

Vótáil

AONTÚ

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Luke Silke, aged 26, from just outside Tuam works in Leinster House as Parliamentary Assistant for the Aontú leader Peadar Tóibín TD. A graduate of NUI Galway, he is passionate about protecting and investing in rural Ireland. As a student in the HRC in Mountbellew, Luke authored a book on the history of his homeplace. He is son of Gerard and Marita Silke nee Kinneen. His family have strong connections with Clonbern, Lavally, Barnaderg, Athenry and Craughwell.

Through his behind-the-scenes work in the Dáil Luke Silke has helped try to mitigate against some of the damage the Green Party and their friends in Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil are inflicting on rural Ireland. He will be better placed to fight Galway's corner if you elect him in his own right to Leinster House. Through his work in the Dáil Luke has authored Legislation and has consistently lobbied TDs and Ministers for better investment in Co. Galway.



Luke SILKE

Galway East

Housing for Galway

There are over 200 vacant council-owned houses in Galway, according to statistics secured by Luke under the Freedom of Information Act. This is completely unacceptable at a time when homeless figures are skyrocketing and nearly 70,000 people are emigrating each year. Luke wants to see a return to the traditional style council house – where a young couple who might have a site from their parents but can't afford to build would be offered a house by the council on their own land, which would be leased and eventually sold back to them. Every townland in Ireland had council houses like this in the past and the system worked.

Vacant council houses need to be brought back into use as a matter of urgency. Many of the 200 families who should be in these vacant houses are currently homeless or else being accommodated in private rentals for which the council is paying the rent – at a savage cost to the taxpayer, and occupying huge space in the private market which should be available to private tenants!

Luke will:

- Reform and speed up the planning permission process.
- Build more social housing.
- Properly fund the return of vacant houses back to use.
- Incentivise the return of Irish construction workers from abroad.
- Increase the number of construction apprenticeships.
- End tax advantages for predatory Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs).

We need to elect TDs who are not afraid of concrete!



**Aontú Leader
Peadar Tóibín TD**

Government increasing the cost of living

Irish families are still feeling the effects of the cost-of-living crisis. Aontú research has shown that last year, in the cost-of-living crisis, the government collected more tax on fuel than ever before. The government are giving tea and sympathy on the cost of living while at the same time hiking up taxes on fuel.

One in five Irish people are struggling and two thirds are in the same financial position as they were at the height of the crisis early in 2023.

Luke will:

- Cut fuel tax on petrol and diesel.
- Reduce VAT on hospitality.
- Intervene to assist renters and greatly increase the delivery of social housing.
- Direct the ESB to take a smaller profit and reduce the price of electricity.
- Reduce the cost of public transport.
- Fund childcare to ensure its viability and to decrease costs on parents.
- Increase competition in the supermarket sector.

Human Rights

Aontú is a Human Rights party. We believe that all human life is worthy of legal protection, from the unborn child to the nursing home resident, from the disabled person to the migrant or drug addict. Ireland should uphold the human right to life for all.

Fix Galway's broken health system

Our health service is overmanaged, under resourced and crippled with Government red tape and regulation. During Covid the government suspended cancer screening and cancelled over 350,000 hospital appointments in Galway. To make matters worse for the first six months of this year the HSE imposed a recruitment ban on nurses in our hospital.

We've all heard the individual horror stories from UHG, the shocking conditions endured by patients, nurses and staff, the ambulance response times and the disaster with hospital parking. Luke has been to the fore in exposing the statistics relating to healthcare in Galway and advocating for more staff, capacity and better conditions. According to figures uncovered by Aontú, some 400 people in Galway had the carers' allowance removed from them last year. The lack of home help hours and the scandal of long waiting lists for disability and CAMHS mental health services are also being felt in the west.

Luke will: ● Increase the amount of frontline health workers. ● Provide decent pay and conditions to keep Irish doctors and nurses in Ireland. ● Decrease bureaucracy ● Protect regional GP services from closure. ● We will demand the creation of a parallel mental health service accessible for all ages with a dedicated multi-year budget.

Farming and rural Ireland under attack

Farmers in rural Galway are facing huge challenges in terms of the cost of production. Many farmers are actually operating at a loss. Luke Silke was proud to stand with farmers at the factory gates during the beef protests a few years ago. He has voiced his strong opposition to the Nature Restoration Law which will see wet lands which were 'reclaimed' through the hard work of our ancestors, turned back into a condition unsuitable for agriculture. The massive threat that Mercosur poses must be called out – this trade deal will see Irish beef sidelined in favour of poorer quality Brazilian produce. In South America deforestation, forest fires and over-grazing are very common. This EU deal, supported by Fine Gael, makes no environmental sense, especially when the carbon cost of transportation is factored in.

It's the same with turf – while the government here are hell bent on trying to stop us cutting turf, 172,000 tonnes of peat has been imported from abroad since 2016. It was Luke Silke who brought this scandal into the public domain. Aontú is the only party consistently speaking up for rural Ireland and challenging the establishment over their hypocrisy, neglect and bullying of rural Ireland. We have brought legislation to the Dáil that would put a floor under the price of beef to stop the exploitation of farmers by factories and supermarkets and we will continue to defend our farming sector at all costs.

Luke will: ● Demand fair price for farm produce and reduce the power of factories and supermarkets. ● Oppose Green Party attempts to undermine the family farm. ● Oppose the Mercosur Trade Deal.

Planning development and immigration

There are enormous flaws with the planning system which is in part what is forcing such a quantity of our young people to emigrate. Luke has consistently highlighted the fact that there appears to be one rule for big developers and one rule for ordinary Galway people. Its near impossible to build a house, even on your own land, without running into reams of red tape. On the other hand we see proposals for wind farms in the Tuam area getting preferential treatment in planning and being undemocratically imposed on rural communities, with the developer allowed by-pass the council in the planning process. Luke Silke opposes these developments. He opposed the Gort Bio Gas Plant and the Gas Powered Generator in Portumna.

In terms of immigration, we see huge flaws with the planning process also – private profit-motivated entities are turning unsuitable buildings into migrant accommodation right across the country. Incredibly they do not have to follow the same planning process. This means that an office block could be converted into IPAS accommodation without a single sentence appearing on An Bord Pleanála's website. This is wrong.

Aontú supports the unity of the Irish people, the human right to life of everyone, born and unborn, and economic justice so that all families can confidently raise their children to their full potential.

For assistance on local issues, contact Luke: **Tel** 085 223 9620 **Email** luke.silke@oireachtas.ie

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