

Irish Rural Link

27<sup>th</sup> September 2022

### **Budget 2023 Announcements will not go far Enough for Many Rural Households**

Irish Rural Link (IRL)– the national network representing the interest of rural communities have raised its concern that the announcements in today's Budget will not go far enough for many rural households who are really struggling with the rising cost of living.

In its Pre-Budget Submission, IRL had called for a 30% increase in core social welfare rates to ensure people are not just standing still during the winter months. The €12 increase in core social welfare will not go far enough for those on fixed income. The lump sum of €400 breaks down to an extra €14 per week. However, it will be paid in one lump sum making it difficult to budget for the months of 2023. While we welcome the extension of the number of households eligible for the fuel allowance, this will not come in to effect until January 2023 so may not be eligible for the lump sum payment and will be on the unchanged rate of €33 per week.

With the cost of 1000ltrs of home heating oil now an average of €1240; an extra €790 per 1000ltrs since 2 years ago and almost twice the cost last years, many rural households will continue to struggle to keep their homes adequately warm this winter and meet other increasing costs of food and transport. A bale of Briquettes is now between €6.50 and €7.50 per bale depending where you buy it. Again this is an increase of almost €4 from 2 years ago.

Carbon tax will be applied to these fossil fuels next May, impacting most on these household. IRL had called, in its' pre-budget submission for a low cost loan scheme to support households to finance the difference in the cost of retrofitting. We welcome the announcement made today but we caution that it needs to go to those low-income households who need it the most and repayments be made on ability to pay so they can move away from reliance on fossil fuels.

While the .2c increase in petrol and diesel have been offset, households in rural areas will continue to face uncertainty at the pumps over the next few months and will continue to face higher cost of living due to this. The extension of the 20% reduction in public transport cannot be availed of by many rural households. We look forward to more detail on what the funding for rural transport will be.

While we welcome some of the one-off payments, core payments will not address long-term poverty or help those living in poverty and have done so even prior to the current crisis.

Ends

#### **For further information, please contact (anytime):**

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**About Irish Rural Link:**

Irish Rural Link represents the interests of locally based rural groups in disadvantaged and marginalised rural areas by highlighting problems, advocating appropriate policies, sharing experiences and examples of good practice. It has a membership of nearly 600 rural community groups dedicated to sustainable rural development and represents rural communities at a national and international level