

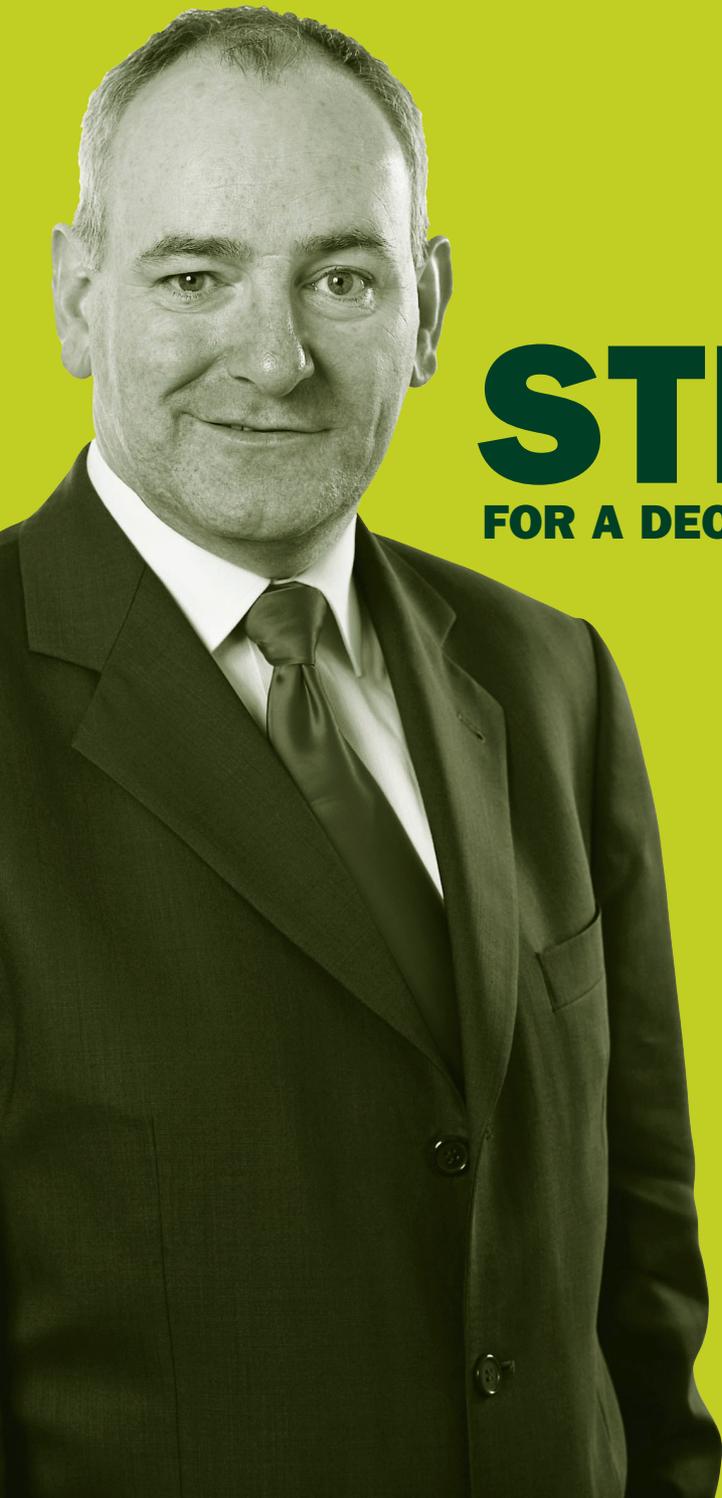
SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC & LABOUR PARTY

# **SDLP Manifesto**

## **2005**

**A Better Way to  
a Better Ireland**





# **STRONGER**

**FOR A DECENT PEACE AND REAL PROGRESS**

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Please note that certain objectives appear under more than one heading to give a complete overview of each topic at a glance.

# SDLP – A BETTER WAY TO A BETTER IRELAND

Dear Voter,

It is now a whole seven years since the people of Ireland voted for the Good Friday Agreement.

Yet look around and how much agreement do you see? The DUP determined to override the positive will of democratic Ireland. On the other extreme, Sinn Féin and the provisional movement equally refusing to listen to the voice of democratic Ireland.

The result? Suspension.

Instead of local people running their own assembly, we have Direct Rule ministers running down our local services.

Instead of building a prosperous economy for our children – one child in three lives in poverty.

Instead of communities shaking off the past, we have communities still bound in fear.

People are growing sick of this manipulation and stalemate. They want a better way to a better Ireland.

The SDLP have that way. We set it out in this manifesto.

We are the only party to stand totally and positively by both of the key standards of the Good Friday Agreement – an inclusive democracy and a lawful society.

We – and the whole of democratic Ireland – are demanding good standards. Our positive pressure is working. That is why we have seen more shifts from the IRA in the last seven weeks than in the seven years since the Agreement. And it is why the DUP is having to accept more and more of the Agreement.

So we need to keep on the positive pressure, with a strong vote for a stronger SDLP. A vote for the SDLP says no more stunts, no more stalemate. A vote for anyone else changes nothing – it just makes others more complacent.

Down the years it has been proved that when the SDLP is stronger, things get moving.

So on May the 5th use your voice, your vote, to vote for a stronger SDLP.



Mark Durkan MLA  
SDLP Leader

## Stronger for the Agreement

The SDLP is stronger for the Good Friday Agreement. Because we are stronger for each and every one of its key principles. Inclusion. North/South. Policing. Equality. Human Rights. Victims. Community relations. Demilitarisation. Peace.

We are the only party that has lived up to all of the Agreement and worked all its institutions.

We are also the only party that has defended all of the Agreement. It was approved by the Irish people, North and South. As a truly republican party, we stand by their will – even when others do not.

At the last Assembly elections we promised not to renegotiate the Agreement. We held to our word. Others, meanwhile, broke theirs. The failed SF/DUP “Comprehensive Agreement” renegotiated the Good Friday Agreement and -

- abolishes the joint election of the First and Deputy First Ministers;
- gives the DUP new vetoes over nationalist ministers in government;
- gives the DUP new vetoes over who nationalist ministers are;
- threatens any democratic party with a new form of automatic exclusion if they register democratic dissent from the flawed SF/DUP deal;
- fails to offer a single extra North/South body or area of cooperation.

Of course, improvements can be made to the workings of the Agreement. Indeed, no party during the review came up with more constructive suggestions for this than the SDLP.

But we are emphatic that there is nothing wrong with the Agreement. What is wrong is that paramilitaries, parties and governments have not lived up to all of it.

Just because others persist in falling short of the Agreement, does not mean that we should stay stuck in the rut of suspension. The SDLP is the only party with positive proposals for ending suspension and getting the Agreement moving now. These proposals also challenge parties in public to show whether they are really up for the Agreement or not.

### The SDLP will therefore:

- Stand **strong for the Good Friday Agreement**. Unlike Sinn Féin, we will not renegotiate it for the DUP.
- Oppose the **flawed SF/DUP “Comprehensive Agreement.”**
- Stand strong for **inclusive democracy**. We will continue to oppose unionist and British pressure for exclusion or voluntary coalition. We will also oppose the SF/DUP plan for automatic exclusion of democratic parties.
- Stand up for a **lawful society**. We will keep on the positive pressure for all paramilitaries, loyalist and republican, to go away and for all parties to co-operate with the police.
- Demand that the **DUP show good faith** on the Agreement’s North/South agenda by agreeing up front new areas for co-operation and new North/South bodies.

- Demand the **Agreement's full implementation and development**, including the full implementation of the Joint Declaration's commitments on:
  - human rights;
  - equality;
  - demilitarisation;
  - community relations;
  - victims;
  - the Irish language;
  - devolution of policing and justice;
  - North/South co-operation.
- Secure **repeal of the Suspension Act** and an end to stop-go politics.
- Argue for our **proposals for ending suspension and getting the Agreement moving**. These will allow us to get as much of the Agreement as we can now and to end direct rule.
- Seek the **improvements to the workings of the institutions** set out in our published document (DUP Myths Exposed). All of these are consistent with the Agreement. All of these improve efficiency and accountability.

## Stronger for a United Ireland

The SDLP is stronger for a United Ireland.

We are the only party that has made clear that in a United Ireland all the Agreement's protections should continue.

Our vision of a United Ireland is based on equality. The SDLP believes that all the rights, protections, and inclusion that nationalists sought within Northern Ireland while it is in the United Kingdom, must equally be guaranteed to unionists within a United Ireland. We are emphatic that unity must not be about the entrapment of a new minority.

That is right in principle – since in a United Ireland we will still need to find a way of sharing our society as equals every bit as much as we do today – and that is what the Agreement is all about.

It is also right in practice. The best context for holding and winning a referendum is when it is clear that the Agreement is fully bedded down and that all its protections will continue regardless of the referendum's outcome. A majority is most likely to vote for a United Ireland when reassured that it is neither a vote against the Agreement nor a vote for constitutional uncertainty.

Achieving a majority for Irish unity any time soon will require the persuasion of some unionists. It will also require the reassurance of many others. Because of our unblemished record of peace and partnership and our unqualified commitment to the Agreement, only the SDLP can persuade a majority in the North in favour of unity – just as we persuaded a majority of the North in favour of the Good Friday Agreement.

That is why only the SDLP can deliver a United Ireland.

### **Working towards a united Ireland the SDLP will:**

- Seek the recalling of the **Forum for Peace and Reconciliation**. At the last Forum, Sinn Féin would not sign up to the emerging consensus on how unity could be achieved. At this Forum we will seek the Agreement of all parties to our vision of and strategy for unity.
- **Engage in outreach with the unionist community** to persuade them of the merits of a United Ireland and reassure them of the protections that the Agreement offers them in it.
- Seek a **referendum on a United Ireland** when the Agreement's institutions are operating stably and campaign vigorously in favour of a yes vote.

### **Stronger for all-Ireland Development**

In the current context, the North/South agenda is also vital to provide an Irish dimension and recognise the full set of relationships on this island. We believe that all-Ireland development will help improve the lives of all on this island. Working together will help break down the barriers, which have hindered development and made lives more difficult throughout the island.

The SDLP wants to see current North/South co-operation expanded so that it can reach its true potential. One of our strongest criticisms of the failed Sinn Féin-DUP comprehensive agreement was that there were no extra areas agreed for North/South co-operation and no extra North/South implementation bodies. We demand better.

**We stress our commitment not merely to North/South co-operation, but also to additional North/South implementation bodies.**

### **Energy and infrastructure**

North and South both need enormous investment in infrastructure to ensure future development. Our priorities are to:

- Create a **new all-Ireland transport & infrastructure body** to produce a **strategic development framework** for the island, networking air and sea-ports and economic corridors and co-ordinating key projects such as the construction of the “TENS” (Trans-European Networks).
- Accelerate the opening of an **all-Ireland energy market** to increase competition and reduce energy prices.
- Actively encourage NIAER and the regulator in the South, to work together to develop a new **all-Ireland energy planning framework**.
- Continue to advocate recognition of Ireland, North and South, as a **European Energy Zone**, to assist us in reducing costs, meeting targets and improving planning.
- **Secure expansion of the gas network** on a North-South and East-West basis.

## Economy & Skills

Joint action on the economy and skills can help make the island more competitive internationally. Our priorities are to:

- Agree an **all-Ireland marketing co-operation and investment** strategy to maximise sales overseas and incentives for investors.
- Build on the work of the Business Alliance, establishing a new **all-Ireland Research Alliance**, based on the successful Georgia Research Alliance, to work with colleges and other institutions to operate a 'mix and match' service with businesses, maximising the economic potential of new research as quickly as possible.
- Remove all **cross-border trading impediments**, e.g. reducing bureaucracy associated with livestock sales.
- Establish a **North/South Further & Higher Education body** to encourage collaboration in policy, teaching, research, evaluation, recognition of qualifications and models of excellence.
- Commission the **economic research bodies** North and South to work together to produce proposals for further all-Ireland co-operation and development in social and economic policy.
- Ensure that **economic policy** generally, North and South, is discussed and, where appropriate, co-ordinated at the NSMC.
- Establish an **all-Ireland Comptroller and Auditor General** to ensure value for money of all services North and South and replacing the separate Comptrollers in each jurisdiction.

## Policing and Justice

The SDLP wants to see the devolution of justice without delay. In this context new areas for North/South co-operation and new North/South bodies will have to be agreed. But the SDLP believes that this agenda is too important to await devolution – the two Governments must advance it now. Our priorities are to:

- Create an **all-Ireland Criminal Assets Bureau**, modelled on the Criminal Assets Bureau in the South, to deprive criminals of their wrongful gains without fear or favour throughout the island.
- Establish an **all-Ireland Law Commission** to research and promote harmonisation of laws.
- All-Ireland police training at the **new police training college**.
- Advance **North/South police personnel exchanges** in the agreed areas: serious crime, change management, drugs, community policing, ethical standards, criminal assets, training, immigration, traffic, personnel, fingerprinting and IT.
- Create an **all-Ireland Sex Offenders register**.

## Health, Social Policy and Environment

North/South action needs to deliver not merely economic benefits, but also clear social benefits. Our priorities are to:

- Agree an **all-Ireland free travel scheme for pensioners** through mutual recognition of pensioner identification, to boost tourism as well as improving cohesion of rights and benefits, island-wide.
- Commission **comprehensive all-Ireland research on anti-poverty strategies**.
- **Advance all-Ireland co-operation in health** to maximise opportunities for investment in specialist services and

equipment which would be otherwise unaffordable in either jurisdiction.

- Develop a **waste management strategy** on the basis of North-South and East-West co-operation, to move away from landfill and maximise opportunities to 'reduce, re-use and recycle'.
- Building on the success of the food safety body, create an **all-Ireland Public Safety Body** to build on the successful collaboration on road safety advertising and education initiatives to work systematically to bring down the incidence of injury and fatalities arising from accidents in the home, at work and on the roads.

## Food and Agriculture

The need for North/South co-operation in food and agriculture is accepted by all stakeholders. Our priorities are to:

- Establish a new **all-Ireland Food Marketing Body** to improve branding of local produce and conduct a vigorous international marketing campaign capitalising on the green, clean image of Ireland
- Complete an **all-Ireland Animal Health Strategy** – centred on the development of an effective contingency plan, with greater control of restricted herds and improved monitoring.
- Develop an **all-Ireland position on reform of the Common Fisheries Policy** to secure the future of Irish fishing.
- Develop and promote an **all-Ireland agenda** for agricultural and rural development.
- Develop and promote a **border regions agricultural liaison group** to deal specifically with animal health issues.
- All-Ireland approach to **EU fish quotas**.

## Equality, community relations and rights

As Ireland, North and South, become more diverse societies, the need for joint working on promoting equality becomes ever clearer. Meanwhile, there is an urgent need to address the rights of victims throughout the island, as well as the rights agenda more generally.

Our priorities are to:

- Work to agree an **all-Ireland Charter of Rights**, to guarantee the highest standards of human rights throughout the North.
- All-Ireland action on **tackling racism**.
- The development of an all-Ireland victim-centred mechanism for **truth and remembrance**.
- Development of common effective **incitement to hatred laws**, North and South;
- Action to promote **community relations and reconciliation**, North and South.

## Culture and Irish Language

Our culture and language are shared throughout the island and are clearly suitable for North/South co-operation. Our priorities are to:

- Develop **all-Ireland arts, sport, culture and leisure strategies**.
- Secure all-Ireland coverage of **RTE television & TG4**.
- Establish an **all-Ireland racing body** to regulate and promote the sport throughout the island.
- Increase all-Ireland funding for **Irish-medium television**.

## **Stronger for Public Services, Investment & Government Reform**

The failure of some political parties to implement the Agreement is costing our economy and our society. Under direct rule, no serious effort is being made to tackle the legacy of under-investment in roads, infrastructure, hospitals, schools etc. Indeed direct rulers have rolled back some of the key initiatives the SDLP worked hard to create such as the 'EPFs' (Executive Programme Funds) – designed to tackle deprivation, promote growth and support voluntary and social economy sector services. Local institutions should have been delivering real improvements to services by now, yet instead we are witnessing the ongoing government of neglect. Only the SDLP has a strategy to stop suspension and end direct rule right away, to get decision-making back into the hands of local politicians and start delivering real change.

We want to reverse 30 years of decline by decisive actions to reshape government and rebuild public services, investing for change and changing for investment. The SDLP has proposals to invest in your and your children's future guided by the twin principles of need and equality.

For many of our people, government has been remote and unresponsive, disconnected from the challenges of everyday life. The SDLP is working to bring government closer to the people we serve. We pioneered political partnership and partnership government. Now we want to see these principles enshrined in law in the reform of Local Government. We promoted the notion of social partnership that led to the Civic Forum. Now we want to reshape government on this basis, widening and deepening partnerships with unions, business and voluntary

organisations, not just as consultees, but as real partners agreeing long-term plans for government action and social progress. This social partnership model has been central to the economic growth and stability in the South in recent years.

The SDLP wants to get devolution back so that we can drive a reforming agenda throughout government, reducing bureaucracy, driving out inefficiency and delivering better services, more effectively. Through the reform of government, we can also accelerate change in the community, partnering social economy enterprises, to help them become self-sustaining and deliver opportunity and prosperity.

### **SDLP Goals:**

#### **Reforming Government**

- **Reshape the Programme for Government**, working with unions, business and the voluntary sector on a **new basis of real social partnership to agree a 5-year programme.**
- **Create a new model for strategic decision-making on major public investment projects**, broadening membership of the Strategic Investment Board to include unions and voluntary sector groups, extending the social partnership model to ensure longer-term, robust decisions as we originally proposed.
- **Reform the delivery of public services, creating opportunities for local ownership and delivery.** LSPs, Councils, voluntary bodies or new partnerships could be invited to bid for central government funds to deliver services locally, similar to EU funding models.
- Use the **Review of Public Administration** to:
  - Restructure government, making it more responsive, more accountable, decentralised, efficient and transparent, spending less on bureaucracy and more

on public services and better releasing the talent and potential of those in public sector employment.

- Deliver equality of access to public services of a consistently high standard, while increasing local flexibility in meeting those standards.
- Put partnership (see above) at the heart of reformed structures.
- **Reform Local Government:**
  - Secure new legal requirement for power-sharing, ensuring cross-community protection in representation and decision-making. The SDLP has championed power-sharing for decades. We will continue to challenge recalcitrant unionism in Lisburn, Castlereagh and elsewhere.
  - Ensure effective local representation, value for money, equality of opportunity and quality services for rate-payers in the debate on the number of Councils that should exist and powers they should exercise.
  - Increase local input into the delivery of public services (see above).
- **Create a fair rates system** based on ability to pay, ending the current injustice and protecting those on lower incomes such as pensioners.
- **Spend less on government bureaucracy, more on front-line public services** – roads, nurses, school-books etc. The SDLP has proposals to introduce **permanent scrutiny of government performance** in meeting set targets, and **government spending** on departments running costs rather than on services. This is another reason that we need the Assembly back in action, improving **public accountability, transparency and efficiency** and doing so on a **permanent basis** rather than a one-off as proposed by other parties.
- **Legislate to require decentralisation** of government

functions and agencies including at least **2000 jobs to towns across the North** within 5 years, including (but not exclusively) Derry, Strabane, Omagh, Newry & Downpatrick, targeting areas of high unemployment in the systematic promotion of balanced regional development. We propose a legislative route having reflected on the Accommodation Review which moved slowly under devolution and has not progressed under direct rule.

- **Use the leverage of government spending** – through the criteria for awarding government contracts – to achieve **equality and environmental targets** as well as **economic regeneration**.

## Investing in public services & infrastructure

Below we set out proposals to address the historic under-investment by government and continual under-performance by departments. We need to do, not just more, but better.

### SDLP Goals:

- Use the reconfigured **Strategic Investment Board** (see above) to enhance the **professional expertise** available in considering funding options for all public-led investment projects and the **partnership basis** on which decisions are taken. The SIB to advise the Executive/Assembly on optimum funding mix and best financing solutions for the region's capital investment programme.
- **Release under-utilised public land and assets** and secure further release of **military bases** – another SDLP-led initiative gone awry under direct rule – to generate both **economic and social dividends** for the whole community. This would enable major investment and create thousands of jobs. Funds generated could be re-deployed into front-line services and to help community

and voluntary groups become self-sustaining.

- **Establish new 'not-for-profit' models for investment** in, and development of, better **public services**. Income derived would form a new basis of civic dividend for more hard-pressed communities.
- Commission the economic research bodies North and South to work together to **produce proposals for further all-Ireland co-operation and development** in social and economic policy.

### **Recognise the Community and Voluntary Sector as valued service providers:**

- Work to ensure that **services currently dependent on EU funds**, that reflect the priorities agreed by social partners, are in future supported by **new mainstream expenditure (funded in part by civic dividend)**.
- **Pool transferable benefits** such as air-miles acquired through civil service & elected representatives' travel and **redistribute to charities**.

## Stronger for Regional Development

Continued investment in quality infrastructure is necessary to achieve balanced and sustainable economic growth and social inclusion throughout the North. Direct rule has had a severe impact on the development of the region. Ministers have downgraded the Belfast-Derry rail line to 'lesser used' status and published unacceptable proposals for water reform. The SDLP firmly believe that access to a clean water supply is a fundamental right. **We completely oppose the direct rule decision to introduce water charges.**

We are committed to balanced regional development across the North, using the Strategic Investment Board to identify the most favourable funding solutions and the best way to deliver projects on budget as well as on time.

However we are mindful of our obligation to the rest of the world. Climate change is a real and growing threat to our environment. This destabilisation can lead to rising sea levels and extreme weather conditions. We want to reduce carbon emissions through increased investment in bus and rail services to make public transport an attractive alternative to private transport.

We believe that better access to transport networks can help tackle social exclusion by connecting people to jobs and amenities.

## SDLP Goals:

### Water

THE SDLP IS AGAINST PRIVATISATION, AGAINST DOMESTIC METERING and AGAINST WATER CHARGES.

- **Restore** the transparent **link between rates and water**, for which the Barnett formula does not make provision.
- **Oppose** the proposal to turn the Water Service into a **Government-owned Company** (GoCo) as this would be a step towards privatisation.
- **Modernise** the water service and **improve water quality**.
- **Upgrade the sewage system** to meet modern environmental and EU standards.
- **Modernise** and streamline the **public procurement** process for all major capital and structural maintenance contracts to ensure more accountability and transparency, resulting in a better deal for the public.

### Balanced regional development

Balanced regional development across the North requires targeted strategies to counter decades of uneven growth. SDLP Goals:

- **Legislate to require decentralisation** of government functions and agencies including at least 2000 jobs to towns across the North within 5 years, targeting areas of high unemployment. This can enable regional towns and rural areas to derive benefits from government-led investment and help to stimulate private development. Decentralisation will also be key to addressing traffic congestion in the greater Belfast area.
- **Target areas** of under-developed infrastructure for **enhanced support**.

## Energy

- Work to **reduce energy tariffs** for domestic and business customers.
- Accelerate the opening of an **all-Ireland energy market** to increase competition and reduce energy prices.
- Build on existing **'not for profit' refinancing** initiatives such as the Moyle inter-connector to ownership of other major energy infrastructure thereby passing any cost savings directly to the consumer.
- **Extend the gas network** so that more customers can benefit from an alternative energy supply.
- **Promote renewable energy** sources including bio-mass, wind-power and hydro-electric power, particularly in areas beyond the reach of the natural gas network so that all areas can benefit from enhanced competition and choice.
- Continue to advocate recognition of Ireland, North and South, as a **European Energy Zone**, to assist us in reducing costs, meeting targets and improving planning.
- Further **promote energy efficiency** and increase the number of efficiency programmes particularly for the vulnerable and people living in fuel poverty.

## Public Transport

- **Invest in Public Transport** enabling the Metro Service, Ulsterbus and Northern Ireland Railways to meet their Passenger Charter Standards and to deliver long-term growth in public transport.
- Secure major capital investment for the **Belfast-Derry rail line** to make certain the line remains open for future generations.
- Agree **all-Ireland scheme for free travel** for people of pensionable age, through mutual recognition of

identification, to boost tourism as well as increasing cohesion of rights and benefits island-wide.

- Extend the **children's half price travel** scheme to 16-18 year-olds in full time education.

## Air

- Develop an **aviation strategy** for the North.
- Guarantee **air access to Heathrow** airport from the North.

## Infrastructure and Roads

- Create a **new all-Ireland transport and infrastructure body** and produce a strategic development framework for economic corridors, Trans European Networks (TEN's) and air and sea ports.
- Secure funding to **upgrade key TEN's**.
- Secure adequate **strategic investment** for the Regional Transport Strategy and the three associated sub-plans
- **Expand Rural Transport initiatives**, particularly 'demand responsive' services such as community taxis and 'rural rover' bus services.

## Planning

A **strategic, coordinated, design-led system** is required as a basis for economic growth and social development. The planning system requires **wholesale reform** to clarify to policy framework within which decisions are made, **reduce by half the time taken** for decisions and, in this context, introduce a right of **third-party appeal** in bona fide cases. See also Environment section.

## Stronger for Job Creation, Growth & Competitiveness

Direct rule has resulted in a period of lost opportunity for our economy. While there are now more people in employee jobs than ever on record<sup>1</sup>, our economy remains too heavily reliant on public sector employment. Recent years have seen major job losses in manufacturing, rising business costs and increasing global competition.

Central to the success and stability of the economy in the South in recent decades, has been the social partnership model. This has enabled competitiveness, overseen structural change and ensured sustained growth through agreed investment priorities, industrial relations stability and skills development. The SDLP wants to get devolution back so that we can establish a similar model and generate sustained growth across the North, creating well-paid and sustainable jobs for people from all backgrounds. Our strategy is designed to build competitiveness first and promote social inclusion and tackle poverty through economic growth as well as social measures.

Small businesses are at the heart of our communities. We are committed to building an enterprise economy, rewarding risk-taking, supporting business growth & addressing costs. The SDLP commends the work of local Enterprise agencies in this task and will work with Enterprise NI to widen and strengthen the process of business start-ups.

The creation of an all-island economy is an essential SDLP objective and would bring major benefits North and South. We need co-ordinated strategies on transportation infrastructure, energy and telecommunications as quickly as possible. We will bring forward policies to generate

all-Ireland trade by encouraging the development of new business alliances throughout the island. These will take the form of supplier clusters and new business co-operation agreements. Meanwhile, our efforts will continue to correct the competitive disadvantage in the North due to higher corporation tax and fuel costs than in the South.

The SDLP has always argued that peace, partnership and prosperity go hand in hand. We have brought this message across the world to bring jobs and support programmes home. We have worked with local companies to help expand their businesses to create jobs and compete in EU and wider markets. This is why the SDLP is stronger on the economy.

### SDLP Goals:

- Set **targets** for economic growth, job-creation and all-Ireland business co-operation and resource a proper strategy to achieve this.
- Create a new “**Enterprise Growth Fund**” comprising a loan fund and equity fund to work together to **increase the number of business start-ups, promote social economy enterprises** and also to enhance the all-island business co-operation model. The Fund should build on the successful Enterprise Ireland model.
- Extend the ‘Aspire’ **micro-loan initiative** across the North complimenting a new enterprise growth fund.
- Work with the Enterprise Agencies to increase the measures to enable those with sound business ideas from **low-income backgrounds**, to become **self-employed**.
- **Support business growth**, seeking **new tax relief and rate relief** on an offset basis against spending on Research & Development, training and marketing and cross-border business development initiatives.

- **Continue to oppose the end of industrial de-rating** in the present economic climate. We argued when proposals were launched, that there should be no curb on the exemption unless a menu of reliefs was developed – this has not happened and moreover, economic pressures have increased.
- **Release under-utilised public land and assets** and secure further release of **military bases** to generate both economic and social dividends for the whole community.
- Facilitate **development of ‘clusters’ of companies** that can derive mutual economic benefit from co-operation and networking **locally** and on an **all-island** basis.
- **Equip small and medium-sized local firms & social economy enterprises** to compete for **major public contracts** working in co-operation to derive widespread economic benefit from public investment. This requires a pro-active approach that gives necessary support and information.
- **Support the Tourism industry** as a key growth sector for development. In addition to the transportation upgrade referred to elsewhere, improvements are required in access routes to the North as well as staff training and marketing. A comprehensive inter-departmental development strategy is required for the industry.
- Target **investment in high-unemployment areas**.
- Build on the work of the Business Alliance, establishing a new **All-Ireland Research Alliance**, based on the successful Georgia Research Alliance, to work with colleges and other institutions to operate a ‘mix and match’ service with businesses, maximising the economic potential of new research as quickly as possible.
- Agree an **all-Ireland marketing co-operation and investment strategy** to maximise sales overseas and incentives for investors.
- Dismantle the **barriers to labour mobility** including mutual recognition of qualifications and social security matters.
- **Work to reduce energy costs** including accelerating the opening of the **all-Ireland energy market**. [see section on Regional Development]
- Run a promotional campaign to **encourage businesses to operate in Euro** as well as Sterling and **encourage government departments** to make arrangements to **make and accept payments in Euro**.
- Campaign for entry to the **Euro**.
- See also sections on Workers & Skills; All-Ireland Development; Regional Development & the Environment.

## Stronger for Workers & Skills

Many of the positive developments delivered by SDLP Ministers under devolution have been eroded under direct rule. We introduced innovative measures to tackle long term unemployment, abolished FE tuition fees and reintroduced grants for HE students. Direct rulers have introduced variable tuition fees, made cuts to life long learning, axed the Worktrack programme and reduced financial support for Enterprise Ulster.

Education is key to providing the North with the flexibility to face the changing global economy. Investment in education and skills can create higher incomes, improve job security and enhance an individual's quality of life. The SDLP is committed to investing in education and skills. We want to build a high-skill, high wage economy that is based on social justice. The SDLP is dedicated to investing in people, nurturing individual talent and empowering people for the future.

### SDLP Goals:

#### Protecting Workers

- **Act to stem the increasing tendency of employers to under-fund their pension schemes.** On returning to government the SDLP would not only carry out a review of public sector pension provision but would require major private sector employers to demonstrate that their pensions were adequately funded.
- **Develop accessible and affordable childcare and support integrated early years care** incorporating the full range of services including breakfast clubs, educational provision, child care and after school clubs, family support services, health care and more.
- **Deliver an integrated cross-departmental strategy to review and address the range of needs of migrant**

**workers** and their families, raising awareness of their entitlements, and helping them to access social welfare, education, health and other services. We will also campaign for the UK government to sign the UN Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers.

#### Employability and Tackling Unemployment

- **Deliver programmes** that address the **skills of the unemployed** and **economically inactive**.
- Build on the work of the **Taskforce on Employability and Long Term Unemployment** with further innovative measures to **help people overcome the barriers to employment**.

#### Adult Literacy & Numeracy

We are committed to righting the wrong represented by the fact that one adult in four has difficulty with literacy and numeracy skills. SDLP Goals:

- Work to reduce the associated **stigma** and encourage those with literacy difficulties back into education.
- Implement the **Essential Skills Strategy** in full.

#### Student Support

Finance should not be a barrier to attaining a third level education – the SDLP is committed to widening access, targeting social need and promoting inclusion for students and their families. SDLP Goals:

- Secure **additional financial support to widen access** to education, targeting families on lower incomes.
- Dedicate **specific extra funding for mature students, students with disabilities & students with dependants**.
- Continue to **oppose the introduction of top-up fees**.
- **Introduce Career Development Loans** in the North.

## Further Education

The SDLP is committed to enhancing recognition of FE to create parity of esteem between academic and vocational training. FE colleges must be engines for economic development and social inclusion, particularly at a local level. SDLP Goals:

- **Enable and properly fund FE colleges** to enhance school pupils' educational experience through authentic, robust technical and vocational training.
- **Support the FE Review** through a fundamental **overhaul of college funding mechanisms** to enable colleges to meet the needs of their local areas.
- **Develop strong links with colleges throughout Ireland**, learning from their successful experience of redevelopment.
- **Enhance partnership among colleges, businesses, community** and voluntary sector groups to promote social inclusion and economic development.

## Higher Education

The SDLP is committed to increasing funding for Research & Development, helping to meet the demands of the 'knowledge society' and local and global economies. SDLP Goals:

- **Establish an all-island HE outreach programme** mobilising expertise and experience **to assist HE in developing countries**.
- Increase resources by **encouraging links with business for Research & Development**.
- Promote **greater accountability in Higher Education institutions** in terms of planning, development, policy, equity of access and transparency, in the context of respect for academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

- Build on the work of the Business Alliance by establishing a new **All-Ireland Research Alliance** based on the Georgia Research Alliance to work with colleges and other institutions to operate a 'mix and match' service with businesses, maximising the economic potential of new research as quickly as possible.
- Encourage the higher education system and business to maximise applications for the **European Research Area** and in the **European Research Framework Programme**. Increased investment in technology is crucial for our economic future.

## Widening horizons

If we are to increase opportunities locally, we must forge partnerships that will allow local workers to travel, expanding their skills and bringing home new competencies. SDLP Goals:

- Establish a **North-South Further & Higher Education body** to encourage collaboration in policy, teaching, research, evaluation, recognition of qualifications and models of excellence.
- Acknowledge the community sector as a valuable service provider and grant **mainstream funding on a multi-annual basis** to promote long-term planning and sustainability.
- Compile a comprehensive **database of all training provision** to be made available to local training and employment agencies, schools and colleges.

## Stronger for Farming & Rural Development

Those responsible for the political stalemate and direct rule are costing our agricultural communities daily. Against a backdrop of long years of hardship, farmers are facing unprecedented challenges at this time, without a local Minister to fight their corner. A combination of factors including the Nitrates Directive, Cross Compliance, Single Farm Payment Regulations and the ban on on-farm burials have brought many farms close to the limits of viability.

New interventions are required to ensure that the farming industry does not go the way of textiles and shipbuilding. We want to support farmers in their bid to innovate, diversify or add a competitive edge to their high quality produce. Sustainable rural communities further require public services to be designed to meet the needs of a dispersed population.

The SDLP is stronger on agricultural and rural affairs. We have a proven track record of working to redress the decline in farm incomes over recent years. We are committed to regenerating the rural economy, sustaining farming communities and acknowledging farmers as custodians of the countryside. Only the SDLP has a strategy for the immediate restoration of the Assembly, putting decision-making back into the hands of committed local representatives.

The record of delivery by the SDLP must influence the decisions of rural voters on 5th May if they are serious about protecting the Farming and Fishing industries and securing a thriving countryside.

## SDLP Goals:

### A Fair Deal for Farmers

- Develop an **all-island agriculture industry**. As an immediate step, dedicated resources are required for the implementation of the All-Ireland Animal Health Strategy.
- Represent local farmers in the struggle to deal with **EU and DEFRA regulations**.
- Insist that DARD addresses problems arising through the **inaccuracies in many GIS maps**.
- Fund a scheme to enable farmers to **dispose of plastic silage wrap free of charge** at Council amenity sites.
- Continue representation on reaching a workable **sheep tagging system**.
- **Increase grant aid** to assist farmers in meeting the terms of the **nitrates directive**.
- Establish a **new All-Ireland Food Marketing Body** to improve branding of local produce and conduct a vigorous international marketing campaign capitalising on the green, clean image of Ireland.
- Secure removal of all **cross-border trading impediments, for example those affecting the sheep sector**.
- Seek development of an **all-Ireland position on reform of the Common Fisheries Policy** to secure the future of Irish fishing.
- Review immediately the value and effectiveness of **advisory services** currently being offered by DARD.
- Secure entry to the **Euro-zone** – as referred to above, this a key priority in raising farm incomes.
- Secure removal of the **Beef Export Ban** and the **Over Thirty Months Scheme**.

- Encourage growth in **co-operatives** to secure better selling power for producers supplying large multiples.
- Oppose the development of **GM crops** on the grounds of inadequate reassurance on the implications for health and the impact of long-term transfer of modified genes.

## Investing in the Future

- Support farmers wishing to explore **organic farming** and other means of **diversifying** their business or adding value to their produce.
- **Reform planning policy** to enable development of rural businesses such as agri-tourism on farms. Introduce 'brown-field' policies, which would enable replacement of run-down agricultural buildings & prove helpful in addressing over-development of green-field areas. [See section on 'Natural Resources'.]
- **Reduce bureaucracy** to deploy maximum resources in assisting farmers directly.
- **Promote better use of ICT**; progress has been made but more can be done to reduce paperwork.
- **Continue increasing training opportunities** for farmers, tailored to needs and peer-group centred.
- **Promote an early retirement scheme.**
- Explore the role for farmers in increasing our supply of renewable energy through **biomass**. [see also 'Natural Resources' section]

## Protecting Rural Communities

- Develop a new cross-cutting **Rural White Paper** to promote economic regeneration and social inclusion and strengthen the fabric of rural society.
- Increase funds for **rural community and voluntary organisations**, including **Women into Agriculture Groups** to support vital work being done by the Rural Community Network.
- Make **post offices a rural hub** offering internet access and providing tourist information, transportation and public services information and e-government services.
- **Secure effective implementation of 'rural-proofing'** – designed so that all key government policies are checked for their impact on rural communities.

## Stronger for the Environment

Our environment is under sustained threat. Increased levels of polluting gases are accelerating the pace at which climate change is occurring. Protection of the marine environment is woefully inadequate with toxins and raw sewage being pumped into the sea on a regular basis. A deficient waste management strategy makes the prospect of achieving EU targets and reducing our reliance on landfill look bleak.

Sustainable development – meeting the needs of today's society while protecting resources for future generations – is a principle at the heart of SDLP policy. We are stronger for the environment, with ambitious all-Ireland proposals to protect one of our most precious assets – our distinctive countryside. We are dedicated to upholding environmental rights including good quality air, clean waters and thriving animal and plant life to ensure a better Ireland not only in our lifetime but for future generations.

### SDLP Goals:

#### Waste Management

- Develop a **waste management strategy** on the basis of North-South and East-West co-operation, to move away from landfill and maximise opportunities to reduce, reuse and recycle.
- **Increase recycling targets** and ensure widespread access to recycling facilities, ensuring that every household has access to a recycling bin or regular multi-material kerbside recycling collections.
- Lobby for legislative change including **economic incentives** to reduce, reuse and recycle; an increased landfill tax; and landfill bans for specific materials.

- Legislate for a **tax on plastic bags**.
- Introduce legislation with **tougher penalties** to prevent illegal dumping.
- Examine the health and environmental **impact of energy recovery methods** including thermal processes as an option of last resort after opportunities for recycling and composting have been exhausted.

#### Pollution

- Establish an **All-Ireland Independent Environmental Protection Agency** to improve government and private sector accountability.
- Introduce a **Marine Act** that legislates for a spatial planning strategy to ensure sustainability of our seas and to address issues of pollution and habitat protection as well as providing for enhanced research into marine life.
- Continue our campaign for the immediate cessation of reprocessing and Mox production at **Sellafield** and lobby for the earliest possible closure of the whole plant.
- **Increase penalties** – polluters should be required to pay not just for the damage done – but also for restoration of the habitat to its prior condition.

#### Climate Change

Road transport and fossil fuels are the largest contributors to Carbon Dioxide emissions. SDLP Goals:

- Develop and **invest in public transport** – a key factor in tackling emissions.
- **Strengthen targets** to ensure that carbon dioxide emissions are reduced to 20% below 1990 levels by 2012.
- Develop a long-term **energy strategy** that will include targets for the reduction of the North's use of

fossil fuels as well as targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

- Develop **renewable energy** sources.

## Maintaining Biodiversity

- Campaign for the provision of appropriate **resources** an improved **management** of important wildlife sites.

## Sustainable Development

- Urgently implement a Sustainable Development **Strategy** including the establishment of a time-bound forum on sustainable development, with representation from voluntary bodies, relevant agencies and government departments to drive the strategy forward.

## GM Foods

- Continue to **oppose the development of GM crops** on the grounds of inadequate reassurance on the implications for health and the long term transfer of modified genes.

## Education

- Widen children's knowledge and outlook by ensuring that **outdoor education** is included in **Citizenship classes** in the new curriculum.

## Planning

The planning system requires wholesale reform. Policy must centre on sustainable development, balancing respect for the environment with the needs of communities living on the land. It should not unduly inhibit the diversification and development of rural businesses. SDLP Goals:

- **Strengthen and clarify the policy framework** within which

decisions are made. This can reduce ambiguity about the types of developments that will be permitted.

- **Streamline the process** with a target to reduce by half the overall time taken for decisions.
- **Within the context of a reformed and streamlined system**, improve public consultation at an earlier stage to minimise formal disputes later and introduce a right of third party appeal for bona fide cases.
- **Improve enforcement** of planning decisions and increase penalties for breach.

## Stronger for Culture, Arts & Leisure

Under direct rule, investment in culture, arts and leisure pursuits has been cut. The recent budget allocation reduced funding for the arts leaving the Arts Council with a substantially lower budget than its counterparts in England, Scotland and Wales. The implementation of the EU Charter for Regional and Minority Languages has made little progress due to an inconsistent and uncoordinated approach by government.

The SDLP recognises that cultural and leisure activities have the capacity to enrich lives, assist personal development, promote social inclusion and strengthen communities. We value and want to develop all the diverse aspects of our national cultures, island-wide. By investing in leisure opportunities we are able to enhance health and well-being of the whole community and also improve community relations. We have demonstrated our commitment on these issues, lobbying successfully for increased funding for the Sports Council and the Northern Ireland Events Company.

### SDLP Goals:

- Develop **all-island culture, arts & leisure strategies**.

### Cultural Heritage:

- Monitor the implementation of the **European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages** and ensure its proper functioning.

- Continue our campaign for a new **“Irish Language Act”** to provide full legal recognition to Irish, create parity of esteem between English and Irish. We want to extend opportunities to deal with public bodies through Irish.
- Ensure recognition for **Irish in the Bill of Rights**.
- Increase funding for the **Irish Language Film and TV** fund to allow for the extension of the fund from 3 to 5 years.
- Secure enhanced **regional autonomy for BBC Northern Ireland** to facilitate development of local writing and production, including Irish language and Ulster-Scots productions. Ensure that the new BBC Charter contains a commitment to the provision of an Irish Language Service from the licence fee.
- Continue to lobby for **additional Irish language broadcasting** by the BBC.
- Bring the Irish-medium pre-school **teacher-pupil ratio** into line with the English-medium sector and Integrated sector to help the Irish-medium sector enhance its function within pre-school education and better meet children’s all round developmental needs.
- Develop a **cultural heritage programme** in schools.
- Establish a **Resource Unit in the Department of Education** for Irish as a subject in English-medium schools.
- Secure **increased funding to Foras na Gaeilge** to enable Irish language organisations to implement agreed plans.
- Establish a **Cultural and Historical Archive**.
- Ensure **all-island coverage of RTE television and TG4** and increased funding for Irish medium television.

## Arts

Arts have a key role in the promotion of well-being, education and community morale. Arts must be accessible to all groups in society and must be connected to the community.

### SDLP Goals:

- Increase **funding for the Arts Council** to ensure parity with England, Scotland and Wales.
- Develop a **cross-departmental strategy** linking all relevant agencies in the development and promotion of community arts.
- Establish a **Northern Ireland Theatre Company**.
- Maximise the economic viability of the local film industry.

## Sport and Leisure Activities:

Equality and inclusion are at the heart of our beliefs and we recognise the contribution that sport and physical exercise can make in terms of social inclusion as well as health and well-being.

### SDLP Goals:

- Promote a **2-hour weekly minimum** time allocation on the **school curriculum** for sport & physical activity.
- Devise and resource a **cross-departmental sport and physical activity strategy** to provide for quality, accessible leisure facilities for all communities, linked to the broader strategy to promote a healthy lifestyle, tackle obesity and reduce preventable illness.

- **Encourage greater physical activity** amongst adults as approximately 21% of men and 24 % of women are obese with a further 47% of men and 33% of women considered overweight.
- **Invest in community sport**, ensuring that all areas avail of the Community Sport Programme resulting in the development of programmes tailored to the needs of the community and targeting under-represented groups to promote social inclusion.
- Recognise and treat **sport as a central element** in **cultural development** and a significant sector of the **economy**.
- Allocate funds to **implement the strategic development plans** drawn up for Gaelic football and rugby, on a proportionate level with soccer. Gaelic sports and rugby benefit from major voluntary input but should, in addition, receive parity of recognition from government.
- **Support creation of an all-Ireland soccer team**.
- Invest in the creation of opportunities for talented young athletes to excel - including the provision of an **Olympic-size swimming pool** and ensuring that, as plans progress for a regional stadium, they do so in partnership with all sporting sectors and social partners and target social need.
- Expand and develop **leisure schemes** developed by the Probation Board and others as a means of targeting and reducing **anti-social/anti-community behaviour**.

## Stronger for Education

Education is a human right. Moreover, a well-resourced education system is a powerful tool in tackling poverty, creating equality of opportunity and building a healthy, cohesive society.

The SDLP is appalled by recent announcements of cuts to education services. This is why our members resigned from Education & Library Boards. Together with the abolition of the Children's Fund and Social Inclusion Fund (which the SDLP worked hard to create) these cuts are key examples of the cost of the political stalemate and direct rule. The SDLP has a strategy for the restoration of the Assembly, putting decision-making back into the hands of committed local representatives.

The education system should enable *every* student to maximise his or her potential, in academic, vocational and creative terms. Our education system produces some of the best results in Europe for many of our children but a significant number of students still leave school with few or no qualifications. We believe that through reform it is possible to remove present inequalities, maintain and enhance the highest standards of the present and offer greater opportunities to all children.

## SDLP Goals

### Post-Primary Reform

- **Invest in education** to maintain and enhance the quality of educational experiences for all children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- **End the eleven plus and academic selection** for post-primary education to create equality of opportunity, broaden choices and enhance standards for all.
- **Oppose** efforts to use **new pupil profiles as academic selection 'by the back door'**. Rather, profiles should **inform choice and decision-making** throughout a child's educational career, providing an ongoing record of the full range of a student's achievements and encouraging pupils and parents to take pride in all types of learning and development.
- Introduce **all-ability, co-educational education** based on parental choice of sector (controlled, maintained, integrated or Irish language).
- **Guarantee *all children***, regardless of which school they attend, **access to a wide *choice* of subject areas and experiences** catering for all interests and abilities.
- **Increase co-operation between schools** to offer wider choices to all students and improve access to resources; the SDLP will support the creation of **voluntary networks of schools** to facilitate this.
- **Preserve rural schools**, an important part of the fabric of rural communities.
- **Replace 'A' Levels with a broader post-16 curriculum** to widen career options for young adults.

## Acknowledging Special Needs

- Ensure that the **Special Educational Needs Order** is implemented effectively to enable **children with a disability** to attend **mainstream schools** if desired; extra teacher-training and classroom support must be available to make this work in the interests of child, teacher and class-mates.
- Urgently progress plans to improve provision for children with autism **spectrum disorders** including the implementation of the Taskforce recommendations and measures to increase choice in respect of programmes and approaches. [see also equality section]
- **Invest in services for young adults** with learning disabilities (post 19), linking health and employment to training provision and making better use of existing facilities.

## Investing in Early Years education

- **Invest more in early years learning** and family support, acknowledging community (as well as statutory) groups as valued service providers and enabling them to invest in training and future development.
- **Develop and fund integrated early years care** incorporating the full range of services including breakfast clubs, educational provision, child care and after school clubs, family support services, health care and more.
- **Fund & implement the Foundation Stage Primary Curriculum** for 4&5 year-old which focuses on learning through play and practical activities, delaying formal learning until year 3.
- Explore the possibility of introducing **modern languages** at primary school.

## Citizenship

- **Increase funding** to strengthen links between **schools and businesses** and improve links with **public and voluntary bodies**, working with them and with schools to devise and implement an **active citizens programme**, to run alongside the citizenship curriculum. This would build on the success of existing environmental and other schemes, to promote social responsibility, participation and the beneficial use of leisure time among young people.
- Expand the citizenship agenda to include **financial awareness & consumer rights**.

## Supporting the profession, managing change

- **Increase support for teachers**, giving greater attention to **health and well-being issues** amongst the teaching profession.
  - **Implement** changes proposed in the **Curran Report Part II**, to improve working conditions.
  - Restore **pay parity** with England & Wales.
  - Secure extension of **legislation protecting teachers** in cases of **false allegations**, to Northern Ireland.
  - Fund Colleges in the North to teach and examine the **Irish language qualification** required to teach in the Republic.
  - **Ensure that change is managed in partnership with teachers**, parents and governors. Closer relationships between schools and parents are essential.
- See also sections on Irish language, Social Inclusion, Health, Regional Development and Transport.

## Stronger for Health & Care

Since the return to direct rule, waiting lists for outpatient care have increased sharply while waiting times for in-patient services remain at unacceptable levels. Rising instances of preventable illness, lengthy waits for care packages and housing adaptations place even greater demand on acute care services.

We recall our commitment in the November 2003 manifesto: “we will work to secure major investment in an acute hospital in Omagh to meet the needs of the people of Tyrone”. We regret that the election result then and the continued suspension have not helped to pursue these commitments successfully. For the SDLP proper accessible and sustainable acute services for the people of Tyrone and the wider Mid-Ulster area is still a key priority, while recognising the concern about the apparent rundown of services in this area and the future service deficit which people fear. We call for a special taskforce to report back within a fixed number of months on acute and other services in Tyrone and the wider Mid-Ulster area. This service-focused exercise for the area must not undermine wider strategic commitments.

The SDLP is committed to ensuring access for all to a high quality, well-managed health service, free at the point of use. We believe that good quality care is a basic human right and that investment can bring enormous benefits to society. We have demonstrated our commitment in this regard – for example, the regional cancer centre could not have been built without SDLP Ministers securing resources based on RRI. This initiative also underscores the need to restore devolution.

The SDLP values the commitment and care provided by health professionals. We want to build on their valuable work to create a consistently high quality health service for all those who wish to avail of it.

### SDLP Goals:

#### · **Increased Investment**

We are committed to **passing on every penny of health spending increases** made available by Barnett or any replacement formula **directly to front line health and social services** not bureaucracy. Effective targeting and efficient use of these funds means real priority for areas of greatest need.

#### · **Structural Reform**

Use the Review of Public Administration to reshape health structures to **reduce bureaucracy and devote increased resources for the delivery of front line services.**

#### · **Improved audit and accountability**

We will ensure that **resources allocated to health** will be **spent efficiently** through **increasing financial accountability** without unnecessary bureaucracy.

#### · **Primary care**

Over 90% of care is delivered at primary level. We will work towards a **well-resourced primary care-led service** with **real partnership between GPs and health professionals** in order to respond to local need and reduce demands on acute services.

- **A Positive Health Agenda**

**We must** shift the focus of health strategy **further towards** preventative approaches. **SDLP supports initiatives to promote a healthy lifestyle, to reduce smoking and increase physical activity and improve diet.** The SDLP supports a ban on smoking in the workplace.

## **Access to services**

- **Major investment in acute hospital services for Tyrone**  
Developing **accessible and sustainable services for the people of Tyrone and the wider Mid-Ulster** area remains a key priority. SDLP would establish a special taskforce to report within a fixed number of months on acute and other services in Tyrone and the wider Mid-Ulster area. This service-focused exercise for this area must not undermine any wider strategic commitments.
- **Better rural access to services**  
We want to see **principles of equality and rural-proofing deliver local hospitals across the North** that can meet everyday needs and stabilise life-threatening conditions.
- **Ending the post-code lottery**  
It is unacceptable in today's society that certain medicines are available in certain areas and yet unavailable in others. **Local needs must be addressed while ensuring consistently high standards of care.**
- **Access to affordable NHS Dental Treatment**  
**Increase spending on dental care and update contracts governing dentists,** ensuring parity with England and Wales to improve preventative care and overall oral health.

## **Cleaner hospitals, better staffing, better working**

- **Fully integrate hygiene and cleaning** standards in hospital wards back into **hospital management** and explore new ways of fighting hospital-acquired infection such as MRSA.
- The short-term solution of **overseas recruitment is inadequate, uneconomical and unfair** to developing countries trying to build up their own services. The solution is a rational strategy to increase the number of staff in priority areas. Past employment practices are no longer acceptable; the SDLP will work to **encourage modern, flexible work practices** to attract, for example, parents of young children back to the NHS.
- **Tackling discharge delays and supporting independent living**  
Freeing the 10-15% of beds currently 'blocked' by those awaiting care packages or housing adaptations would significantly impact on waiting lists. SDLP will lobby for **additional care packages and expansion of rehabilitation services** to ensure that people regain their independence after a hospital stay.
- **Increased Strategic Planning**  
The SDLP supports the **introduction of 'Service Frameworks'** to deliver co-ordinated strategies and ensure best practice in the treatment of Coronary Heart Disease, Cancer, Older People & Neo-natal Care. The Diabetes Taskforce Report recommendations should also be implemented in full.

## All-Ireland co-operation

- All-Ireland co-operation should be explored to **maximise opportunities** for **investment in specialist services** and equipment which would be otherwise unaffordable in either jurisdiction.

## Nursing and Personal Care for Older people

- During devolution the SDLP secured the funds to introduce free nursing care; the SDLP remains supportive of the Royal Commission proposals on **free personal care** and will continue to work towards this goal.

## Meeting Mental Health needs

- Address the **chronic lack of child and adult mental health services** as a matter of urgency.
- Ensure that **adequate funding is made available for the Review of Mental Health** to deliver a strategy offering support and early intervention in the community, improving the capacity and quality of hospital and residential care and addressing the worryingly high suicide rate, particularly among young men.

## Tackling Drug Addiction

Growing use of illicit drugs and addiction are major problems in our society. We want to secure **additional resources for the implementation of the Drug and Alcohol Strategies**. Given the connection between drugs, crime and unemployment, this should be seen as an investment as well as a public obligation.

## Stronger for warm, affordable homes

Housing has not been prioritised under direct rule and local problems are not being addressed. Northern Ireland faces a shortage of social housing as homes are being sold faster than they are being built. Meanwhile affordability is fast becoming a major issue, particularly for first-time buyers. These problems are compounded by weaknesses in planning and development policy. The net result is that many families continue to live in temporary and unsuitable accommodation and young people are being forced away from the areas in which they grew up. The government has launched disparate legislation on homelessness, house sales and the private rented sector but in ten years has failed to conduct an over-arching policy review bringing together these various strands to produce a coherent strategy.

The SDLP is stronger on housing. The party was formed out of the civil rights campaign for adequate housing. We acknowledge housing as a fundamental human right and attach great importance to the link between good quality, warm homes, good health, educational attainment and economic development.

## SDLP Goals:

### Addressing housing shortages

- **Develop a new Housing Strategy**, properly linked to Regional Development Strategy and Planning policy.
- **Ensure better planning and co-operation between public and private sector** to achieve plan-led development producing high quality, mixed use developments with water, sewerage, energy, communications and transport networks in place in good time.
- **Revisit the inadequate and biased housing growth indices** under the Regional Development Strategy.
- Implement proposals accepted recently by government to transfer to the **Housing Executive management of the Social Housing Development Programme**.
- **Review the operation of Housing Associations**.

### Tackling Homelessness

- Implement the **Promoting Social Inclusion report** on Homelessness.
- Make publication of the **Homelessness Strategy a statutory obligation** on the Housing Executive.
- Ensure full implementation of the Strategy by delivering the necessary **co-operation and resources**.
- **Break the cycle leading to homelessness through comprehensive long-term social support** addressing educational, financial and wider issues including anti-social behaviour.
- Introduce a statutory **right to review and right to appeal Housing Executive decisions** on the provision of assistance under the Homelessness legislation.
- Enhance support for **homeless teenagers and care-leavers**.

## Good Quality, Warm Homes

- **Improve quality**, using planning powers to place pressure on builders to complete existing developments to satisfactory standards before they are granted permission for new developments.
- **Tackle fuel poverty**, bringing together all the necessary resources and authority to target need in a systematic fashion [see Fuel Poverty section, under 'Combating Poverty'].

## Improving Affordability

- Ensure an **increase in the supply** of new houses (as above).
- **Expand the Co-ownership Scheme**, which is not only successful but is in a position to make a multi-million pound return to the department each year!

## Addressing Anti-social/ Anti-Community behaviour

- Develop and fund a more **effective inter-agency strategy** to tackle this problem at its roots, addressing underlying issues including alcohol and drug abuse, educational and employment issues. [see also policing & justice and sport and leisure sections]

## Private Rentals

- **Extend mandatory licensing to all landlords** to raise standards and accountability.
- Improve **protection for tenants of private landlords**, by introducing a requirement to produce a **written contract** with set minimum terms and a new scheme where **deposits are held by an independent body**.

## Housing Benefit

- **Review the Housing Benefit system**, addressing rent levels and procedures for assessment, payment and review of claims.
- Secure **adequate finance** each year to deliver the **Supporting People Fund**.

## Rental Arrears & Mortgage Debt

- Introduce **new guidance for social landlords on rental arrears management** requiring **publication of procedures** and the introduction of **debt counselling** so that problems are addressed quickly and homelessness is prevented.
- Improve **regulation of mortgage lenders** to encourage responsible lending.
- **Increase funding for independent agencies providing financial advice** (see Combating Poverty section) and devise system to trigger timely support for those who find themselves in difficulties.

## Stronger for Equality & Human Rights

The SDLP is committed to promoting equality and protecting human rights. As the party of the civil rights movement, equality and human rights are not just slogans – they are part of our founding philosophy.

Now we want to take forward our work to ensure that the Agreement's promise on equality and human rights is delivered for all.

### The Damage of Direct Rule

- **Children's Fund abolished – even though one in three kids live in poverty.**
- **Single Equality Bill on the long finger.**
- **Rights for disabled kids in education delayed.**
- **Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission in crisis.**
- **Go slow on action to tackle the unemployment differential.**

### Promoting Equality

#### SDLP goals:

- Introduce a **Single Equality Bill**, to harmonise protection against discrimination upwards and guarantee equality for all groups.
- **Outlaw discrimination in all land sales**, so that everybody has an equal chance to buy land.
- Impose **tougher penalties on persistent discriminators**, including exemplary damages.
- **Eliminate the differential in unemployment rates** between the two main communities by 2011. See further below.

- **Vigorously oppose any dilution of fair employment monitoring** – it is a vital protection against sectarianism.
- **End discriminatory rules** restricting eligibility for key civil service posts to UK nationals only.
- Create a **new Equality Tribunal** to hear all discrimination complaints.
- Oppose proposals to put Justice and Equality into the one department. The SDLP will not give equality to the securocrats.
- Introduce **equal pay audits** to eliminate the gap between men and women's earnings. We will minimise the burden on business by timing these with fair employment reviews.
- Develop a **comprehensive gender equality strategy**, addressing in particular the issue of childcare.
- **Outlaw age discrimination.**
- Implement remaining recommendations of the **Disability Rights Taskforce**, in particular to ensure access to transport.
- Ensure **full rights for children with special educational needs** through new legislation.
- Ensure the delivery of the new **race equality strategy**.
- Develop a joined up strategy for **LGBT equality** and take a firm stand against homophobia.
- Provide training for party representatives against all forms of intolerance, including racism and homophobia.
- Ensure **proper accommodation for travellers** in line with their established needs.
- Fund groups involved in equality consultations and ensure the full development of section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act.
- Deliver an integrated cross-departmental strategy to **review and address the range of needs of migrant**

**workers** and their families, raising awareness of their entitlements, and helping them to access social welfare, education, health and other services.

- Campaign for the UK government to sign the **UN Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers**.
- Develop a resourced Children's strategy – to match the internationally praised southern strategy.

## Guaranteeing Human Rights

### SDLP goals:

- Develop a comprehensive and **forward-looking Bill of Rights** for Northern Ireland by agreement between political parties and civic society.
- Ensure that the Government honours its welcome commitment to give **powers of inquiry** to the Human Rights Commission.
- **Credible appointments** to the Human Rights Commission.
- Champion an **All-Ireland Charter of Rights** to guarantee the highest standards of human rights protection throughout the island.

## Stronger For Social Inclusion

37% of our children grow up in poverty yet there is no strategy for co-ordinated remedial action across government departments and agencies. The long-awaited Anti-Poverty Strategy published in 2004 contained no targets or detailed action plans and made no mention of dedicated resources. Worse, direct rulers have abolished some of the progressive measures the SDLP worked hard to introduce such as the Children's Fund and the Social Inclusion Fund.

The SDLP has successfully championed equality and social and economic rights for decades. We secured their inclusion in the Agreement and further reference in the Joint Declaration of April 2003. We will continue to work towards the implementation of an effective Anti-Poverty Strategy that can unleash the potential of all our people to contribute to the building of a prosperous economy and a fair and inclusive society.

### SDLP Goals:

- Develop urgently a detailed **Anti-poverty Strategy**, backed by dedicated resources. The strategy to include specific targets, suggested actions and programmes and details on the Ministerial led forum. There should be a particular emphasis on children in poverty, disabled people, lone parents and on eliminating differentials between the two communities in poverty and unemployment.
- Work for an increased **minimum income guarantee** to lift families out of poverty.
- **Create a fund to target social need**, acting as a top-up fund for departments that skew resources to areas of greatest need.

- Extend the work of the **Taskforce on Employability and Long Term Unemployment** to tackle unemployment black-spots.
- Give preference to **government contractors** that recruit from the **long-term unemployed**.
- **Eliminate the differential in unemployment** between the two communities by 2011.
- Implement the **money & debt advice strategy**.
- Co-operate with CAB, Credit Unions and others to put together the resources necessary to **protect people from loan sharks and assist those with social debt problems**.
- Establish a **Financial Services Authority** office in Northern Ireland
- **Provide funding bodies with all available research and deprivation indicators** to ensure that resources are targeted at areas of need and promote consolidation of applications procedures to make resources more easily accessible.

## Child Poverty

- Agree a Northern Ireland-specific **target to reduce Child Poverty** as part of the **Anti-poverty Strategy and Children's Strategy**.
- **Increase resources** for children's services.
- **Extend the children's half-price travel scheme** to 16-18 year-olds in full-time education.
- Provide **fresh fruit** in schools and **wholesome school meals**.

## Older people, poverty & social inclusion

- **Increase the basic state pension**.
- **Implement** the recently published strategy "**Ageing in an Inclusive Society**", securing dedicated resources to do so.
- Secure **mainstream funding** for independent advice bodies (see below) and voluntary sector bodies like Help the Aged and Age Concern.
- Co-ordinate a **new strategy to eradicate fuel poverty** (see below) including special measures for older people.
- Reduce age limit for free **TV licence**.
- Work to secure free **personal care**.
- Agree **all-Ireland scheme for free travel for older people**, through mutual recognition of older peoples' identification, to boost tourism as well as improving cohesion of rights and benefits island-wide.
- Work in **partnership with older people and the voluntary sector** on a formal basis so that policy is better informed and older peoples' needs more effectively met.

## Fuel poverty

Tackling fuel poverty is not just a social justice imperative but a sound economic investment. People in warm homes are healthier, place less strain on the health service and take fewer days off work through ill-health. In addition, jobs are created installing systems and energy efficiency measures.

The current strategy is fragmented and does not effectively target those in greatest need. The Department for Social Development has responsibility yet lacks overall control of the various funds and schemes involved.

## SDLP Goals:

- **Consolidate resources and authority within coherent structure** so that strategy and planning can systematically target those in need, rather than focusing exclusively on age or benefits dependency. All relevant bodies and organisations need to be brought together including energy-suppliers, the regulatory authority, the Housing Executive, charitable organisations etc. The success of the ADHAZ scheme should be built upon in terms of effective targeting and successful partnership working.
- **Broaden the Warm Homes Scheme** beyond energy efficiency measures to allow installation of heating systems so that a single intervention ensures a warm home.
- Commission the Social Economy Agency to explore, in association with Age Concern, **new initiatives to reduce fuel costs for older peoples**, examining best practice elsewhere for potential application.

## Social Security and Tax Credits

- **Simplify and streamline** benefit application and delivery.
- **Use technology better** to avoid endless form-filling.
- **Reform the Tax Credit system**, making award notices clearer, calling an amnesty on over-payments resulting from Inland Revenue errors, providing better guidelines on how people can challenge recovery of over-payments and enabling the public to access information and support through Social Security offices.
- **Cancel the age requirement for the mobility component of DLA** so that parents of infants with a disability can seek support.

- **Reform oral appeal hearings** to make the process more user-friendly.
- **Offer greater assistance in completing forms** to those applying for Disability Living Allowance or Incapacity Benefit.
- **Increase the number of independent doctors** to gather correct information at the outset of claims.
- **Decrease paperwork** so that appeals can be dealt with promptly.
- Improve the service to applicants so that, once in contact with the system, **all relevant benefits are identified** and processed as quickly as possible.
- Appoint a senior member of staff at each office to **take responsibility for Carers' needs** which are more complex than most, often involving benefits for dependants as well as benefits for carers themselves. Increased flexibility is required so that, for example, staff can make home visits to those unable to leave the house.
- **Invest in Citizens' Advice Bureau** to support their work addressing injustices and loop-holes in the system, challenging government to perform and serve better.

## Stronger for a Shared Society

The SDLP believes that we must all take a strong stand against hatred and intolerance – be it sectarianism, racism, homophobia or other forms of prejudice.

We are determined to build a shared, pluralist society where everybody can live together freely and without fear.

Work to tackle hatred and encourage sharing go hand in hand. If we do not protect people against hate, there will be no sharing. If we do not encourage sharing, we risk generating hate.

### SDLP Goals

#### · **A new Sectarian and Hate Crimes Act including:**

- A total overhaul of our laws on **incitement to hatred** to make them effective and also to tackle hatred on the internet.
- **Preventing bands that promote hate language** or use paramilitary symbols from parading.
- **Outlawing flags and graffiti** on public property, including repeal of laws requiring the flying of union flags from government buildings.
- Requiring public authorities to agree a **common strategy for removal of flags** etc, including use of contractors backed by police and prosecutions.
- **Introducing regulation for bonfires**, including payment for damage done.
- **Outlawing sectarian chanting** at football matches.
- A duty on every District Council to devise **plans for promoting sharing and tackling hate**.
- A new **Good Relations Commission** to spearhead the drive for better relations and supervise District Councils.

- Bringing together political parties, churches, employers, trade unions and the community/voluntary sector to agree **action across society to promote sharing and combat hate**.
- **Mainstreaming good relations** into community development work.
- Co-ordinated action in **education for sharing and cross-community contact**, involving schools, teacher training, curricular development and the Youth Service.
- Encouraging **mixed estates**. In particular, those guilty of sectarian and other harassment should be moved, not their victims.
- Ensuring **shared spaces**. Joined up efforts by the planning service and the police will be essential to ensure the creation and protection of shared spaces.
- **North/South common action on racism**, incitement to hatred law reform and to promote better community relations throughout Ireland.

## Stronger for Victims, Truth & Remembrance

The SDLP believes that sustainable peace and true reconciliation will only be achieved if we acknowledge and account for the past and redress the suffering of victims and survivors.

The SDLP is concerned that victims' needs are not being met. The SDLP has a comprehensive package of proposals that places their needs and rights at the centre – not those of the victim-makers. We are determined to deliver on the Agreement's promise to victims.

## SDLP Goals:

- **Convene the Victims' and Survivors' Forum.** The Forum will allow victims and survivors to design a truth and remembrance process that puts them first.
- **Victims' Commissioner** – we welcome the government's recent announcement of the establishment of a Victims' Commissioner. We will work to ensure that any Commissioner raises the profile of victims' needs, promotes victims' interests and oversees the co-ordination of services and funding.
- **Implement a new overarching victims' strategy** to increase the effectiveness of service delivery and to accommodate all practical needs.
- **Improve monetary compensation** available for victims, ensuring decent levels, awarded on the basis of need.
- **Redistribute criminal assets** seized by the Assets Recovery Agency to victims' groups, as an **additional** source of funding.

## Truth and Remembrance

The SDLP has long believed in the need for a mechanism for truth and remembrance for our society to move forward.

Below is our proposal. But we are determined that victims and survivors themselves have the greatest say in shaping any truth and remembrance mechanism through the Victims' and Survivors' Forum.

## SDLP Goals:

- Tony Blair gave his word publicly that there would be a public inquiry into the murder of Pat Finucane. The SDLP will keep the pressure on him to do so – at home and abroad.

- We welcome the public inquiries into the murder of Robert Hamill, Rosemary Nelson and Billy Wright. We will work to ensure that these inquiries are not impeded and have the resources that they need.
- The **SDLP will support all families seeking justice** – as we have done for the Conlon family, the families of the Guildford Four and the Maguire Seven, for families like those of Rosemary Nelson, Robert Hamill, Robert McCartney, David McIlwaine, Gerry Conlon, Peter McBride, Colin Worton and many many others.
- We suggest a **Truth Body**, of independent, international standing, to direct the process of truth and remembrance.
- We would task the Truth Body with compiling a **register of victims**, open to all, to allow those injured or bereaved to have their stories heard, formally recorded and held in a public archive so that what happened to them is never forgotten.
- We will allow victims' families to have the Truth Body **re-open police files** – and carry out investigations – as an alternative to the police doing so, where families want this.
- The SDLP would support a **'Day of Reflection'** in recognition and remembrance of past events.
- The SDLP will continue to press for increased action to be taken on finding the **bodies of the disappeared**, ensuring adequate time, resources and modern technologies are employed.

## Stronger for the Rule of Law, Justice & Safety

Communities in the North want the rule of law – not people acting like they are the law. Communities are calling out for decent policing – not backstreet justice. They want protection against crime.

The SDLP is the only nationalist party working to deliver this – through the Policing Board and the District Policing Partnerships.

And we are winning. As the Oversight Commissioner has said, there has been “excellent progress” in implementing Patten. Communities are also starting to get the protection they deserve.

For example:

- **We are fighting crime.** Sectarian and hate crime have been taken seriously at last. Working with the community car crime in West Belfast is down over 80%, sectarian crime in Larne is down over 87.5% .
- **The number of Catholics in the police has already more than doubled.** In five year's time it will be 30%.
- **The culture of policing is changing** – with a dramatic fall in the police use of force. For example:
  - No plastic bullets fired in two and a half years.
  - Complaints about baton use a third of what they were in 2001.
  - Live fire shootings a quarter of what they were in 2001.
  - Other complaints about the use of firearms a third of what they were in 2001.
- **The old Special Branch has gone.** It has been replaced by new structures which, in the words of the Oversight

Commissioner “meet the best practice requirements of any police force in the world.”

- **The Police Ombudsman is investigating human rights abuse and wrongdoing** – from the murder of Sam Devenney in 1969 to the botched Omagh investigation.
- **The Full Time Reserve is being phased out** – despite huge resistance from anti-Patten politicians.

None of this would have happened if the SDLP had not been on the Policing Board. All of this has happened only three years into Patten's ten year programme of change.

“there is good reason for optimism that all of the Patten recommendations will be fully implemented within a reasonable timeframe.”

### Report of the Oversight Commissioner, 2004

But our work is not done – and more is to come. This is our agenda for law, justice and safety.

### The Rule of Law

- The SDLP believes that **everybody is equal before the law** and nobody is above the law. **We will expose cover ups wherever we find them.** Be it the State in the Finucane case. Be it Sinn Féin and the IRA in the McCartney case. Be it loyalists in the McIlwaine case.
- Backed by democratic Ireland, **we will demand that all political parties accept the rule of law and policing.** We stand against intimidation of people working to get decent policing, such as members of District Policing Partnerships.

## Delivering Patten and Proper Policing

- **We will hold the police to all targets against crime set by the Policing Board.**
- **We welcome improvements in how the police handle hate crimes.** More needs to be done, working with community leaders, to ensure that all communities have protection.
- We are pleased that there will be **Garda secondments to the PSNI– as well as lateral entry.** We will make sure that this happens in practice.
- We will continue to **oppose the use of plastic bullets** and will seek a safe non-lethal alternative.
- We welcome the closure of intrusive police stations like Carrickmore, Springfield Road and Andersonstown. **We will ensure a far reaching programme of closure of intrusive and militarised police stations.**
- We will push for **accessible and acceptable police stations.** There has been approval for defortification of over 42 stations. We will push this further still.
- We will continue to get **police officers out from behind their desks and onto the streets.** Closure of police stations that don't contribute to policing will help.
- **We will push for vacated police and army sites to be returned to community use,** building on Mark Durkan's Reinvestment and Reform Initiative.
- **We will argue for a routinely unarmed police service.**

## Parades and Criminal Justice

The SDLP:

- Welcomes the decision, advocated by the SDLP, to **bin the Quigley report.** We will remain vigilant to ensure that the Parades Commission is not undermined in its work.
- Welcomes the decision, advocated by the SDLP, to **give the Parades Commission power to regulate parade supporters.** We will work to ensure its implementation.
- Wants reasons given when criminal charges are dropped or not brought - as a rule, not an exception.
- Demands a **new leadership of the Prosecution Service,** as the Criminal Justice Review envisaged.
- **Opposes control orders.** People should not be deprived of their liberty without a fair trial.
- Favours the creation of an **all-Ireland sex offenders register.**

## Devolving Justice

In the negotiations on devolution of justice and policing, the SDLP will:

- Argue for **devolution of justice and policing within 18 months.** This requires an end to paramilitary activity and stable political institutions.
- Ensure **no reduction in the powers of the Policing Board and the Police Ombudsman.**
- **Defend police primacy and oppose any role for MI5.**
- Seek a **single new Department to deal with both policing and justice issues.**
- **Ensure cross-community safeguards** so that there can be no return to the days of a unionist dominated Ministry of Home Affairs.

- Seek a **new generation of North-South bodies** including:
  - an All-Ireland Criminal Assets Bureau;
  - an All-Ireland Law Commission.

## Demilitarising the North

The SDLP believes that we are all entitled to a normal society. We welcome progress such as the closure of Girdwood Barracks – but are impatient for much more.

We will push for:

- **Radical demilitarisation over 9 months to be completed no later than Easter 2006 – by implementing the Joint Declaration.** Even if the IRA does not end its activity, we believe that 80% of the Joint Declaration can be implemented in 9 months. That includes:
  - demolition of all South Armagh towers;
  - an end to emergency legislation;
  - closure of joint police/army bases;
  - reduction in troop levels to 5,000 and below.
- **Publication of a British Government strategy on demilitarisation**, which they would be held to by the International Monitoring Commission.

## Public Safety

Public safety initiatives are spread across a number of government departments and agencies. That has meant fragmentation – and lives being lost.

The SDLP wants to:

- Bring together all aspects of public safety under **one main government unit**.
- Create an **all-Ireland Public Safety Body**.
- Implement the strategies on **home accidents prevention, workplace health, road safety and the fire cover review**.

## Road Safety

Scores of lives are lost annually on our roads. The SDLP wants to see this carnage stopped.

We seek:

- A holistic approach to road safety **involving education, enforcement and road improvements**.
- Full implementation of the **Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy**.
- Reduction of the acceptable **blood alcohol levels** for driving from 80mg/l to 50mg/l.
- Better highlighting of accident black spots.
- Increased **traffic calming measures** around schools, hospitals and residential areas.

## Emergency Services

The SDLP will push for:

- Increased resources to improve **ambulance response times** especially in rural areas.
- Increased **North-South co-operation** between the emergency services, examining areas of mutual concern e.g. training, road Safety

## Under-age Drinking

The SDLP will push for:

- enforcement of legislation on licensees against under-age drinking, with **more spot checks**.
- Implementation of the **Drug and Alcohol strategy** and the recommendations of "Reducing Alcohol Related Harm".
- **A proof-of-age scheme**.

## Stronger for International Development

The SDLP is committed to global co-operation and believes that this is the only viable way to tackle major issues that cross state boundaries such as poverty, international trade and environmental protection. Since our formation the party has been a member of the 'Socialist International' and has campaigned against injustice and conflict across the world.

The Tsunami disaster in Asia illustrates the importance of global co-operation in reconstructing communities hit by adversity. With the UK taking presidency of the EU and hosting the G8 Summit, 2005 offers a unique chance to set the agenda in terms of International Development. The SDLP will use this opportunity to lobby on Africa, climate change, aid, trade and debt relief to ensure that these issues are kept on the global agenda.

### SDLP Goals:

- Continue to support the campaigns for the **cancellation of debt in the developing world** and the end of bonded labour and slavery.
- Support the **MakePovertyHistory** campaign, ensuring that wealthier countries increase aid to developing nations and ensuring that the aid works better for poor people.
- Lobby for accelerated progress in the achievement of **Millennium Development Goals**.
- Implement the recommendations from the Report of the **All-Party Group on International Development** including awareness raising and enhanced support for conflict resolution overseas.
- Promote **Fair Trade** goods and increased reliance on such products by public bodies. We support the Belfast

bid to become Ireland's first Fairtrade city and will encourage the establishment of Fairtrade towns and cities across the north.

- Campaign for fair treatment of **asylum seekers**, including an end to the use of prison for those awaiting hearings.
- **Protect migrant workers'** rights – promote union membership for all migrant workers and lobby the UK government to sign the **UN Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers**.
- Work to develop an integrated policy for all government departments leading to the provision of an appropriate **support service for migrants and their families** to ensure they are fully aware of social welfare, education, health & housing entitlements.
- Support the creation of a **Palestinian state**, while firmly opposing terrorism in the Middle East and elsewhere.
- Campaign for **greater investment in Iraq** to rebuild infrastructure and an increase in **humanitarian aid**.

### In the international arena, we will:

- Play our part in harnessing the forces of globalisation to eliminate world poverty through fair trade, building a global framework for labour mobility & developing a global environmental framework to tackle environmental issues.
- Advocate withdrawal of support for regimes that flout human rights.
- Argue that support for democratic national governments is central to tackling social and economic problems.
- Campaign for a successful WTO trade round that gives more opportunities to less developed countries.
- Champion the democratisation of global institutions including the UN, World Bank, IMF and WTO and

strengthening of international capability to protect victims of aggression.

- Be a consistent and persistent advocate of democracy, promoting human rights across the world.

## Stronger on EU Affairs

The SDLP is the only major and consistent advocate of EU membership amongst all the parties in the North. Membership of the EU has brought significant material benefits such as improved infrastructure, assistance for agriculture as well as improvements for industry through access to wider and open markets.

### SDLP Goals:

- Continue the campaign for **entry to the Euro zone**. In the interim we will work to promote the use of the Euro by businesses, individuals and public services.
- **Maximise opportunities of enlargement** to support business development and job creation.
- Continue to develop strategies designed to enable our businesses to make the most of the opportunities provided by the new single market of 450 million people.
- Support the **development of export opportunities** for Northern Ireland farmers in the wider EU.
- Build on the achievements of the **agri-food industry** to modernise and develop a top-class 21st century agri-food sector.
- Work to develop an all-Ireland position on reform of the **Common Fisheries Policy** to secure a sustainable future for Irish fishing.
- Campaign for the development of **Trans-European**

**Networks** in Transport, Energy and Telecommunications.

- Lobby for the completion and extension of Transport TEN's so that all parts of the North are connected to them.
- Build support for a **PEACE III programme**.
- Lobby for the most favourable treatment possible when the **EU regional development policy** rules are decided in 2006.
- Campaign for **increased EU support, aid and fair trade** to developing countries.
- Ensure that our Further and Higher Education systems participate fully in **EU education and training programmes**, broadening the horizons of our young people, and giving them marketable skills.

**A Better Way to  
a Better Ireland**



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