

Pre-Budget Submission

Monday 5 October 2026



LIFE · UNITY · ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Executive Summary

Aontú's priorities for the 2027 Budget include:

Cost of Living Supports

- **Petrol and Diesel:** Aontú will introduce a dynamic pricing ceiling. If the price of petrol or diesel increases to above €1.90 carbon tax will be removed on a cent per cent basis. This will stabilise the price of petrol and diesel and help families across the country.
- **Home heating Oil:** Aontú will end carbon tax on home heating oil above €1.15 per litre.
- **Agricultural diesel:** Aontú will end carbon tax on agricultural diesel above €1.15 per litre.
- **Excise:** Aontú will not reinstate the excise which was cut from petrol and diesel, while the price remains above €2 a litre.

Because of the dynamic nature of these proposals, it is hard to give specific costs to the exchequer, but we estimate that this will cost €1.5bn in 2027.

- **Electricity:** Ireland has the most expensive electricity prices in Europe. Aontú seek to end the ESB dividend to the government for 2027. This would cost €150m. It would reduce the cost of a family's electricity bill by €100 a year.
- **Electricity:** Aontú would cut VAT on electricity from 9% to the EU minimum of 5% while electricity prices remain high. This will cost an estimated €85m a year and should remain in place for a year.
- **Electricity:** Aontú would seek to pull Ireland out of the system of marginal pricing of electricity which artificially ties the per unit cost of electricity to the cost of gas.
- **Electricity:** Aontú would invest in the electricity infrastructure to reduce constraints, bottlenecks and dispatch down.
- **Renewable energy:** Double the solar PV grant (€1,800 to €3,600), Double the EV purchase grant (€3,500 to €7,000), €600 battery grant for homes.

The cost of these measures would come to €440m

- **End the USC on the first €25,000 of income,** costing about €830m in year one.
- **A Family Care Credit of up to €4,000,** replacing the €1,900 childcare subsidy and the Home Carer Tax Credit, extended to cohabiting parents and payable to low-income families. €126m in year one.
- **Increase to Pension:** €10 a week increase to pensions. Cost €397m
- **Cost of living:** core welfare rates up €3 a week (about €224m), Fuel Allowance up €5 a week, targeted help for older people living alone and one-parent families, and mortgage interest relief held for one more year (up to €38m).
- An additional **second rate of child benefit** that would be means-tested. This additional payment will benefit 100,000 children. This will cost €168m.
- **Childcare hours that follow hours worked,** with non-working households limited to 20 subsidised hours a week and exemptions for carers and disability. There is no cost.
- **A legislated weekly Cost of Disability Payment,** rising from €10 a week in 2027 to €55 in 2030. This will cost €120m
- **Older people:** 1 million more home support hours (about €48m) and a timetable for the statutory home care scheme.
- **Special education:** a guarantee against SNA cuts and 500 more posts (about €19m).
- **Class Size:** We would reduce the average class size by two students to achieve a student-to-teacher ratio of 20 to 1. This would cost €42m.
- **8,000 vacant home grants** of up to €70,000 each, costing the exchequer up to €191m.
- Cut the VAT rate on new homes from 13.5% to 9% for the period of the next Dáil to lower the cost of building homes, matching the 9% rate already applied to new apartments. The government take €50,000 VAT in every new house. This will cost €480m

- **Pattern Book Zones:** ten pre-approved house designs on serviced sites in every province, with one site-wide approval and no individual planning application. This will cost €15m.
- **A State forward-purchase of stalled apartments** at cost, starting with a pilot of 500 homes. This will cost €134m.
- **An 8-week standard for re-letting vacant council homes.**
- **State-built student accommodation** with fixed, cost-based rents. 5,000 beds will cost €25m
- A competitive offer of **€12,000 for each essential worker to come home**, providing a grant of €12,000 to necessary construction workers, doctors and nurses who are willing to work in the sector for 5 years – two and a half to three times what the HSE currently offers. This will cost €40m
- Easing the “over the shop” accommodation regulation to allow for **empty commercial** properties to be used to accommodate families.
- **Addition of 400 Health Consultants.** €88m.
- **Increase the Mental Health Budget.** €200m.
- **1000 extra nurses.** €40m
- **Health charges:** rule out any rise in the Drug Payment Scheme threshold or new drug co-payments.
- **Women’s health:** €10m ring-fenced for endometriosis and a €2m research fund for endometriosis, adenomyosis and PCOS.
- **Gender-based violence:** a €50m annual capital fund for refuges (€150m over three years) and €19m a year for frontline services.
- Setting out a concrete 3 year timeframe for the **deletion of the means test for Carers Allowance.** This will cost €150 million in 2027.
- Reinstating the **Supplementary Pension** for fast accrual pensions for Gardaí.
- **Inheritance Tax Reform:** €200m
- Creating a **Unity Realisation Fund** aimed at mapping out the practicalities of a 32-county state, coupled with a **North-South Unit** in every department to start mapping out how their responsibilities could be met in the event of unity. €5m.
- **Increasing the number of Gardaí to 18,000** at an estimated cost of €348m a year once full strength is reached (from about 14,300 in 2025). 1000 extra Gardaí in 2027 will cost €77m.
- Re-opening **26 rural and regional Garda** stations. This will cost €30m.
- **A Job Guarantee Training Pipeline** starting with 1,000 bus drivers, at about €4m to €5m.
- **Rural Ireland:** all 87 identified rural bus services funded in 2027, post office funding indexed to inflation, and a broadband connection voucher for low-income households. €26m
- **Small business:** freezing employer PRSI at 11.4%, a mandatory SME impact assessment, and an On-Trade Sustainability Tax Credit for small pubs. €30m
- **Public sector pay:** €2bn has been assigned for this in the proposed Government budgetary envelope. Aontú would weight it toward the frontline.
- **Gaeltacht and the Irish language** Aontú will invest an extra €66m in 2027.

Savings and Increased Taxes

- **Ending Waste:** Aontú would cut out waste by €1bn in 2027. We would ensure that new contracts of all senior civil servants would include a clause that states that there would be penalties up to and including being fired if they significantly waste taxpayer’s money.
We would also nominate a Junior Minister for Efficiency whose job it would be to track expenditure in real time and report it weekly to the Taoiseach. This would place responsibility for waste in the Taoiseach’s office.
- **End Dependency on External Consultants:** Aontú would cut by €200m in 2027 the spend on external consultants in the civil service.

- **Audit NGOs:** Aontú would audit all NGOs. Those that simply lobby government on government policy and provide no other service to the general public would have their income cut. There is also a large level of duplication. In 2027 Aontú would cut funding by €300m.
- **End Military Expenditure to Ukraine:** €100m
- **Non replacement of 400 Administration Staff within the HSE:** €24m
- **Reduction in Agency Staff in the HSE:** €40m
- **Reduction in Compensation because of Increased accountability:** €100m
- **Immigration reform:** an asylum appeals court, a single Border Agency, enforced deportations and lower accommodation costs. This would save €200m
- **Doubling the bank levy:** from €200m to €400m.
- **A Large Energy User Levy on data centres:** €10 to €20 per MWh, raising about €77m to €153m.
- **End Default School meals in Non DEIS schools:** Children from non DEIS schools can opt in. Saving of €230m
- **Output-funded hospital pilot:** TBC

Background

Expenditure

The Government has agreed on an overall budgetary package of €8.5 billion. The government expenditure in 2027 is planned to be €125.5 billion.

The 8.5bn will be split into €7 billion of new expenditure. Of this, €5.9 billion will go toward day-to-day current public services (bringing total current expenditure to €105.2 billion). Of this €2bn is likely to be set aside for a new Public Service Pay Agreement.

€1.1 billion is designated for long-term capital infrastructure. This will bring total capital expenditure to €20.3 billion.

A taxation package of €1.5 billion will be allocated for new tax relief measures, primarily intended to target personal income tax and Universal Social Charge (USC) adjustments to "make work pay."

Income

In 2025 the tax revenue breakdown in Ireland was: Income Tax amounted to €36.6 billion. Corporation Tax amounted to €32.9 billion. Value-Added Tax amounted to €22.9 billion. Excise Duty amounted to €6.5 billion and other taxes and non-tax revenue amounted to €3.5 billion

Waste

The elephant in the room is government waste. Government waste is endemic. Government waste such as the National Children's hospital and the latest IPAS contracts scandal show that on a daily basis, hard earned taxpayers money that could be spent on public services or on tax relief is instead being incinerated.

This year there will be €3 billion in overspending across Government departments. Some of this will be unavoidable, such as spikes in people using hospital A&Es. However, health alone will account for €1.4 billion overspend by the end of the year. Capital infrastructure overspend will also likely add up to over €1bn. Aontú in government will stop the waste by enforcing accountability. This will increase the revenue available in the budgetary envelope.

Prudence

In 2021 the government introduced a core public spending growth limit to 5% per year, matching the economy's estimated long-term sustainable growth rate. Independent watchdogs like the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council (IFAC) note that actual spending increases routinely exceeded the 5% limits, averaging closer to 6%–

9% due to supplementary estimates and public pay demands. Aontú will stay within the current 6% spending growth limit.

Ireland's gross general government debt stands at approximately €208 billion to €217 billion, depending on the specific accounting measure used. Because of yield increases the of debt repayments is expected to double in the next number of years. Aontú seek to reduce the national debt.

The State has two main funds where money is set aside for future use. These are the Future Ireland Fund and the Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund. At the end of last year, they held nearly €17 billion between them. However the Government is now borrowing money to save in the rainy-day fund. This does not make sense. Aontú will set aside 10% of future Corporation taxes to repay the national debt.

Middle Ireland is working harder and has nothing to show for it.

The government continues to squeeze the population with energy taxes, ignoring higher prices and falling short on their own housing targets.

The price of the most basic commodities for families, food and heat continues to keep parents awake at night.

Food costs 12% more in Ireland than the EU average. Prices have seen a jump of 14.6% for the average household.

The Government's take from taxes on energy and fuel has topped €4.5bn for the first time, and carbon tax receipts have doubled in the last five years.

The total amount of VAT raised on fuel and energy has continued to increase. This year the government will make an extra €280m on VAT because of the spiralling cost of fuel. Carbon taxes, at €1.2bn, are also at their highest ever. 35% - 45% of the cost of a litre of petrol and diesel is made up of government taxes, levies and duties.

Fuel excise was temporarily cut in 2026 and is being phased back in from 1 November; extending the cuts from 1 September to the end of February 2027 is estimated to cost €407m.

In their latest report, the ESRI spells out what that will mean for families. "The latest data show that one in five (c.225,000) children are below the poverty line when housing costs are accounted for, little different from the share seen during the worst years of the financial crisis."

It goes even further; "This means that barring significant real increases to payments in Budget 2026, the incomes of those at the bottom of the distribution are likely to continue lagging behind those of the rest of the population. Such patterns of income growth will have important consequences for rates of poverty and material deprivation."

There are 500,000 electricity and gas accounts in arrears. The CEO of the ESB has just been given a salary increase of just under €100,000 by the government

Our housing system remains shattered. 17,885 people – including 5,830 children – are homeless (August 2026). Rents are pricing families out of their homes, and many young people would rather emigrate for a better chance at owning their own home than try to enter the market here.

In health, the state continues to ignore inequalities, the HSE and CHI continue to oversee scandals involving our most vulnerable, and Ministers continue to dodge accountability.

On infrastructure, the government have spent the last number of years dragging their feet on planning, tendering, licencing, permitting and Judicial Review reform. Infrastructure projects such as the Greater Dublin Drainage Scheme and Metro North are glacial as a result.

It will take until 2050 before the gaps in the water infrastructure that are blocking the building of homes will be filled in. Yet the CEO of Uisce Éireann has received a salary increase this year of €118,000.

Aontú's Approach to Waste

Aontú would cut out waste by €1bn in 2027. We would ensure that the contracts of all senior civil servants include a clause that states that their jobs will be lost if they significantly waste the taxpayer's money.

We would also nominate a junior Minister for Efficiency whose job it would be to track expenditure in real time and report it weekly to the Taoiseach. This would place responsibility for waste in et Taoiseach's office.

We would also seek to tie the pay of senior civil servants to their productivity and their efficiency.

We would seek to increase the recruitment from the private sector into the civil service at all levels.

Infrastructure

Our infrastructure across the state is ailing. Projects face delays, funding shortfalls, waste and red tape.

Our electricity network faced a crisis following Storm Éowyn, leaving tens of thousands without power for days. The government has been informed by professional associations that the grid is not fit for the future, and yet it will seek to prioritise 'private lines' to power data centres and not homes.

Rural roads are crumbling and investment in wastewater infrastructure is continually caught up in red tape and delays. The government has presided over a litany of wasteful spending, and has sought to put distance between Ministers and accountability by creating more quangos and civil servant positions to cushion against responsibility.

A 2025 review of the National Development Plan outlined that over half of all major projects had been delayed, often for between 3-5 years. MetroLink, the National Children's Hospital and the Greater Dublin Drainage Project are all monoliths to the failure of government to deliver on infrastructure.

According to the European Court of Auditors, it takes an average of 143 days in Ireland alone to complete a tender evaluation. It is considerably longer in the case of the bid and tender evaluation stage for construction competitions in Ireland at 294 days, which is second worst in Europe and approximately three times the European average.

Aontú want to see a directly responsible Minister in the Department of the Taoiseach to oversee projects and eliminate waste.

We want to see resources made available to the courts to determine judicial reviews and contests relating to infrastructure.

The upcoming budget needs to prioritise delivery in critical infrastructure.

Aontú also wants infrastructure spread across all four provinces: an Ulster prison (see Crime and justice), the Letterkenny surgical hub and a day-surgery site for Cavan and Monaghan, and dedicated mental health emergency centres (see Health).

Housing

This government continues to fail to meet even its own targets for housing. Rents are skyrocketing, and young people are leaving the country in droves because they cannot afford to even save for a deposit for their own home. Only 36,284 homes were completed in 2025, against the 50,000 to 60,000 a year that experts say are needed, and 16,679 were completed in the first half of 2026.

17,885 people are accessing emergency accommodation in this State (August 2026). This figure includes 5,830 children (aged under 18) and 12,055 adults, up approximately 17% from January 2025 (15,286 total, including 4,603 children).

Vacant and derelict homes

- Aontú will provide 8,000 vacant home grants of up to €70,000 each, costing the exchequer up to €560m a year at the maximum grant, of which up to €160m is new spending above the existing €50,000 vacant-property grant (derelict properties already qualify for up to €70,000).
- Aontú will significantly reduce the bureaucracy and red tape surrounding the drawing down of this funding.
- Aontú will provide a similar grant of up to €30,000 for the refurbishment of the accommodation above shops. This will cost €60m.

VAT on new homes

- Aontú will cut the VAT rate on new homes from 13.5% to 9% for the period of the next Dáil to lower the cost of building homes, matching the 9% rate already applied to new apartments.

Pattern Book Zones

The Ready to Build scheme already lets councils sell sites with electricity, water and wastewater at up to €30,000 below market value. But only eight sites had been offered in its first year, and buyers must still apply for planning permission house by house. New South Wales launched a Housing Pattern Book in 2025, with eight pre-approved designs and approvals in as little as ten days through a private certifier. Aontú will bring the same idea to Ireland:

- **A National Pattern Book of ten house designs**, chosen through a design competition run by the Government Architect, with free plans.
- **One site-wide approval** for each serviced site covering all ten designs, so buyers need only building-control certification. The exact legal route, a council Part 8 approval or a new exempted development class, must be confirmed by planning counsel.
- **A utilities guarantee:** Uisce Éireann and ESB Networks must connect each site within a set time, or the site is not offered.
- Sites in towns and villages with mains services in all four provinces, with a minimum number in every county.
- The existing principal-residence rule and ten-year clawback stay in place.
- A pilot of 500 sites in year one, rising to 2,000 sites a year by year three.

Servicing costs up to about €30,000 a site, so about €15m in year one and €60m at 2,000 sites, partly recovered through site sales. The design competition should cost low single-digit millions. The ten designs would be:

- 1. A one-bed bungalow for starters or ageing in place (about 55 m²).
- 2. A two-bed single-storey cottage (about 75 m²).
- 3. A two-bed two-storey terrace (about 85 m²).
- 4. A three-bed terrace or townhouse.
- 5. A three-bed semi-detached (about 105 m²).
- 6. A three-bed dormer bungalow (about 120 m²).
- 7. A four-bed two-storey family home (about 140 m²).
- 8. A fully accessible three-bed bungalow for disability and older buyers.
- 9. A live-work house with a studio, for rural businesses.
- 10. A multi-generation house ready for the exempt 32 to 45 m² rear dwelling.

Stalled apartments

The Banking and Payments Federation reports that more than 41,000 approved apartments across Dublin's four local authorities had not started at the end of the second quarter of 2026, and it points to viability. The four councils have invited advance-purchase offers on stalled schemes since 2023, and Croí Cónaithe targets apartment viability, so Aontú's version would make this a standing national programme priced at cost. Aontú will have the Land Development Agency and the Housing Agency forward-purchase stalled approved schemes at cost, for cost-rental and affordable purchase. We will begin with a pilot of 500 homes, about €134m of capital, and scale to 2,000 homes, about €536m, at the €268,000 a unit used in this submission. The capital is recovered through rents and funded from the windfall capital allocation described under Funding.

Council homes and worker accommodation

- **An 8-week standard** from vacancy to re-let for council homes, with ring-fenced voids funding and a published league table by county. There are 3,779 vacant council-owned homes, and more than 2,100 were returned to use in 2025. Cost to be confirmed with the Housing Agency.
- **Reinstating our 2024 proposal** for purpose-built accommodation for construction workers under Class 17 of the Exempted Development Regulations, at €75m (2024 estimate, to be updated).

Empty homes

The most recent figures show that there are 3,779 empty council-owned homes across the State. A further 70,149 homes were classed as vacant by the CSO at the end of 2024 (3.2% of the housing stock), and more than 2,100 vacant social homes were returned to use in 2025 under the Voids programme.

Having empty homes in the middle of a housing crisis is akin to exporting food in the middle of a famine.

The highest council-owned home vacancy rate was in Cork City at 355, followed by Dublin City Council at 336, Fingal at 323 and Limerick City Council at 315.

The government is paying nearly €600 million to house people in RAS (Rental Accommodation Scheme) and HAP (Housing Assistance Payment) homes, while so many Local Authority homes are empty.

We want to:

- Ensure the national rent control system that replaced Rent Pressure Zones on 1 March 2026, which limits increases to 2% or inflation, whichever is lower, remains in place.
- Ease “over shop” accommodation regulation to allow for empty commercial properties to be used to accommodate families.
- Strengthen the protections against no-fault evictions that were introduced in March 2026.
- Reduce HBFI rates from 13% to 5% and subsidise the connection fees of utilities for new homes.

Gaeltacht and the Irish language

Aontú will invest an extra €66m in 2027 to start closing the gap. This will fund language planning, support for Údarás na Gaeltachta and a new housing division so Gaeltacht families can afford to stay in their communities. It will also give direct support to Irish language groups across the island, and an extra €11m for TG4. This is the first step towards raising funding from under 0.17% to 0.4% of State spending.

Homelessness

Carried forward from our 2024 budget: intensive case management for households in emergency accommodation for more than a year, legislation requiring local authorities to consider the best interests of the child, an inter-departmental group on child and family homelessness with Tusla, and aligning rent arrears arrangements for HAP tenants with those for social housing tenants.

State-built student accommodation

The Government’s strategy targets 42,000 student beds by 2035, against a current shortage of 15,000 and only 15,648 State-funded units. It cuts VAT on student accommodation to 9%, but there is no cap on what private operators charge, and developers say they need €12,000 to €14,000 per bed. Aontú will:

- Build State-financed beds on public and college land, with technological universities using their new borrowing powers.
- Publish a flat, fixed rent for each room type, set at cost and indexed only to inflation.
- Target beds first at the regions with the largest gaps.

If rents are capped at €8,000 a bed, the subsidy needed is roughly €4,000 to €6,000 a bed a year, or about €60m to €90m a year across 15,000 beds. The capital cost per bed must be confirmed by the Housing Agency.

Operation Shamrock

Operation Shamrock is an initiative by Aontú to put in place effective incentives and support for Irish emigrants in key sectors to come home. Many respondents to surveys relating to leaving home for a life abroad have referred to working conditions (doctors and nurses) and rates of pay.

35,400 Irish citizens emigrated in the 12 months to April 2026, while 30,200 returned, a net outflow of 5,200. This signifies an ongoing trend of Irish people leaving home for better prospects across the globe.

The Irish health service has lost a generation of nurses. Almost 13,000 nursing or midwifery staff have applied for their CCPS in the last five years, a document required to show competence before moving roles to another jurisdiction. The vast majority of those who have applied have been general nurses, but there have also been applications from almost 500 midwives.

The HSE allowance for those seeking to come home is measly in comparison to what some Australian health providers are offering to entice Irish workers there. The HSE allowance is payable towards vouched accommodation and flight expenses up to a combined total amount of €4,160 for candidates relocating from the EU/Britain and €4,710 for candidates relocating from non-EU countries.

The HSE do not know how many doctors or nurses came home and availed of this scheme.

- **We want to offer a competitive €12,000 for each essential worker to come home**, providing a grant of €12,000 to necessary construction workers, doctors and nurses who are willing to work in the sector for 5 years – two and a half to three times what the HSE currently offers.
- Using the model utilised in the Shanganagh Castle development in Dublin where the LDA partnered with the local authority, they were able to build homes quickly by using state land/building exemptions. We estimate the cost of each unit to be in the range of €268,000, depending on the configuration.

Operation Shamrock pays for itself. A nurse costs about €76,000 a year to employ directly. A 30% agency premium is therefore about €23,000 a year. If each returning nurse or doctor replaces an agency post, the €12,000 grant pays back in about six months. Aontú will pay the grant in stages, €4,000 on starting, €4,000 after two years and €4,000 after five, with clawback if the worker leaves early. Every returner must fill a vacancy or replace an agency post.

THE COSTING

Total cost of measures €7,663bn

Total savings €2,471bn

Infrastructure bill €720m

Health

Aontú want to see an additional €10 million in funding to establish 12 additional CAMHS teams across the country.

The existing provision of specialist mental health staff in hospital A&Es, prisons and on-campus medical centres in universities needs to be expanded, and should include mental health nursing cover available to respond to mental health challenges and crises as they arise. The cost of this additional cover is estimated to be approximately €4 million.

Agency staff and an in-house staff bank

The government must reduce the use of agency staff in the HSE by 20% for each of the next 5 years. Agency spend was €903m in 2025 and agency staff cost around 30% more than direct hires, according to HSE estimates. Converting 20% of agency posts to direct employment would save around €40m a year, rising to around €200m a year at full conversion.

The HSE's own plan is to cut agency spend to about €760m, and the Health Minister has said she wants an in-house HSE agency. Aontú will back that with hard targets: convert 20% of agency posts to direct employment each year, and let HSE staff who want extra hours work through the staff bank rather than an outside agency. Agency spend rose 14% in 2025. Each additional 20% converted saves about €40m a year, and full conversion about €200m. Savings beyond the HSE's own plan count as new.

Administrative staff

35,000 management and administrative staff work within the HSE. This works out at 1 in 4 staff within the HSE who works in management and administration. Aontú will aim to increase the number of frontline staff and reduce the number of admin and management staff.

Aontú will introduce a moratorium on recruitment of administrative and management staff in the HSE, so that natural retirement reduces the number over time. It is estimated that 600 people retire from management and administration each year within the HSE. The non-replacement of 600 WTE in this sector would save the HSE €30m a year at full run rate (around €15m in the first year, as retirements are spread across the year). Posts that directly support frontline clinical services would be reviewed case by case.

Consultants

The government should ring-fence employing 400 Consultants next year at a cost of €88m.

Funding hospitals by output

Activity-based funding has been in place since 2016 and covers admitted care and day cases in 44 acute hospitals. But hospitals are subject to only 25% of the funding change, with 75% held back as a cushion, and emergency and outpatient activity will not be included before 2028. Aontú will run a pilot in three to five hospitals where funding is based on the outputs of each hospital: operations, treatments, consultations, therapies and engagements with patients. The cushion would be removed and outpatients included, with safeguards on readmissions, waiting times and patient experience so hospitals are not rewarded for volume alone. The pilot should be cost-neutral, with an independent evaluation after two years.

Day-surgery hospitals in every province

The Government is opening surgical hubs, with Swords open since June 2026, Cork open and Galway due, but Letterkenny and Sligo are still only in design. Among the most overcrowded hospitals in June were Limerick, with 1,799 patients on trolleys, and Sligo, with 885. Aontú will bring forward the Letterkenny hub and add a day-surgery site for Cavan and Monaghan, reusing an existing hospital site to save time. Costs to be confirmed with the HSE.

Mental health emergency centres

About 50,000 people a year go to an emergency department seeking mental health help, and the Oireachtas Health Committee heard in July that a separate centre outside mainstream hospitals is needed. There are only six pilot Crisis Resolution Teams. Aontú will open a dedicated 24/7 mental health emergency centre in each HSE region, starting with three pilots including one in the north-west. They will be staffed by psychiatric nurses, doctors and peer support workers, and linked to the 12 CAMHS teams proposed above. The cost must be obtained from the HSE through a parliamentary question.

Health charges

Free GP care covers children under 8, and a means-tested GP visit card is available up to the median income, just under €47,000 a year, since the 2023 expansion. The prescription charge is €1.50 an item, capped at €15 a month (€1 and €10 for the over 70s), and the Drug Payment Scheme caps household drug costs at €80 a month. The Irish Times reported on 23 September that health officials are looking at asking patients to pay more for drugs. Aontú will:

- Rule out any rise in the €80 Drug Payment Scheme threshold and any new drug co-payment, at no cost.

Women's health

Budget 2027 should provide dedicated funding to fully implement the National Framework for the Management of Endometriosis, with a particular focus on reducing waiting times and bringing specialist treatment closer to women. This requires an additional €10 million ring-fenced for endometriosis, on top of existing commitments,

with the HSE required to publish exactly what the money delivers in terms of posts, additional surgeries, diagnostics and waiting-time reductions. Aontú will:

- Expand regional hubs so women do not have to travel to Dublin or Cork for specialist care.
- Provide dedicated physiotherapy and pain-management services, recognising that treatment cannot consist solely of surgery and medication.
- Fund GP training, building on the Framework's presumed-diagnosis approach so GPs can recognise symptoms earlier and refer appropriately without requiring a definitive diagnosis first.
- Provide menstrual and endometriosis education in schools, expanding the HSE's new MISE programme beyond its current two education officers. The programme is already designed for schools, workplaces and sports clubs.

The HSE was asked in 2026 about developing a structured PCOS model of care, so this is not just a general women's-health issue; there is an identifiable gap in how PCOS is organised within the health system. The Government's existing €2m women's-health research programme for 2026–27 has specific themes including endometriosis and menstruation, but PCOS is not listed as a named priority theme. Aontú will:

- Establish a dedicated €2 million research fund through the Health Research Board for endometriosis, adenomyosis and polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS).
- Prioritise research into early diagnosis, causes, treatment and long-term health outcomes.
- Examine why women experience prolonged delays in diagnosis and whether current diagnostic pathways are effective.
- Fund research into the links between these conditions, fertility, metabolic health, chronic pain and mental health.

Migration

Ministers must assess the cost of duplication in agencies with responsibility for migration versus a singular Migration Agency proposed by Aontú.

This must also include the cost of appeals and ad hoc deportations, and an Irish Sea Border for people.

The British government announced a digital ID scheme in 2025 but dropped its mandatory element in January 2026, so the predicted rise in migration from Britain on that basis has not materialised. The Government must nonetheless monitor UK immigration policy and plan for any change affecting the Common Travel Area.

Aontú seeks to implement, with the British government an Irish Sea Border to reduce the flow of migrants from the north of Ireland. We also seek to make the immigration system stricter and faster to reduce the costs. We sought estimates for our proposed savings from the state, but numbers were not provided.

The International Protection Act 2026 came into force on 12 June 2026, with decisions due within six months (three months for accelerated cases), but the appeals backlog has grown from 895 at the end of 2022 to about 19,000 in January 2026. Aontú did not support the EU Migration Pact, but with the Act now in force we will hold the Government to its own timelines and focus on enforcement, appeals capacity and cost. Aontú will:

- **Create a new, properly resourced asylum appeals court** to clear the backlog of about 19,000 appeals. Where an appeal is refused, the applicant is subject to enforced deportation.
- **Set up a single Border Agency**, with staff dedicated to enforcing deportation orders.
- **Reduce the number of visas issued**, to encourage people already here into work, linked to the training pipeline under Jobs and skills.
- **Cut accommodation costs.** The State paid €978m to private operators in 2024 for about 33,000 people, an average of €82 a night. The Justice Minister gave the national average as €71 in May 2026, ranging from €60 in Longford and €66 in Roscommon to €73 in Leitrim. Every €5 off the average saves about €60m across 33,000 people, so tendering towards the lowest rates, about €10 below today's average, saves about €120m. The Government is already trying to cut demand and move to State-owned centres, so only savings beyond its own plan count, and the State has legal duties to accommodate, so supply must be secured first.

Cost of living

The Government's €10 rise in core rates in Budget 2026 cost €750m, so each €1 a week costs about €75m. The Fuel Allowance is €38 a week for nearly 500,000 households over a 28-week season, and the €5 rise cost €58m. The Social Protection Minister has signalled a smaller, targeted package this year, with a focus on pensioners living alone. That fits the data: consistent poverty among older people living alone rose from 5.2% to 9.6% in the latest survey, and among children in one-parent households from 11% to 13.4%.

Petrol, diesel and heating fuel

- **No increase to petrol and diesel from tax decisions.** Aontú will hold carbon tax at €71 a tonne rather than let it rise in October. Revenue's Ready Reckoner puts every €1 a tonne at €20m a year including VAT, so the legislated €7.50 step is worth up to €152m.
- **A carbon tax ceiling.** Carbon tax comes off diesel when the national average pump price passes €1.90 a litre, and off petrol when it passes €1.99, and returns when the average falls back below the line. Carbon tax is 18.74 cent a litre on diesel and 16.35 cent on petrol before VAT, and Revenue's reckoner implies about €45m a month for diesel and €16m a month for petrol while it applies. Diesel averaged €1.92 in August, with excise being restored from 1 September at 10 cent a litre, so the ceiling is likely to apply on diesel this winter, at up to about €270m over six months.
- **End carbon tax on home heating oil and on green diesel.** By Aontú's estimate from excise receipts, this costs about €90m to €105m for heating oil and about €120m for green diesel, and Revenue must confirm. Green diesel costs around 90 cent a litre including VAT and carbon tax is about 19 cent of that, so removing it lowers farm, contractor and haulage costs and so food prices.
- **A fuel price stabiliser.** When pump prices rise, the State's VAT take rises with them. Aontú will recycle that extra VAT automatically into lower excise, instead of relying on emergency packages. Extending the cuts from 1 September to the end of February 2027 is costed at €407m, and extending them further into early spring is reported at about €100m a month. The Department of Finance must publish monthly VAT-on-fuel receipts so the ceiling and the stabiliser can be calibrated. Carbon tax receipts reached almost €1.2bn in 2025, and the Comptroller and Auditor General found only 61% of ring-fenced receipts were spent on their intended measures between 2020 and 2023, so unspent receipts should fund these measures first.

Welfare and household support

- **Raise core rates by €3 a week,** about €224m. Every extra €1 a week costs about €75m.
- **Raise pensions by €10.** Cost €397m.
- **Raise the Fuel Allowance by €5 a week,** about €70m, and extend the season by four weeks, about €76m, funded as a one-off from the windfall allocation.
- **Target older people living alone** through a higher Living Alone Increase, and one-parent families through a higher income disregard. Costs to be confirmed by the Department of Social Protection.
- **Hold mortgage interest relief at its 2026 level for 2027.** Revenue shows the 2026 credit at half value, a maximum of €625, and reports say it is phased out in 2027. More than 60,000 households benefit, so holding it costs at most about €38m (60,000 × €625). The relief has critics, so Aontú proposes a one-year hold only.

There is no economic basis for the continual increase in toll costs for commuters. Ministers must commit to ensuring no further toll increases over the next three years and begin the process of purchasing toll bridges to ensure that the government controls charges, and that any excess money brought in (which is beyond what is required to maintain the roads) will be used for the upkeep and maintenance of primary and secondary roads across the country.

We wish to see the government allocate €15m annually for the provision of holiday hunger schemes in Ireland, either in the form of a specific benefit or through community schemes.

Energy Supports

Electricity prices for domestic customers remain the most expensive in Europe (net), with some providers already increasing prices in recent weeks for the winter ahead. The current cost equates to about €1,553 per year—over €500 more than the EU average.

The government previously offered electricity account credits in the previous budget, totalling a total of €250 in credits, split into two €125 instalments, ending at the end of February 2025, with additional allowances for eligible households.

Ministers further announced a total package of ten lump sum payments totalling over €1.4bn.

- **Working Family Payment Thresholds:** We want to see Ministers put in place another €400 lump sum providing immediate relief.

The government should cut VAT on electricity from 9% to the EU minimum of 5% while electricity prices remain high. Budget 2026 extended the 9% rate to the end of 2030. Moving to 5% will cost an estimated €85m a year (subject to a Revenue costing) and should remain in place for a year.

The government has the authority to mandate the ESB, which is making extraordinarily high profits, to reduce its profit levels and lower the cost of electricity. It is imperative that they now do that.

Tax and working families

The higher-rate threshold

The point at which workers pay 40% tax is €44,000 for a single person and €53,000 for a one-income couple. It was left unchanged in Budget 2026, so wage growth has pushed more people into the higher rate. The Government is expected to raise it to at least €46,000. Revenue's Pre-Budget 2027 Ready Reckoner puts each €1,000 added to the band at €256m in the first year and €293m in a full year, so €46,000 costs about €0.5bn and €48,000 about €1.0bn to €1.2bn. Aontú wants the threshold raised and indexed to earnings from 2028 so that bracket creep cannot return, but the increase is not in its year-one package because it would take the package above the 6% limit. Inflation-proofing the bands by 4% would cost about €1bn a year.

End the USC on the first €25,000

Aontú will end the Universal Social Charge on the first €25,000 of income for every taxpayer. This replaces the earlier proposal to scrap the USC below €50,000 for €1.9 billion. Revenue's Pre-Budget 2027 Ready Reckoner puts cutting the 0.5% rate to zero at €163m in the first year (€188m in a full year) and cutting the 2% rate to 1% across its whole band at €419m (€481m). Removing the 2% rate on income up to €25,000 is about €670m by Aontú's estimate, so the total is about €830m in year one and about €950m a year in full. The Ready Reckoner does not cost this exact change, so a Revenue costing is needed. A worker earning €25,000 or more saves about €320 a year.

Family Care Credit

Married couples can already transfer unused credits and rate band between spouses. But the €2,000 PAYE credit can never transfer, and the Home Carer Tax Credit of €1,950 is available only to married couples and civil partners. Cohabiting parents get nothing. Aontú believes the Home Carer Tax Credit should equalise the tax treatment of one-income and two-income couples created by tax individualisation. Aontú will:

- **Replace the Home Carer Tax Credit and the €3,000 stay-at-home subsidy** with one Family Care Credit of up to €6,000, refundable so that low-income families benefit.
- Extend joint assessment treatment to cohabiting couples with dependent children.
- Let the working parent claim the stay-at-home parent's unused credits.

Revenue costs each €50 added to the Home Carer's Credit at €3.0m in the first year and €3.4m in a full year. Taking the credit from €1,950 to €6,000 is 81 steps of €50, so about €243m in year one and €275m in a full year

for the roughly 60,000 to 68,000 households who claim it now. Extending it to cohabiting couples and making it refundable adds to this, and Revenue must supply the number of eligible households.

Family friendly policies

Aontú want to see an additional second rate of child benefit that would be means-tested. This additional payment will benefit 100,000 households. This has the potential to take more than 40,000 children out of poverty. We estimate that introducing this payment would cost around €700 million per year.

Aontú will legislate in 2027 so that the payment can begin in Budget 2028, in line with the Government's own work on a targeted extra payment.

We believe work should begin immediately to deliver child benefits to mothers from 4 months of pregnancy, which will cost €60 million.

Ministers must set out a concrete timeframe for the deletion of the means test for Carers Allowance. This will cost €450 million a year.

Aontú would invest €97m in the Early Years Education and Childcare sectors to stabilise the sector and prevent closures.

Childcare that follows work

Under the National Childcare Scheme the universal subsidy is €2.14 an hour for up to 45 hours a week, whether or not a parent works. Enhanced income-assessed hours of up to 45 apply only where every parent is working, studying or training, and otherwise the maximum is 20. From 31 August 2026 the income thresholds rose to €34,000 to €68,000 and a €183.70 weekly cap on full-time fees applied. Aontú will:

- Link subsidised hours to hours worked, with enhanced hours for working parents.
- Limit the universal subsidy for households where no parent works, studies or trains to 20 hours a week, or four hours a day.
- Exempt carers, parents with disabilities and jobseekers in activation.
- Reinvest any savings in lower fees for working parents. The free preschool year (ECCE) is unchanged.

This should be broadly cost-neutral. The Department must supply the number of non-working households using more than 20 hours.

Disability

Research for the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission and the ESRI found that disability adds €488 to €555 a week to a household's costs, against a Disability Allowance of €254 a week. The Programme for Government promised a permanent Cost of Disability Payment, which has not yet been introduced, and reports suggest Budget 2027 will pay a grant in lump sums rather than weekly. Aontú will:

- **Legislate a weekly Cost of Disability Payment** on a fixed glidepath: €10 a week in 2027, €25 in 2028, €40 in 2029 and €55 in 2030. It would be separate from means-tested payments and would not be lost on taking up work.
- With about 310,000 recipients (a Social Democrats estimate; to be verified with the Department), the cost is about €161m in 2027, €403m in 2028, €645m in 2029 and €887m in 2030.
- **Raise the Domiciliary Care Allowance by another €20 a month**, about €17.5m, which is what the last rise cost.
- **Fund 300 independent living support packages**, more personal assistance hours and permanent personalised budgets, as disability groups have asked. Cost to be confirmed by the HSE.
- Carers' supports and the Carer's Allowance means test are set out under Family friendly.

Older people and home support

About 190,000 people aged 65 and over live alone. The home support budget has nearly doubled since 2020, from €490m to €920m, yet waiting lists are higher than they were then, according to Home and Community Care Ireland. Waiting lists cluster outside Dublin, with about 1,000 waiting in Cork alone, and the statutory home care scheme promised since Sláintecare in 2017 has stalled. Budget 2026 added €82m for 1.7 million extra hours, or about €48 an hour, and €92m to the Fair Deal scheme. Aontú will:

- **Fund 1 million more home support hours**, about €48m, directed at the counties with waiting lists.
- **Publish a timetable for the statutory home care scheme**, with draft legislation within twelve months. Cost to be confirmed by the Department of Health.
- Pair this with the Living Alone Increase under Cost of living, so both the income and the service gap are addressed.

Defence and Unity

We are committed to reinstating the Supplementary Pension for fast accrual workers such as our Defence Force members.

We believe that to prepare for Irish reunification, the government should now create a Unity Realisation Fund aimed at mapping out the practicalities of a 32-county state, coupled with a North-South Unit in every department to start mapping out how their responsibilities could be met in the event of unity.

Agriculture

Aontú is calling for the Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS) to be replaced by a Whole Farm Environmental Scheme with a base payment of €15,000.

Ireland's quota of Sole in Irish waters is 4%, compared with around 80% for Belgian trawlers. This is an outrageous inequality that has further damaged the Irish fishing industry after Brexit. The government must end the importation of fish products that undermine the Common Market Organisation regarding the protection of our processing sector and introduce a strategic plan to assist all sectors, prioritising the polyvalent section of our fleet, starting with small-scale fishermen.

We are advocating for a Tillage Survival Scheme payment of €250/ha and a Tillage Expansion Scheme of €400/ha to be paid on land converted into tillage in year 1. There must also be a maintenance payment of €250/ha in year 2. Aontú seek €100 per dairy and suckling yearling and €100/dairy beef calf.

Aontú will also end the carbon tax on green diesel (marked gas oil), as set out under Cost of living. Fuel is a direct cost for farmers, contractors, hauliers and processors, so the change lowers costs along the food chain and eases pressure on food prices.

Crime and justice

- Crime is out of control in parts of the country, and many communities have no recourse to a local Garda station. We want to see an increase in the number of Gardaí to 18,000 in 5 years at an estimated cost of €348m a year once full strength is reached. Ministers must reopen 26 rural and regional Garda stations. This will cost €30m. Garda strength was 14,318 in 2025 against the Government's target of 15,000, and Templemore can train around 800 to 900 recruits a year while about 440 gardaí leave each year.
- The government must meet our responsibilities under the Istanbul Convention. Central to that, Ministers must accelerate the delivery of Women's Refuges and Rape Crisis Centres in counties without these services.
- Aontú want to see measures in place that ensure that cash remains in widespread use so that those in abusive relationships have the means to leave and not rely on digital payments that may reveal their whereabouts.
- Aontú will increase funding to organisations supporting women suffering from domestic violence

A public defender pilot

Ireland has no public defender. A 1994 Department of Finance study found salaried defenders about 70% more expensive than the present scheme, and criminal legal aid cost about €62m in 2020, small next to asylum accommodation. But criminal defence solicitors are withdrawing services over the new €520 flat fee, so resilience matters. Aontú will run a three-year public defender pilot in the Dublin and Cork District Courts, with an independent evaluation of cost and outcomes before any national roll-out.

Gender-based violence

Domestic violence remains a significant issue in Ireland, with specialist services reporting increasing pressure on refuge, housing, legal and frontline supports. In January 2026, 850 adults and 324 children were receiving support from specialist services on a single day, while 1,872 women were turned away in the previous six months because of capacity, housing and staffing pressure. The challenge is prevention, but also ensuring that victims can access safety, legal support and housing when they leave an abusive environment. Aontú will:

- **A €50m annual capital fund** for domestic violence refuge and safe accommodation, contributing to a three-year €150m programme for new and expanded refuge capacity.
- **€19m additional annual funding** for frontline domestic violence services, supporting staffing, recruitment, retention and sustainable service provision.
- A dedicated move-on housing allocation so women do not remain in refuge because there is nowhere affordable or secure to go.
- An emergency financial support fund for women leaving abusive situations, covering immediate costs such as deposits, transport, food and essential household items.
- Multi-annual funding for refuges, rather than short-term or annual funding cycles, allowing services to plan staffing and accommodation capacity properly.

Education

We want to see the abolition of fees chargeable to parents for digital infrastructure for schools. The removal of fees for school books has been replaced in many schools with high fees for tablets and computers, undermining the policy objective. The government should introduce a reduced fee for these items as part of its procurement framework or offer parents a subsidy to utilise cheaper digital options.

Previous budgets saw the student contribution fee paid by college students cut by €1,000, bringing the cost of one year in university to €2,000. We would make that permanent.

We would reduce the average class size by two students to achieve a student-to-teacher ratio of 20 to 1. This would cost €42m. The Government said that they would reduce class sizes by 5 over the length of this government. To achieve that, the government have to reduce class sizes by 2 this year.

Special education

There will be about 25,000 special needs assistants in schools from September 2026, after 1,717 new posts, and special education is allocated €3 billion. But the National Council for Special Education's review of allocations left about 187 of the first 585 schools facing reductions, until the Government paused it, and the Department of Education faces a deficit of about €500m this year. The Department's own figure of €19m for 500 additional posts implies about €38,000 a post. Aontú will:

- **Guarantee that no school loses SNA posts** during the review, and give schools an independent right of appeal against any reduction.
- **Fund 500 further SNA posts**, about €19m, and publish allocations school by school.

School meals and food

The Hot School Meals programme has a 2026 budget of €286 million. It serves about 550,000 children in 3,200 primary schools at €3.20 a meal. About a fifth of meals, around 100,000 a day, go uneaten, and 84% of parents want a cold lunch option. The Government is already moving towards one. The Programme for Government also commits to extending the scheme to secondary schools, so any saving has a use. Switching the whole scheme to cold lunches would not release a large surplus, and it would risk children going without a proper meal, so Aontú proposes:

- **School meals for all DEIS schools**, with students outside DEIS able to opt in.
- **A daily hot-or-cold choice** for every child, with suppliers paid per meal ordered. Cold lunches can be substituted instead of the hot meal. The cold lunch, a roll or wrap with a protein filling, fruit, a drink and a snack, must meet the same nutrition standards. The cold lunch rate was €1.70 against €3.20 for a hot meal (2024 rates; to be verified).
- **A food card for low-income under-4s and pregnant women**, modelled on the Britain Healthy Start scheme. That pays £4.65 a week (£9.30 for under-1s) on a prepaid card for fruit, vegetables, milk, pulses and formula, and about 366,000 of 506,000 eligible families use it. At €5 a week for an assumed 45,000 to 55,000 children, the cost is about €12m to €14m. Auto-enrolment is harder than it looks, because in the UK a prepaid card is a regulated financial product.
- **A standby emergency food box framework** for shocks like the 2026 energy crisis, using the FoodCloud network and the EU-funded food support that over 150 charities already use. Northern Ireland's Covid food boxes went to people who were shielding and were wound down within months. As a permanent scheme, a €20 weekly box costs about €1,040 per household a year before delivery, so 50,000 households would cost about €52m. A card gives families choice for less.

Jobs and skills

Unemployment was 5.0% in August 2026, with about 147,000 people out of work and youth unemployment at 12.3%. Yet the bus operators say at least 2,000 more drivers are needed. Dublin Bus recruits about 400 drivers a year and has hired 93 from South Africa, at a training cost the company describes as higher and slower than local hiring.

Aontú will create a Job Guarantee Training Pipeline. The Department of Social Protection, SOLAS and the education and training boards will agree conditional job offers with employers. For example, the State can fund Category D licence and driver training for unemployed people, at an estimated €4,000 to €5,000 each. We will start with 1,000 bus drivers, at about €4m to €5m, then extend to HGV drivers, construction trades and care work.

Children and sport

New South Wales gives every school-age child a \$100 voucher towards organised sport. About 53% of eligible children registered and 43% used it, and users' activity rose for at least six months.. Aontú will introduce an Active Children Card worth €100 a year, redeemable at approved clubs and simple to use, because redemption was the weak point in New South Wales. It would start with children in DEIS schools and extend to all school-age children as funds allow. There are roughly one million school-age children, so full rollout costs up to about €100m at full uptake, or about €43m at New South Wales-level uptake, and every 10,000 children costs €1m at full uptake. The Department of Education must supply the number of DEIS pupils.

Rural Ireland

Only four new or enhanced rural bus routes were introduced under Connecting Ireland in the first half of 2026, against 36 in 2025, 45 in 2024 and 65 in 2023. The National Transport Authority has identified a further 87 services, which depend on 2027 funding. The Rural Transport Programme and Local Link have €97m in 2026.

The last cost estimate for the plan is about €20m a year, which the NTA says needs adjusting for inflation. Aontú will fund all 87 identified services in 2027, about €20m, adjusted for inflation.

Post offices

The Government has committed €15m a year for 2026 to 2030, up from €10m, which meets the postmasters' union's main ask. But 257 post offices have closed since 2015, 888 are independently run, and the union says 108 postmasters earn less than the minimum wage after costs. Aontú will:

- Index the €15m to inflation so its real value is protected to 2030, about €0.5m in year one at 3%.
- Route more State services through post offices, such as identity verification for the Public Services Card, with a fee per transaction. Net cost to be confirmed by the Department of Social Protection.

Small business

Employer PRSI rose to 11.4% and employee PRSI to 4.35% from 1 October 2026, and the minimum wage is likely to rise from €14.15 to €14.95. The Small Firms Association says average business costs have risen 44.4% in three years. Aontú will:

- **Freeze employer PRSI at 11.4%** by deferring the next scheduled step. The increases fund the Social Insurance Fund.
- **Require a mandatory SME impact assessment** before any new statutory cost on employers takes effect, at no cost to the Exchequer.
- **Simplify reporting** by moving enhanced reporting requirements from real-time to month-end, also at no cost.
- **Introduce an On-Trade Sustainability Tax Credit** for small and independent pubs. The credit would be based on verified purchases of draught products, capped at €20,000 per premises per year, and targeted particularly at small rural pubs that do not benefit from the hospitality VAT measures. Cost to be confirmed by Revenue once the number of eligible premises is known.

Aontú does not propose freezing the minimum wage, because low-paid workers are already under pressure.

Public sector pay

The last public sector pay agreement, worth an estimated €3.6bn, expired in June 2026. The pay bill has risen 55% since 2020 to €34bn, and there are more than 420,000 public servants, 70,000 more than in 2020. The Government says it will not agree a deal at any cost, and unions say there is no basis for talks. Aontú's position is:

- **Any deal will fit inside the Government's own €7bn.** It is part of the standing-still money, not additional to it. Each 1% costs about €340m.
- **Weight increases to the lower-paid** through fixed sums, as the last deal did, rather than percentage rises that favour the best paid.
- **Prioritise frontline recruitment** (nurses, Gardaí, teachers) over growth in non-frontline posts.

Revenue: the bank levy and a Large Energy User Levy

The 2026 bank levy has a €200m target, while AIB alone made €939m in profit in the first half of 2026. Aontú will double the levy to €400m, and consider a rebate for banks that pay savers more.

Data centres used 7,663 GWh in 2025, 23% of metered electricity, up from 5% in 2015, and EirGrid's median scenario has that share reaching 31% by 2034. The new CRU connection policy requires new sites to bring their own generation and source 80% of demand from renewables, but it does nothing for the Exchequer or for household bills. Aontú will introduce a Large Energy User Levy of €10 to €20 per MWh:

- On 2025 consumption it raises about €77m at €10/MWh, €153m at €20/MWh and €192m at €25/MWh.

- It would apply to all users above a set size, not only data centres, to avoid discrimination and state-aid problems.
- The proceeds would be ring-fenced to cut household network and PSO charges.
- Start at the lower rate and index it. A rate that is too high risks projects going abroad, which would erode the corporation tax base the whole budget depends on.

THE COSTING

Total cost of measures €7,597.0

Total savings €2,471.0

Infrastructure bill €720.0

Net cost (measures plus infrastructure less savings) €5,846.0