

Senator Pippa Hackett Minister of State for Land Use and Biodiversity



Autumn 2022 Update

Passionate about finding collaborative climate and biodiversity solutions that create jobs and quality of life for people in the Midlands

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I hope you and your family are safe and well.

As a passionate Green, a woman and mother, I take my role as your Minister of State in the Government very seriously. I am committed to supporting communities of Laois and Offaly through the climate, biodiversity and cost of living crises.

In these pages you will read about some of the work I have been doing in my Department and in the Constituency in the first half of the year.

If there is anything I can assist you with, please do get in touch.

Pippa



For updates on my work, visit my website by scanning the QR code

GOING GREEN

Reducing public transport fares by 20% until end of 2022 and a further 50% off with the Youth Travel Card

Revitalising our town centres to function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit

Rebuilding communities with €50m fund to refurbish vacant and derelict properties.

Heritage Week 2022 & Tidy Towns Visits

It was my privilege to attend many wonderful events across Laois and Offaly over Heritage Week; we marked 1000 years of Geashill history, celebrated nature in the woodland auditorium on the banks of the River Brosna in Clara, and participated in a biodiversity walk on the farm of Pat Byrne who is a passionate educator and advocate for nature.

As judging season for the Tidy Towns competition got underway, I took the opportunity to visit Tidy Towns groups to hear about the wonderful work they have been doing in our towns and villages. Tidy Towns groups nurture more than plants; they nurture the true values of community, co-operation and connection that are so important to our human experience.

These are values the Green Party holds dear too. We know how important it is to work together to provide our children with a planet that is not damaged beyond repair. We want to leave them a legacy of clean air, clean water, warm homes and good jobs. That is why we are trying so hard to support communities to thrive and flourish.

I commend all those who made Heritage Week 2022 a success and wish all the wonderful communities across Laois and Offaly the very best in the Tidy Towns and Pride of Place competitions.



Miriam's Handmade Gifts



Offaly Organics

We have so many wonderful local growers and producers across Laois and Offaly. I encourage you to support those producers by spending in your community and shopping locally when you can. If you have a small or solo enterprise in Laois or Offaly, I would love to hear from you for a list of Local Makers and Producers I am collating in the run up to Christmas.

Food, Forests & Biodiversity



ORGANIC FARMING SCHEME PAYMENT RATES 2023 - 2027

Organic Farming Scheme Payment rates 2023 - 2027	Year 1 - 2 In Conversion << 70ha	Year 1 - 2 In Conversion > 70ha	Year 3 - 5 Fully Converted << 70ha	Year 3 - 5 Fully Converted > 70ha
	€/ha	€/ha	€/ha	€/ha
Drystock	300	60	250	30
Tillage	320	60	270	30
Dairy	350	60	300	30
Horticulture	800	60	600	30

Organics

The Government has an ambitious target of reaching 7.5% of agricultural land under organic production by the end of 2027 – it is currently at 2%.

The newly announced organic payment rates will attract more farmers to organic farming. I am also proposing an annual participation payment which will be €2,000 in the first year of conversion and €1,400/year thereafter, and Organic Farmers will have priority access to ACRES.

I am working hard to ensure that we have strong markets for the increased organic produce that will come on stream in two years' time. We now have an Organic Strategy Forum where stakeholders from across the sector are examining how best to promote Irish organic produce. In July I travelled to Germany for the first ever ministerial organic trade mission to promote the sale of Irish organic foods abroad.

Forestry

My Department is currently finalising the next Forestry Programme for 2023 – 2027. I will very shortly be announcing significantly increased grant and premium rates for afforestation to encourage greater numbers of farmers to consider planting trees.

As well as working towards substantially enhanced forestry payment rates I continue to reform the sector which was severely impacted from 2019 onwards as a result of EU and Irish court decisions relating to environmental regulation. Since these rulings, I have secured significant additional resources for forestry within my Department, hiring more ecologists, forestry inspectors and administrative staff to work solely on licencing and deal with the significant additional work load that has resulted from the court rulings.

I have also passed legislation to make the forestry appeals process more efficient, as well as legislation to enable the establishment of a small scale native woodland planting scheme for farmers without the requirement to go through the full forestry licencing process.

Biodiversity

In my work as Minister, I promote on-farm biodiversity by supporting more organic farmers, close-to-nature forestry, and increased funding for locally-led initiatives and EIPs, which see farmers, communities and ecologists working together on shared biodiversity and habitat projects.

Horticulture

I commissioned a major review of the Horticulture industry in Ireland, to identify the challenges and opportunities facing this important sector. Retail must play their role also in supporting our domestic growers. Your shopping choices matter too – so please buy Irish, and local, if you can.



Wool

In July, I published the results of the Wool Feasibility Study. This valuable report contains a wealth of information on potential funding streams and market opportunities for Irish wool, as well as recommending the establishment of an Irish Wool Council – a group for which I announced seed funding following the publication of the study.



IRELAND IS CHANGING FROM A LINEAR



The Circular Economy Bill 2022 includes a suite of measures that will put into law many commitments that will make our lives less wasteful. We can no longer operate under the 'take, make and waste' model. We don't have the natural resources to sustain such a model and our environment simply cannot cope with the amount of waste it produces. We must rethink the way we consume the goods and materials we use every day. Little changes can make a big difference. Did you know, up to 200 million single use cups are thrown away every year in Ireland? Simply using a reusable cup can combat this (and save you money off the cost of your tea or coffee)

Retrofitting

In February, Ireland launched one of Europe's most ambitious retrofitting plans. The €8 billion programme includes:

- 80% grant for attic and cavity wall insulation for all households
- Local authority and low-income can get free energy upgrades to reduce the risk of energy poverty
- Increased grants of up to 50% for the cost of a typical deep retrofit
- One Stop Shops to offer a hassle-free, start-to-finish project management service



Mountlucas
Centre of Excellence for
Retrofitting & NZEB

Doing Better for Women...

Cabinet approved an amendment to the Health (Exemptions from Charges for Acute In-Patient Services) Bill 2022 which will insert provisions to provide for the free contraception for young women aged 17-25 from September, 2022.

Cabinet also agreed to legislate for the designation of safe access zones around healthcare premises to safeguard access to termination of pregnancy services. This is something that I have been pushing for as I believe that all persons accessing or providing healthcare services need protection from harassment while doing so.

The Government launched the 'Zero Tolerance strategy' an ambitious five-year programme of reform to achieve a society which does not accept domestic, sexual and gender-based violence or the attitudes which underpin it. This plan, which is underpinned by four pillars; Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Policy-coordination, sends a clear message that Ireland is an island where gender-based violence will not be tolerated.

I recently met with Edenderry woman, Mary McHugh, also known as 'Mary Menopause', who is doing great work to raise awareness around Menopause care in Ireland. Menopause will affect 50% of our population, yet many are suffering in silence. The first of four publicly funded specialist Menopause Clinics is now open in the National Maternity Hospital. The rest need to be rolled out as quickly as possible. Access to specialist advice and proper treatment is essential, and this is something I have and will continue to pursue with the Minister for Health.

Investing in Recreation



In August, I was delighted to welcome over €300,000 in funding from the Outdoor Rural Infrastructure Scheme for outdoor projects in my constituency of Laois and Offaly. I look forward to the announcement of further funding for other successful projects later this year.

This is part of an overall package of €15 million that will support dozens of outdoor recreation projects across the country.

2022 saw the largest investment in sports capital grants in the history of the State. Sporting organisations across Laois and Offaly shared €6.3 million of funding.

I was delighted to lend my support to many applications from Rugby Clubs to Running Tracks and upgrades to Lighting and Changing Facilities.

I want to thank all of the volunteers associated with these clubs for their tireless work and their commitment to improving their facilities to benefit all members.

Thank You

I am committed to...

A Just Transition

As a Green Minister living in the Midlands, my priority is to ensure that nobody gets left behind as we move towards a climate resilient Ireland.

Cabinet has considered the draft Territorial Just Transition Plan and has agreed to match EU funding as well as details of the draft priorities for investment. This decision allows for a combined total allocation of up to €168.9m over the period up to 2027. Now is the time for agencies, local authorities, business communities and social enterprises to align their activities to one or more of the priorities and fine tune project proposals.

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity for the Midlands region to invest in our future, a future of vibrant and viable, inclusive rural and urban communities.

Considering Solar?



Concerned about rising utility bills but have some savings? You can add a solar array to your roof and receive a SEAI grant towards the cost. You may even be able to sell excess electricity back to the grid through the Clean Export Guarantee.

For more information visit seai.ie

Addressing the Cost of Living Crisis

The Government is acutely aware that the cost of living crisis is having a major impact on households across the Country and has already put in place a suite of measures to assist people. We are committed to ensuring Budget 2023 will further target those who need it the most.

Supporting displaced Ukrainians

I am in awe of the incredible work that has been done across Laois and Offaly to welcome displaced Ukrainians arriving here.

I was lucky to be in a position to employ Vlas Novokhatnii, a displaced Ukrainian, in my office and he continues to work on my local team.

I am particularly proud of the Geashill community for their efforts to provide homes for Ukrainian families and making them feel so welcome there. Well done to all involved.



Your Local Green Team...

I have an excellent team on the ground, including Cllr. Mark Hackett on Offaly County Council, our Green Party Local Representatives in Laois, John Holland and Rosie Palmer and my Parliamentary Team who are always on hand to assist with any queries you might have.



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