

A 2020 General Election Manifesto



The Wheel is Ireland's national association of charities, community and voluntary organisations, and social enterprises. With a membership of over 1,700 organisations, we are a representative voice and a supportive resource that offers leadership, advice, training, influence and advocacy for the sector.



Stronger Communities Stronger Ireland

A 2020 General Election Manifesto

In Ireland, charities, community and voluntary organisations, and social enterprises provide essential services in areas such as health and disability, social care, education, housing, poverty relief, the arts and sport in every constituency in Ireland, as well as contributing to international development.

We are the often unseen undercurrent which powers our communities, driving positive social change, and giving people a voice, while providing vital supports and services.



The graphic features a large, stylized hand holding a heart. The hand and heart are composed of various social and community-related terms in different colors and fonts. The words include: VOICE, ADVOCACY, JUSTICE, DEVELOPMENT, REHAB, INTEGRATION, ENVIRONMENTAL, INCLUSION, LOCAL, MENTAL HEALTH, CLIMATE ACTION, CHARITABLE, LIFE-SAVING, PHILANTHROPY, REPRESENTATIVE ACTION, PASSION, FAMILY, INVALUABLE, INNOVATION, WORKPLACE, EQUITY, OUTREACH, SOCIAL ENTERPRISE, GRASS ROOTS, MENTORING, REHABILITATION, SUPPORT, LOVE, FINANCE AND GRANTS, HOSPICES, FUNDRAISING, SUSTAINABILITY, WELFARE, AFFORDABLE, RENT, CHANGE, SOCIAL, CLUBS, TOPPLER GROUPS, KINDNESS, ACTION, and CLUBS.

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We are the often unseen undercurrent which powers our communities, driving positive social change, and giving people a voice, while providing vital supports and services.

The graphic features a stylized illustration of a hand holding a heart. The entire composition is made up of overlapping, wavy bands containing various words and phrases related to social and environmental issues. The color palette consists of shades of blue, green, and yellow. Words visible include: VOICE, ADVOCACY, JUSTICE, DEVELOPMENT, REHAB, INTEGRATION, ENVIRONMENTAL, INCLUSION, LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH, CLIMATE ACTION, CHARITABLE, LIFE-SAVING, PHILANTHROPY, REPRESENTATIVE ACTION, PASSION, FAMILY, LOVE, SUPPORT, REHABILITATION, GRASS ROOTS, INVALUABLE, WORKPLACE, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, OUTREACH, AFFORDABLE RENT, SOCIAL ENTERPRISE, WELFARE, FUNDRAISING, HOSPICES, FINANCE AND GRANTS, SUSTAINABILITY, CHANGE, CLUBS, TOPIER GROUPS, KINDNESS, TACKLING, and NEIGHBOURHOOD.

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Manifesto

We can harness the power of our charity, community and voluntary, and social enterprise sector through:

1 RECOGNISING AND SUPPORTING THE VALUE THE SECTOR ADDS TO SOCIETY

3 ENABLING RESPONSIVE SERVICES THROUGH STREAMLINED COMPLIANCE SYSTEMS

2 SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE FUNDING MODELS

4 EMBRACING COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING



STRONGER COMMUNITIES STRONGER IRELAND

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Ireland's charity, community and voluntary, and social enterprise sector flows through every aspect of our social infrastructure and is a powerful force in Ireland's economy.

The Wheel is the representative body for this vibrant and diverse sector, and together with our members, we work to shape and promote conditions in which people and their communities thrive. Our simple but ambitious mission is to make Ireland a fair and just place for all.

We do this by strengthening the capacity and capability of charities, community and voluntary organisations, and social enterprises to play their part to the full as the undercurrent driving positive change in every constituency in Ireland.

We passionately believe that community and voluntary action improves and enriches communities and society.

Ireland's 29,000 charities, community and voluntary organisations, and social enterprises represent a deep pool of resources involving over 60,000 volunteer directors and trustees, more than 189,000 employees and a combined total income of €14.5bn per year. Over half of this income is raised by these organisations directly, and represents a major subsidy to the cost of public services in Ireland.

In fact, Indecon Economic Consultants (in a report published by the Charities Regulator in 2018) estimates that total direct, indirect and induced value of the work of Ireland's charities exceeds €24.5bn per annum. So the sector is very significant in our national life, but it can make even bigger waves if it is supported in key areas regarding the challenges it faces.¹

1 <https://www.charitiesregulator.ie/media/1564/indecon-social-and-economic-impact-report-2018.pdf>

1 **RECOGNISING AND SUPPORTING THE VALUE THE SECTOR ADDS TO SOCIETY**

Ireland's charity, community and voluntary, and social enterprise sector is a great national asset which mobilises over 1m volunteers every year, raises over €7bn towards the cost of services, involves over 60,000 volunteer board members and employs over 189,000 people. We rightly pride ourselves in Ireland on our strong sense of community, the value we place on inclusivity for all and the work done by community and voluntary organisations to support people in need. The charity, community and voluntary, and social enterprise sector is at the heart of this work.

General Election 2020 presents an opportunity to support the sector to realise its full potential and enable Ireland to become a world leader in active participation, volunteering, community activity, social wellbeing and health.

To recognise and support the value the sector adds to society, we are seeking commitments in manifestos and the next Programme for Government to:

Provide ring-fenced funding for the sector

The Wheel strongly supports the suite of new policies for the charity, community and voluntary, and social enterprise sector developed by the Department for Rural and Community Development (DRCD). These comprise *Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: A five-year strategy to support the community and voluntary sector in Ireland 2019-2024* (published August 2019); the *National Volunteering Strategy* (currently in development), and the *National Social Enterprise Policy for Ireland* (published July 2019).

We have long advocated for a strategic approach from Government and welcome the recent progress made in this area. Taken together, the above policies indicate great potential for addressing the major issues facing the sector as well as enabling effective and efficient provision of services and supports across a range of areas. We believe that these strategies will play an important role in underpinning the immense social and economic value created by the charity, community and voluntary, and social enterprise sector across Irish society. Ring-fencing of funds will ensure they are implemented without reducing existing funding streams which support crucial work with the most vulnerable and marginalised people in our society. It will be vital that these strategies are adequately resourced.

Additionally, we are seeking commitments from the incoming Government to:

- Further expand dormant accounts funding, accompanied by a dedicated budget line to support the Department of Rural and Community Development's social enterprise initiative
- Ensure that funding and supports for the three new strategies are complementary to each other and ambitious in nature, together forming an overarching national development strategy
- support increasing active citizenship through investing in participatory and democratic decision-making processes such as the Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) and Public Participation Networks (PPNs).

Retain a senior cabinet Minister for the sector

The continued presence of a senior cabinet Minister for the Community and Voluntary Sector in the next government, and for the Department of Rural and Community Development itself, is a priority to enable full implementation of the new DRCD strategies and to recognise the status of the sector. This will also enable the charity, community and voluntary, and social enterprise sector to continue to work collaboratively with Government through a shared focus on improving society for all.

Protect civil society voice by reforming the electoral acts

The electoral acts as currently interpreted have had the unintended consequence of restricting advocacy by community and voluntary organisations. The acts present a threat to our culture of civic participation and to the rights of people to come together to campaign for change. The electoral acts need to be amended to exclude civil society groups from its provisions outside of the context of general elections and referendums.

Develop a strategy for skills building in the charity, community and voluntary, and social enterprise sector

Ireland's charities employ a large part of Ireland's labour force with over 189,000 workers in the sector. Charities, community and voluntary organisations, and social enterprises face the same training and development challenges as those faced by commercial business, yet there is no dedicated national skills development strategy in place. We are seeking a commitment to develop and implement a comprehensive skills-development strategy for charities, community and voluntary organisations, and social enterprises funded through the National Training Fund.



2 SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE FUNDING MODELS

Charities, community and voluntary organisations, and social enterprises provide supports and services for people in every area of Ireland's health, social, education and community services, with half the sector's funding coming from the State and half being raised by organisations directly.

The sector makes an enormous contribution (approximately €7bn per annum) to the cost of our public services. While the sector carries out essential and ongoing work on behalf of the State, many charities, community and voluntary organisations, and social enterprises face significant challenges in relation to precariousness of funding. Funding is always a struggle, but reforming statutory funding schemes and programmes would greatly increase the impact of the work. Much of this is related to uncertainty of income streams beyond annual allocations.

To support sustainable funding models, we are seeking commitments in manifestos and the next Programme for Government to:

Introduce multi-annual funding

The ability to plan long-term increases the impact that charities, community and voluntary organisations, and social enterprises can have on Irish society. The introduction of multi-annual funding as the default approach for community and voluntary organisations would facilitate longer-term planning and improved outcomes for all. It would greatly reduce the annual administrative burden on charities, community and voluntary organisations, and social enterprises - and individual government departments and state agencies - by significantly reducing the processing of applications on an annual basis. An average funding cycle of three years is deemed appropriate (in line with the majority of EU funding schemes).

Fund the full cost of delivering services

For the nonprofit sector to continue to deliver high quality services and supports we need a funding model that allows for a realistic assessment of costs. Innovative funding should factor in the full cost of service delivery, inclusive of a contribution to overheads, quality and oversight costs, administration and compliance costs, adequate wages to attract and retain qualified personnel, and the making of pension contributions. This would enable charities, community and voluntary organisations, and social enterprises that are part funded by the State to deliver more responsive, sustainable outcomes.

Ensure sustainable funding for HSE Section 39 and Tusla Section 56 organisations

Section 39 and Section 56 funded organisations deliver vital services in health and social care, family support and disability services. Unsustainable pay and conditions for the staff of such organisations is a major issue that threatens the ability of many organisations to retain staff and provide services. Sustainable pay and terms and conditions for staff - in line with HSE and Tusla staff performing similar functions - would ensure retention of fully-qualified staff.

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER), the Department of Health, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), Tusla and the Health Services Executive (HSE) need to put in train a process to determine essential services. This should be followed by a commitment to resourcing organisations adequately, making provision for sustainable terms and conditions for Section 39 and Section 56 employees providing essential services.

Increase the VAT Compensation Scheme for Charities

Applications totalling close to €40m for the recently introduced VAT Compensation Scheme for Charities show the extent of the negative impact on charities of the EU anomaly that prevents charities reclaiming VAT. However, the very welcome VAT Compensation Scheme introduced by government provides only a €5m rebate against the €40m claimed. Denmark, which has a similar population size to Ireland and a similar charity structure, provides a €20m rebate under its rebate scheme. The current scheme should be incrementally increased in line with Danish rebate levels to provide a proportionate rebate to charities on independently fundraised income.

Bring down the cost of Insurance

The unsustainable rise in insurance costs is having a very serious effect on many charities, community and voluntary organisations, and social enterprises. The Wheel is working as a part of the Alliance for Insurance Reform (AIR) to ensure that community and voluntary organisations can continue to carry out their vital work. The Wheel calls for:

- The establishment and resourcing of a Garda insurance fraud unit
- A cut in unfair personal injury awards
- A rebalance of the duty of care
- Lower premiums from insurers.

This will ensure that charities, community and voluntary organisations, and social enterprises can afford to operate into the future. As a first step, we urge the Government to work with the Judicial Council to prioritise the objective to deliver personal injuries awards guidelines that ensure that modest injuries attract moderate damages

and that damages are kept proportionate with a cap set on general damages for catastrophic injuries of €450,000.

Commission for highest quality - not lowest cost - services

Many of the charities, community and voluntary organisations, and social enterprises that deliver essential services for the State receive funding through commissioning processes. For these organisations to continue playing their key role in health, community and social services, we need to ensure that commissioning models fully support the community-based, nonprofit approach. To achieve this outcome, commissioning needs to be understood by funders as a strategic approach to meeting identified needs, and not as an instruction to procure or competitively tender for services. We need to ensure that all statutory funders understand that the Public Procurement Directives permit a high level of discretion in how funders allocate funds.

When commissioning models are used they should aim at delivering the most responsive outcomes for the people and communities concerned rather than simply the lowest cost. If and when competitive tendering approaches are used:

- Contract-awards need to be small enough in scale to enable community and voluntary organisations to bid for and deliver the service
- The setting of the outputs/outcomes to be commissioned/procured needs to be done very carefully and in partnership with charities, community and voluntary organisations, and social enterprises and the communities concerned.

Rooting consultation in the community will provide the type of localised, person centered services we all want.

Establish a working group on positive commissioning and procurement

The Wheel proposes the establishment of a dedicated working group, comprising equal representation from The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER), Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) and the charity, community and voluntary, and social enterprise sector, to explore and deliver recommendations on delivery of positive procurement and commissioning initiatives during the lifetime of the next government.

Reform charitable giving and incentivise philanthropy

Measures should be developed to promote a culture of larger donations and to develop structured-giving vehicles that enable investment in causes targeted at the public good.

The exit of Atlantic Philanthropies has highlighted an increasing vacuum in funding from philanthropy and the lack of a coherent policy to encourage major giving to assist jobs, essential services and advocacy work. Less than 1% of donations in Ireland are more than €5,000, very significantly below international levels.

The 2013 Minimum Donations Scheme, while benefiting charities through an improved tax regime on donations, has not boosted major donations. Intended to be cost neutral, it has instead produced a saving to the exchequer of up to €50m since 2013, according to estimates by Philanthropy Ireland.

The exchequer should divert this unexpected ‘saving’ (made effectively at the expense of charities) to incentivise an increase in major giving and from major donors. It should encourage expansion of grant-making trusts and foundations, which are scarce in Ireland compared to other countries.

The Wheel therefore proposes:

- Introduction of a direct tax incentive for Major Gifts (additional to the current charitable tax relief scheme) as recommended in the 2012 Forum on Philanthropy Report (the only recommendation not activated). It should have a minimum level no lower than €5,000 and be capped at €1m
- Where major-gift donations are made to grant making foundations, trusts, donor advised funds and charities opting into such a new Major Gift Scheme, tax relief should go directly to the donor.

The Wheel proposes that all relevant stakeholders should be involved in development and finalising of the next philanthropy strategy, to ensure an effective and meaningful set of initiatives are agreed and rolled out.

3 **ENABLING RESPONSIVE SERVICES THROUGH STREAMLINED COMPLIANCE SYSTEMS**

Charities, community and voluntary organisations, and social enterprises believe in high governance standards and high levels of accountability and transparency – indeed the sector led the campaign for effective regulation and governance regulations, which were eventually delivered with the Charities Act 2009 and the subsequent creation of the Charities Regulator.

Charities, community and voluntary organisations, and social enterprises pride themselves on being responsive to the needs of the people and communities they serve, and are flexible and innovative in their work. We need to ensure a future where community and voluntary organisations continue to provide vital services and supports rather than increasingly diverting energies in to fulfilling regulatory and compliance requirements. Boards require specific and adequate resources to discharge their governance responsibilities and reduce the compliance burden. Boards need to be able to focus on their core mission and on innovation.

We need a smarter compliance regime.

High governance standards are essential and good planning and financial management is also essential. However, we need to ensure that ever-increasing and unresourced compliance demands do not deflect resources from essential community services to administration. Many organisations are required to duplicate reporting information across state bodies. This is inefficient, unnecessary and adds an unsustainable burden on organisations' limited resources. It is also hugely wasteful of funding and commissioning bodies' time as they are engaged in the processing of multiple and duplicated report submissions.

The state has rightly invested significantly in regulation and compliance processes, including the establishment of the Charities Regulator, which The Wheel campaigned for over many years. It should now make an equivalent investment in charities to enable and support their capacity to comply.

To enable responsive services through streamlined compliance systems, we are seeking commitments in manifestos and the next Programme for Government to:

Provide for the cost-of-compliance (and good governance) in funding agreements

Many funding authorities only contribute to the marginal cost of the service they are funding, making no contribution to the general governance and compliance-costs incurred by (part) funded-organisations. Yet the work done for funding authorities would not be possible without such governance and compliance cost overheads. We are seeking a commitment that all funding authorities make a proportionate contribution to the governance and compliance-costs incurred by funded organisations in the course of their work.

This should involve improved information sharing and communication systems between state bodies to reduce duplication of information requests and increase efficiency.

Conduct a review of compliance and regulatory requirements to streamline procedures, reduce duplication and make better use of resources

A streamlined compliance and regulation system would allow charities to enter their data on a 'report once, use often' basis, accessed by multiple departments as required. A streamlined system would also reduce the administrative costs to government departments in repeat processing of information and reports. Collaboration between all relevant bodies in developing a more streamlined system would ensure it meets the needs of both community and voluntary organisations and government departments, avoiding the unintended consequences of adding work and reporting for charities, community and voluntary organisations, and social enterprises.

4 EMBRACING COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Our charity, community and voluntary, and social enterprise sector forms a crucial part of our social infrastructure. Ireland's social, health, community and education services are delivered by an interdependent partnership of public departments or agencies and the community and voluntary sector.

In recent years relationships between funding authorities and funded organisations have become dominated by financial accountability rather than oriented around ensuring high quality, responsive outcomes for communities.

A new framework for partnership and collaborative working is required to foster a sense of shared purpose and mission between those public authorities and agencies with responsibility for ensuring services and the charities, community and voluntary organisations, and social enterprises funded to deliver those services.

Increasingly, partnership working approaches are changing towards commissioning-based approaches and the use of Service Level Agreements that risk becoming contrary to the spirit of partnership.

We need to move away from 'risk-shifting', contract-dominated approaches, to 'risk sharing', best-outcome approaches. New commissioning approaches represent a way of doing this if we can get them right.

To embrace collaborative partnership working, we are seeking commitments in manifestos and the next Programme for Government to:

Develop and implement a collaborative framework for partnership working

In delivering essential services and supports, many charities, community and voluntary organisations, and social enterprises work in partnership with government bodies to provide essential services and supports. Increasingly, these organisations are struggling with the complex and demanding nature of partnership working, which has changed significantly in recent years.

We are seeking a commitment that parties will work in partnership with the community and voluntary sector to develop principles and publish a framework for collaborative/partnership working, as well as establishing a partnership mechanism to monitor and review its effectiveness.

Implement the Independent Review Group report recommendations

The Wheel endorses the findings in the *report of the Independent Review Group established to examine the role of voluntary organisations in publicly-funded health and personal social services* (IRG report), and we call on all parties to commit to fully implementing its recommendations. The IRG report comes at a crucial time for re-defining the relationship between the state and voluntary organisations. The Wheel believes that the IRG report maps out solutions for a more efficient, effective and fruitful relationship, which will result in person-centred service provision across a range of fields.

These include:

- agreement on a list of essential services
- official recognition of the charity, community and voluntary sector through a charter
- simplification of service agreements
- introduction of multi-annual budgets
- improved dispute-resolution mechanisms
- establishment of a forum for dialogue between the sector and the Department of Health
- simplification of service agreements
- avoidance of duplication in reporting
- a system to manage deficits and
- provision of governance training and supports for smaller organisations.

The recommendations should apply not only to the Department of Health but be extended to apply to several other areas of government policy, including community and rural affairs, education and children. The Forum recently established to drive implementation of the IRG report can deliver real progress on the report's recommendations and on related issues in Sláintecare. The development of a charter, as recommended under the IRG report, would give official recognition to the status of the voluntary sector appropriate to its role as a provider of essential social care and health services.

Stronger Communities Stronger Ireland

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We look forward to working collaboratively to harness the full power of our charity, community and voluntary, and social enterprise sector by:

1 **RECOGNISING AND
SUPPORTING THE
VALUE THE SECTOR ADDS
TO SOCIETY**

3 **ENABLING RESPONSIVE
SERVICES THROUGH
STREAMLINED
COMPLIANCE SYSTEMS**

2 **SUPPORTING
SUSTAINABLE
FUNDING MODELS**

4 **EMBRACING
COLLABORATIVE
PARTNERSHIP
WORKING**

**Click here to show your support
by signing our Manifesto**



The sector's social and economic impact

In Ireland, charities, community and voluntary organisations, and social enterprises provide essential services in areas such as health and social care, education, housing, poverty relief, the arts and sport. These organisations are vital to community life and our democracy as they give people a voice and more control over their lives.

29,000

Number of nonprofit organisations operating in Ireland. This includes 10,000 registered charities

€14bn

Combined annual turnover of Ireland's registered charities

189,000

Number of people employed by registered charities

28%

Percentage of adults who volunteer every year

233m

Number of hours volunteered in Ireland every year

€2bn

Estimated economic value of voluntary work carried out in Ireland each year







SOCIETY VOICES
DISCIPLINE
DEVELOPMENT
ADVOCACY
JUSTICE

SUPPORT
HELP
ENVIRONMENTAL
INTEGRATION
REHAB

SPORTS CLUBS
DIRECT PROVISION
CHILD PROTECTION
TODDLER GROUPS
SUPPORTS
KINDNESS
CLIMATE CHANGE
SOCIAL WELLBEING
FUNDRAISING
HOSPICES
LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH

CLIMATE ACTION
FINANCE AND GRANTS
LIFE-SAVING
PHILANTHROPY
REPRESENTATION
REHABILITATION
MENTAL HEALTH
GRASS ROOTS IN

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Stronger Communities.