



Local Election Manifesto 2023

End Division
Build a New Ireland



The Local Elections are an opportunity for you to elect local champions who will deliver for you, your family and your community.

The SDLP is running candidates across the 11 council constituencies in Northern Ireland who are committed to fighting for you!

The SDLP wants to realise the ambition of our local communities as great places to
LIVE, WORK & VISIT

This manifesto sets out our priorities for you, your family and your community in this local election.



www.sdlp.ie



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Leader's Message

Colum Eastwood MP

This election comes at a difficult time for people and communities across Northern Ireland. Energy prices and the cost of inflation are putting extreme pressures on household finances. The unforgivable absence of devolved government is preventing fair pay deals for public sector workers. And 25 years on from the Good Friday Agreement, it feels like politics here is stuck in reverse.

We were supposed to build a new kind of society together. One where everyone could aspire to a better life for themselves and their families. A new society where hard work could get you a good job with a fair wage, where you could buy your own home and make a life for yourself here, working to change this place for the better. That's the future I believed in. It's a future I still want to build.

Instead we have more peace walls. Our society has the longest hospital waiting lists on these islands. There are thousands of homeless families. Far too many kids are leaving school without the GCSE grades they need to be successful. And we're paying the people who run our public services far too little. It doesn't have to be like this.

The renewed mission of the SDLP is to end the politics of division that has held our people back for far too long and to work across our communities to build a new Ireland. We are focussed on creating a new, diverse and reconciled society that offers opportunity to everyone.

And that begins in local communities. We can't hope to build a new, modern country if we don't first get the basics right in your area.

This manifesto is a vision for community renewal built on three important pillars – creating great places to live, work and visit. It is filled with practical solutions to the common challenges every area faces and promises that the services delivered by your council will always offer value for money.

SDLP Councillors deliver for their communities. We have a strong record in local government because our party is powered by local representatives who care about the places they live and work in.



We are relentlessly focussed on how we transform health services to make sure everyone can get timely access to a local GP or hospital treatment when they need it. We're tabling new plans to protect public services and public sector workers from more austerity budgets. We're bringing forward bold new proposals to fund childcare for working parents so that everyone can raise a family and pursue a career if that's what they want.

The SDLP works every day to build a future based on opportunity for everyone. If that's what you believe in, then we need you to come out and support us on 18th May.

The people who will deliver our ambitious vision for the future will be known to you. They are hardworking SDLP candidates who are rooted in their communities and want to change this place for the better.

Together, we can end division.

**Together, we can build happier, healthier
and more united communities.**

**Vote SDLP and let's build
a new Ireland.**

A Better Northern Ireland Now

The SDLP is committed to building a better society in the North today. We want to end the divisions of sectarianism and grow and build a truly shared and reconciled society.

Our party has been tireless in trying to make our institutions work. From advocating a strong voice in Westminster to fighting for communities in our local councils.

We know that we can deliver for you, your family and your community now.

Essential to making things better is the restoration of our Assembly and Executive!

We need a functioning devolved government to make decisions that are impacting you and your family today. From investing in our children's education to transforming our healthcare provision; from supporting families through the cost-of-living crisis to assisting our local business community to thrive.

The SDLP will continue to fight for the restoration of the Assembly and Executive.

And we have confirmed that when the Assembly is restored, we will play our role as the official opposition. This is an important role within any democratic society: holding the Executive to account and advocating constructive solutions to improve the lives and public services for all our people.

The Windsor framework is a positive step in ensuring dual market access, easing East-West trade. We need to seize the opportunity that global market access gives all of our people.

If the DUP refuse to re-enter the Assembly and Executive, we will act in a spirit of partnership with other local parties and the Irish & British governments to demand reform to allow us to restore our devolved institutions.

If government in the North is to deliver for you and your family, it must be reformed. The SDLP has ambitious ideas to reform our institutions so they are focused on what matters most: delivering for you, your family and your community.



Building a New Ireland for the Future

The SDLP's mission is to build a movement for a New Ireland.

In the past number of months, the SDLP's New Ireland Commission has published its Six Core Principles document for a New Ireland.

We have also launched our innovative New Ireland Commission workshops with local community and youth organisations across the north. To date, we've engaged with women's groups, youth groups and community organisations from across the political spectrum on our island. We want to listen to the hopes, fears and ideas of all across our community.

This will allow us to develop a blueprint – an ambitious plan for a New Ireland. One that embraces all the traditions on our island.

A New Ireland is also how we will bring the North back into the EU.

Over the coming months, we will be setting out our policy ideas for a New Ireland in areas including: tackling climate change, health, mental health, education, culture, identity, language, innovation, connectivity, rights, diversity, reconciliation and how we can build better relationships across Ireland and with Britain.

**We are building a movement for a New Ireland.
Be part of this exciting movement today.**

Follow our work and get involved via
www.newirelandcommission.com



SDLP Local Election Manifesto 2023 - Priorities

Creating great communities to live

Creating great places to work

Creating great places to visit

A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE

Better public services for all

- A review of cleansing services to ensure our town and city centres are clean, welcoming, open spaces for the public
- Expanding recycling provision and ending the practice of offering different service levels across the same council district
- Seek a review of council funding to ensure that all business, community and voluntary sector groups have the opportunity to tender for services
- Put an end to the culture of carve up funding in councils where the favoured groups of the largest parties receive more opportunities
- Ensure that funding for groups and communities is based on need and tackling identifiable challenges with measurable outcomes for citizens
- Extending opening hours for parks
- Ensuring there is at least one dedicated dog park in every council area, with an ambition to deliver in every DEA
- Create an easy way for people to report dog fouling for clean-up online, including tracked clean up time (similar to site for broken streetlight)
- Raise dog fouling fees to £500 in every council area, and introduce a rising scale where fines increase for repeat offenders (up to £1000)

Creating a healthier, happier society

- We will ensure all councils review the current state of mental health outcomes and availability of mental health services in each council area
- Developing cross-cutting approach to mental healthcare across council services, such as the availability of open & green spaces

Tackling the cost-of-living crisis

- We will ensure all councils review how to support families and individuals with practical supports for the cost-of-living crisis, including additional 'cost of living payments' for those most in need and supporting our community & voluntary sector

Promote Active living

- Developing more greenways, more cycle initiatives and better provision of places to exercise
- Promoting green spaces and greater pedestrianisation areas within our towns and cities

- ➔ Progress on the Belfast Cycle network within the next 12 months and expansion of the Belfast Bike Scheme partnerships with Antrim & Newtownabbey, Lisburn & Castlereagh City and Ards and North Down Councils to extend out the public hire schemes on busy routes outside of Belfast
- ➔ Revisiting the Belfast Pitches Strategy to meet the growing demand for pitches in the city, particularly for GAA pitches
- ➔ Local council strategies to ensure parks, public green spaces are enhanced with accessibility for families and people with disabilities
- ➔ Creating more clean air zones
- ➔ Promoting dog-friendly policies, such as dog parks

Putting our children, young people & students first

- ➔ Ensuring greater investment in local youth clubs and activities that support our young people – such as sport, culture, music and art.
- ➔ Ensuring each council has a process for engaging with young people through initiatives such as youth councils
- ➔ Prioritising affordable and accessible student housing
- ➔ Developing a sustainable model for free public transport for students
- ➔ SDLP will campaign to support #RemoveTheRoom removal of seclusion and restraint

Promoting Safe, Diverse & Inclusive Communities

- ➔ Greater investment in community organisations with focus on positive outcomes that empower local communities
- ➔ Promote use of civic participation models in each council areas such as mini-citizen assemblies and 'participatory budget' initiatives
- ➔ Support the work of the Paramilitary Crime Taskforce
- ➔ Work with Policing and Community Safety Partnerships and the PSNI to erase the infrastructure of paramilitary gangs
- ➔ Seek an immediate review of funding for any organisation where senior members are found to be involved in criminality



- Working to ensure a comprehensive and resourced Violence Against Women & Girls Strategy with measurable outcomes for local government
- Investment in LGBTQ+ services including supporting the clustering of advice and advocacy groups in physical premises
- Ending all forms of discrimination and prejudice in terms of religious belief, political opinion, race, age, marital status, sex and sexual orientation
- Promoting the Irish language as well as protecting the rights of Ulster Scots speakers. We also want to see the creation of a Sign Language Act and more work to celebrate the diversity of languages that are part of our community
- Supporting UNCRPD and developing robust strategies for promoting & realising the rights of persons with disability. We will also highlight that not all disabilities are visible, such as learning, mental health, neurodivergent and sensory

Tackling the Climate Emergency

- Expanding the One Million Trees programme to restore nature and prevent habitat loss
- Investment in public information campaigns around carbon reduction, active travel and public transport
- Trialing car-free Sunday initiatives in major towns and cities
- Expanding electric vehicle charging point access
- Extending 20mph zones and low traffic neighbourhoods
- Campaigning for the devolution of greater powers around active and public transport
- Extending the Translink night buses scheme to improve nighttime safety and access to the night time economy
- Creating an all-island sustainability network at local government level to plan for a net zero future across Ireland

A GREAT PLACE TO WORK

Re-imagining our Communities

- Planning reform that engages investors, communities and citizens
- Greater civic participation in local development plans
- A review of vacant property rates to prevent land banking and maximise the use of space
- The devolution of regeneration powers
- The expansion of rail through the SDLP initiated all-island rail review
- A strategy for a comprehensive road repair scheme

Big Ambition - City Deals

- Ensuring that local communities, especially our most vulnerable, receive the benefit of the City Deal investments

Supporting Local Business

- New strategies to support social enterprise, women in business and youth enterprise
- 'Prompt payment champions' in each council area to ensure small businesses are paid quickly for services
- Tackling regional investment deficiencies that have left too many communities behind
- Campaign for a Childcare Rescue Plan and hold the Executive accountable for a resourced Childcare Strategy that guarantees universally affordable and accessible childcare and early education
- Campaigning to lift the MaSN cap to increase student numbers in Derry to at least 10,000 places





A GREAT PLACE TO VISIT

Welcoming Communities

- Ensure each council area has an ambitious plan for tourism, understanding its strong link to creating local jobs
- Strategy in each council area to bring concerts, cultural & sporting events to our local communities

Ambitious Culture

- Ensure each council area develops inclusive strategies to promote culture, music and arts within our local communities
- Advocate for the creation of a Night Mayor and night-time taskforce for both Belfast and Derry, with a focus on promoting and supporting the development of arts and culture

Re-imagining our high-streets

- Ensure our streets are cleaner and safe for the benefit of all in our community.
- Strategy in each council area to transform our local high-streets



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Your Community:

**A Great Place
To Live**



YOUR COMMUNITY A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE

We all take pride in our home. In this election, our SDLP local champions want to ensure that your community is the best place to live.

Our Priorities:

Better public services for all

Creating a healthier, happier society

Tackling the cost-of-living crisis

Promoting active living

Putting our children & young people & students first

Building united communities

Promoting safe, diverse & inclusive communities

Tackling the climate emergency

Better Public Services for All

Enhancing public services

In every council area across Northern Ireland, residents are now expected to pay substantially higher rates but see no direct increase in service provision. In many areas, people are now paying significantly increased premiums for a reduced level of service. That is not good enough.

Everyone should expect a minimum level of service from their council from effective cleansing and appropriate recycling facilities to easy and cost-effective access to leisure centres and good quality open spaces.

We also want to ensure meaningful Co-Design with disabled residents and councils, to discuss policies and ensure public realms that meet the needs of deaf and disabled people. We need to see improvements rural public transport. The SDLP will campaign for more accessible social housing and emergency accommodation for disabled people.

OUR PRIORITIES

A review of cleansing services to ensure our town and city centres are clean, welcoming, open spaces for the public

Expanding recycling provision and ending the practice of offering different service levels across the same council district

A plan to 'address the mess' left by irresponsible dog owners in public spaces by recruiting more wardens to police fouling

Investment based on need

Too many councils have become 'mini-Stormont' systems where resource and investment is carved up rather than shared out. Funding the projects of favoured groups is no way to run local government and there must be an immediate review of all council funding which has not been subject to open tender processes.

OUR PRIORITIES

Seek a review of council funding to ensure that all business, community and voluntary sector groups have the opportunity to tender for services

Put an end to the culture of carve up funding in councils where the favoured groups of the largest parties receive more opportunities

Ensure that funding for groups and communities is based on need and tackling identifiable challenges with measurable outcomes for citizens

Tackling dog fouling – ‘Address the Mess’

Dog mess is no laughing matter and gets to the heart of what local councils should be about. In recent years many areas have reported a significant rise in dog fouling on our streets.

It isn't just unsightly, it's a risk to public health. We need a robust plan to address dog mess and confront the irresponsible dog owners who give other animal lovers a bad name and create hazards for everyone else, not least children and the more vulnerable.

OUR PRIORITIES

Extending opening hours for parks

Ensuring there is a dog park in every council area

Create an easy way for people to report dog fouling for clean-up online, including tracked clean up time (similar to site for broken streetlight)

Raise dog fouling fees to £500 in every council area, and introduce a rising scale where fines increase for repeat offenders (up to £1000)

Creating a healthier, happier society

We will ensure that the health, mental health and well-being of all in our community is protected.

We are all aware of the challenges facing our healthcare system – it is broken and needs transformed. The SDLP will continue to demonstrate leadership by putting health above petty party politics. We need real leadership and action to transform the experience of people in accessing the healthcare system – from visiting their GP to reimagining the delivery of social care in our community.

The SDLP will press any newly established Executive to prioritise health service transformation. We will promote our principle that if any service is removed from a hospital, other services will be relocated to them.

We will also continue to fight for our healthcare workers – to be properly paid and supported for their incredible public service.

To do this, we need a functioning Executive and Assembly.

To help create a healthier and happier society, SDLP councillors will work to address the growing levels of mental health problems in our society and propose solutions to provide additional support to those in need and improve mental wellbeing outcomes.

Our response to this must take into account three basic dimensions: The cross-sectoral nature of mental health, level and availability of care, and coordination among policies and stakeholders.

SDLP councillors across all 11 councils will call for a review of the current state of mental health outcomes in their respective council areas. The three-dimensional response will consider the following:

Availability of counselling services through GP clinics, local hospitals and the community and voluntary sector. A review of the availability of mental health supports and therapeutic interventions in schools and workplaces should also be examined.

Calls for a Cross-Council Committee to coordinate an NI wide response through review of policies, monitoring and evaluation—and stakeholder engagement. This will include an Executive when it is formed, donors, non-governmental organisations, schools, private providers, and statutory bodies.

Calls for inter-agency collaboration and local planning to address the nature of transgenerational trauma. In the absence of an Assembly, through councils working together an NI wide assessment can be completed, with recommendations made, such as has been seen in countries such as Uganda and Bosnia & Herzegovina.

SDLP councillors will also support:

Access to the Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme. Recognising that many people seeking to apply for this fund will be living with levels of trauma, PTSD and injury support must be made available to help complete their applications. Organisations such as Relatives for Justice and WAVE are doing this but their lists are getting longer and their resources more finite.

Areas of highest deprivation in the North must see the appropriate resources made available to them to address mental health outcomes. For example: Belfast City Council and Derry City & Strabane have a majority of health outcomes worse than the average in the North with a strong focus on alcohol and drug related deaths and admissions.

As a result of the cross-cutting nature of mental healthcare, subsequent SDLP policies for local government will have a positive impact, such as our availability of open and green spaces, having welcoming communities, putting children first through early interventions etc. This will help create healthier and happier communities now and into the future.

OUR PRIORITIES

We will ensure all councils review the current state of mental health outcomes and availability of mental health services in each council area

Developing cross-cutting approach to mental healthcare across council services, such as the availability of open & green spaces

Tackling the cost-of-living crisis

One of the greatest challenges facing families and communities right now is the cost-of-living crisis.

The SDLP has consistently campaigned to ensure that we provide 'cost-of-living payments' and support the incredible community & voluntary sector organisations who are providing assistance in our communities.

We will work to find urgent and practical ways to ensure that we get support to those who need it most. No child our community should be hungry. No parent should have to choose between 'eat or heat'.

Our SDLP local champions already work day-in-day out to support those most in need. From running local foodbanks to advocating anti-poverty strategies.

We will also work on tackling the causes of poverty that blight our society – ensuring investment in local communities, tackling addiction, addressing educational underachievement and focusing on creating jobs.

OUR PRIORITIES

We will ensure all councils review how to support families and individuals with practical supports for the cost-of-living crisis, including additional 'cost of living payments' for those most in need and supporting our community & voluntary sector

Promoting active living

Our SDLP local champions want to ensure that we can enjoy the communities in which we live.

Creating new areas to walk, enhancing our parks & public spaces, investing in our leisure services and schemes that promote cycling will make a measurable difference to our communities and the health of everyone who lives here.

OUR PRIORITIES

Developing more greenways, more cycle initiatives and better provision of places to exercise

Promoting green spaces and greater pedestrianisation areas within our towns and cities

Progress on the Belfast Cycle network within the next 12 months and expansion of the Belfast Bike Scheme partnerships with Antrim & Newtownabbey, Lisburn & Castlereagh City and Ards and North Down Councils to extend out the public hire schemes on busy routes outside of Belfast

OUR PRIORITIES - Promoting active living continued

Revisiting the Belfast Pitches Strategy to meet the growing demand for pitches in the city, particularly for GAA pitches

Local council strategies to ensure parks, public green spaces are enhanced with accessibility for families and people with disabilities

Creating more clean air zones

Promoting dog-friendly policies within our local communities, such as dog parks

Putting our children, young people & students first

The SDLP wants to put children and youth services at the centre of our communities.

Our SDLP local champions will prioritise creating opportunities for our children and young people.

We want to see greater investment in local youth clubs and activities that support our young people – such as sport, culture, music and art.

The SDLP also want to ensure our young people play an active role within their community - we want to see greater participation of our young people in the decision-making process within local councils. We will ensure each local council works to develop meaningful process for engaging with young people, for example through youth councils.

Our people are not just our future – they are our present and should be involved in shaping the kind of society we want to be.

Education is not a local Council issue. However, the SDLP will continue through our Assembly team to fight for greater funding for education, increase in teachers pay, extension of free school meals during holiday period, radical overhaul of special educational need provision, transformation of early years education and review of curriculum to equip our children & young people for the ever-changing world in which they will live and work.

We want our students to love the place they live – we want them to be active members of our community so that we can encourage them to work in our local communities after their studies. We will work to make our communities student-friendly and prioritise more affordable & accessible student housing, seek to develop a sustainable model for free public transport for students and focus on greater alignment between skills, opportunities and economic development.

OUR PRIORITIES

Ensuring greater investment in local youth clubs and activities that support our young people – such as sport, culture, music and art.

Ensuring each council has a process for engaging with young people through initiatives such as youth councils

Prioritising affordable and accessible student housing

Developing a sustainable model for free public transport for students

SDLP will campaign to support #RemoveTheRoom Removal of Seclusion and Restraint

Promoting safe, diverse & inclusive communities

The SDLP is building a movement for a New Ireland. We want to realise the potential of our people and our island. We want the conversation about a New Ireland to be a process of reconciliation – one in which all the traditions of this island work to build a better society for our children.

The SDLP has a long tradition of striving to eliminate sectarianism and hatred from our community.

Our SDLP local champions will work to build good relations between all the traditions who call this place home.

We also acknowledge the many traditions and cultures who have made Northern Ireland home. We want them to feel welcome and included in the decisions that affect our community.

The SDLP will work to ensure investment in community organisations – we need more places and spaces to come together.

We know the everyday champions in our society are the community workers who work tirelessly to bring people together. We want to support them to empower local communities.

We want to see more civic participation – from mini-citizen assemblies to townhall meetings – local people shaping the kind of community they want. We will champion increasing levels of participation & engagement between citizens & Council to improve how public money is spent. This will include each council developing a 'Participatory Budget' strategy to ensure a specific annual budget whereby citizens within each council area can vote on which services should receive funding & setting priorities for the locality.

The insidious influence of paramilitaries on communities across Northern Ireland must be brought to an end. The coercive control exercised by criminal gangs involved in drugs, extortion and attempts to murder police officers must be tackled head on.

OUR PRIORITIES

Great investment in community organisations with focus on positive outcomes that empower local communities

OUR PRIORITIES - Promoting safe, diverse & inclusive communities continued

Promote use of civic participation models in each council areas such as mini-citizen assemblies and ‘participatory budget’ initiatives

Support the work of the Paramilitary Crime Taskforce

Work with Policing and Community Safety Partnerships and the PSNI to erase the infrastructure of paramilitary gangs

Seek an immediate review of funding for any organisation where senior members are found to be involved in criminality

The SDLP is committed to building a rights-based society rooted in equality.

We want to see our local councils as places which champion the rights of all who live in our community.

The SDLP will continue to oppose the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill – a Bill that has no support from our victims and survivors.

Our vision of a New Ireland is one in which the rights, dignity, and wellbeing of all citizens must be respected, protected, and promoted within appropriate legal and policy frameworks.

Our SDLP local champions are passionate about building and promoting diverse and inclusive local communities. We see difference and diversity as a strength. And we want to build welcoming communities for all who live here.

OUR PRIORITIES

Ensuring the rights of women & girls, especially in tackling violence and misogyny within our society.

Working to ensure a comprehensive and resourced Violence Against Women & Girls Strategy with measurable outcomes for local government.

Investment in LGBTQ+ services including supporting the clustering of advice and advocacy groups in physical premises

Ending all forms of discrimination and prejudice in terms of religious belief, political opinion, race, age, marital status, sex and sexual orientation

Promoting the Irish language as well as protecting the rights of Ulster Scots speakers. We also want to see the creation of a Sign Language Act and more work to celebrate the diversity of languages that are part of our community

Supporting UNCRPD and developing robust strategies for promoting & realising the rights of persons with disability. We will also highlight that not all disabilities are visible, such as learning, mental health, neurodivergent and sensory



Tackling the climate emergency

The threat of climate change is the greatest challenge facing our planet.

Whilst it will require global action, the SDLP believe that the answer starts locally. We each have a responsibility to take action to tackle the climate crisis.

We are fortunate to live in one of the most beautiful islands in the world: rich in biodiversity, stunning natural environment and with an ability to harness energy from the sea.

Our SDLP local champions will campaign to preserve our natural environment, coastal communities and schemes which encourage biodiversity and protect our wildlife.

OUR PRIORITIES

Expanding the One Million Trees programme to restore nature and prevent habitat loss

Investment in public information campaigns around carbon reduction, active travel and public transport

Trialing car-free Sunday initiatives in major towns and cities

Expanding electric vehicle charging point access

Extending 20mph zones and low traffic neighbourhoods

Campaigning for the devolution of greater powers around active and public transport

Extending the Translink night buses scheme to improve nighttime safety and access to the night time economy

Creating an all-island sustainability network at local government level to plan for a net zero future across Ireland



Your Community:

**A Great Place
To Work**



YOUR COMMUNITY A GREAT PLACE TO WORK

Our Priorities:

Reimagining our communities

Big ambition - City deals

Supporting local business

Reimagining our communities

Northern Ireland has ambitious economic aspirations and is fast growing a global reputation for our expertise in areas such as technology development.

The SDLP will work to ensure the rest of the economic ecosystem keeps up to growth is sustainable across the north.

A well-functioning planning system is vital if Northern Ireland is to achieve its economic ambitions and a sustainable future. Investors, communities and planners alike have often raised concerns that our complex system is creating unnecessary delays and potentially discouraging investment.

Too often the planning system is failing to deliver to ensure the redevelopment of our communities and the building of new homes. The SDLP wants to see reform of our planning system. We will be involved in delivering Local Development Plans and work to ensure cooperation between the bodies tasked to deliver planning. For example, in Belfast, we want to ensure all citizens benefit from the Local Development Plan.

We want to promote greater collaboration between developers, planners, local communities and local government to ensure that we have sustainable development that promotes investment opportunities, puts communities at the heart of development and unleashes the huge potential of our towns and cities.

The SDLP will also press for a review of vacant property rates to ensure that land & property owners either 'use-it or tax-it' to promote regeneration and redevelopment. We will advocate for the devolution of regeneration powers to councils.

SDLP local champions will work to develop innovative spaces and places that inspire creativity and promote entrepreneurship. This includes co-working spaces, entrepreneurial hubs and places which inspire innovation.

The SDLP was instrumental in creating the All-island Strategic Rail Review. We understand that connectivity is key to economic success and wellbeing for our communities.

The expansion of the all-island rail network will better connect our communities. We recognise the multitude of benefits a thriving railway system will have for the Northwest in supporting improved investment and economic growth. Better public transport plays a role in tackling the climate crisis through a long-term decarbonisation strategy, helping to reach net-zero carbon goals and as a viable alternative to private vehicle usage.

We also understand that many rural communities depend on their local road network and the SDLP will continue to advocate for a strategy to address potholes and upgrade our rural road network.

We need to explore greater devolution of transport powers to councils to allow for bespoke and innovative local solutions, such as the late-night buses in Belfast advocated by the SDLP.

SDLP local champions will continue to press our local councils to be ambitious in their plans for better connectivity and infrastructure so that we can help our local businesses to thrive and encourage inward investment.

OUR PRIORITIES

Planning reform that engages investors, communities and citizens

Greater civic participation in local development plans

A review of vacant property rates to prevent land banking and maximise the use of space

The devolution of regeneration powers

The expansion of rail through the SDLP initiated all-island rail review

A strategy for a comprehensive road repair scheme

Big ambition - City deals

The SDLP was a tireless champion for the delivery of the City Deals for Belfast Region and Derry & the Northwest.

We are proud to have played our part in delivering these ambitious City Deals for the North. The Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) secures a bespoke package of investment of more than £850 million.

The Derry City Deal will bring a total funding package of around £250m and create an additional 7000 jobs within the next decade.

The SDLP want to make sure that this money provides inclusive economic growth, creates better jobs and impacts directly on our most deprived communities. We also need to ensure that the implementation and benefit of the city deals is acted upon urgently.

The SDLP focus is to maximise the opportunity of the City Deals for all in our community.

OUR PRIORITIES

Ensuring that local communities, especially our most vulnerable, receive the benefit of the City Deal investments.

Supporting local business

Our local businesses are the backbone of our economy.

The SDLP wants to make sure that local councils provide business growth supports especially for our small & medium business sector, start-ups and entrepreneurs.

We will work to develop specific strategies aimed at supporting social enterprise, women in business and youth entrepreneurship. This will include providing more local workspaces for our start-up & creative communities.

Our small businesses are the heart of our local communities. So we will advocate for 'Prompt Payment Champions' in each council area to ensure that those small businesses providing services to local councils are paid on time. We understand that cash flow for small businesses is about survival – we will work to find practical supports through business growth initiatives to ensure we continue to support our local business community.

We will seek an intensive independent review of non-domestic rates to ensure that the small businesses which sustain jobs and communities are not facing a disproportionate burden. We will also promote a policy that every local council should be a Living Wage employer.

The SDLP has campaigned for decades to address the regional economic imbalance in Northern Ireland.

We will work in local councils to ensure a collaborative approach with Department for Economy and Invest NI. We will advocate for bespoke schemes to ensure that skills, apprenticeships and opportunities for entrepreneurship exist in every community across the North.

The SDLP will promote the growth of key sectors including our agri-food industry, tech, cybersecurity, creative industries and fintech.

The SDLP's vision for a New Ireland economy is one in which everyone has the opportunity to live with dignity and security. We are developing policy towards the introduction of a real living wage across the island, which reflects the cost of living and ensures that all workers can afford a decent standard of living.

Childcare place a significant financial burden placed on parents. We also recognise the particular barriers faced by women in participating in the labour market, caused by the high costs of childcare.

Over the past year, the SDLP has been at the forefront of developing innovative policy solutions for childcare, including developing a new Childcare Rescue Plan, to freeze and lower costs for parents and save places. We have also campaigned for a resourced Childcare Strategy to be agreed without delay, one that guarantees universally affordable and accessible childcare for parents and gives every child the best start in life.

The SDLP recognises the invaluable impact of higher and further education on our society and economy. Too many staff and students are facing significant challenges in accessing further and higher education through unaffordable fees and financial costs, especially at postgraduate level.

We will continue to work to remove the MaSN cap on student numbers and champion a time-bound process to produce a resourced plan to expand student numbers in the North-West to at least 10,000 student places.

Our SDLP local champions will work to ensure that your community is a great place to study, start a business and to work.

OUR PRIORITIES

New strategies to support social enterprise, women in business and youth enterprise

'Prompt payment champions' in each council area to ensure small businesses are paid quickly for services

Tackling regional investment deficiencies that have left too many communities behind

Campaign for a Childcare Rescue Plan and hold the Executive accountable for a resourced Childcare Strategy that guarantees universally affordable and accessible childcare and early education

Campaigning to lift the MaSN cap to increase student numbers in Derry to at least 10,000 places



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Your Community:

**A Great Place
To Visit**



YOUR COMMUNITY A GREAT PLACE TO VISIT

Our Priorities:

Welcoming communities

Inspiring culture

Re-imaging our High streets

Welcoming communities

The SDLP wants to ensure our communities are welcoming to all.

Tourism & hospitality are essential components of our local economy and an important way to build civic pride.

Our Westminster team have worked closely with the tourism sector to oppose the Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) system for international visitors to the UK and trying to ensure an exception to be applied to all international visitors travelling to NI from the Republic of Ireland.

We want to see ensure each council area has an ambitious plan for tourism, understanding its strong link to creating local jobs. It is also a way of supporting our incredible homegrown food and drink offering. The SDLP was proud to champion local and cross-border initiatives such as bringing the Ring of Gullion, Mourne and St Patrick's Country into Ireland's Ancient East.

Concerts, events and sporting activities also contribute to bringing visitors into our local communities, which is why the SDLP will continue to support projects such as the redevelopment of Casement Park.

SDLP local champions will work to promote welcoming communities for visitors and tourists.

OUR PRIORITES

Ensure each council area has an ambitious plan for tourism, understanding its strong link to creating local jobs

Strategy in each council area to bring concerts, events and sporting to our local communities

Ambitious culture

The SDLP wants to see our local councils develop inclusive strategies to promote culture, music and arts within our local communities.

From culture events to food markets, from promoting local emerging artists to attracting conferences to your community – we want to celebrate our local food producers, distillers, coffee roasters, artists, musicians and creatives.

We will create a target for Belfast City Council to attract one major international event per year (such as the Giro D'Italia & the MTV Awards).

We will advocate for the creation of a Night Mayor and night-time taskforce for both Belfast and Derry, with a focus on promoting and supporting the development of arts and culture sectors which produces a significant return for the local economy.

Your SDLP local champions will ensure that we celebrate the diverse and rich culture within our community.

OUR PRIORITES

Ensure each council area develops inclusive strategies to promote culture, music and arts within our local communities

Advocate for the creation of a Night Mayor and night-time taskforce for both Belfast and Derry, with a focus on promoting and supporting the development of arts and culture





Re-imagining our High streets

The SDLP has been at the forefront of efforts to re-imagine our local high-streets, especially in the aftermath of the Covid19 pandemic.

We understand that a big picture approach is needed – working with local businesses & stakeholders, redeveloping disused spaces into start-up and creative spaces and ensuring that our council services such as street-cleaning showcase the best of our local towns.

We want our villages, towns and cities to be hubs of enterprise, innovation and creativity.

Our SDLP local champions will ensure civic pride in our local communities.

OUR PRIORITIES

Ensure our streets are cleaner and safe for the benefit of all in our community.

Strategy in each council area to transform our local high-streets.



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