

General Election 2024 Manifesto Analysis for Faster and Fairer Climate Action

Coordinated by University College Dublin's Earth Institute
Commissioned by Friends of the Earth Ireland

28 November 2024

This report summarizes the findings from an independent evaluation of political party manifestos for Ireland's General Election 2024, commissioned by Friends of the Earth Ireland and coordinated by University College Dublin's (UCD) Earth Institute.

The independent judging committee included:

- Dr. Cara Augustenborg, Assistant Professor in Environmental Policy at UCD
- Prof. Hannah Daly, Professor in Sustainable Energy at University College Cork
- Prof. Mary Murphy, Professor of Sociology at Maynooth University

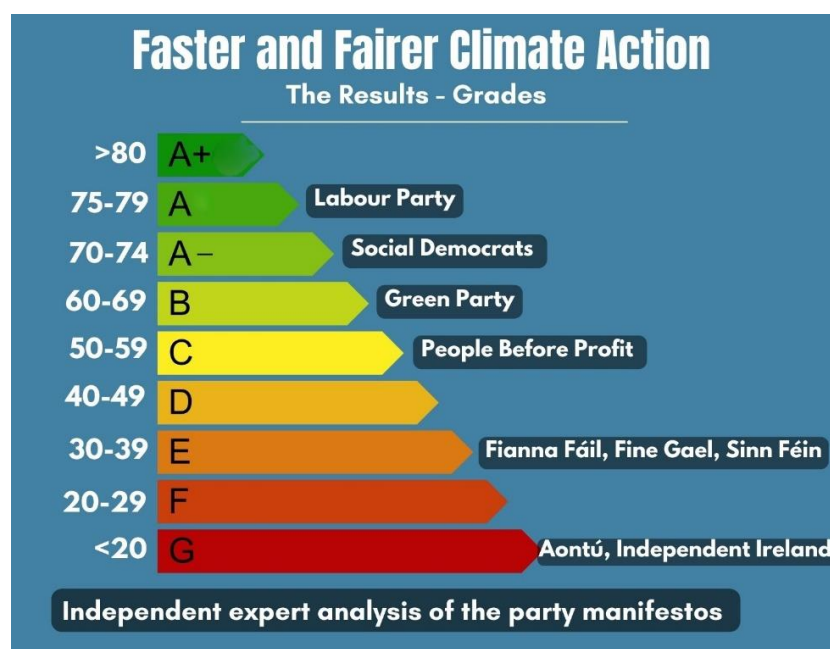
Methodology

The judges were asked to evaluate nine political party manifestos against the five core demands in Friends of the Earth Ireland's [Programme for Faster and Fairer Climate Action 2025-2030](#):

1. Government leadership, action and accountability, nationally and internationally
2. Warm homes for all with lower bills and no fossil fuels
3. Clean, affordable renewable energy for people, not data centers and big tech
4. Affordable, reliable, and accessible fossil-free transport
5. A fair deal for family farmers to feed Ireland and restore nature

The manifestos were judged against the set of more than 100 policy recommendations in the Programme for Faster and Fairer Climate Action, which was shared with the parties in advance. The policy recommendations were grouped according five categories. See Appendix One below for a summary list of the policy proposals, full detail in the [programme](#) itself. Parties were scored in each category according to the extent that their manifesto included commitments that aligned with Friends of the Earth policy recommendations. Demonstration of stronger commitments to the Programme, for example through greater level of detail in policy implementation and funding commitments, were scored higher.

The results are presented in below in graphic and table form:



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Table 1: Evaluation of political party manifestos in Ireland's General Election 2024 for faster and fairer climate action, coordinated by University College Dublin's Earth Institute and commissioned by Friends of the Earth Ireland

Climate Action category	Fianna Fáil	Fine Gael	Sinn Féin	Green Party	Labour Party	Soc Dems	People Before Profit	Aontú	Independent Ireland
	<i>Each of the five categories were scored out of 20 points</i>								
1.Leadership	8	11	6	15	20	15	9	0	0
2.Homes	9	9	8	11	16	15	15	1	1
3.Energy	4	7	8	11	12	11	13	3	1
4.Transport	5	6	4	13	14	12	8	2	1
5.Food	4	5	8	13	18	18	11	3	1
	<i>Total score for each political party is scored out of 100 points</i>								
Total score	30	38	33	63	79	71	56	10	4
Grade	E	E	E	B	A	A-	C	G	G

Grading legend: A+ (>80); A(75-79); A- (70-74); B (60-69); C(50-59); D(40-49); E(30-39); F(20-29); G(<20). If the 5 category scores don't add up to the total that is the effect of rounding each score.

Summary of results

The parties who received the highest scores in this assessment, especially Labour and Social Democrats, placed climate action as a key policy priority; detailed a comprehensive set of policies to deliver faster and fairer decarbonization; and viewed climate action as a lever to achieve positive outcomes in many other areas within their manifestos. This aligned closely with Friends of the Earth's Programme for Faster and Fairer Climate Action 2025-2030, which takes a people-centered approach to addressing climate change. It was promising to see several political parties, particularly the Labour Party, Social Democrats, the Green Party, and People Before Profit, considering climate issues in such depth. Within their manifestos, all political parties committed to accelerate construction of renewable energy infrastructure, and most parties, with the exception of Aontú, placed household energy retrofitting high on their agendas. However, climate action is still only a core priority for smaller parties. While larger parties are starting to show good progress in committing to renewable energy and retrofitting homes, their commitment to genuine, transformative climate action is still weak.

A key difference between the political parties who received failing grades (i.e. Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Sinn Féin, Aontú and Independent Ireland) compared to political parties with higher grades (i.e. Labour, Social Democrats, Green Party and People Before Profit) was that failing parties were far more focused on accelerating development of wind and solar infrastructure than curtailing the burning of fossil fuels. In other words, they answered only half of the climate question by not committing to phase out fossil fuels and stop building new fossil fuel infrastructure. While most political parties made the link between our dependency on fossil fuels and high energy prices, which impact our cost of living, failing parties had insufficient policies to end our dependence on these costly fuels. In contrast,

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the highest scoring parties were willing to “grasp the nettle” and propose transformative actions in thorny topics like aviation, roads and food policy.

Parties who received high scores in their approach to affordable, reliable, and accessible fossil-free transport demonstrated a commitment to end Ireland’s excessive car dependency. The three bigger parties (Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, and Sinn Féin) were very poor in this area, while Labour, Social Democrats and the Green Party provided detailed implementation plans in both public transport and cycling and walking infrastructure. The suggestion by both the Green Party and Labour to create a “Climate Ticket” to reduce the cost of public transport is an innovative solution that benefits both people and planet. With respect to aviation emissions, half the parties provided at least one immediate policy to address this (Sinn Féin, Green Party, Labour, and People Before Profit) while Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil, Social Democrats, Aontú and Independent Ireland did not.

Those who received failing grades also doggedly insisted on maintaining carbon intensive farming practices that will incentivize continued expansion of the beef and dairy herds, leading to further damage to water quality and climate change. Ending below-cost selling practices in supermarkets is a key structural change that would both support farmers and positively reform Ireland’s food policy, but only Sinn Féin, Aontú, Social Democrats, and the Labour Party provided policies to address this in their manifestos, which was a missed opportunity for others.

Quote from the judges:

After completing this assessment, the judges explained,

“This process was illuminating and gave insight into the coherence of each party’s engagement with the existential climate challenge. Parties who did best committed to systematic, ambitious, high-level interventions with significant impact. Their policies delivered both ecological and social outcomes and promised the necessary investment in state and institutional capacity to deliver on targets.

“For this evaluation, in order to show their commitment to deliver on Ireland’s climate pledge, political parties had to prioritize climate and nature across their manifesto, as well as providing credible, practical and detailed plans to deliver faster and fairer emissions cuts. We were positively surprised there was more than one political party capable of this. However, the larger political parties need to take a close look at the transformative policies smaller parties are proposing and follow suit if they intend to make Ireland a resilient, competitive, and healthy place to live and work.”

*- Dr. Cara Augustenborg, Prof. Hannah Daly, and Prof. Mary Murphy,
Independent judging committee coordinated by UCD’s Earth Institute*

Notable observations about each political party manifesto:

1. **Labour Party (79%)** - The Labour Party demonstrated an admirable level of coherence addressing climate change throughout their manifesto as one of six key missions used as a lever to achieve positive outcomes in other areas. Their systems approach instills confidence that the climate and biodiversity crisis has been considered in an integrated way. Their proposed Minister for Future Generations was novel, and their plans to expand energy retrofit offerings to vulnerable communities; tackle fossil fuel infrastructure head on; and develop safer cycling and walking infrastructure surpassed those of any other political party. Their manifesto lacked proposals to communicate climate change more effectively to the public or address fossil fuel subsidies, but overall Labour exceeded all other parties in the quality and detail of policies proposed in four out

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of the five categories of climate action.

2. **Social Democrats (71%)** - Like the Labour Party, the Social Democrats demonstrated their willingness to tackle thorny issues head on, particularly with respect to aviation, nitrates pollution; food policy reform; and engagement with civil society as part of the Just Transition. Unlike the Labour Party, the Social Democrats neglected to address areas such as the legal mandates of state bodies; minimum Building Energy Ratings; social housing retrofit; energy guarantees; and new fossil fuel infrastructure, but they did commit to ending fossil fuel subsidies; and integrating issues such as sprawl, traffic, and bike parking into County Development Plans.
3. **Green Party (63%)** - The Green Party demonstrated a strong commitment to Government leadership on climate change within their manifesto. They also presented detailed implementation plans for certain climate policies, such as public transport infrastructure. However, their manifesto lacked the big picture vision and bolder ambition of higher ranked parties. In the last Government, the Green Party finally put Ireland on a path to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but their manifesto did not provide a path to reduce emissions at a steeper trajectory as needed. Their proposed structure of Government was novel, and the involvement of public participation networks and community engagement across commitments was a strength, but their response to fossil fuel dependency in heating; low income protection; and below-cost selling practices, in particular, were weaker than those proposed by Labour or Social Democrats.
4. **People Before Profit (56%)** - People Before Profit consistently demonstrated commitment to resolve the macro-level issues regarding climate change. While their manifesto was brief compared to others, it was strongest in areas such as low-income protection; energy consumption by data centers; and phasing out fossil fuels. They scored higher than all other parties in their approach to provide clean, affordable renewable energy for people. However, supporting the switch to electric vehicles and reforming VRT were not addressed, nor were the critical recruitment, capacity, and infrastructural deficits which prevent implementation of current environmental policies. While their overarching aim to nationalize private industries shows a clear vision for the State's role in delivering renewable energy, it is unclear how they can achieve this in the limited time we have left to address the climate crisis.
5. **Fine Gael (38%)** - Fine Gael demonstrated support for existing climate legislation and the need for more capacity to achieve national climate targets. Climate was integrated into their core policies to support enterprise and drive economic growth by leveraging climate action to attract business and maintain competitiveness. They also demonstrated an understanding of the need for structural reforms to address climate change, for example through a new Minister of Infrastructure, Climate and Transport and further investment in local authorities. However, a lack of sufficient policies to address fossil fuel infrastructure and agricultural emissions presented an incomplete version of climate action. In addition, their "Know your number" campaign gave flashbacks of the ineffective, costly 2006 Government's "Power of One" campaign and demonstrated a dated, unhelpful approach to climate communication.
6. **Sinn Féin (33%)** - Climate was treated sparsely throughout Sinn Féin's manifesto as an isolated, single issue rather than a prioritized policy area. While it was unsurprising that the manifesto was dominated by Sinn Féin's priority areas of reunification and the Irish language, it was disappointing that complex, cross-border environmental issues, such as the environmental disaster in Lough Neagh or all island energy-infrastructure, were not mentioned as part of reunification goals. In contrast, the Labour Party proposed to leverage our island's shared environmental resources through collaboration on renewable energy, infrastructure, skills, cycling and public transport. Sinn Féin demonstrated some vision to drive household retrofit and promote renewable energy, but

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nothing to phase out fossil fuels; end dependency on fossil fuels heat and transport; develop active travel infrastructure; or support the switch to electric vehicles.

7. **Fianna Fáil (30%)** - While Fianna Fáil demonstrated support for existing climate legislation and the need for additional state capacity and apprenticeships to achieve our national climate targets, climate action did not appear to be a headline priority across their manifesto. A commitment to reduce emissions by 90% in 2040, without spelling out a vision for meeting our carbon budgets *this* decade, sparked a concern of “kicking the can down the road” in their response to climate change. Of the bigger parties (including Fine Gael and Sinn Féin), Fianna Fáil was the only party to propose free public transportation to those under 15 and commit to an Energy Poverty Act and social housing retrofit plan, which were commendable. However, their weak policies on big energy issues, such as data centers, aviation, and fossil fuel infrastructure, demonstrated a hesitance to deal with all areas necessary to address climate change.
8. **Aontú (10%)** - Aontú’s manifesto, published in two volumes, made almost no proposals to address the climate challenge. The party went out of their way to be combative about climate change, proudly boasting they were the only political party that opposed Ireland’s current climate action law. This conflict-based approach to climate change is unhelpful and would delay efforts to transition Ireland to a sustainable and resilient society. No commitments were made to ensure people live in warm, sustainable homes with lower bills; to support the switch to electric vehicles; to address energy consuming data centers or the aviation sector; or to phase out fossil fuels. However, Aontú did commit to accelerate renewable energy infrastructure and address below-cost selling through a competition authority.
9. **Independent Ireland (4%)** - The Independent Ireland party included a section on Climate, Transport & Technology in their 25-page manifesto along with vague but supportive commitments to increase home energy retrofit; expand public transport commuter schemes; and “harness Ireland’s natural resources” in energy production. They also had a policy to include more community owned energy and create more school transport places “to improve safety and reduce emissions”. However, there was no further detail how these commitments would be implemented, and these positive intentions were contradicted by an overarching policy to “end the net zero agenda”, -a legally binding climate target in Ireland’s own legislation that drives many of the changes referred to above. In addition, misleading statements were made, without evidence, that framed climate action as something being done to harm farmers. Overall, the climate agenda was used as a political football in this manifesto - If it suited the party's agenda, they were in support of climate measures, but equally it was used as a way to sow division and perpetuate false narratives.

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Appendix One:

Summary list of demands in Friends of the Earth's Programme for Faster and Fairer Climate Action

A full explanation of each demand can be found in the Programme for Faster and Fairer Climate Action document published by Friends of the Earth Ireland [here](#).

1. Government leadership, action and accountability, nationally and internationally

1. Uphold Climate law
2. New Climate Action Plan measures
3. Support EU target 90% by 2040
4. Adhere to carbon budget 2025
5. Revise legal mandates for state bodies
6. Additional state capacity + apprenticeships
7. Civil society support
8. Just Transition Commission on statutory footing + dialogue
9. Public information campaign
10. Minister of Future Generations
11. Right to environment
12. Climate Finance from EUR 225m to 500m, L&D fund
13. Support EU Business treaty on Human Rights
14. Support EU Corporate Sustainability Directive
15. End Energy Charter, Investor State disputes in treaties
16. Several specific policies on Ukraine + Palestine

2. Warm homes for all, with lower bills and no fossil fuels

A. State leadership

1. Minimum BER
2. Community Energy advice
3. Low cost loans + free BER
4. HAP expansion
5. Traveller homes
6. SEAI/local authority mandate
7. Warmth & Wellbeing
8. Renovation passports for shallow retrofit
9. Rural solid fuel/oil pilot
10. Energy Poverty Act

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B. Social Housing

1. Retrofit plan
2. AHB stock
3. EnergyCloud

C. End fossil heat

1. National Heat Law, boilers end 2030, fossil end 2035
2. End gas network expansion
3. Renewable heat guarantee
4. Increase SEAI grant, boiler scrappage
5. Increase Warmer Homes Scheme
6. Local Authority heat/cooling plans, District heat zones
7. End heat loss indicator requirement
8. Data centre waste heat mandate
9. Air quality monitoring, zones, smokey fuel enforcement

D. Low income protection

1. Energy guarantee scheme
2. Increase fuel allowance £196 + eligibility travellers, families
3. Core social protection value
4. Increase pension 24% wage
5. £40/wk disability payment

3. Clean, affordable renewable energy for people, not data centres and big tech

A. Renewable Energy

1. Commit to 9Gw onshore, 8Gw solar, 56Gw offshore + grid by 2030
2. Commit to 100% Renewable Energy by 2035
3. Solar PV on every school and 1 million homes by 2030
4. Increase solar + battery installations
5. Support small scale Renewable Energy and EU Community energy
6. Support shared ownership
7. Include nature protection in Renewable Energy development
8. Protect court access/Aarhus

B. Data centres

1. Legal moratorium, no Gas Network expansion, must have Renewable Energy + storage

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2. Require decarbonisation plan
3. Require emissions disclosure
4. Reform PSO levy
5. Profits must cover costs

C. Phase out fossil fuels

1. Legal phase out
2. Plan for CRU to phase out oil, gas
3. No new fossil fuel infrastructure
4. Ban LNG
5. Limit fossil fuel lobby
6. Advertising, address fossil fuel greenwash
7. End fossil fuel subsidies
8. Support Fossil Fuel non-proliferation treaty
9. Support Beyond Oil & Gas Alliance

4. Affordable, reliable, and accessible fossil-free transport

A. Invest in public transport and low fares

1. EUR 2 public transport spend for every EUR 1 new roads
2. TII/CCAC consulted on investment needed
3. LUAS for Cork, Galway, Limerick, Waterford in new NDP
4. Eight new LUAS lines fast tracked
5. Accelerate Bus Connects & Rural link, Provide EUR 50m/yr rural transport
6. Disability and child friendly
7. Communications campaign in transport

B. Bus, cycle, walk safe and easy

1. Footpath / cycle to schools, Safe Routes within 3km
2. Ban engine idling, create car free schools
3. Free school bus places and electric school buses
4. Free public transport < 16s
5. Maintain 20% fare reduction, 50% young adult, flat fare
6. Deliver active travel
7. Bike to work scheme should not be linked to PAYE

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C End car dependence/ EVs should be rural focused

1. Maintain Climate Action Plan goals, journeys via public transport
2. Ban ICE in cities by 2030
3. EV subsidies targeted at rural drivers
4. Dublin congestion charge
5. Low Emissions Zones
6. VRT should be weight based
7. Cycling subsidies, not parking subsidies
8. Targeted tax relief on public transport / EVs
9. CCAC consult on ending ICE sales by 2030
10. Right to Charge
11. DEPR advise on congestion/health costs
12. County Development Plans on sprawl, bike parking, smart traffic

D. Aviation

1. Maintain DAA cap
2. Moratorium on DAA expansion
3. Frequent flyer levy
4. Reduce private jets
5. Remove jet kerosene tax exclusions (IRL/EU)
6. Create aviation carbon tax
7. Reject non EU biodiesel

5. A fair deal for family farmers, to feed Ireland and restore nature

1. Fair price in supermarkets
2. End below cost selling and harmful Free Trade agreements
3. End EU Mercosur
4. Revise mandates of Coillte, Bord Na Mona, Teagasc, Bord Bia
5. Decrease dairy, beef expansion and food imports
6. Reform food policy
7. Nature Restoration Plan funding
8. Decrease nitrogen fertiliser use, Improve water quality, regulate pesticide use
9. Review ACRES
10. Create land use plan
11. EU CAP to include public goods
12. Marine Protected Areas at 30% + 10% protected status
13. Dept. of Env to include NPWS, EPA, Water, Marine, BnM, Coillte