tackle gangland measures. The Criminal Justice (Surveillance) Act 2009 allows for covert surveillance to be used in evidence for the first time.
- **Taking on Knife and Gun Crime:** The Criminal Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 introduced the most far-reaching gun and knife control measures since the foundation of the State.
- **Increased Gardaí Numbers:** Today the Garda Force numbers approximately 14,615 compared to 10,840 in 1997. The Gardaí remain well resourced with a budget of over €1.4 billion compared to €610 million in 1997.
- **More Prison Places:** Since 1997, we have provided almost 2,000 prison places with more to come on stream.
- **Tackling Headshops:** In a bid to rid the country of 'legal highs' we have brought in tough new legislation that will crackdown on the operation and activities of head-shops.
- **Defending the Home:** Fianna Fáil introduced the new Criminal Law (Defence and the Dwelling) Bill 2010 which tips the balance in favour of the law abiding home dweller. In clarifying the law in this area, this Bill sets out that a person can use reasonable force, including in some cases, lethal force, in defending the home.

## 12. Protecting the Rural Economy

**Key fact:** Fianna Fáil recognises the vital role that agriculture and the agri-food industry can and will play in this country's economic recovery, and especially in rural areas. Payment levels for all the main agricultural schemes have been maintained displaying Fianna Fáil's commitment to protect farming as a way of life.

- **Recognising the role of Agriculture:** Budget 2011, the Recovery Plan, and Food Harvest 2020 all recognise agriculture and the agri-food industry as key to our economic recovery. There are vital parts of our economy.
- **Sustaining Recovery:** The agriculture sector has experienced a massive recovery since 2009. According to the CSO, the first estimate of operating surplus in agriculture in 2010 shows an annual increase of 46%. This follows a 31.1% decrease in 2009.
- **Maintaining Payment Levels:** Food Harvest 2020, the report of the 2020 Committee on the future of agri-food, fisheries and forestry sector has set ambitious targets for the sector, including increasing exports by a third to €12 billion on an annual basis over the next decade. In order to ensure we meet these targets in the years ahead, there will be no change in payment levels for all the main agriculture schemes in 2011. Funding for forestry, bio energy and fisheries are being maintained at very close to 2010 levels.
- **Spending on the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme** is being maintained at 2010 levels at €220 million; Spend on the Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS) and the Agri-Environment Options Scheme (AEOS) will increase from €330 million to €337 million;

- **REPS & Agri-Environment Options Scheme:** All existing REPS contracts will continue to be honoured and the amount being spent on REPS in 2010 will again be among the largest amount ever spent on the scheme in any given year. The AEOS scheme will reopen in 2011 and payments levels will be capped at €5,000 and participation levels will be capped at 10,000.
- **Waste Management:** Up to €100 million of the final instalment of the Farm Waste Management Scheme, was brought forward to December 2010. Total payments under the Farm Waste Management scheme will top €1.2 billion to 34,000 farmers when completed in Jan 2011. The original commitment to the Farm Waste Management Scheme 2007-2013 was €200 million. 90% of total grant aid of €1.2 billion is now paid.
- **Suckler Cows:** Budget 2011 also provides for bringing forward €32 million for the Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme in 2011 to ensure that the Department can make the 2010 and 2011 payments under the Scheme in 2011.

## 13. Environment & Local Government

**Key fact:** We are committed to an ambitious environmental programme which includes investing in our water supply infrastructure and tackling climate change. We are continuing with a restructuring of the social housing investment programme with an emphasis on long term leasing and tenant purchase.

- **Site Value Tax:** The National Recovery Plan 2011-14 provides that future years will see revenues from a Site Value Tax and water charges.
- **Sustaining Employment:** Over €1 billion will be spent on housing and water services in 2011, which will create and sustain employment of somewhere in the region of 10,000 jobs.
- **Investing in Water Infrastructure:** Some €4.6 billion in Exchequer resources has been invested between 2000 and 2009 in all forms of water services infrastructure. This has resulted in the completion of 476 major projects and an increase in water treatment capacity equivalent to the need of a population of 1.1 million. There are currently 120 major water services capital contracts in progress and these will continue to be funded in 2011.
- **Water Charges:** In order to fund our water infrastructure in the years ahead, we have decided to introduce domestic water charges for households over the next four years. This will be preceded by the roll out of water meters funded through the NPRF.
- **Social Housing Investment:** In 2011, there will be continued restructuring of the social housing investment programme towards greater levels of delivery under the Rental Accommodation Scheme and a lesser need for capital finance.

- **Rental Accommodation Scheme** funding (€125m) and long term leasing arrangements (€25m) is being maintained at 2010 levels.
- **Tenant Purchase Scheme:** Fianna Fáil has provided a major incentive to long-term tenants who wish to own their own home. We have announced an improved tenant purchase scheme allowing local authority tenants to avail of a discount of up to 45% on the cost of their home. This is a temporary increase from current discount of 30%, and applies only for 2011.

## **14. What the Critics Say**

### **Q: Did Fianna Fáil blow the boom?**

No. While mistakes have been made, the reality is that we dramatically cut the national debt, saved in the National Pensions Reserve Fund, and invested in infrastructure and services when we could. Without these Ireland would be much weaker today, and we wouldn't have the necessary basis for recovery.

### **Q: Is Ireland “banjaxed” or “an economic corpse” as the Labour Party says?**

No, it is not. These terms used by the Labour Party are part of their negative agenda. However, this country needs answers, and not incessant negativity. We have a people and an economy that are both resilient and have numerous significant advantages. We must remember that in Ireland:

1. There are over 1.85 million people working today. That's well over 400,000 more people since 1997.
2. We have a young, educated, flexible workforce.
3. Over 19,000 new jobs were created by Enterprise Ireland and IDA backed companies in 2010.
4. We are number 1 in the world for jobs created by Foreign Direct Investment.
5. Eight of the world's top 10 technology firms are based in Ireland.
6. Ireland was one of the world's only developed countries not to experience a sharp fall in exports during the greatest collapse in trade in recent history.
7. We exported goods and services valued at €161 billion last year (up 6.7% on 2009), and this is expected to grow by 7.2% this year.
8. Irish competitiveness improved significantly in recent years.

## **Q: Why didn't Fianna Fáil predict the economic crisis would hit us?**

No one predicted the scale and extent of the economic crisis that would face both Ireland, and the world. Each of the ESRI, Central Bank and IMF were predicting healthy growth rates.

Fine Gael and Labour blame us for not having foreseen it. However, Fine Gael and Labour's 2007 manifesto predicted average annual growth rates of 4.2% between 2008 and 2012. They criticised our policies at the time for being too conservative and called for increased expenditure on health and education.

In their 07 manifesto, Fine Gael promised:

- Massive tax cuts and increased public spending.
- To abolish stamp duty for first time buyers up to €450,000.
- To cut 20% tax rate to 18%.
- To increase the state pension to at least €300 per week by 2012.
- A laptop to every child entering secondary school.
- Extend medical cards to 100,000 more families.
- Free Health Insurance for every child under 16.
- Free GP visits for every child under 5.
- To continue the system of benchmarking.

In their 2007 manifesto, Labour promised:

- That the "The broad macroeconomic outlook for the Irish economy is positive...".
- A 2-point cut in the standard rate of tax from 20% to 18%.
- 2,300 more beds in hospitals.
- Five half-days of pre-school education, provided free of charge to all children.
- To abolish means test for carers.
- To increase the number of Community Gardaí to 1500.
- To raise the zero stamp duty threshold for first time buyers to €450,000 no stamp duty up to €100,000.

In total, the 2 parties promised to extra spend amounting to anywhere between €14bn and €34bn each year over the 5 years from 2007 to 2012. Nowhere in these manifestos did they call for greater regulation of the banks or a slowdown in public spending. We are not saying that it is their fault, but we will not let them rewrite history.

## **Q: Would Fine Gael and Labour have handled the crisis differently?**

Given their sharply contrasting policies, it is quite likely that if Fine Gael and Labour were in Government we would be in an even worse situation than we currently are.

For example, Fine Gael supported the bank guarantee in September 2008. Labour opposed it. If the two were together in Government at the time, such a division over such a key policy area would likely have resulted in a paralysed government and a run on our banking system; something which the guarantee avoided.

## 15. An Opposition at Odds

**Key fact:** At these difficult times, it is hard to imagine how a Fine Gael – Labour government could possibly have the necessary coherence required to run the country. Their divergent views on numerous crucial policy areas are a recipe for inaction and stagnation. They have said and done nothing that would suggest they could work together, or agree a coherent policy programme.

- Their alternative budget proposals revealed the large and growing ideological gap between Fine Gael and Labour.
- Fine Gael agreed that a €6 billion adjustment is necessary in the Budget. Labour disagreed and believed this figure should be €4.5 billion
- Fine Gael plan to cut a further 30,000 public sector jobs and dismantle the HSE and FAS. Labour doesn't agree.
- Labour wants to introduce a new 48% tax rate. Fine Gael vehemently opposes this.
- Fine Gael would cut social welfare rates. Labour say all headline social welfare rates must be protected
- Fine Gael want to increase VAT rates. Labour on the other hand think that we can reduce VAT – which is fantasyland economics given the crisis that the country is in.

## Table of Discord – A Selection of their Proposals

Policy Area	Fine Gael	Labour
Budget 2011	They set out a €6 billion adjustment target	They set out a net adjustment of €4.5 billion – an amount far short of what is required
Tax Rates	They also oppose proposals to raise either the standard 20% or the top 41% rate of income tax	They are proposing a third rate of tax at 48% on joint incomes over €200,000 – a political stunt which they admit would not raise significant revenues
VAT	Want to increase VAT	Want to reduce VAT, a move which would undermine all our efforts to reduce the deficit
Public Sector	Propose cutting the public sector by 30,000 jobs. They also want to abolish FAS.	They want to reduce the numbers by only 15,000. Don't want to abolish FAS
Redundancies Social Welfare	They are proposing to reduce the dole rate.	They are opposed to this – which is completely impractical given the current financial difficulties
Gangland Crime	Supported anti-gangland crime legislation	Cynically opposed this legislation
Health	Says it will dismantle the HSE, without providing for what will replace it	Opposes dismantling the HSE
Third level fees	Proposes a graduate tax	Opposes any form of third-level fees – another impractical and incredible proposal
Banking	Their National Recovery Bank proposal has been quietly dropped, so their policy is not known	Still committed to the Strategic Investment Bank – based on what was dubbed “Germany's dumbest bank”
Political Reform	Reduce number of TDs by 20 and introduce a partial list system	Opposes both measures

The last time Labour and Fine Gael went to the country with such divergent policy views was November 1982. It resulted in a divided and paralysed Government from 1983-87.

## 16. Canvassing

Canvassing is about communicating a message directly to voters about the Party and about the candidate in order to secure their support. In this campaign, this will be the most crucial method of communicating to the electorate. The efforts of grassroots members and supporters will be vital to ensure that Fianna Fáil returns a strong representation to Dáil Éireann at this critical time. Please use the tips below to help you on your canvass.

### Prepare

1. Plan every canvass by co-ordinating with the candidate's election agent or constituency co-ordinator.
2. Bring literature, pens, and canvass cards. Marked register canvasses offer significant benefits to candidates and should be used accordingly.
3. Familiarise yourself with this guide, with the Fianna Fáil manifesto, and our Plan for Recovery. Be aware also of local issues not covered by this guide and be aware of the candidate's and Party's position on these.
4. Be aware of good and bad times to call to a house
5. Dress smartly and comfortably, with a good pair of shoes.
6. Ensure they are registered to vote

### Inform

7. Introduce yourself and the candidate, or, if you are not with the candidate, say who you are canvassing for.
8. Be courteous and polite at all times.

9. If challenged about an issue, use this as an opportunity to explain actions we have taken, or solutions Fianna Fáil and the candidate proposes.
10. However, don't spend too long at any one door and don't get into arguments with voters about issues.
11. Make sure you give the voter a piece of literature.
12. Use the canvass to gather information like phone numbers and email addresses, and if there are any local issues the candidate should get back to them on.

## **Ask**

13. Always ask for the voter's Number 1 vote.
14. If the person cannot commit their Number 1 vote, ask for their highest possible preference. Preferences will be crucial in the coming campaign.
15. Ask the voter to continue preferences for the other Fianna Fáil candidates. This reflects well on the candidate, and will be important to ensure that the Fianna Fáil team is elected.



