



# Goal 9



Industry Innovation and Infrastructure

# Goal 9



## Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

Our research agenda must align with the EU priorities to benefit from the next round of EU funding. Energy and the digital transition will be fundamental to the coming decade.

Ireland has become a world leader in the digital economy and should now cement this by becoming a world leader in appropriate, effective, and common-sense regulation of the digital sector. This could offer us exceptional opportunities on the world stage if we are responsible guardians of the sensitive data of other nations, if we are not responsible we risk other nations erecting digital borders so that they can protect their national and citizens' interests.

In contrast, on the environment, Ireland is a laggard. Our infrastructure holds us back and has launched the country down an unproductive pathway that damages our competitiveness and make it harder to attract Foreign Direct Investment, to find skills, and to retain employees.

The next Government must tackle our enormous infrastructure deficit and simultaneously manage our transition to a sustainable economy. Our national infrastructure is at or beyond capacity, but fortunately the European Green Deal, and sustainable financing, offer us a path back towards an efficient and sustainable economy.

Ireland is uniquely placed to benefit from this transition. We have ample renewable energy resources, we are not economically depending on high CO<sub>2</sub> emission industries, and we have a young highly-skilled, English-speaking population that can adapt – a population that also wants to adapt.

The projects we need, around public transport, water treatment, and renewable energies are all aligned with the EU Commissions agenda making finance increasingly accessible and proposed 'Green Golden Rule' will require us to not only measure the cost of individual projects but also provides mechanisms to account for the costs of not taking climate change mitigation actions.

Our transport, energy, and waste networks need investment to facilitate high-density housing, and our local authorities must take their role in making our cities and towns attractive and healthy places to live seriously. The coming government must put building that better Ireland at the top of their agenda.

The delivery of investment in infrastructure is essential if we are to be able to complete the body of work that the National Planning Framework, and that the transition to a low-carbon economy, requires.

## Delivery of Infrastructure

### Finance Infrastructure Sustainably

- Maintain the “Rainy Day Fund” with the transfer of above profile corporate tax receipts that can be used for funding capital infrastructure in the event of an economic downturn
- Optimise investment in capital projects and infrastructure, ensuring transparency, and open approach to infrastructure funding models such as PPP, to ensure progress is maintained
- Improve reporting requirements for all large projects and programmes
- Prioritise infrastructure which aligns with the National Planning Framework, multi-modal, and Transport Orientated Development principles
- Ensure that all critical infrastructure investment with the EU Commissions ‘Green Golden Rule’ proposals, and its ‘Sustainable Finance’ definitions
- Move away from the Public Works’ standard form contract towards international best practice alternatives

### Planning Reform

- Streamline the planning regime to reduce uncertainty for key infrastructure investment
- Make greater use of Regional Assemblies and their ability to create strategic master plans by increasing their internal resources to allow them to offer high-skilled expert planning services to local authorities, and to guide the integration of Local Area Plans with regional and national infrastructure.

### Securing National Grid Infrastructure

- Upgrade our electricity network to provide for long-term energy security by increasing investment in the electricity grid
- Provide additional resources to connect renewable supplies to the network
- Rapid rollout of the legislation that will facilitate offshore windfarms

- Invest in the accelerated roll-out of a national fast-charging network for the EVs with a focus on regional areas, while providing for public transport in urban settings
- Future proof the National Gas Grid by investing in biomethane technologies and systems to provide renewable methane and hydrogen supply
- Ensure that high-speed internet access becomes available nationwide
- Ensure there is additional investment for water infrastructure, providing powers to state bodies to finance such investment through land value capture

## Supporting Research and Innovation

### Climate Action through Innovation

- Invest in research into innovative technologies such as Carbon Capture Storage
- Create a national strategy that supports the decarbonisation of agriculture, like sustainable Anaerobic Digestion
- Support research into using Hydrogen gas as a fuel, and as a means of storing excess electricity

### The Digital Economy

- We need to see common sense, risk-reducing, and reliable regulation in the area of digital economy that will both protect innovation over the long run and withstand the scrutiny that inevitably arises when the data of other nations’ citizens are processed in Ireland.
- Create a civilian cybersecurity agency with a multiple mandate, firstly to identify threats to ordinary residents in Ireland, state bodies, and businesses. Secondly to have a remit for penetration testing state bodies. Thirdly a mandate for informing the public, and training the business community, on how to minimise the risk to them and their property that arise from cyber security threats.