

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

SUMMARY

**In light of the overwhelming scientific evidence for human induced climate change, People Before Profit advocates a radical series of measures to dramatically reduce Ireland's Co2 emissions.*

**These will include a public transport revolution to cut car usage and provide every community both urban and rural with a cheap and efficient mode of public transit appropriate for the area.*

**We want the latest energy efficient standards in new buildings and a national programme to retro fit housing and public buildings.*

**All reserves of energy, renewable or fossil fuel should be retained in public ownership and any development should be in the public interest and developed only to ensure that Ireland moves to a low carbon society as soon as possible.*

**The country's physical heritage, its mountains, countryside, lakes rivers and seashore, should be safeguarded from privatisation and remain accessible to the public.*

**We advocate programmes of re-forestation with the goal of protecting and enhancing the land's biodiversity for this and future generations.*

People Before Profit's Environmental Policy

Our environment, the natural world around us and our towns and cities face an unprecedented crisis. The planet is now in the midst of the sixth great extinction event in its history with thousands of species facing wipe-out while the earth's climate is facing the real prospect of catastrophic change caused by Capitalism and the burning of fossil fuels. Other earth systems essential for life are at or approaching unsustainable depletion. The ability of the planet to continue to provide a habitable home for future generations of humanity and the animal kingdom is now in question.

The People Before Profit Alliance environmental policy seeks to address the root causes of all these different forms of environmental destruction and despoliation. We reject the thesis that the environmental crisis is caused by any innate human instinct, overpopulation or simple consumerism. The crisis comes from the economic system of capitalism and its drive toward profit and competition. It is a system that eulogises the profit motive and relegates both human, environmental and other species rights and existence below the need for profit and economic growth.

Looking to capitalism and markets to provide solutions for any environmental crisis will not work because it is the operation of free market capitalism that is the root cause of each of these crises. In every issue examined from climate change to biodiversity and conservation, attempts at binding international treaties based on commodifying nature or incentivising markets have and will continue to fail to protect our environment. Only a radical challenge to the priorities of capitalism can save our natural world and preserve the earth's biodiversity for future generations.

While the environmental crisis threatens all of humanity, we believe that the world's poorest and ordinary working class people will suffer the greatest from the chaos that capitalism is creating in our climate and environment. We reject the idea that there is a conflict between safeguarding the environment and the earth's species and the right to a decent living for ordinary people. The conflict lies between the priorities of capitalism and markets on one hand and our environment, biodiversity and most of humanity.

We believe that a new, radical environmental and social movement is needed that identifies the root causes of the current mass extinction of species and threats to humanity and the natural world. We stand with those communities and groups that are campaigning against all forms of environmental destruction or trying to protect and conserve endangered species and habitats. But we want to unite these struggles, in our countryside and cities to take on the real cause of this crisis.

Climate Change

"If humanity wishes to preserve a planet similar to that on which civilization developed and to which life on Earth is adapted, paleoclimate evidence and ongoing climate change suggests that CO₂ will need to be reduced from [current levels] to at most 350 ppm" James Hansen

Levels of Co₂ in the earth's atmosphere are currently at over 400ppm, well beyond the levels that most

scientists believe can be accommodated if we are to avoid the risk of dangerous climate change. We are already witnessing extreme weather events, droughts, record storms, heat waves and altered rainfall patterns with tragic consequences for millions. Such change is already a feature of life, affecting huge numbers of the world's populations and especially the poorest and most marginalised.

Ireland has failed to effectively curb its own emissions and instead continued to allow big business and sections of the agricultural industry (especially the so-called beef barons) to dictate that no policy is enacted that might undermine their profits. During the Celtic Tiger period, Irish emissions were well above the Kyoto targets and these emissions only declined with the collapse of the economy. The Environmental Protection Agency has calculated that Ireland will be producing between 4.1 and 8.8 million tons of carbons above the EU target in 2020, leaving it open to possible fines.

People Before Profit will support practical and immediate steps to dramatically cut our Co2 emissions, and will not rely on market mechanisms to deliver this. These include;

A Public Transport Revolution;

We will oversee massive state investment in the public transport systems. We would abolish the National Transport Agency as it is a neoliberal agency whose chief concern is competition and facilitating private for-profit transport companies. The remit of a new state agency will be to provide cheap and efficient public transport that can facilitate the dramatic reduction in the use of private cars from the roads and ensure ease of movement in our towns and cities. This will mean a significant increase in the bus fleet numbers of existing state companies in both Dublin and Bus Eireann and the expansion of the rail network. We will involve transport users and local communities in planning new routes with the goal of a dramatic reduction in Co2 emissions from private car usage. We will reverse the dramatic increases in the cost of public transport over recent years and stop any attempts to privatise this essential service.

Building Sustainable Homes And Towns ;

We will introduce and enforce new building codes that insure all new buildings and homes are up to the latest standards in energy efficiency and insulating (eg; Passive Home standards). We will empower a new state agency to work with local authorities to oversee the retro-fitting of older buildings and homes to reach the same standards and with a remit to dramatically cut the use of energy for home heating. (The present home improvement grants are a wholly inadequate response and will never oversee the retro-fitting of homes on the scale or to the standard needed).

Opposition To Fossil Fuel Corporations;

We will support the building of a European-wide movement that aims to challenge the power and control of energy resources by multinational corporations in the fossil fuel industries. We will campaign to ensure that new proven reserves of gas, oil and coal that corporations intend to exploit remain in the

ground and that all available resources are utilised to switch to non-carbon and sustainable forms of energy production.

Our Natural Resources;

We will nationalise all of the state's gas and oil fields and use all of the state's natural resources to switch the economy to a carbon neutral basis as soon as practically possible. We will support the taxing of corporate profits to fund the switch to renewable forms of energy generation and invest in wave, solar and wind power generation.

Renewable Energy;

We will insure that the switch to renewable energy, (wind, wave, solar, thermal and biomass) is democratically controlled and aimed at ensuring a sustainable and carbon neutral economy. At present the small advances in total amount of energy produced by wind or solar energy is at the dictate of the market and the profit margins of companies involved. This is why many communities are opposed to the imposition of massive wind farms in their locality. We are in favour of wind energy and will support and fund a massive expansion in this sector. But the imposition of wind farms is not how we should be harnessing this power; they are primarily concerned with the profits of large firms and not with the sustainability of renewable energy. Instead we will seek to diffuse the expansion of all renewables to every town and city and ensure communities have ownership and control of all projects. We will ensure that wind and solar energy are harnessed at local levels and at scales that will make profound differences to energy generation, not to the profits of existing companies.

Biofuels/Biomass;

We will oppose the way in which biofuels are currently being harvested. This is often disguised as an environmentally friendly measure to combat global climate change. It is not. These measures will have a negligible impact on carbon emissions but are having profound effects on the poorest communities in the developing world. Recent policies have seen an effective land grab by multinational corporations and others in many parts of the world that have destroyed the livelihoods of peasants. The result is that biofuel monocultures are replacing food production and are increasing the food insecurity and malnutrition of the world's poorest. We will support sustainable use of indigenous biomass where possible and in conjunction with a radical policy for our forests and woodlands. We will ensure that increases in the use of biofuels will not impact on food production here or in the developing world.

Nuclear Power

We will oppose any measures that seek to promote nuclear energy as a solution to climate change. Some environmentalists have become so demoralised by the failure of capitalism to counter climate change that they have reluctantly accepted nuclear energy as a solution. We reject these arguments. Nuclear energy remains linked to the production of nuclear weapons, its growth would not be carbon neutral and the risks it poses remain unacceptable with no solution to the long term problem of the removal and storage of nuclear waste. The proposed growth of this industry to reduce carbon emissions would have to be on a massive scale and with huge costs both financial and environmental. Such resources should be used to build and invest in other renewable energies.

Fracking And Shale Gas.

We will oppose any attempt to introduce fracking into Ireland and pledge full support to communities that are opposing such projects. Shale gas will do nothing to reduce carbon emissions, and its use in other countries has simply taken investment away from renewables and shored up the fossil fuel industry and its infrastructure.

Protecting Our Environment And The Natural World.

People Before Profit will campaign both in the streets and in the Dail for a radical approach that places people and nature before the needs of multi-national corporations and profiteers.

Protecting Our Environment;

We will ensure that there is a properly financed and strong Environmental Protection Agency with a clear remit to protect the natural environment and people's rights to clean water, air and a safe built environment for both this and future generations. We will ensure that this agency is independent of commercial interests and that it is democratically accountable.

Access To The Environment;

We will establish a clear legal right of responsible access to the physical heritage of the country; its mountains, countryside, lakes, rivers and seashore, with the right to roam in remote and highland areas.

Extending Our Forests;

We will seek the extension and protection of Irelands forests, both as a measure to combat climate change and to increase biodiversity. Ireland has the third lowest level of forestry coverage in the EU with only 12 percent of its landmass compared to an EU average of 40 percent. We will campaign for

the land assets, commercial forests and amenity woodlands of Coillte to be retained in public ownership. We will seek a radical re-organisation of Coillte and the empowering of both workers and communities in managing and extending the forest cover and the potential to increase its sustainable harvesting and the biodiversity contained therein. With a democratically accountable forest management structure, we will ensure the enlarging and linking up of existing native woodlands to encourage biodiversity and connectivity within areas like Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Natural Heritage Areas where appropriate.

A Publicly Owned And Control Waste Management Policy.

We will seek the re-municipalisation of the waste collection and recycling industries. The privatisation of this essential industry has been a disaster for any hope of a coherent and safe waste management policy for the country. Unbridled competition between firms has produced a race to the bottom in standards in both the working conditions of those employed in the industry and of the management of society's waste. The volume of dangerous and toxic waste is increasing and is an inevitable by-product of a system where production is geared only for profit with no thought to its consequences. We will plan for a rational waste management strategy that seeks to reduce the volume of waste that industry produces and make companies that produce it responsible for its safe disposal and recycling.

GM Foods.

We reject the idea that GM foods/crops are necessary to feed growing populations here or in the developing world. There is a huge push to force acceptance of GM foods onto consumers. Objections are dismissed as unscientific and irrational. But the reasons advanced for GM foods are false. GM foods will not solve world hunger or vitamin deficiency of the world's poorest people. Social and economic inequality are the root causes of these problems, not a lack of food production. There is at present an abundance of food globally, but the poorest have no access to it.

Control of the food industry by global corporations and profit-driven production ensures that the adoption of any new technology will simply see the continuation of these injustices. GM crops are being imposed on populations and are forcing more peasants to switch to cash crop production instead of food for local consumption. This is also part of the cause of the world-wide exodus from farming by the poorest as larger commercialised farms drive the world's peasants off the land.

The drive towards GM crops is about allowing corporations to have patentable commodities that will enhance their control of all aspects of food production and consumption from "*the seed to the plate.*" Such crops will not stop world hunger nor deal with dietary deficiencies caused by poverty. They will ultimately strengthen the system that is actually responsible for these problems. Behind the rhetoric of feeding the world's poor lies a corporate agenda that will do nothing to deal with the underlying social inequalities and injustices that ensure such hunger exists. We will campaign to ensure all such research is publicly controlled and funded and that the rights of corporations to patent seeds or crops that may be vital for a sustainable agriculture is ended.