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## Who are we?

**ShamrockSpring** is a Kildare based a voluntary organisation of people who recognize the need for an alternative vision for society which puts people and the natural environment at the core of political decision-making. The 2040 plan for Ireland can and must significantly alter our carbon footprint

## How will we meet our energy needs?

We believe that our country can thrive in an ecologically sustainable way, allowing us to prepare for the oncoming effects of climate change, mitigate its impact, while also meeting our energy needs.

Currently Ireland imports nearly 90% of its energy needs, almost €6Billion send out of the country making it one of most import reliant countries in the EU. We must cease to extract industrial turf and peat and at all costs implement renewable energy.

- 1. Solar** - Ireland has 80% the solar potential of Spain. This opportunity needs to be grasped if we as a country are to meet our 2050 targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions (90% reduction from 2005 levels). Communities should be part of this process and given the agency to generate their own renewable energy for their homes via solar panels on the roofs of their homes, businesses, community centres etc. At present no financial incentive is given to individuals to install solar panels and on average it takes between 10 and 15 years to earn back the initial investment. Good planning would reduce this time and incentive solar by introducing a **feed-in tariff** for microgeneration of solar energy. A 2015 KPMG report on the solar industry in Ireland stated that for every one euro in policy support for the industry it will return three euro of gross added value to the economy.
- 2. Wind** - Ireland is uniquely positioned to harvest the potential of wind power. Whereas the majority of the supply is on the west coast and the majority of the demand is on the east coast, wind can still play a huge part in meeting clean and green energy needs. These are easily surmountable engineering issues. Each contribution towards energy independence provides communities with greater wealth, and therefore increased empowerment towards self determination, less ecological decay as well as emissions and intrinsic carbon. To increase the social acceptance of wind energy in Ireland a variety of ownership models should be encouraged. An example of this would be in Denmark where 20% of all new wind farm developments have to be community owned. Public participation and early engagement for large scale energy projects should be made a statutory requirement at the preplanning stage .
- 3. Energy reduction** - This is some of the most “low hanging fruit”. Engineers Ireland have stated that retrofitting homes and businesses in Ireland would go a long way to meeting our energy and carbon emission targets. It would also create more local jobs, for example replacing the work of those who currently work in the uneconomic, inefficient and unethical peat burning power stations. According to the SEAI, the public services have a 33% reduction in energy usage, which has not been met. There are a whole plethora of initiatives that the public sector could target, by aggressively ramping up retrofitting of public buildings, and replacing the transport fleets with electric vehicles. Carrying out such initiatives would not only help Ireland get closer to our energy and carbon emission commitments, but the public sector could be a shining example here, leading the way for the domestic, transport, agriculture and industry sectors to follow.
- 4. Wave / Tidal** - Ireland is on the cutting edge of R&D with wave & tidal. We would encourage a

continuation of such efforts and indeed an increase in funding. Ireland has the opportunity within this sector to become the 'Denmark of Ocean energy'. There is massive potential to not only develop further the R&D efforts currently taking place in Ireland, but to develop other related areas such as manufacture of such technology.

**5. Bio energy** - Due to its massive advantages, growers ought to be encouraged to grow hemp. This is for its plethora of advantages across a multitude of applications, as well as a ecological and economical replacement for many current raw materials. Another interesting and worthwhile form of bioenergy is thoughtfully manufactured biochar, along with biogas and bio-oil in the process. These products are made from 'waste' biomass and, when done correctly, can result in a carbon negative life cycle.

**6. Bio Solar and Green roof** implementation to address Climate change mitigation and adaption, storm water management, sustainable drainage and improved water quality, biodiversity, air quality and amenities. Combining green infrastructure and ecosystems services to address resilience in flooding and town and city planning towards our climate change adaptation EU requirements. Bio Solar rooftops provide power and biodiversity combined solutions to meet EU Habitat directives in an era of rise in EU power price trends

That the government implement a national policy to ensure green roofs and bio-solar roofs are part of national planning in line with the EU Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem services strategy. Such a policy would address a range of environmental benefits including stormwater, climate change adaptation, biodiversity, temperature management with additional wellness and economic benefits to the community. To undertake best practice guidance for relevant national government bodies and departments (Environment etc etc) to ensure that delivery is performance lead and to ensure that collaborate with the leading authorities in Europe to ensure that the criteria is ecologically lead, rather than by the construction industry.

**7. Taxation** implement a supporting Tax policy for wind, solar, wave etc always works.

**8. Introduce a Carbon pricing** that moves to lower carbon economy also works. Look at California on low carbon growth.

**9. Introduce a government mandates on energy storage work and battery storage**

10. Renewable are unstoppable as capex budget continues to decline for solar and wind making it more affordable globally. Corporate buying of renewables is doubling this year with Fortune 500 being very active.

11. Phase peat and coal burning completely out and replaced by natural gas and renewables which are now almost 17% of the total energy pie in the US.

12. Hydrogen should be invested in aggressively for both energy storage and transportation.

13. Invest in startups and commercialization multiple battery storage technologies that will back stop solar and wind power.

14. Retrofit homes in turf cutting areas and beneficiaries of fuel allowances soonest. The increase wellness and health benefits will reduce time spent off work and in hospital stays. Ireland's asthma rates are significant expense to the budget, Indoor air pollution is deadly in our contry Every €1 invested by government would return €3.20 in increased GDP and €1.25 in tax revenues. It could create 108,000 net jobs over the period 2020-30. And the CO2 emission reductions helping Ireland to meet the targets set out in COP21

## **Green transport options?**

**1. National services - Rail, light rail (LUAS) and Bus** - Public transport is inextricably linked to environmental sustainability. A full standard bus can take more than 50 cars off the road while a full train can take 600 cars off the road. We need to lower prices and expand services, and not allow the degradation of services to occore as a result of privatisation. A recent EPA report found that an estimated 380,000 people living in rural areas do not have access to the transport services they require.

2. **Increase pedestrian options of cities** - The criteria for a walkable city are that the areas where people walk are safe, comfortable and interesting. Studies have shown that walking can support local shops and businesses, as pedestrians have the freedom to 'pop-in' to pick up goods. What's more, increasing the walkability of our cities would ease pressure on our health services as walking is one of the easiest and most effective exercises we can do to combat the problem of increasing levels of obesity in our country.
3. **Cycling** - At present less than 2% of our transport budget goes to cycling, whereas the UN recommends that it is 20%. We need parking protected bike lanes, and segregated cycle lanes for our most congested areas. Cycling infrastructure is one the highest return investments a country can make. Study after study continues to pile up the evidence that increasing the uptake of utilitarian cycling increases air quality, has positive effects on all-cause mortality of a population, is easily accessible and therefore equitable, as well having a host of other co-benefits. The benefits are seen from rural cycleways to urban bike-shares and bicycle corridors. *"A bicycle path is a social statement that a person with a \$40 bicycle is as important as anyone with a \$40,000 car"*- Enrique Peñalosa. True sustainability has ecological, social and economic elements. Cycling brings all of these strands together.

## Economic Development

Given the ecological and financial pressures we face with an ageing population, we must diversify our economic indicators beyond GDP. There is increasing evidence that 1) An economic model based on economic growth is unsustainable environmentally and economically and 2) That GDP is an inadequate measure of the real health of an economy and society. It fails to capture inequalities and social issues which negatively affect quality of life. We need to make a decision. Does the government's priority lie with maintaining an inadequate measure of progress (GDP), or with the provision of meaningful work and 'the good life' where people live.-Local, co-operative economies in food and energy. A number of initiatives will be key in this regard:

1. The introduction of a fairer welfare system, with some sort of 'living wage' payment to citizens
2. An introduction of a more diverse national accounting system beyond GDP, taking into account happiness levels, social cohesion, access to essential services as well as quality of the natural environment.
3. Fairer taxation policies, whereby small family run businesses do not end up paying more corporation tax than the world's largest companies, as is often currently the case
4. Introduction of 'alternative' economics modules and courses in schools and universities, focusing on issues such as environmental economics and degrowth
5. Investment in a 'big society fund' similar to that in the UK, which will act as 'seed capital' for community based social enterprises and co - operatives, that can help to tackle social exclusion and economic decline in rural areas. A positive example of the type of initiative which could be supported would be the Loughmore Tea Rooms, a community co - operative in Co. Tipperary.
6. Introduction of a 'Localism act' giving local authorities greater decision making powers and direct revenue raising potential to have a key role in deciding the future of services and policy in areas such as health, education, transport. A Localism Act, modelled on that in Britain would give community groups legal powers to 'register an interest' in important assets such as shops and pubs, thereby giving them greater powers to keep these open should they go up for sale

## What jobs will we have?

Retrofitting homes to upgrade their energy rating, while also improving the health and wellbeing of our population, would provide thousands of jobs. Jobs in care must be available, particularly to care for our most vulnerable in an ageing society. Denmark operates a principle of community health care, whereby elderly or those who need care in their own homes are provided by a team of local care workers. Some of this is voluntary work and helps to build social cohesion and solidarity, as well as ensure that older people can stay in their homes for longer. Our health care system would benefit by allowing people to receive as much treatment and care in their own homes as possible, keeping them out of centralised and impersonal hospitals and medical centres. This model could be replicated for other needs such as child care. We need to empower communities and social entrepreneurs to find innovative ways to meet our growing social demands, particularly as we can expect greater financial

pressures and uncertainties in the future. We must move away from a purely private or purely public model of care provision in order to meet our needs sustainably in the long run. We can also increase our public transport services in rural areas, providing increased employment to those in areas outside of our cities.

There is huge potential to create jobs and training opportunities in the emerging sharing economies. Initiatives such as repair café's, tool libraries etc can provide much needed social and environmental services in communities, while also providing opportunities for individuals in communities to contribute positively to their local area. However, in areas where there are high rates of economic or social deprivation such initiatives will need direct financial support, in the form of grant aid, social investment or community share packages.

Central spaces & community centres generate economic activity. These could be combined with public service facilities such as local enterprise offices and / or community kitchens. Regional towns need to be targeted for sustainable enterprise incubation, particularly focusing on creating jobs which will be key to the low carbon transition, such as those in renewable energy and sustainable food production. The Centre for Renewable Energies and Sustainable Technologies (Co. Fermanagh) and the Drumshanbo Food Hub are excellent examples which could be replicated around Ireland. Irish communities could once again become famous for local indigenous enterprise, which has a strong social dimension. Instead of small towns being characterised by closed shops and declining job prospects, why not have them characterised as the front - lines of developing the solutions we will all need for a more prosperous and socially enriching low carbon future.

## **Communication**

We need fast broadband in our rural communities in order for sufficient work to be available in those communities. With fast broadband available, students can study effectively in these towns and might not be forced to be part of the 'brain drain' that is pulling our youth away from rural areas and into our already congested cities. Furthermore, creating a different culture of work, where remote working was more acceptable would allow people to work, via high speed broadband from their homes, or from shared work spaces in regional towns. This would alleviate transport and housing pressure on our largest cities and potentially help to address other social care issues, such as child care.

## **Where will we live?**

Suburban sprawl is degrading communities, increasing air pollution and clogging our transport networks. Planning for 2040 must include an emphasis on building upwards instead of outwards. Cities on the European continent have succeeded in making this model work. Clever use of smaller spaces could bring a whole new dimension to our cities.

At present we are still building on floodplains, areas which will inevitably be affected by rising sea levels by 2040. We must use our resources effectively and build only in areas where the habitation can be reliably sustained.

We need urban redesigns.

## **Public space**

The success of the Beta project can be seen all over Dublin. This should be re-introduced, allowing citizens to co-create their living space. Ireland has one of the highest rates of green spaces in Europe, however there are many small pockets of land which are not being utilized. We envision these spaces as areas for social engagement or to be used as community gardens. We could have 'pocket parks' (also known as a parkette, mini-park, vest-pocket park or vesty park), which are small parks accessible to the general public. Pocket parks are frequently created on a single vacant building lot or on small, irregular pieces of land and are seen frequently in Mexico City and San Francisco.

In France, a new 'gardening permit' or 'permis de végétaliser' has been instated allowing people to plant public urban gardens, and we propose that a similar law is instated in Ireland.

Overall, we advocate conceptualisation for the provision and creation of public spaces. At the moment there is very much a 'them and us' mentality when it comes to public space. Parks, public squares or community gardens are often either authorised and managed almost exclusively by local authorities or are the preserve of for profit private enterprises. Instead of viewing our space and our cities as a dichotomy of public vs private space, we call on all our people to co - create our urban environment

collectively, as a commons. This means normalising the collaboration between public, private and civic on urban improvement and design projects, such as cleaning up a derelict space, planting trees along a foot path, the provision of flower beds etc... Specific legislative measures could be introduced as a one stop shop authorising such collaborative urban improvement projects. A single legal form for these types of agreements would simplify the process of navigating the bureaucratic maze that can sometimes surround initiating these projects, thereby putting time - pressed members of the community off active citizenship. Such initiatives include the 'permis de végétaliser' mentioned above or the Bologna Regulation for the Care and Regeneration of the Urban Commons.

### **How do we plan for climate change?**

#### **1. Circular Economy**

- a. Instate a Deposit Return scheme for aluminium cans and plastic bottles. These have been successful everywhere that they have been introduced.
- b. Open 'Repair cafés' such as the Remakery in Edinburgh. The benefit of this is threefold; More jobs as people will be trained to work in these repair shops, necessary skills will be kept alive rather than that essential sustainability knowledge dying out, we will consume less resources.
- c. Implement citywide composting systems such as that in San Francisco

#### **2. Reduce food waste**

On average we throw away one third of the food we buy, equating to approx. €700 per year per Irish family. We as a small nation generate two tonnes of food waste every minute, yet one person in every eight go hungry, and land 200 times the size of Ireland is used to grow food that is just thrown away. We should instate city-wide composting schemes so that any food waste can be put back into our agricultural system. France has forbidden food waste in Supermarkets - Ireland needs a similar scheme. We also need a brown bin for every home, and small brown bin 'caddies' for the inside of each home.

### **Investment in housing**

Every human should not simply have access to shelter, but the right to a home where they can live in unmolested peace and dignity. Buildings are one of our largest points of energy consumption. When one considers that 90+% of Ireland's buildings are 'old stock', it is therefore congruent with common sense that we need to invest in deep scale retrofit. This will serve our population in terms of (i) better indoor air quality (ii) warmer buildings & lower heating costs to alleviate fuel poverty (iii) contribute to greater energy independence and economic savings.

More importantly than deep retrofitting is the need to (i) utilise current supply (ii) create more housing. Ireland has seen an explosion in homelessness over the last few years. A recent report stated that there were nearly 70 empty homes for every 1 homeless person in Ireland. This supply needs to be utilised. The number of social housing units being built has decreased dramatically decade on decade since the 70s, when Ireland was in even worse economic dire straits. These actions need to be facilitated by strong tenant rights, landlord and rent controls as well as having government cease interference when the populace take affirmative action, such as peaceful occupation of NAMA buildings.

### **Water services**

***The United Nations "Recognizes the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right that is essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights" – UN Resolution 64/292, July 2010.***

The provision of sufficient water and sanitation is an essential public service and a human right recognised by the United Nations. It should be freely available to all regardless of wealth or income. All citizens need clean drinking water and quality sanitation.

### **Health and education infrastructure**

With increased rates of suicide, obesity, physical and mental health issues, we can draw but one conclusion...Ireland we have a problem. However our solution does not have to cost much and Education is key. A more holistic education in mental and physical health (diet, exercise, psychology, meditation etc.) are great preventatives and will serve future generations as well as taking a large strain off the current struggling health system. Environment also plays a huge role

in this and we cannot ignore our indoor and outdoor air quality which seems to be correlated with rising respiratory disorders. Design of our cities, increasing green spaces and public space for community to talk, to play, to breath will also have great positive knock on effects on our quality of life and health.

Education must also take a more holistic approach from a young age introducing more topics that are relevant to the child's development. Encouraging art, music and craft and furthermore valuing their important role in society. More education in nature (ecology) and connecting with it (food production) is key to a basic education. Finally and most importantly we must educate our future generations on the self, their minds and how they work (their weaknesses and strengths) so that they may effectively cope with whatever the world will throw at them.

Kind regards

Deirdre Lane

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