

WORKING

FOR ALL

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Mary Lou McDonald

This is a time for hope, for positivity and for optimism.

Real change is happening before our eyes. A generation moving forward to build a new and better future for all.

A new Ireland, a united Ireland delivering for every person, for every family, for every community.

Sinn Féin is leading this exciting change right across Ireland. We are determined to get the Executive up and running, to deliver a government for all. In the Dáil, we are championing this new Ireland too.

We know there is no limit to what we can achieve if we do it together.

We know that communities must be at the very heart of change.

We also know services matter, community facilities matter, local economies matter. That is why we worked so hard to transform local government and that is why we work so hard on the ground.

We are ambitious for you, for your family and for the place where you live. We want to make change count for you and make real improvements in your everyday life.

That is why we are standing 162 candidates, more Sinn Féin candidates than ever before in a local council election and over 40% of them are women.

We are standing candidates in areas that have never had a Sinn Féin representative or candidate.

Sinn Féin's goal of becoming the largest party in local government for the first time is not about seats in councils. It is about electing people rooted in your community to represent your needs.

To make sure your voice is heard loud and clear.

To get the job done.

It is time to build a better future for everyone.

Be part of it.

On May 18th Vótáil Sinn Féin.

Is mise le meas,

Mary Lou McDonald TD
SINN FÉIN PRESIDENT



Introduction Michelle O'Neill

Sinn Féin is committed to working for all and building a better future together.

We have been ready to form an Executive since last May's Assembly election, and work with others to deliver for workers and families.

That would mean supporting workers and families struggling with the cost-of-living crisis.

It would mean delivering the flagship projects committed to by the Executive such as the crucially important A5 road, the Magee University expansion and the redevelopment of Casement Park.

People want us working together to prioritise these issues. Power-sharing can work if those involved are committed to it.

The council election on 18th of May is now more important than ever as one party continues to block a new Executive.

It is an opportunity for people to send a clear signal.

To show support for a party that is ready to get the Executive up and running, to deliver first class council services, to help people with the cost of living and to begin to fix the health service.

It is an opportunity to elect hard-working Sinn Féin councillors who will prioritise the issues that matter.

No matter what your background or your community, Sinn Féin councillors are there every day to work hard and deliver on the things that matter to workers, families and businesses.

Our councillors are committed to ensuring that local government delivers the highest level of council services, community facilities, and economic regeneration and development.

Sinn Féin candidates will work hard every day to give positive and progressive leadership in communities, and work for all to make people's lives better and build a better future for our young people.

FIRST MINISTER DESIGNATE
Michelle O'Neill MLA



Cost of Living Crisis

High living costs have placed huge pressure on ordinary people.

Over a decade of Tory austerity has left workers, families, and public services, less able to deal with crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the spiralling cost of living which people have had to struggle with in recent years.

In the face of these significant challenges local councils have played a vital role in supporting people right across our communities. From individuals and families to community groups and business, council and council representatives remain well placed to identify and respond to local needs.

During the COVID-19 pandemic and at the outset of the cost of living crisis, Sinn Féin ministers worked closely with councils, assisting them with additional finances and resources to respond quickly and effectively to the growing crises and empowering them, where possible, to make spending decisions most relevant to their council needs.

During her time as communities minister, Sinn Féin's Deirdre Hargey established the COVID-19 Community Support Fund to directly support grass roots organisations and set up a weekly food distribution service, both administered by councils, to help those in greatest need.

Minister Hargey also extended Social Supermarket pilot scheme to be delivered by Councils to support an increased number of people experiencing food insecurity, as well as giving additional funding to local councils to provide independent advice services, such as debt and social security advice.

Sinn Féin finance minister Conor Murphy also worked with Minister Hargey to increase the rate support grant to help address pressures on councils and unlocked £33million in council reserve funds to mitigate the impact of the cost of living crisis, in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 recovery.

Sinn Féin remains committed to doing all we can to support people through this cost of living crisis.

Working for All

Sinn Féin is going into this election with a commitment to work for all. To elect local councillors across the north who will focus on supporting communities and making our cities, towns, villages and rural communities better places to live.

That means breaking down barriers between communities, securing investment and regeneration, developing more community facilities, investing in recreational facilities, more green spaces and better transport infrastructure.

It means ensuring our communities support people at all stages of life including ensuring they are a good place to raise children and a good place to grow old.

It means ensuring local government contributes to delivering a better quality of life for all.

It also means ensuring our facilities and infrastructure are accessible to all.

Local representatives are best placed to make decisions most relevant to their communities. We need to ensure they are empowered and funded to make these decisions.

But for our local councils to deliver for communities we need the Executive and Assembly back up and



running. Sinn Féin is committed to getting back into the Executive without further delay to support and fund local government to deliver services and infrastructure.

Sinn Féin is committed to working collaboratively with councillors from other parties to deliver the best outcomes for all communities.

SINN FÉIN LEADING IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT MEANS A STRONG COMMITMENT TO:

- ➔ **Power-sharing and partnership**
- ➔ **All council chairs and committee places allocated by D'Hondt**
- ➔ **Keeping key services in public ownership**
- ➔ **Value for ratepayers**
- ➔ **Transparency in decision making**
- ➔ **Councils as Living Wage Employers**
- ➔ **Cross border and all-Ireland partnerships**

Local Economy and Good Jobs

Sinn Féin wants to build a more inclusive and sustainable economy for all.

We want an economy which supports small local businesses, promotes regional balance and creates good quality jobs.

The north has the lowest wages, lowest economic growth, lowest productivity, and highest economic inactivity on these islands, as a consequence of partition.

Despite not holding the Economy Department, Sinn Féin ministers have tried to tackle these issues. During the pandemic, Sinn Féin finance minister Conor Murphy delivered grants to businesses left behind by the Department for the Economy.

Sinn Féin communities minister Deirdre Hargey supported councils to provide opportunities for people to gain skills in sectors with skills shortages and employment opportunities such as manufacturing, haulage and childcare.

Councils play an important role in supporting small and medium-sized indigenous businesses which are the bedrock of our economy. We want a reformed Invest NI with budgets for each council area ring-fenced so that every part of the north receives a fair share of investment.

We need local economic development that tackles inequality and poverty by keeping wealth in, and directing public spending into, our communities.

City Growth Deals provide unprecedented levels of funding for economic development in each council area. Sinn Féin councillors will work to ensure they prioritise inclusive and balanced economic development and have a lasting impact on employment and skills.

Sinn Féin also wants to promote opportunities for local economic development by supporting culture, arts and heritage. Creative industries can play a vital role in helping local economies, creating new jobs and attracting tourists.

We want to harness our tourism potential and see councils benefit from an expansion of Fáilte Ireland's



successful tourism marketing strategies into the north. We will make the case for local tourism attractions to be included within the Wild Atlantic Way; Ireland's Ancient East; or Ireland's Hidden Heartlands.

Since the chaos of Brexit, Sinn Féin helped secure the Protocol to protect jobs and businesses. Huge opportunities continue to exist for our local companies due to our access to both the EU and British markets. We want to see councils support our local businesses to trade with those markets and build on the growth in north-south trade in recent years to maximise the potential of the all-Ireland economy.

SINN FÉIN'S PRIORITIES FOR LOCAL ECONOMY AND GOOD JOBS ARE:

- ➔ **Supporting small local businesses and promoting a regionally balanced economy**
- ➔ **Maximising the potential benefit of further integration in the all-island tourism sector**
- ➔ **Creating skills and job opportunities**
- ➔ **Supporting cross border trade and economic co-operation**

Housing

People are entitled to homes that are good quality, safe, secure, comfortable, and affordable. This should be the case for everyone regardless of whether they are homeowners, living in social housing or private renting.

Sinn Féin wants to introduce further legislation and regulation to protect private renters from unfair rents, improve housing standards and end unfair letting fees. We need an Executive back in place to achieve this.

Sinn Féin minister Deirdre Hargey announced the biggest shakeup of the housing system in 50 years with the aim of delivering over 100,000 homes over 15 years across the north.

We want to target areas with the most housing need, in both urban and rural areas, so people can live in the communities of their choice.

Councils play a central role in increasing significantly the supply of housing across the north. Councils are legally obliged to produce Local Development Plans which set out how areas will be developed and how land in its district will be used, ie for housing; amenities; commercial development.

Sinn Féin is committed to delivering Local Development Plans that prioritise, understand and meet the housing needs of the community, including the importance of proximity and access to services and amenities for residents.

The role of councils in identifying, and in some cases providing, land for housing development is vital to ensuring people access good quality, safe, secure, comfortable, and affordable homes. We want to see more land in each council area made available for social and affordable housing.

Councils also play a central role in the planning process. We want to see an improved planning system which addresses unnecessary delays and works for the benefit of our community and environment.

Homelessness must also be addressed. While the solutions to homelessness are wider than housing alone, and will take considerable effort across Executive departments and sectors, building more homes is an important part of the solution.

Councils play a key role in supporting our most vulnerable in society, including those who are homeless. Sinn Féin is committed to ensuring councils continue to play its part to help reduce homelessness.

**SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES FOR HOUSING ARE:**

- ➔ **Identify and make available land in each council area for social/affordable housing**
- ➔ **Improve the planning process to address unnecessary delays**
- ➔ **Support interventions to tackle homelessness and support the homeless**

Health and Well-Being

Health and well-being is a priority for Sinn Féin.

As finance minister, Sinn Féin's Conor Murphy in 2022 proposed an additional £1 billion for the health budget over three years. Unfortunately, the collapse of the executive by the DUP prevented this from materialising.

Over a decade of Tory cuts have left public services, particularly our health and social care system, at crisis point, with some of the longest waiting lists on these islands and significant gaps in our health and social care workforce.

It has never been more important to support people to stay healthy and well.

Local councils play an important role in promoting and supporting the health and wellbeing in the community.

Across the north over 60 leisure centres are owned by district councils making vital amenities – such as swimming pools and gyms accessible to the public. In addition, across the 11 council areas council-owned and maintained public parks provide outdoor exercise facilities, walkways and green spaces for use by the public.

Using council spaces such as parks for sporting activities like park runs have contributed greatly to supporting good mental health and physical well-being as well as promoting a sense of community.

Council facilities across the north provide a variety of concessions to accessing leisure facilities which can include older people, people with disabilities, and students, for example.

This is important in tackling health inequalities within our communities and making these facilities and resources more accessible to all, particularly those who often experience barriers to accessing facilities, such as those in deprived communities.

As well as supporting and promoting active and healthy lifestyles and positive mental health with its obvious benefits for individuals, access to council facilities can help keep people healthier for longer and prevent further pressures on our already stretched health and social care system.

Sinn Féin understands and values the important role local councils can play in protecting and promoting the physical and mental well-being of the community.

We will work to continue to improve access to council facilities and amenities that support well-being and help tackle health inequalities which lead to poorer health outcomes for those who are most disadvantaged in our community.

SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES FOR HEALTH AND WELL-BEING:

- ➔ **Protect and improve access to leisure sites to improve physical and mental wellbeing**
- ➔ **Support the greater use of council spaces such as parks for sporting and community activity**



- ➔ **Work with local GPs and other healthcare services to connect people to community services run by local councils and improving health and wellbeing**
- ➔ **Promote and support healthy lifestyles and mental health and emotional well-being**

Education

Sinn Féin wants an education system that delivers for all and doesn't leave anyone behind.

We want to see an end to the cruel practice of academic selection and introduce a school transfer system based on equality and fairness for all students regardless of their background.

Parental demand for Integrated Education and Irish Medium Education are both growing. Those who want their children educated through Irish Medium or in the Integrated Education system should have the opportunity to do so.

We want to improve access to education for all including those with disabilities; those from low income families; those with childcare responsibilities; those with care experience; and those from minority ethnic communities, to name a few.

We are determined to get the Executive up and running to work to achieve these goals.

While council doesn't have a responsibility in providing formal education it can promote and provide some education opportunities and help to break down barriers to education.

Sinn Féin are committed to lifelong learning and we will work at council level to help remove barriers to education and promote education opportunities.

SINN FÉIN'S PRIORITIES IN EDUCATION ARE:

- ➔ **Promote Lifelong learning**
- ➔ **Work to remove barriers to education**
- ➔ **Support awareness raising and learning on important issues**

Rural Communities

Rural communities are vital to the cultural and social fabric of Ireland and we want them to thrive and be places where people want to live and work in, do business in, and visit.

Rural communities were particularly affected by the isolating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. They were also hit hard by the financial impact of the cost of living crisis. Soaring fuel costs have impacted those who most need to use private transport and solid fuel and oil heating.

We want rural dwellers to have access to quality housing, good jobs and amenities to live well in their communities.

Meeting housing need is vital to allow these communities to grow and to thrive.

Sinn Féin will work to ensure council Local Development Plans identify, understand and help to meet



the housing needs of rural communities across the north, including the importance of access to services and amenities. This includes ensuring that planning processes work for rural communities and allows families the opportunity to live in their local communities.

We also want to see greater business and job opportunities within the rural economy.

Family farms and the Agri-food sector are a major source of economic prosperity to our rural communities and wider economy and they should be supported to continue to do so.

Geographical imbalances due to partition have been particularly felt in rural areas west of the Bann, and along the border. It is important councils support small rural businesses which promote balanced economic development and create good quality locally based jobs.

Tourism in particular provides opportunities for economic development and job creation in rural areas, which often struggle to attract jobs and investment on the same scale as cities.

Our rural areas are rich with the cultural, historic and natural heritage which already attracts people to our island and provides a good basis to further develop rural tourism.

Rural communities, particularly farmers, also play an important role in protecting our environment. Sinn Féin believe councils must work in partnership and cooperation with farmers and rural communities to improve our local environment and promote greater biodiversity.

SINN FÉIN'S PRIORITIES FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES ARE:

- ➔ **Ensuring council policies are rural proofed in accordance with the Rural Needs Act**
- ➔ **Improving access to rural social and affordable housing**
- ➔ **Supporting small rural businesses, the creation of good jobs, and realising our rural tourism potential**
- ➔ **Working in partnership with rural communities and farmers to protect the local environment and promote biodiversity**

Workers' Rights

Over the last three years workers from across the public and private sectors have stepped forward in response to the global pandemic and the fallout it left in its wake. Whether on the front-line in delivering vital health and social care or in other essential services ensuring food got on to shop shelves and into homes, workers were invaluable in getting us through Covid-19.

Since then huge increases in cost of living and high levels of inflation have put severe pressures on workers and families across this island. This has had a particular impact on workers in the north where, on average, wages are lower.

Workers are entitled to fair pay and a decent standard of living. The reluctance of the British government and some large profitable companies have forced many to the picket lines. Workers should not have to strike in order to achieve fair pay.

Sinn Féin is committed to strengthening workers' rights and ensuring they are protected in law. We also want to tackle low pay and insecure jobs which cause in-work poverty by improving workers' pay and conditions and removing the barriers to work.

Much of what is required to protect workers will need to be progressed in a re-established Executive



such as progressing legislation to ban zero hour contracts; improving access to flexible working; and making trade union membership accessible to more workers.

However, councils themselves employ over 10,000 people right across the north and Sinn Féin is committed to protecting these workers' rights.

In recent months within councils Sinn Féin engaged with trade unions and ensured that workers were given a pay uplift to support them through the income crisis. Sinn Féin is committed to protecting jobs and supporting fair pay while minimising rate increases and ensuring that ratepayers continue to receive decent public services.

In the last Assembly, Sinn Féin finance minister Conor Murphy made the Executive a Living Wage Employer and has also made payment of the living wage a requirement for any company receiving a government contract. We want to see similar progress made in councils.

SINN FÉIN'S PRIORITIES FOR WORKERS RIGHTS ARE TO:

- ➔ **Strengthen workers' rights and protect against low pay and insecure jobs**
- ➔ **Support good quality jobs with fair pay and conditions**
- ➔ **Work to ensure councils become Living Wage Employers**
- ➔ **Improve council procurement by including clauses on the living wage and secure contracts**

Climate and Environment

Local councils have a vital role to play when it comes to environmental protection, sustainability and climate action.

Within the last two decades council waste management efforts have seen a significant reduction in the level of waste going to landfill and an increase in recycling.

Councils develop parks and greenways, protect our waterways, conserve our peatlands and hedgerows, develop community and cross-border environmental networks, and plan our towns and cities to prioritise sustainable public and active transport.

Right across Ireland Sinn Féin councillors have been to the fore when it comes to displaying the kind of vision necessary to take meaningful climate action at a local level.

Sinn Féin in councils have supported transformation of landfill sites into new woodlands; restoration of peatland; major green and blue infrastructure projects; transition of council fleets away from fossil fuels; biodiversity projects improving our rivers, bogs and hedgerows; all-Ireland programmes to protect pollinators; and major cross-border environmental projects.

It's a good start but Sinn Féin believes there is much more to do. With the challenges currently facing our environment and the need to tackle climate change it's now more important than ever that local councils play their part, in partnership with communities.

We need to ensure that moving to more sustainable practices is done fairly - in line with a just transition - meaning farmers, workers, and families are not left behind and that the burden of the cost of reducing emissions isn't left on the shoulders of those least able to pay for it.

Sinn Féin wants to develop more green spaces, clean the air we breathe, improve our active travel infrastructure, create a circular economy.



We want to see cooperation with councils in the north and across Ireland to tackle the unique environmental issues we face as an island. Our countryside, rivers and mountains don't recognise council boundaries or the border, so our policies to address the significant challenges that exist must be based on the reality that we live on a single geographical entity.

SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES FOR THE CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT ARE TO:

- ➔ **Improve active travel infrastructure including across boundaries and the border**
- ➔ **Support transition of council fleets to electric vehicles**
- ➔ **Expand the network of electric vehicle charging points, in urban and rural areas**
- ➔ **Work to increase recycling and reduce waste**

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Sinn Féin is committed to building a society based on equal rights and equal opportunities for all who live here. There can be no place for sectarianism, racism, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, or disability discrimination in our institutions or our society.

That means, protecting the health and wellbeing of those with disabilities, addressing the scourge of violence against women and girls, and creating a safe, welcoming, and inclusive society for all, including those seeking asylum and refuge.

We want to see an Executive back in place and for the inclusion strategies to be delivered and implemented to protect and promote the rights of LGBTQI+ people; women, persons with disabilities; refugees and asylum seekers; those most socially deprived; and those from minority and marginalised communities in the north.

Sinn Féin supports the rights of all victims of the conflict to information, maximum disclosure, and truth. We also continue to advocate for victims and survivors of institutional abuse to protect their right to truth, justice and redress that they have been denied for too long.

We want to mainstream equality in all aspects of political and public life. We can help do this by working within our communities to ensure that local councils across the north are accessible to everyone and deliver for all.

We need to be an inclusive society for all ethnic minorities, both indigenous - Irish Travellers – and those who more recently have made this island their home.

We are proud that the north is home to refugees and asylum seekers from across the world, including in recent times those from Syria, Afghanistan, and Ukraine.

Sinn Féin wants to see parity of esteem for Irish culture and language as provided for in the Good Friday Agreement.

We want to continue to support the most vulnerable.

We want to work within our councils to deliver a society that values and celebrates the diversity of all of our identities.



SINN FÉIN'S PRIORITIES FOR EQUALITY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ARE TO:

- ➔ **Stand up against all forms of sectarianism, hate crime and discrimination**
- ➔ **Make council areas a safe space for those seeking refuge**
- ➔ **Advocating for council-led warm spaces and food parcels for the vulnerable**
- ➔ **Support victims, families and human rights groups in their opposition to the British government's legacy proposals to introduce an amnesty**

Planning for Unity

Demand for change is sweeping across Ireland.

25 years after the Good Friday Agreement was overwhelmingly endorsed across the island people want to see a new Ireland of diversity, equality and respect.

That change needs properly planned through discussion, dialogue and negotiation.

We must avoid any repeat of the Brexit debacle.

This will require a democratic process that will allow everyone, north and south, to participate in planning and preparation for constitutional change.

This will facilitate a peaceful, smooth transition to a new and united Ireland – one that belongs to us all, and where we can govern ourselves.

The division of Ireland has held back our potential for too long. There is now a real opportunity to shape a more prosperous future - to achieve a stronger, better and fairer country.

We can use this opportunity to create an all-Ireland National Health Service, sustainable housing policy, universal childcare, and ensure transition to a carbon neutral economy.

There is now a democratic process through referenda provided for in the Good Friday Agreement, to allow people to decide the future.

People across Ireland would be better served without duplication of governmental systems, with a single national health service, economy, tax regime, legal system, and education system.

European Union leaders have guaranteed that the north will resume full membership of the EU as part of a United Ireland.

Unity is central to building a modern, inclusive, fair society and a country which can play its full part in the world.

Now is the time to talk about the future.

SINN FÉIN'S PRIORITIES IN PLANNING FOR UNITY INCLUDE:

- ➔ **Working on a cross-border basis with other councils on common regional development issues**
- ➔ **Working to have the Irish government establish an all-island Citizens' Assembly to discuss our constitutional future**
- ➔ **Securing a date from the Irish and British governments for the referenda on unity provided for in the Good Friday Agreement**
- ➔ **Engaging with people on the future of Ireland in an inclusive, respectful and informed way**



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 *Sinn Féin*