



PEOPLE BEFORE PROFIT

Manifesto for 2017 Assembly election

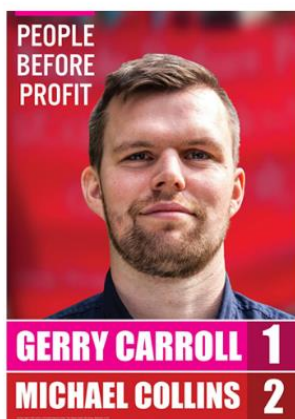
Election Candidates



South Antrim



East Derry



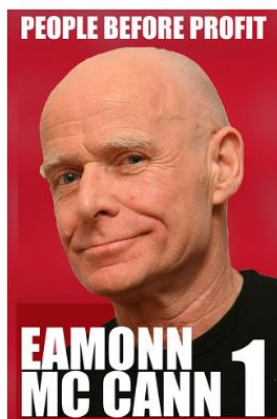
West Belfast



West Belfast



North Belfast



Foyle



South Belfast

INTRODUCTION

People before Profit is the anti-establishment alternative in this election. We believe in doing politics differently; building a consensus for change through grassroots campaigning and people power. We work alongside people wanting change – workers, communities, young people and others, helping them to get organised to change their own circumstances and, eventually, to transform society.

The presence of PBP MLAs in Stormont makes a huge difference to the ability of people on the ground to organise in this way, and to make the changes we need in society. Our MLAs – who only take an average workers wage – can amplify the voices of discontent and bring hope to those fighting for a better future.

This manifesto, therefore, represents both the kind of policies that we will fight for in Stormont and the basis for a fightback in the streets and workplaces as well. What Stormont does, the people can undo. The time for change is now.



People Before Profit Manifesto for 2017 Assembly election

End privatisation, defend public services and keep our natural resources in public ownership

People Before Profit is opposed to the privatisation of public services. We stand with public sector workers in seeking to ensure that these services remain in public hands. The past decade has seen a creeping privatisation of our services. For example, we have seen more and more of the funding for both education and health sectors going to private companies.

We are constantly being told there is no money for public services, for wage increases etc. Yet, the taxpayer in Northern Ireland pays out more than **£1 million a day** for PFI projects which take almost half a billion from the Block Grant before we can start paying for anything else.

In spite of this disaster, Sinn Féin and the DUP advocate even more privatisation. Martin McGuinness who, as Education Minister, signed off on many of the PFI projects which will continue to cost us more than a million a day until 2030, recently told AgendaNI magazine (speaking about the North West) that “I want to the local economy to continue to rebalance from the public to the private sector.....We remain open for business, open for investment and committed to the reduced rate of corporation tax, which will drive economic growth and deliver more jobs and higher wages for our people.”

Rebalancing “from the public to the private sector” means more privatisation. People Before Profit will challenge this agenda at every opportunity and work with public sector trade unions to protect the jobs threatened by privatisation. McGuinness’s stance is purely ideological; in spite of all the tabloid headlines to the contrary, the evidence is that workers are better paid within the public sector and that the public sector is more efficient than the private when it comes to delivery of services. We only have to look at the Health Service to see that this is true.

The neo-liberal, pro-business agenda includes the sale of our natural resources, whether through licences to quarry or to drill or the actual sale of forests and land owned by the public. People Before Profit is against fracking and favours a “leave it in the ground” approach to all fossil fuels. To take any other approach would undermine the development of renewal resources.

After RHI: Fight Corruption at all levels

The Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) scheme is the latest in a long litany of scandals in which the Executive has been involved. The DUP may be the biggest offenders, but they are not alone. The revelations that Michelle O’Neill’s department organised 58 workshops explaining RHI’s benefits, later stating that promoting the scheme was “the right thing to do at the time,” raises significant questions about the role of Sinn

Féin in the debacle. The more recent allegations that Conor Murphy strongly lobbied Jonathan Bell to keep the RHI scheme open suggests that the rot runs much deeper.

Corruption, in our opinion, is endemic to the establishment in Stormont. We can all rhyme the list off by this stage: Red Sky, Nama, etc. Sinn Féin's massive expenses rip-off surrounding the Research Services Ireland scam, whereby up to a million pounds of tax-payers' money was funnelled into party coffers, should be included too. Disgracefully, most of these scandals have simply been swept under the carpet. RHI is too big to be swept under the carpet, and opens up the need for a more widespread investigation of corruption in the Assembly.

People Before Profit demands a full public enquiry into the RHI debacle. All of the books need to be opened, and the beneficiaries of the scheme made public. Any enquiry into corruption needs to be all encompassing, and take into consideration the NAMA deal, the Social Investment Fund, in an attempt to ascertain whether politicians have been involved in corruption during any of these dealings. Those responsible for the RHI scandal should be held to account. We must endeavour to claw back the £600 million wasted in RHI and ensure the waste of taxpayers' money is ended.

Raise revenue through a progressive local income tax OR rates system

The top quarter of earners in the North pay between £5,000 and £7,000 less in tax than their counterparts in Scotland, England or Wales. Were those earning over £50,000 a year equalised to take account of household size, to pay their fair share, we would be able to raise much needed revenue.

People Before Profit wants the implementation of a progressive local income tax in place of the current rates system. But until this is implemented, we want to see a rates system that is linked to ability to pay. This will end the current regressive system where this tax is based on the valuation of the property, rather than on the amount of income in the household. Linking the rates to ability to pay, would make it far easier for the Executive to collect this extra revenue. The progressive rates system which we propose is now possible because the introduction of Universal Credit led to a situation where all earnings must now be reported to HRMC by employers on a monthly basis.

The progressive system which we advocate will include abolishing the cap on rates that sees millionaires paying no more than an average householder, the unfreezing of the rates for the top 25% of earners and reduction in rates bills for some of those who currently do not qualify for a rates rebate but who struggle to make ends meet.

Oppose the reduction in corporation tax

For the best part of a decade, the economic strategy of the Executive has been predicated on the Thatcherite concept of 'trickle down' economics, whereby the rich and corporations pay less in the hope that this will somehow benefit everyone else.

This is the reasoning behind the proposed reduction in corporation tax, included in the Fresh Start Agreement. PBP believes that it is obscene that at a time when working class people have had to face wage cuts and the slashing of public services, corporations are going to be given free handouts, at a cost of hundreds of millions of pounds to the block grant.

As well, PBP believes that there is no evidence that a cut in corporation tax will lead to any kind of trickle down to the rest of the population. In fact, the evidence against “trickle-down economics” has been endorsed even by the IMF. It is now clear that improvements in income for the wealthiest do not “trickle down” to the less well-off. An IMF report (Dabla-Norris et al, 2015) concluded: “if the income share of the top 20 percent (the rich) increases, then GDP growth actually declines over the medium term, suggesting that the benefits do not trickle down. In contrast, an increase in the income share of the bottom 20 percent (the poor) is associated with higher GDP growth.”

People Before Profit believe that any plans to reduce corporation tax should be immediately halted. Instead, the NI Executive should be pressurising Westminster to close tax loopholes, end the practice of tax evasion, and make the corporations pay the tax that they owe.

Since there is considerable evidence of corruption at government level, People Before Profit want to see an end to “Northern Ireland exceptionalism” with regards to donations to political parties. The whole system should be transparent. We agree with Transparency International that *“For too long, political parties in Northern Ireland have lagged behind the rest of the UK – failing to reveal who funds them. The potential for hidden payments is a serious corruption risk in politics and should end as soon as possible.”*

We believe that powerful financial interests and the interests of political parties are too interwoven. PBP believe that transparency in donations would allow for some oversight of this; ultimately though we believe that politics should be about challenging the power of corporations and financial elites. To that end we do not accept donations from corporations and, in line with law elsewhere in the UK, we are happy to freely publish our donations over £500 – even if the law here is not changed.

Reform of Employment Law to remove anti-trade union measures

People Before Profit want to rescind the anti-trade union laws and give trade unionists in NI back the rights they had under the 1906 Trade Union Act. To this end, in the week before the Assembly was dissolved, we had initiated a consultation on a Private Member’s Bill on trades union rights, the Trade Union Freedom Bill. Our Bill would be the first piece of trade union legislation to come before the Assembly since

its formation—and the first piece of pro-trades union legislation to be considered by any NI legislative body since the foundation of the State.

The union laws dating back to Thatcher and New Labour are no longer “Thatcher’s anti-union laws”, but the Assembly’s anti-union laws. However, since the formation of the Assembly there has been no effort to change the legislation. We think it is past time for that to be put to rights.

Our preliminary draft has focused on three specific aspects of current industrial law which we want changed: the restrictive notice period before industrial action can be taken legally; the requirement for secret balloting of a tightly defined section of workers before industrial action becomes legal; the ban on solidarity (secondary) action. Our bill would remove these curbs on trade union freedom. Additionally, PBP want to see an end to zero hour contracts.

We hope that the presentation of our Bill will spark discussion across society of the centrality of trade unionism to social progress, the alleviation of poverty, achievement of greater equality and the place of the Labour movement in society.

Defend the Health Service and provide decent social care

There is a health and social care crisis in Northern Ireland. Headlines about patients on trolleys, long waits in A&E and vital operations being cancelled because nursing staff are not available for after care are all too common. Inequalities in health are a scandal in Northern Ireland. While the health of the population generally has been improving, there are huge differences in health outcomes between the most well-off and the least. The Department of Health admits that the last ten years has not seen any change in the gap between those living in the least and most deprived areas of Northern Ireland. For example, men in the 10% least deprived areas in NI can expect on average to live almost 12 years longer than their counterparts living in the 10% most deprived areas. For females, the gap is more than 8 years. People in the most deprived areas are more likely to die from Chronic Heart Disease, suicide, lung cancer and other cancers.

It is an outrage that, for people under 75 years, cancer-related mortality in the most deprived tenth of the population is more than twice that in the least deprived and one and a half times that in NI as a whole. Lung cancer related mortality in the most deprived tenth of areas is five and a half times that in the least deprived. Death rates for circulatory disease in the 10% most deprived areas is nearly four times that experienced in the 10% least deprived areas and death rates for respiratory disease in the most deprived decile are nearly **six times** those of the least deprived. Alcohol and drug related mortality is respectively 9 and 11 times greater in the most deprived than in the least deprived areas. It’s no surprise then that, while 80% of those in the least deprived areas describe their health as good or very good, the figure is only 62% of those in the most deprived areas.

When it comes to mental health, the links between class and poor health are even greater. Because there is also a link between conflict and poor mental health and, because the conflict here was at its worst in the poorest parts of the region, there is a tsunami of mental illness in many parts of Belfast and Derry. This goes a long way to explaining the fact that more people have taken their own lives since 1998 than died in the course of the Troubles. Despite this, our mental health services have never been properly funded and now they are now facing further cuts.

In the North, as in the South, People Before Profit wants to see:

No to cuts and privatisation:

Health Service reorganisation plans like Transforming Your Care and the Bengoa Report only make sense if there is a lot more investment in preventative services. People Before Profit supports a more preventative, community-based system, but this has to be introduced alongside local hospitals, statutory residential homes etc. We support the idea of regional specialisms but this must not be at the expense of local hospitals which must remain open with A&E departments that can deal with minor injuries such as broken bones and less serious medical emergencies.

More ambulances and air ambulances are required to reduce transit times to both local hospitals and regional centres in emergencies. People Before Profit wants to see guaranteed response times to medical emergencies by ambulance within 12 minutes, and transit time to emergency healthcare to be less than one hour in total. If this is possible in the Republic, it should be possible in the North. We should restore staff lost due to austerity measures, and increase health staffing to at least EU average levels. Good health services require timely treatment of patients and proper treatment of staff. PBP demands an end to 'outsourcing' of frontline health service jobs, such as catering, cleaning and security, as outsourcing is wasteful and dangerous. We demand an end to the reliance of expensive agency medical staff, where much of the money goes to the Agency rather than the doctors and nurses. Permanent, pensionable jobs provide secure employment and halt the exodus of qualified Health staff.

We need a local income tax to help fund the Health Service but, in the meantime, there are other things we can do. We can cut profiteering in healthcare: stop using private healthcare and cut drug company profits by taxation earmarked for health care. We could cut profiteering in drug costs by achieving an EU average of 80% generic prescribing and by refusing to pay more than the cost of drugs in equivalent countries such as Spain or New Zealand. Any money saved by cutting waste, such as the duplication and profits of private medicine should be earmarked for reinvestment in the health service. To retain staff, all new entrants including trainee doctors and Nurses should be offered permanent pensionable contracts and

provided with quality training and continuing education programmes. Consultants should not be allowed to earn both a public salary and a private income from fees.

Sort out Primary Care – let GPs be Doctors: There is currently a crisis among GPs in Northern Ireland. Doctors want to look after their patients, not run a business. People Before Profit agrees and wants to see GPs employed by the health service instead of being self-employed business people. We want Primary Care Centres across the 32 counties; one PCC for every 8-10,000 people, with services free at the point of use and networked with hospitals and other health services. All Primary Care Centres should be functioning within 5 years. Employ a full range of health staff in Health Centres: Psychologists, Physiotherapists, Social Workers, Counsellors, General Practitioners (GPs), Nurses, Occupational Therapists (OTs), Speech and Language Therapists, Dentists, Opticians and Pharmacists. Developing community involvement can be facilitated through employing a network of Community Development Health Workers based in community projects and family resource centres which are linked to their local PCTs.

Fund Mental Health: Mental Health funding should be increased to at least 15 percent of the health budget. We should improve access to alternatives such as social support, OT and Psychotherapy to reduce the over-reliance on multiple drug prescription and coercion in Mental Health Care. Treatment of drug dependency and mental health should be more closely integrated, with promotion of non-drug options for personal and social problems. We should improve funding for services and facilities for assisting safe withdrawal and longer-term rehabilitation in patients with long-term use of psychoactive drugs including prescription drugs.

Funding for Disability Services should be increased and be rights-based. There is an urgent need to improve access for children to prompt, good quality mental health and developmental assessments and therapies; by properly staffing Primary and Secondary Care Mental Health and Disability Teams to age 18 and ensuring child welfare services are adequately staffed and supported with childcare facilities.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health should receive at least 25% of the Mental Health budget. We must ensure 24-hour access to emergency beds in children's wards in mental health emergencies. Support for parental welfare and mental health has been proven to improve children's welfare and mental health. We should improve liaison with, and availability of school supports, including small class sizes, SENCOs, classroom assistants, speech therapists and psychologists.

We support the Autism Act (NI), as well as an autism advocate to ensure independent scrutiny, transparency and partnership working with carers and the voluntary sector.

In Mental Health care, PBP emphasises preventive measures such as increased welfare spending, especially on income support, child care, social care, jobs and housing to reduce mental health problems including substance abuse and suicide.

Transforming Your Care?

Most people who rely on social care services because they are older or disabled, or because they have an older or disabled relative for whom they care would agree that social care in NI is being transformed – by cuts, not by improved services. Despite an ageing population, with more people needing care in their own homes, the number of people receiving Trust-funded domiciliary care has actually ***gone down*** from 25,330 in 2013 to 23,260 in 2016. Even when someone gets care, it isn't exactly what most would want for their relatives, more than three out of four care visits are less than half an hour, with just under a third only 15 minutes. Clearly, it is impossible for domiciliary care workers, however dedicated, to provide adequate care in such short visits. Nor does it help that these workers are not paid properly, often not being paid for travel time and receiving expenses that do not cover their costs.

PBP is clear that social care in NI is a disaster mainly because it has been left mainly to the private sector. So, instead of more money going to the domiciliary care workers and the staff in nursing homes, it is going into the profits of the private companies who run the agencies and the nursing homes. This has to stop.

We need to take the *profits* from the private companies and invest them in *people and services* to care for our older people and those disabled people who need support services. Think how many more nurses, doctors and care assistants could be employed if profit was taken out of the equation.

Good food before profit: To address the rising epidemic of illnesses related to obesity and high blood pressure, access to regular opportunities to exercise and to fresh, affordable, high-quality, locally-sourced food should be subsidised to improve our population's health. Food should be adequately labelled for contents (for example with the simple 'traffic light' warning system), especially additives, and recommended limits enforced for additives, especially caffeine, alcohol, sugar, salt and fats. Where possible, food and drug production should be considered for nationalisation. Promotional advertising to increase consumption of food or drugs should be banned and replaced by reliable information on quality of contents. Chemicals added to food, water or air should be more closely regulated and subject to public consultation and control. Improved levels of employee control in the workplace are proven to improve health and welfare and employees should have more say in decisions regarding work practices, work-life balance, terms and conditions and access to quality food, exercise and safe practices in the workplace.

After Brexit: For a Redirection Away from the Failures of Capitalism

In last year's referendum, People Before Profit called for a vote to leave the EU. We based this call on the fact that:

- The EU's primary role today is to impose austerity on the peoples of Europe, including in Ireland where the EU/ECB/IMF 'Troika' austerity programme had devastating effects.
- The crushing of Greek democracy because its people voted the "wrong" way in a 2015 referendum on EU-imposed austerity makes the point.
- The EU has created a fortress Europe that excludes migrants and refugees fleeing conflict and starvation. There is no moral distinction to between Donald Trump's wall to keep Mexican migrants out and the thousand kilometres of EU barbed wire keeping Syrian migrants out.
- The EU is promoting an arms industry and is developing a military apparatus that serves the interests of the big powers. Last May, a contingent from the Irish Army joined manoeuvres on Salisbury Plain by an EU "battle group", including British, Swedish, Latvian, Finnish, Lithuanian and Estonian forces, under the command of a British Army brigadier. People Before Profit remains the only party, North or South, to have raised this issue.

This distinctive left position received little airing in the mainstream media. The vote on "Brexit" came to be dominated by hard-line Tories on the one hand and, on the other, those who wish to sow illusions in the EU as a progressive force. People Before Profit is in neither of these camps.

People Before Profit calls for:

People Power to halt any hard border: Any attempt by the EU and/or the British government to impose border controls, should be met with mass protests and people power. We should not rely on either the British or Irish governments to represent our interests.

Pay increases to tackle inflation: 'Brexit' has seen a fall in sterling and has been blamed for a rise in inflation. Workers are entitled to defend their living standards. People Before Profit will back trade unions who put in pay claims to make up the differential.

Maintain grants and community funding: The British government has pledged to maintain grants and community funding coming from the EU until 2020/21. But it will take major pressure from below to hold them to their pledge. People Before Profit will play a full part in generating this pressure.

Resist Racism: The Tories are trying to re-connect with a conservative popular base by increasing their anti-migrant rhetoric. We should stand firm against this racist poison. We should insist that the Southern Irish government makes no move to tighten immigration controls to appease British Tories. We should insist that migrant workers in Northern Ireland maintain their full rights to work and travel.

For the democratic rights of the people of Northern Ireland and Scotland to: A majority of people of the North and Scotland voted to remain in the EU. The British Government must be told that the Assembly and Scottish parliament have a right to direct representation in negotiations and that the people of the North and of Scotland must have a veto on the outcomes.

Protect the Environment

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

People Before Profit's environmental policy seeks to address the root causes of all these different forms of environmental destruction and despoliation. We reject the thesis that the environmental crisis is caused by any innate human instinct, overpopulation or simple consumerism. The crisis comes from the economic system of capitalism and its drive toward profit and competition. It is a system that eulogises the profit motive and relegates both human, environmental and other species rights and existence below the need for profit and economic growth. Looking to capitalism and markets to provide solutions for any environmental crisis will not work because it is the operation of free market capitalism that is the root cause of each of these crises.

In every issue examined, from climate change to biodiversity and conservation, attempts at binding international treaties based on commodifying nature or incentivising markets have and will continue to fail to protect our environment. Only a radical challenge to the priorities of capitalism can save our natural world and preserve the earth's biodiversity for future generations. While the environmental crisis threatens all of humanity, we believe that the world's poorest and ordinary working class people will suffer the greatest from the chaos that capitalism is creating in our climate and environment.

We reject the idea that there is a conflict between safeguarding the environment and the earth's species and the right to a decent living for ordinary people. The conflict

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

In light of the overwhelming scientific evidence for human-induced climate change, People Before Profit advocates a radical series of measures to dramatically reduce carbon dioxide emissions. These include:

- A public transport revolution to cut car usage and provide every community both urban and rural with a cheap and efficient mode of public transit appropriate for the area;
- The latest energy efficient standards in new buildings and a national programme to retro fit housing and public buildings;
- The urgent establishment of an independent Environment Protection Agency with real powers to intervene when there are suspicions of criminal environmental destruction such as illegal dumping on a major scale;
- Immediate convening of the Public Inquiry into the Mobouy Road illegal toxic dump, as agreed by the Assembly over three years ago and a coherent plan to clean up the 1.5 million tonnes of waste on the site; A second Public Inquiry into the dealings around drilling at Woodburn Forest in Carrickfergus which saw suspicions of corruption at both a local council and ministerial level;
- Northern Ireland to embrace a Zero Waste approach to waste management. We oppose any incinerators or “energy from waste” plants. Energy from waste is not cost effective. Studies show that energy recovery from waste incineration is lower than energy savings derived from waste recycling. For most of the materials in our household waste, recycling saves more energy than is generated by incinerating it. In addition, Zero Waste systems create at least ten times more jobs than current waste management systems.
- All reserves of energy, renewable or fossil fuel should be retained in public ownership and the starting position should be “leave it in the ground”; any fossil fuel development should be in the public interest and only to ensure that Ireland moves to a low carbon society as soon as possible;
- We advocate programmes of re-afforestation with the goal of protecting and enhancing the land's biodiversity for this and future generations.

Public Transport

- Since devolution, there has been less investment in transport in Northern Ireland than in the rest of the UK. The Regional Transportation Strategy for Northern Ireland notes that in terms of its rural nature, Northern Ireland is considered most comparable with Scotland. However, in terms of both current and capital expenditure, and with regard to expenditure per head, spending in Northern Ireland is significantly behind Scotland. Thus, in 2009-10, spending per head on transport in Northern Ireland was £319, compared to £343 in England, £387 in Wales and £563 in Scotland.
- Indeed, indexed against the rest of the UK (UK=100), Northern Ireland has by far the lowest spend per head on transport (88, compared to 155 in Scotland) and environmental protection (77 compared to 141 in Scotland). These figures suggest a very short-sighted approach by the devolved administration, given the close link between transport and the possibility of meeting environmental targets – and given the importance of both public transport and the environment to tourism. Yet when it comes to plans for spending on transport in the 2008-18 period, we find that 81 per cent is to be spent on roads and 19 per cent for all public transport. By contrast, in 2013/14 Scotland, from an overall transport budget of £1,878 million, spent £803 million on rail services alone.
- There is no road to progress if we continue the current neo-liberal policies of promoting whatever the private sector says is good – roads, low wages, privatisation of services etc, rather than considering what is sustainable, good for people and for the future of this island and the planet.
- Thus, one of PBP's greatest priorities is improving the infrastructure across NI, especially increasing investment in public transport, especially rail, to reduce dependence on cars and roads.

End Selective and Segregated Education

The gap between the educational attainment of children living in poverty and those from better-off families is one of the most blatant inequalities in Northern Ireland. From as early as 22 months of age, the children of well-off parents are already 14 percentage points higher up the scale of educational development than children of working class parents. By age three, children growing up in poverty are a full year behind children from better-off families in relation to cognitive development, social skills and school readiness generally. By age six, even those children from more affluent families who started off as low achievers will out-perform high achieving children from low income families.

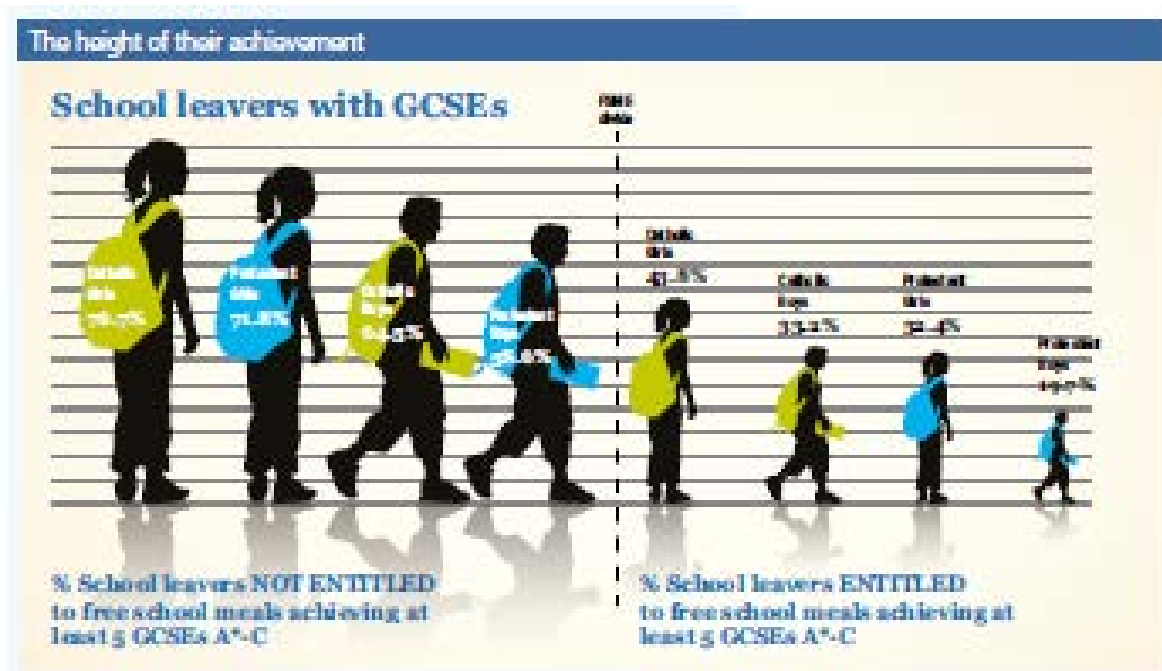
Northern Ireland has twice as many children living in persistent poverty (those in poverty for three out of any four years) than is the case in the rest of the UK and the effects of persistent poverty are significant. Analysing four waves of the Family and Children's Survey, the National Centre for Social Research found that the risks of

poor outcomes were considerably greater than the risk faced by children in temporarily poor families. Those outcomes included being suspended or expelled from school.

As well as being hugely unfair on children, robbing poorer children of the same opportunities to get on in life that better-off children do, this significant inequality is costly to the economy of Northern Ireland. The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) suggests that the UK economy would benefit by up to £8 trillion over the lifetime of a child born today, if the attainment gap was reduced to the Finnish level. Save the Children estimates that “success in closing the gap in Northern Ireland would have resulted in increased economic gains of around £400 million in 2013, rising to £1.3 billion by 2030”.

Each year, A-level and GCSE results show Northern Irish students ahead of students in England and Wales. But this is only half the story because, as pointed out in the *2014 Peace Monitoring Report*, while we have some of the best results in the UK, when it comes to those who do very poorly in the educational league tables, Northern Ireland also has the worst results. For example, no school in England “has fewer than 14 per cent of its pupils achieving 5 good GCSEs in the OFSTED 2012/13 Annual Report. Three schools in Northern Ireland are below this line”.

As pointed out in the 2014 Peace Monitoring Report, “the most significant divisions are based on gender and class...Catholic middle-class girls enjoy remarkable educational success, while Protestant working class boys experience equally remarkable failure.” This graph, reproduced from that report, illustrates clearly the extent of educational inequality in the region.



Source: Nolan (2014), *Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report*, p.97

A range of evidence suggests that the social segregation which results from the division between grammar and non-grammar schools is to blame for the huge gap in attainment seen in the graph above. Protestant working class boys suffer particularly from this division. There is much evidence to suggest that all children—from the most academically able to those with learning disabilities—benefit from being educated in mixed-ability, socially-mixed schools.

This is why People Before Profit campaigns with teachers and students for proper investment in integrated, non-selective education to provide a universal, accessible, lifelong education system, free at the point of access for all. We oppose the sham “shared education” programme which simply reinforces segregation. Children thrive in integrated, all-ability education.

A first step to a proper education system would be to reverse the thousands of teacher and classroom assistant redundancies imposed in recent years and to start to reduce class sizes to a level at which all children would have a chance to learn.

People Before Profit also support the “free school day” which school pupils themselves suggested, where children do not have to bring any money to school, no “voluntary contributions”, no money for any school expenses whether that’s books and materials, art or music or school trips. PBP suggest that the revised funding formula for schools, aimed at supporting better outcomes for the most disadvantaged children could be usefully used to ensure a “free school day”. The suggestion has been made that additional money to schools can be used on all kinds of things, from repairs to replacing old equipment and not benefit individual children. But it should be possible to allocate such additional funding to the child, not the school—that the money be clearly earmarked to ensure that the child has a “free school day” This would have the effect of greatly lowering anxiety levels among both children and parents, thereby improving children’s experience of school.

Northern Ireland is trailing behind the UK in public funding for Higher Education (HE). People Before Profit is for equal public funding with England, Scotland and Wales for HE in Northern Ireland.

PBP advocates drastically increased accountability in university governance. Vice chancellor pay is over inflated, not transparently justified and wholly disproportionate to other university staff salaries. The Department of the Economy funds Universities yet seems to have no role at all in overseeing policy issues. This democratic deficit must end and Universities must demonstrate some accountability to the Assembly that funds them.

People Before Profit is against using tuition fees as a way of funding Higher Education; as with other public services, HE should be funded from taxation.

Paramilitaries and the State

People Before Profit wants to see the disbandment of all paramilitaries. We believe that armed struggle of any kind in the North is counterproductive, and that all attacks should cease.

We are opposed to so-called punishment shootings: a system based on torture or summary execution, without trial or jury, with the death penalty meted out at the drop of the hat. It is wrong, unjust, and needs to stop.

However, we believe that we cannot deal with paramilitarism without also dealing the way that the Northern Ireland state has enabled paramilitarism, both today and in the recent past. There is mounting evidence that suggests that the state here played a role in both fermenting the conflict, and in sustaining the activities of paramilitaries on both sides. For example a recent BBC documentary included the claim that there were some eight hundred informers in Belfast alone who were paramilitaries, many of whom operated with impunity while being paid by the state. If reports are correct, state agents ordered the Shankill bombing, murdered innocent Catholics in their homes, shot people dead, all whilst being paid by the state. PBP are for the disbandment of paramilitaries. But we are also for the disbandment of state paramilitaries, and the highly secretive network of state agencies who directed much of the conflict.

In particular, we believe that sections of the Northern state, and of the British and Irish government, continue to play an obstructionist role in the struggle for truth and justice with regards to collusion between paramilitaries and the state. There needs to be a full accounting of the way that the state here enabled the activities of paramilitaries over the years, both for victims of this injustice, but also to ensure that similar activities are not allowed to be repeated again. For example, the victims of the Enniskillen "Poppy Day" bomb should know why the investigation into the atrocity in which their loved ones were killed or injured was halted after a short few weeks, as should those who lost loved ones at Loughinisland. PBP supports and campaigns with those bereaved in the Ballymurphy massacre, in the Birmingham pub bombings or in the Bloody Sunday Massacre and stand wholeheartedly with them in their quest for justice and truth.

The recent revelations of links between funding from the Social Investment Fund and organisations with links to paramilitaries demonstrate that the Northern state, with the complicity of the Executive, not only acquiesces in the face of paramilitarism, but also works to normalise paramilitaries. It has created a situation where people can be upstanding friends of the establishment by day, with all the funding and trappings that goes with that, and be a Commander of a paramilitary group by night; it has created a situation where the PSNI openly works with members of loyalist paramilitaries, in order to police areas, where millions of pounds of funding is being

handed over to people who openly boast about their paramilitary connections. PBP want to see an end to these links between the state and paramilitaries.

Civil Liberties and State Repression

People Before Profit is concerned about the erosion of civil liberties in the North:

1. PBP wants to see the repeal of so called 'anti-terror' legislation that has encroached on civil liberties. In particular, we believe that stop and search powers are being abused in a way that is unjust and counterproductive, and that this should be ended.
2. PBP is opposed to the continued use of powers by the Secretary of State to revoke the licence of former prisoners who were released under the terms of the Belfast Agreement. We believe that this amounts to de facto internment without trial. If someone is to be jailed, then they must be at the very least charged, and evidence brought against them. Internment without trial is not acceptable. For this reason, we fully support calls for the release of individuals such as Tony Taylor, who have been detained without due process.
3. Though PBP are opposed to paramilitarism, we are for the right of political status for political prisoners. We oppose any moves to remove special category status, and wish to see radical reform for all prisoners, including an end to the practice of strip searching.

Housing

There is a massive housing problem across Northern Ireland. There are as many people in need of housing today as there were back in the 1960s, when homelessness helped spark the civil rights movement. Many tenants complain about the NI Housing Executive which has not been able to refurbish many of its properties over the last decade. Yet, in 2011, Price Waterhouse Cooper's report on the NIHE stated:

NIHE is one of the success stories from Northern Ireland's recent history. Since its introduction nearly 40 years ago it has delivered significant social benefits throughout Northern Ireland with the quality of the housing stock having moved from one of the worst in Western Europe to what is now regarded as best quality stock. It is rightly regarded nationally and internationally as a leading authority on 'best practice' on both housing management and community building.

Yet, Stormont is moving ahead with the sell-off of ALL public housing. This will privatise homes by transferring them to housing associations.

We know what will result from this move, from the example of what has happened in Britain. Rents will go up, services get worse and fat-cat salaries for top managers will become standard. Housing Associations admit that their rents are between a fifth

and a third higher than those of the Housing Executive. This means that the rent isn't always covered by Housing Benefit.

Once the houses are gone, Housing Executive workers would be transferred to the private sector—meaning job cuts and loss of pension and holiday and other entitlements.

Northern Ireland's higher proportion of households that receive lower wages or rely on benefits means the proportion of tenants in both the social housing and the private rented sector receiving housing benefit is substantially higher than in England. In England, 24% of private renters are on housing benefit; in Northern Ireland the figure rises to 57%. Westminster complains that spending on Housing Benefit is 'spiralling completely out of control' but this is largely because of the growth of the private rented sector and the considerably higher rents in that sector. Of over 12,000 statutory homeless applicants on the NIHE waiting list, about 4,500 were singles.

This is why People before Profit would use the £700 million borrowed under the Stormont House Agreement / Fresh Start to launch a crash programme of social housing, including more one and two-bedroom homes for single people. As well as reducing homelessness and housing stress, this would provide a real boost to local economies and considerably reduce the Housing Benefit bill.

The NI Housing Executive should be allowed to borrow under the 2011 Prudential Borrowing Framework, as Housing Associations can, thereby allowing it to refurbish its stock. Stock transfer from NIHE should cease - Northern Ireland has some of the best public housing in Europe and we should maintain it.

We will campaign to scrap the bedroom tax before 2020 when the mitigation fund runs out.

We believe that the 32,000 vacant homes across the region, starting in areas of housing stress, must be brought into public ownership and made available to those on the housing list.

Disability Policy

Continuing pressure from the disability movement for the establishment of legal rights as opposed to charity, has seen the passing into law of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). Internationally, in response to growing pressure from the world disability movement, the UN has been forced to attempt to establish, for the first time, a treaty on human rights for the disabled. (www.un.org/soc, 2006). These laws and treaties are important because they establish legally binding rights for people with disabilities and are a further step towards their acceptance as equal citizens. However, many of these rights are ignored by employers and by government.

Political pressure needs to be continually applied to ensure the full implementation of the DDA. In addition, the able bodied in society should to be made more aware of the prejudice people in the disabled community have to combat in their daily lives.

Taking a more general view of people with disabilities in terms of employment and education, the statistics reveal a stark picture. For example, in 2014, only 37.7% of NI's disabled people were in employment, compared to 75% of non-disabled people. Whatever slim chance there is of able bodied people getting work, disabled people have even less chance and for many of them, even emigration isn't an option.

It also needs to be stressed that greater access to education leads to greater employment opportunities. Yet our selective education system has been shown to be a disaster for children with special educational needs (SEN). Children with SEN are being excluded from schools which do not provide reasonable adjustments to take account of their physical, emotional or behavioural disabilities.

People Before Profit wants to see:

- An integrated, all-ability education system with smaller classes that is able to welcome children with SEN, accommodate their particular needs and ensure they receive every support to meet their full potential;
- An end to children with SEN sitting at home without any urgency to either re-introduce them to school or provide proper home tuition for them;
- Positive action to encourage employers to employ disabled workers;
- An end to assessments such as the Work Capability Assessment and the Personal Independence Payment assessment which are based on the medical model of disability rather than the social;
- Reinstate the Independent Living Fund;
- An end to disabled people being forced into residential care because of benefit cuts.
- Extend the full fare concessionary travel pass, Smart Pass, to all people who are unable to drive for medical reasons.

Reproductive Rights

A recent report from the Equality Commission found that a woman is more likely to be sacked from their job when pregnant than at any other time in her life. Northern Ireland, like the rest of the UK, is now subject to a Benefit Cap which the Guardian

newspaper has described as “the two-child policy” i.e. parents will only receive benefits for the first two children in their family – even when the third or subsequent child was born when the parent(s) was in employment.

Yet we are the only part of the UK where abortion is not available on the Health Service and where women too poor to travel to England for an abortion are prosecuted for taking pills obtained over the internet.

People Before Profit trusts women to know when they can and cannot bring a child into the world. We want to see abortion treated as a health care issue between a woman and her doctor – legal, safe and available free on the NHS. We call for an immediate end to the criminalisation of women who terminate pregnancies and will work within the Assembly to end the prosecution of women who take abortion pills.

Throughout this manifesto are a range of other proposals such as better housing, childcare, public transport and wages which would impact greatly on the ability of women to make decisions about crisis pregnancies.

An End to LGBTQ Discrimination

The LGBTQ community has been failed by Stormont. For too long their rights have been denied, whilst bigots in the Assembly are given free rein to offend. Gerry Carroll, during his time in the last mandate, was a member of a group of MLAs bringing forward a bill seeking to legalise equal marriage. PBP will continue to work closely with those from the LGBTQ community who are determined to achieve full equality. In particular, we will:

- Continue to campaign for immediate legislation to enact marriage equality;
- Work with LGBTQ groups and teachers to devise a strategy for eliminating transphobia, biphobia and homophobia within schools, starting with the recording of homophobic bullying incidents and a sex-ed programme fit for the 21st century;
- Put pressure within the Assembly for a Sexual Orientation Strategy;
- Work with others to produce a Gender Recognition Bill for Northern Ireland which includes the best elements of the legislation passed in the South;
- Fight for radical reforms that will remove any barriers to transgender people in relation to employment or accessing services.

An Ghaeilge a chosaint

Beagnach 20 bliain i ndiaidh Chomhaontú Aoine an Chéasta, tá a gcuid buncheart fós á séanadh ar Ghaeilgeoirí. Tacaíonn PBP go hiomlán leis an Ghaeilge agus is é ár mian:

- go cuirfí Acht Gaeilge i bhfeidhm;
- go gcuirfí deireadh leis na ciorruithe atá i ndiaidh a lán grúpaí Gaeilge a chur i mbaol;

- go leasófaí an dóigh a ndéantar cigireacht ar ghaelscoileanna – lena chinntiú go bpléifidh an chigireacht le riachtanais agus le hoideolaíocht an tumoideachais lán-Ghaeilge agus go mbeidh Gaeilge líofa ag foireann na cigireachta;
- go bhforbrófaí scéim ‘An Ghaelacadaimh’ a lorgaíonn bealaí a chruthú a ligfeadh do dhaltáí gaelscoile leanúint lena n-oiliúint trí mheán na Gaeilge ag an tríú leibhéal;
- go bhforbrófaí seirbhísí tacaíochta leathana faoi choinne riachtanais bhreise i gcás páistí i dtimpeallachtaí Gaeilge lena chinntiú go bhfaigheadh siad an soláthar céanna is a fhaigheann páistí i dtimpeallachtaí Béarla;

Tá ár n-aimn curtha le liosta na moltaí a d’aontaigh breis is 80 eagraíocht agus pobal na Gaeilge i gcoitinne, moltaí ar nós:

- dearbhú go dtabharfaí isteach Acht Gaeilge roimh aontú dul isteach in aon Fheidhmeannas sa tuaisceart;
- an maoiniú cuí a chur ar fáil mar atá leagtha síos i bPlean Infheistíochta Pobail na Gaeilge;
- Aire Pobail agus Aire Oideachais a cheapadh a chuirfeadh dualgais reatha dhlíthiúla i bhfeidhm agus a thacódh le pobal na Gaeilge.

Racism and Immigration

People Before Profit is completely opposed to racism in all its forms, including Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and anti-Traveller racism.

Racism became a major force in the modern world first as a justification for slavery and empire and then as a weapon of divide and rule setting ordinary people against each other to the advantage of our rulers and rotten governments. In opposition to racism we regard the ordinary people of every nation, ethnic group and creed, as our sisters and brothers.

All the mainstream political parties in Britain, Ireland and across Europe view immigration as a ‘problem’ to be dealt with more or less harshly. People Before Profit rejects this view. People have been moving across the world in large numbers since the dawn of history.

Without migration human development would have been impossible. People from all parts of this island have been forced, by poverty and unemployment, to emigrate to many different parts of the world where they have made a huge contribution to the culture and economy of their destinations.

We reject the view that immigration causes unemployment or that immigrants ‘take our jobs’ or that immigrants are responsible for the housing shortage or the state of the NHS. These social problems derive from an economic system based on production for profit and successive governments that serve the interests of the rich.

Where unscrupulous employers try to use migrants as 'cheap labour', our answer is to fight alongside those migrant workers for decent wages for all, NOT to object to the presence or employment of 'foreigners'.

Our position is that immigrants are welcome here. Their presence enriches our society and brings both economic and cultural benefits. We seek to unite with them in the struggle for a better society and a better world. We are completely opposed to the politics of scapegoating minorities and expect all our public representatives and spokespersons to combat it.

We oppose all discrimination and bigotry directed at the Traveller community, and call for a policy of zero tolerance on racism towards the Traveller community.

Policy on young people

People Before Profit starts from a recognition that the overwhelming majority of young people want to have a stake in society, to play a positive role in their communities and to have their point of view heard.

But they can contribute to society only if they feel connected to it. In order to feel connected, they need:

- To have access to resources;
- To feel their opinions will be listened to and taken into account
- To feel their expectations will be met, in terms of the facilities around them and jobs that pay a decent wage with proper conditions of employment.

We know that young people living in poorer areas are more likely to be excluded from school, to opt out early from education, to leave without any formal qualifications—often without basic literacy skills. Some of these problems can be traced back to the effects of selection, with children told at 10 or 11 that they are 'failures'. But even the end of selection won't deal with poverty and lack of hope for the future—the main cause of young people's alienation from their communities, from mainstream politics, from society generally.

Demonising young people will do nothing to help improve their lives or to tackle the anti-social behaviour of a minority.

In many working class areas, there are virtually no youth facilities. Young people have little choice but to gather on green spaces or at street corners. Groups on street corners, around mobile shops and in shared stairwells tend to upset and even frighten residents, especially older people and the parents of young children. The fact that the young people are frequently drinking underage, perhaps using drugs and being generally loud leads to them being seen as 'disruptive' and 'anti-social'; the issue quickly becomes one of policing, with the young people treated as petty

criminals. Soon, anyone 'hanging around' is described as 'anti-social' and moved on by either the State or groups acting as community police.

PBP approaches these issues from a different direction. We see the problem of street drinking and drugs as symptomatic of the environment young people are growing up in. Unemployment is endemic and rising again, meaning that young people can't afford to socialise and meet others in clubs and leisure centres. Without access to facilities, they opt for the only social outlet available to them, buying cans at off-licences and standing in public spaces in their own areas. This not only disrupts local residents but demeans the young people themselves.

Drugs are a major problem. The first step towards getting a grip on the problem is to look at the reasons so many people—not just young people—want relief from reality and to get out of their heads. People of any age content with their lives have less need to get stoned than people whose lives hold out little hope.

Banning this or that drug won't work—as a glance at experience around the world will show. The short-term advantage of putting hard cases out of action will be outweighed in the long-term by the effects of criminalising many others. In any case, it is prescription drugs which are causing most harm on our streets in 2017.

Any drugs policy which isn't devised with the active involvement of the young people it is aimed at will fail. Peer pressure is a big factor in youngsters taking to drugs. Peer pressure is the best way of turning that around. Even many young people taking drugs in the street or in "party houses" will agree when they are talked to that their behaviour is damaging themselves.

Young people need accurate information about the dangers of drugs. Whether it's by government agencies or armed vigilantes, for example, it's counterproductive to imply to young people that cannabis is as harmful as heroin or crack cocaine—or that there's something about it which automatically "leads on" to harder drugs. Skunk is much stronger than "ordinary" cannabis—just as vodka is much stronger than beer. But nobody trying to cut down on alcohol consumption would begin by pretending there's no difference. Young people are more likely to know these things than adults—and know when they are being patronised with false information. The only result is distrust.

The situation isn't as simple as a division between decent young people deserving of praise and "anti-social elements" who have to be stamped on. As often as not, the decent young people and the anti-social elements are the same individuals at different times and in different settings. A high proportion of those seen as lost causes are suffering from mental health problems. Many need one-to-one counselling—which isn't available.

We need a big increase in the number of trained youth workers—some ideally based in schools so as to liaise with teachers and establish links between school and life

outside. But they are not being trained, and those who do become qualified are often then unable to find work—because, we are told, the money isn't there. PBP know that money is there. It's just in the wrong hands and going to the wrong projects.

Why are amateur boxing clubs, youth football clubs, under-age hurling etc., deprived of adequate facilities and funding? They do magnificent work, provided almost entirely by voluntary labour. But there is a failure of official recognition.

Most of all young people need a sense of being in control of their own lives. They should have a leading role in deciding what youth facilities are provided in the city.

Why aren't we nurturing the abundant artistic talents of young people in every estate in every town and city? There should be resident artists in every community centre and youth facility. As in the case of sports, it would cost less in the long term than seeing culture and art as irrelevant to the youth of working class areas. Given the chance, our young people through arts will challenge the consensus of the local establishment and produce beauty to enhance all our futures. Cuts to the arts sector has had a negative effect on vulnerable young people whose access to arts services has been slashed.

We need a new approach, not more of the same. We in People Before Profit put all our trust in the rising generation. We don't want to hold them back but encourage them to become involved in advancing their own position, to feel the sense of achievement that's necessary to any fulfilled life.

Our proposals

- Treat young people with dignity and they will act accordingly.
- Extend voting rights to 16 year olds.
- Involve all young people, not just the well-off articulate ones, in decisions that affect them.
- Provide informal educational opportunities for those young people who have been let down by the education system, especially those with literacy problems.
- End the discrimination against young people of the under-25 in Minimum Wage (£4.05 for under 18s; £5.60 18 – 20 year olds; £7.05 21-25 year olds, compared with £7.50 an hour for over 25s) and benefits.
- CCTV, criminalisation and punishment beatings are not solutions to under-age drinking and street violence. Instead we need the kind of solutions outlined in this paper - support, not surveillance.
- Give young people a leading role in community initiatives on drugs—with no option ruled out.
- Government, local government and the Youth Service should combine to provide a facility in every area run by young people themselves where they can socialise and organise functions to suit their own tastes and culture.
- Schools and youth clubs should be opened in the evenings, at weekends and throughout the summer.

- Youth clubs should keep the same kind of hours as nightclubs. Otherwise, the young people will continue to leave them once they reach 14 or 15 – the very age when they need them most.
- Encourage young people to get involved in local community and campaigning groups – give them a stake in society and they will blossom.

Childcare

Childcare in Northern Ireland is the scarcest AND the most expensive in the UK, outside of London. We have fewer than one childcare place for every six children under the age of four. In spite of this, we continue to expect mothers, even single mothers, to engage in paid employment. We are the only part of the UK without a funded childcare strategy.

People Before Profit recognises childcare as a universal right and an infrastructural issue—if we want to develop economically, if we are serious about promoting the involvement of women in public life, then childcare has to be provided through a public system of crèches and early years' provision such as existed in England in the 1970s.

Promoting sustainable use of our land and supporting small farmers

People Before Profit is concerned about the extent to which our food travels long distances from production to sale. An ever greater number of 'food miles' is created to the detriment of developing high quality locally produced food. With the growing emphasis on trade, profits tend to accrue to the middle men and the agri-industry complex.

People Before Profit favours a strategy which keeps the maximum number of small farmers on the land producing food for the home market. Within that context, we favour a shift to supporting more environmentally sound forms of farming.

Currently, the island of Ireland is one of the few parts of Europe with a bee pollination plan, but there is still a need to ensure the protection and rejuvenation of the bee population. This could be done by managing the cutting of roadside verges and field boundaries.

We also need to encourage a shift in soil enrichment strategies so that more nitrates come from natural sources like clover rather than continued reliance upon chemically produced substances which leak in to our water table damaging source water. More broadly there needs to be greater controls on pesticides and the encouragement of the use of natural pest control. GLAS (Green Low-Carbon AgriEnvironment Scheme) needs to become inclusive of smallholders and communal garden growers. There needs to be encouragement of the use of fallow land for land share for those without access to land.

