

PROGRESSIVE POLITICS NI

CHARTER 2023





WHO ARE WE?

Progressive Politics NI was started in January 2017 in the aftermath of the Cash for Ash scandal that kicked off yet another, though unfortunately not the last, period of instability & no government for the people of Northern Ireland.

It was born from a jealousy & frustration of watching progressive movements catch on around the world & not seeing anything quite the same here – and watching the usual culprits hold back any attempt at progress here.

What started as a Facebook & Twitter account has now grown to include a membership, the PPNI Members Council, who meet & stay in contact on a regular basis to make the most of the platform we have.

We are not from or supportive of any one particular party or politician. We have members who are members of political parties, and also members who are not. We just want to see a more open, forward thinking & progressive place for us all to live. The policies listed in this document are how we believe we can get there.



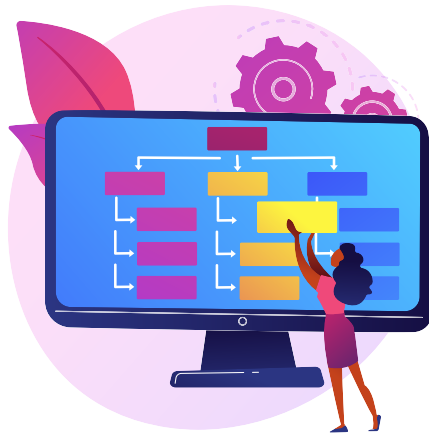


OUR AIMS & PROMISES

Using the policy areas highlighted on this Charter we at Progressive Politics NI will seek to build a progressive movement in Northern Ireland to fight for equality and social justice by carrying out the following;

- Working with & supporting progressive politicians, parties, activists & governments who seek equality & social justice
- Fostering cross-party cooperation to achieve progressive objectives
- Work with organisations & lobbying groups who are working on securing legislative change on human rights of equality & social justice
- Setup groups region-wide to tackle inequality & social justice issues all over NI
- Oppose oppressive politicians, parties & governments





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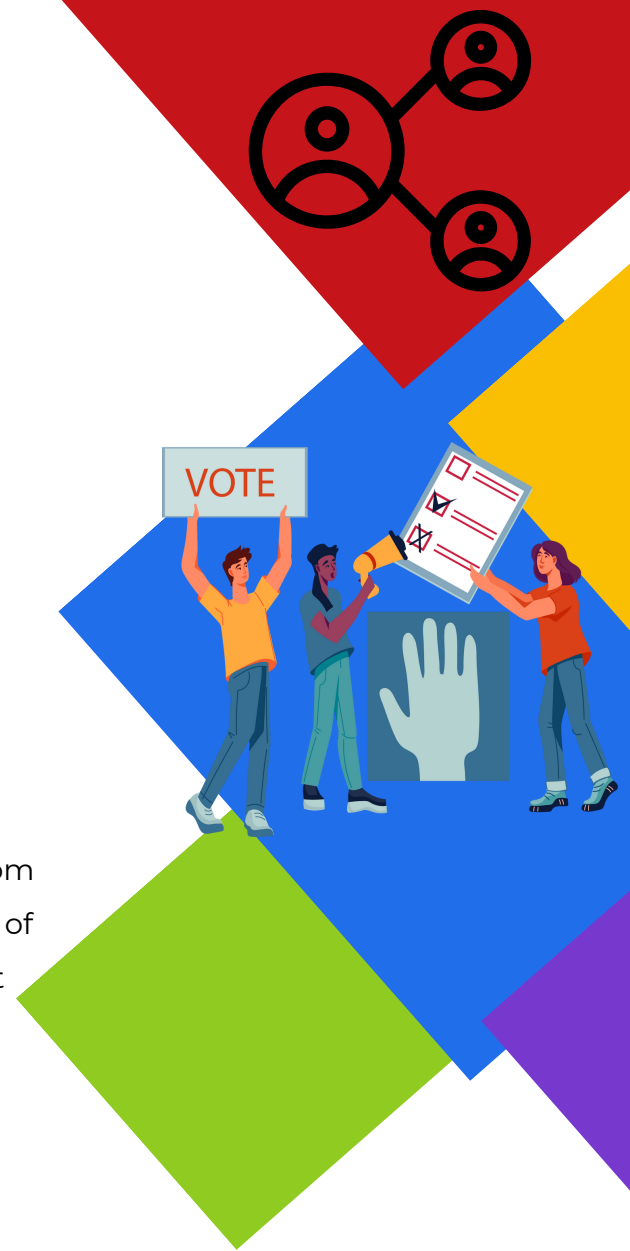
Internationalism

1. SHARED FUTURE

- Integrated education
- Mixed communities & inclusive public spaces
- Commissions to resolve contentious issues
- (flags, parading, the past)
- No paramilitary flags, symbolism or territory marking
- Political parties, politicians and activists need to acknowledge that the killing of innocent people is always wrong & there can never be any excuse for it. Whether it be by the armed forces or paramilitary organisations, we must never seek to hero worship them

2. FIXING OUR POLITICS

- Reassess the terms of the GFA including moving away from mandatory coalition, abolishing or reforming the Petition of Concern and ridding the Assembly of Unionist/Nationalist designations
- End the secrecy of historical party donations
- Right to vote from the age of 16
- Replace the House of Lords with an elected Senate
- Special advisors in Stormont to be selected via employment trawl rather than chosen by Ministers
- Automatic voter registration once a person turns 16 years of age
- Easier access to mail in voting
- Investigations into the incorporation of electronic voting to our current system
- Look at moving "polling day" for all elections being on public/bank holidays, and/or changing them to be over at least 2 days so as to encourage greater public participation in elections
- Reform the libel law in Northern Ireland
- Ban on MLAs employing family as staff
- Reduction of Assembly terms from 5 years to 4 years to strengthen accountability and give the public a say in direct democracy more often
- The NI Executive should provide clarity on the processes of the Executive in their decision making
- The NI Executive should publish minutes of Executive meetings within an appropriate time period after meetings
- Legislate for a binding Citizens Assembly mechanism in Northern Ireland for regional and local policymaking



3. HEALTH & SAFETY

- Properly funded & restructured health service that addresses the current shortcomings within the service & needs of the population
- Address the problems in Emergency Departments and Waiting Lists in Hospitals.
- No to privatisation of our NHS.
- More resources to tackle the issue of human trafficking
- Improvement of support services for refugees & migrants
- Above inflation pay rises for all HSC / NHS workers
- Mandatory First Aid and Medical & Digital Literacy Training in education
- National Care Service – bring care services under public control just like the NHS
- Force the social media giants to take realistic steps to tackle all forms of online abuse.
- Ban the smacking of children
- Defibrillators must be compulsory in all public buildings including education & sports venues
- Misinformation Action Plan should be developed to address the disturbing rise of misinformation within society & the negative influence it has on public life
- HSC Trusts should make improved efforts to involve people from the respective communities in the decision making of the future health services in areas including better advertisements
- The GMC (General Medical Council) should be able to carry out hearings & investigations into the work of former members on when the relevant medical professional was a member
- Develop & act on a plan to end the accepted practice & overuse of agency workers in HSC / the NHS, except in true emergency situations
- The Department of Health & Public Health Agency to develop a plan to greater educate the public on the emergency care options within their local communities, including GP Out of Hours, Phone First services, Urgent Care Centres & Minor Injury Units, to help ease the burden on emergency departments
- Legislate to introduce the Right to Die for patients within the health service
- As well as a fair pay rise, domiciliary care workers must receive appropriate compensation & travel costs for work related activities
- Primary Care multi-disciplinary teams in GPs - the Department of Health to continue & expand the roll out of MDTs at general practices to include First Contact Physiotherapists, Social Workers & Mental Health Practitioners
- Enshrine in law, and appoint the appropriate oversight and enforcement body for, the Right to Food
- Raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14



4. MENTAL HEALTH

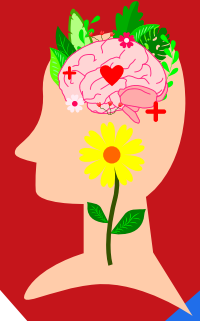
- Restructuring of Mental Health Services
- Additional Funding for Mental Health Services
- Fully deliver the Suicide Prevention Strategy
- All workplaces to have Mental Health First Aiders
- Greater education of mental health issues in schools, further education environments & workplaces
- Fully fund treatment and research of psilocybin-assisted therapy for mental disorders such as treatment-resistant depression and major depressive disorder
- Fully funded mental health wellbeing centres as an alternative to psychiatric wards

5. HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

- Urgent legislation to tackle the growing homelessness problem
- Tax landlords for empty properties
- Have rent caps on properties
- Abolish application administration fees
- Human Right to Housing
- Vacant land tax or the option to receive grants for "rewilding" and planting of native species to those who own vacant land
- Further regulation of Houses of Multiple Occupancy
- Tenants to have greater rights to security of tenure in private rental housing and protection from no fault eviction
- Legislation to prohibit the discriminatory practice of refusing tenancies to those in receipt of social security benefits
- Propose a legislative cap on holiday homes, in seaside towns
- Introduce an enforceable Charter for Renters Rights
- Mandate third party surveillance of homeless and emergency shelters

6. FAMILY

- Government should provide the option of free & quality childcare for all children under school age
- All employers to provide a minimum of 4 weeks paid paternity leave for new non-gestational parents
- Government to subsidise school uniforms so they are supplied to all free of charge & schools should move to more standardised uniforms
- Free & nutritional school meals for all pupils



7. EDUCATION

- Abolition of tuition fees
- Greater education on areas like LGBT rights, Mental Health, Money management and Sex Education
- Greater awareness of neurodiverse conditions for both students & teaching staff
- Revert the cuts to the student nursing bursary & extend to all health & social care students
- Compulsory, comprehensive and standardised relationships and sexuality education (RSE) in schools
- Greater need for political education in schools, higher education & workplaces.
- Introduce 'Activism' as a compulsory school module
- Greater funding for both SEN schools and SEN pupils in mainstream schools, as well as more training and access to resources for staff/practitioners to support SEN
- Equal opportunities and access to higher education for all
- A reform of the RE curriculum to remove the Christian centric nature of the curriculum and provide more of a general education in world religions, philosophies and ethics to increase inclusivity as schools become more multi-cultural
- Education classes/resources held by local community centres/schools to offer support and networks for new parents and families (e.g parenting classes, homework support classes, play groups) and more funding for programmes like Sure Start



8. CLIMATE

- Ban toxic mineral extraction in Northern Ireland
- Modern developments to our utility and transport infrastructures to aid with the transition period to a circular economy
- A crackdown on environmentally harmful acts & the strengthening of legislation regarding this.
- An independent Environmental Protection Agency for NI to provide oversight and regulation across both the private and public sector
- Reduce CO2 emissions through the promotion of renewable & sustainable methods – introduce a Climate Change Act and incentivise the switch away from fossil fuels
- Achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2035 through a gradual change to entirely sustainable materials, services and energy generation methods whilst utilising carbon capture & recycle method

Climate section continued on next page >>>

8. CLIMATE *continued from previous page*

- Rights of Nature Act for Northern Ireland
- Ban petroleum licensing
- Remove the statutory obligation on government in Northern Ireland to support the exploration and extraction of fossil fuels
- Deliver a Green New Deal for Northern Ireland
- Firewall between policymakers and mine / fossil fuel industries
- Department for the Economy should release the Hatch Report, commissioned from Hatch Generis on the economic feasibility of natural gas extraction in Northern Ireland
- Bring Lough Neagh into public ownership
- Suspend sand dredging in Lough Neagh, pending independent scientific analysis and public consultation
- Full implementation of Climate Change Act 2022
- Rescind and have no repeat of Memorandum of Understandings with NFU to minimise and castrate prosecution of ecocidal farming activities
- Deliver zero-carbon energy public transport across NI
- Introduce a ban on new fossil fuel infrastructure, investments, and subsidies (onshore and offshore)
- Insulate homes region-wide to green standards, and install heat pumps in each
- Mandatory divestment of public anchor institutions from fossil fuel industry
- Introduce a ban on fossil fuel industry advertising
- Public enquiry into the relationship between the utilities regulator and the energy industry
- Public enquiry into the relationship between the NI Environment Agency and NFU
- Insert Climate and Ecological emergency declarations into mandates of public authorities (ie utility regulator)
- Expand public financial aid to cooperative energy, food supply, and housing (including new builds and startups)
- Where the planting of trees & other plants occurs, e.g. carbon capture, only native species should be used in order to promote biodiversity & avoid invasive monocultures
- Deliver zero-carbon energy public transport across NI
- Publicly funded universal retrofitting of private and social housing to align with climate and ecological objectives
- Introduce a binding Citizens Assembly on Climate and Ecological Justice for the UK, or for Northern Ireland
- Deliver a government commissioned review into how NIs formal education system is preparing students for the climate emergency and ecological crisis
- Include the climate emergency and ecological crisis in teacher training, and a new professional teaching qualification
- Increase the priority of environmental sustainability in schools, including green infrastructure, sustainability inspections, and sustainability rankings
- Deliver a Northern Irish Climate and Biodiversity Emergency Education Act
- Windfall tax on fossil fuel energy activities (fossil fuel energy companies and private investments therein)



9. ETHNIC MINORITIES

- Implement all points in the Racial Equality Strategy 2015 – 2025
- Ethnic Monitoring to be implemented
- Race Relations Order 1997 to be updated
- Refugee Integration Strategy to be implemented
- Education in schools on race and minority issues including Black History Months in both primary & secondary schools
- Change of CTA rules to extend rights and privileges to nonCTA residents with rights to work, study and live in the island of Ireland
- Stormont should appoint an Independent Advisor on Racial Equality to provide expertise, insight & advice to the Executive on achieving progress
- Develop a Regional Roma Integration Strategy to address the inequality of the community in four key areas; Housing, Education, Employment & Healthcare
- Recognise the cultural rights of the Irish Traveller Community to live their traditional lifestyle and to provide appropriate sites for Traveller accommodation with sufficient access to essential utilities
- End the Immigration Health Surcharge
- Scrap the policy of deporting asylum seekers to Rwanda
- The British government should develop safe routes for asylum seekers to reach the UK
- Lift the ban on asylum seekers that stops them from gaining employment in their country of asylum while their application is being processed
- There should be an investigation into The Mears Group & their practices in housing asylum seekers on behalf of the government & review of their contract



10. LGBTQ+

- Ban all forms of conversion therapy
- Require the Health Minister to accept SaBTO recommendations on blood donor criteria
- Gender Recognition Act for NI
- Support trans women right to be on all-women shortlists
- Support for greater education on trans issues for all ages in schools & workplaces
- Stop homophobic & transphobic bullying in schools & workplaces
- Adoption equality for LGBT couples is implemented
- Trans healthcare services needs to improve.
- Data collection by public & government agencies on LGBT hate crimes needs to improve
- People should be able to self ID with the gender they identify with
- Waiting times in Trans healthcare including access to puberty blockers, surgery & counselling services should be reduced

11. WOMEN'S RIGHTS

- Services should be commissioned by the Health Minister to allow for free, safe & legal abortions
- The Protest Buffer Zones legislation, that allows for those seeking abortions & other forms of healthcare to do so without facing abuse, needs to be implemented
- Introduce gender quotas for elections
- Highlight the need to stop female genital mutilation
- The legislation that would see that period products is available in all public buildings needs implemented
- The full implementation of the Violence Against Women & Girls Strategy in Northern Ireland

12. WORKER'S RIGHTS & BUSINESS

- Above inflation pay rises for all public sector workers
- Legislation brought through to protect workers tips from their employers.
- Give workers "working from home" flexibility where applicable
- Move to a 4-day working week where possible
- Outlaw fire & rehire
- Increase the income tax personal allowance from £12,570 to £25,000
- Ban zero hours contracts
- No reduction to corporation tax & increase it to 26% for larger companies
- Stricter transfer pricing regulations. With the added clause that no existing large company may offshore their HQs within ten years of the start of the legislation
- The minimum wage should be the same for everyone, irrespective of age
- Reduce required notice period for a trade union to take industrial action to two days
- Reduce minimum number of employees needed for an employer to consider recognition of a trade union and a request for industrial action to 5 employees
- Remove the requirement for a postal ballot process when unions are deciding on industrial action
- Extend the right to challenge dismissal for partaking in industrial action to five years
- Legalise the right to strike in solidarity action
- Legalise the right to strike in climate and ecological action
- Support the right of frontline and essential workers to take all forms of industrial action



13. AUSTERITY

- Every adult to receive Universal Basic Income
- Current welfare programs like Universal Credit, PIP & Work Capability Assessment need reformed
- Abolish the Bedroom Tax
- Reverse austerity cuts in the community in important sectors such as the arts, youth clubs and sports
- Scrap pay-to-use ATM machines
- Supermarkets, restaurants cafes & other businesses must donate unused food to food banks
- Return the £20 Universal Credit uplift until a new welfare program is ready to replace Universal Credit

14. REGIONAL INVESTMENT

- Require infrastructure spending and capital investment in the most deprived regions, based on need - not just Belfast
- Improve transport routes in the West with a high priority on train routes
- Councils program for regeneration of town centres
- Give Councils greater powers to take steps to pedestrianise streets in towns & cities
- Get rid of The Surrender Principle in hospitality – The principle at the moment means there are only a set number of licences in Northern Ireland and if you want to open a pub or off-licence you have to obtain a licence from an existing business which is giving up its licence
- Social Value Act for Northern Ireland to entrench community wealth building into regional and local government



15. PUBLIC SECTOR

- Broadband free to all at the point of use
- Stop the creeping privatisation into our public services like the Housing Executive & Translink
- An overall review into the PSNI as an organisation - including but not limited to their handling of cases and the practices & culture within the organisation with a view to taking the necessary steps to improve public confidence in them
- Statutory support & funding for the recovery from the pandemic
- Develop a Northern Mutual Bank which moves away from the privatised system that currently exists & towards a democratised system that gives each person involved a say in how our money can be used for our benefit & the benefit of our region
- Replace Translink with a public transport system that is free to use at the point of use
- Bring electricity grid into public ownership

16. DRUG LAW REFORM

- Creation of a safe & regulated market for the selling of & personal use of cannabis
- Decriminalise drug use so it is not viewed as a criminal justice matter & to focus on a healthcare based approach
- Expansion of support services to help those who misuse drugs to quit
- Recognise the Cancard as a validated indication of medical cannabis usage
- Safe drug consumption rooms & needle exchange programs should be rolled out region wide so as to give those with addiction issues safe options until they can seek help

17. LANGUAGES, CULTURE & ARTS

- Irish Language Act and protections for Ulster Scots
- Sign Language (British & Irish) to be protected languages
- Government subsidiaries on foreign language courses
- More funding should be made available for the Arts Council to make available for grants
- Adequate support for the Arts Council should be put in place so they are in a position to process more grant applications & within more appropriate timescales
- Government should seek to provide studio spaces in towns & cities for creatives to use, including incentivising building owners to offer empty properties as spaces if they are temporarily being unused

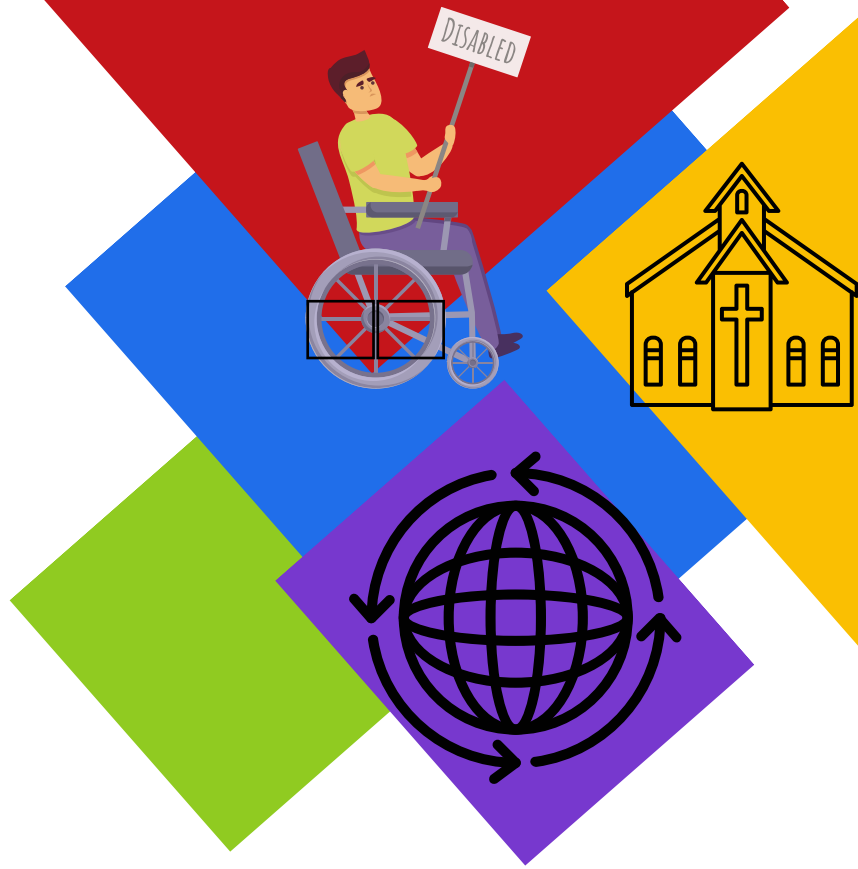
18. ANIMAL WELFARE

- Outlaw animal hunting with a dogs (fox hunting, etc.)
- Ban on puppy farms, third-party sales of animals, and reformation of breeding standards to prioritise health
- Seabins to be installed at docks and marinas to protect marine life
- Harmful pesticides & insecticides to be banned
- Delivery of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan across Government and Councils
- Oppose unsustainable agriculture and factory farming
- Ban badger culling, and move towards science-led control of bTB, including frequent testing and vaccination programmes
- Stricter sentencing for those convicted of animal cruelty offences and the introduction of an animal cruelty register



19. DISABILITY RIGHTS

- Incorporate United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) into law in NI
- Greater education of disabilities taught in schools, further education & workplaces
- Repeal the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) benefit and associated assessment for a better alternative
- Repeal the Work Capability legislation, including the associated assessment and adopt a human rights approach
- Protected time off work for carers
- Harry's Law – legislation to protect children with disabilities in education
- Develop legislation which recognises that children under 16 (including disabled children) can exercise legal capacity with support
- Reform the Mental Capacity Act 2016 to remove discrimination on the basis of disability in the context of deprivation of liberty
- Re-open the Independent Living Fund to new applicants
- Develop Adult Safeguarding legislation to create single source of evidence on violence, exploitation and abuse of d/Deaf and disabled people within care systems in NI
- Data monitoring by public & government agencies must be improved



20. SECULARISM

- Separation of church and state
- Equality of all religions and beliefs before the law
- Equality for nonreligious and minority faith groups
- End the Blasphemy Law

21. INTERNATIONALISM

- Oppose unnecessary military involvement in local or foreign conflicts
- No hard border in Ireland
- Irish border poll
- Support the BDS (Boycott, Divest, Sanctions) movement
- Solidarity with culturally distinct regions to have the democratic right to self-determination, for e.g. Catalonia, Palestine, Hong Kong, etc.

"A great democracy has got to be progressive, or it will soon cease to be either great or a democracy."

Theodore Roosevelt