



Irish Rural Link

10<sup>th</sup> October 2023

### **Irish Rural Link Broadly Welcome Announcements made in Budget 2024**

Irish Rural Link (IRL), the national network representing the interest of rural communities, has given its reaction to Budget 2024 Announcement this afternoon.

IRL welcome the €12 increase in core social welfare rates, including the contributory and non-contributory pension, but know this will not be enough for low-income rural households to meet the continued cost of living challenges. In its Pre-Budget Submission IRL called for an increase of a *minimum* €25 per week in core social welfare payments in Budget 2024 to restore the real purchasing power of payments. We believe, families in rural areas will continue to struggle for the coming year ahead.

While the one-off payments are welcome in fuel allowance, living alone allowance, disability, carers allowance, etc. we would have preferred to see an increase in the weekly payments in these allowances.

The reinstatement of the reduced Excise Duty on petrol and diesel is being deferred until April and August of next year. IRL had called for no further increases in this, however, increases in carbon tax will be put on fuel from midnight tonight – this will add €1.28 to the cost of 60 litre fill of petrol and €1.48 to the cost of a 60-litre fill of diesel. This added to the recent increases in prices at the pumps will continue to place added financial pressure on rural households.

This Budget was framed as reducing child poverty. The wavering of school transport fees was extended and the expansion of the free book scheme to secondary schools to Junior Cert are welcome. However, IRL continued to call for the removal of the 3.2km distance to access school transport. There was no announcement made on this and wait to hear more details on the School transport programme. It will be disappointing if no changes are made to this as it would be another measure to help struggling households and also help meet climate targets by reducing need for a second car.

The increase in the budget to retrofit social housing homes and introduction of a low interest loan, which we called for in our Pre-Budget Submission is also welcome and await more details on this. However, it must be met with having the people on the ground to carry out these works.

Speaking about today's Budget Announcement CEO of Irish Rural Link said: *“There are some welcome measures announced today that will go some way to help rural households. We would have liked to see a larger increase in core welfare payments and an increase in the weekly fuel allowance rather than the lump sum to ensure better income adequacy for people. Access to public transport remains a real issue for people in rural areas and we await further details on what is included in the rural transport and school transport budgets”*.



*Irish Rural Link*  
*Nasc Tuaithe na hÉireann*

A full analysis of Budget 2024 and its impact on rural households will be available in the coming days on the IRL website [www.irishrurallink.ie](http://www.irishrurallink.ie)

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