

An open letter to Irish in Britain:

Irish votes count

A chara,

The General Election is finally underway and whatever our individual views, the Irish community has a stake in its outcome. We all have a responsibility to participate. The Irish in Britain remains one of the largest and most diverse minority ethnic groups in Britain and every Irish adult resident here has the right to vote. Outlined below are the key issues the community have raised with us and we urge you to challenge your candidates on these issues and to support the Irish community in Britain.

- Our community experience is based on a migrant history - a story of both loss and opportunity. We have known discrimination but also great kindness. We hold little in common with those who think migration is to blame for economic woes. Recognition of our own community is important. We call for ongoing protection in law for minority rights and equality for all; support for community cohesion, access to legal aid and a strong and well-funded Irish voluntary sector.
- Austerity has taken a heavy toll – a legacy of joblessness and homelessness. Irish migrants once led post War recovery, providing people power for construction and NHS. Today, new technology has transformed our lives but recovery still needs a kick start. A programme of major investment focused on our need for transport infrastructure, affordable housing and improvement of the public health service would do that. Our community stands ready to assist but will also benefit from it.
- The well-being of our community is important to all of us. We are all too aware of those who are particularly vulnerable and of the desperate deprivation of Irish Travellers. We believe that priority should be given to proper monitoring of Irish community health needs. The Irish Memory Loss Alliance, Cuimhne, works alongside other minority groups to highlight issues particularly among the elderly and we wish to see the Dementia Challenge remain a Government priority.
- Social, political and economic relations between Britain and Ireland continue to flourish and we wish to build upon that. We have celebrated first ever state visits by British Queen and Irish President and we have been partners in Europe. We believe there would be little support for Britain to leave the EU if it would be detrimental to the Irish community in Britain.
- Northern Ireland is thankfully almost unrecognisable from its conflict-torn history but the government must work with all parties to complete and build upon the Good Friday Agreement. We call for this to be a priority of government and for sufficient funding and resources in NI to support this.

We believe each of these issues will have a resonance across our community. Irish votes do count. We urge our members and supporters to listen to local candidates and political parties and cast their votes accordingly.

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Chair



Jennie McShannon
Chief Executive



Irish
in Britain

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