

COUNCIL REVIEW

JOURNAL FOR CITY AND COUNTY COUNCILS

**WILLIAM WALSH
– A LEADING
AUTHORITY ON
SUSTAINABLE
ENERGY IN
IRELAND**

**'HOUSING FOR ALL' MAPS
OUT A NEW PLAN TO DELIVER
MORE HOMES FOR IRELAND**

**NINETY LOCAL PROJECTS
SHORTLISTED FOR LOCAL
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**MAJOR REGENERATION
UNDER 'PROJECT CARLOW
2040'**





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With close to €10m earmarked for key projects identified in 'Project Carlow 2040' under the Urban Regeneration & Development Fund, and combined with match funding by Carlow County Council, this will see a total investment of €13m in the south-east town over the next 20 years.

24 SUSTAINABLE ENERGY AUTHORITY

Ireland is targeting a 51% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030 to achieve its climate action goals, and William Walsh, CEO of the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), tells 'Council Review' that community action will have a central role to play in Ireland's response to the climate crisis.

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Projected changes to the Irish climate will have long-lasting implications for archaeological monuments, protected structures, geological heritage sites and historic properties, according to the findings of Fingal's climate change risk assessment report – the first one of its kind in Ireland.

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Dublin City Council has commissioned its new Integration and Intercultural Strategy for 2021-2025, and Mary Lynch, DCC's Integration Officer, says it is now an opportune time to consolidate all efforts to address, facilitate and embrace this growth in diversity.

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A total of 90 projects from 20 local authorities have been shortlisted for the Chambers Ireland Excellence in Local Government Awards 2021, and the winners will be announced at an online awards ceremony on 18 November.

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The summer launch of Dublin City Council's new EU Programme Participation Strategy 2021-2027 coincided with the visit of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to Dublin to announce a post-Covid investment package, which showcased that the EU and Ireland are now moving towards recovery.

53 CORK CITY COUNCIL

Cork City Council has launched its draft Development Plan, and the long list of projects currently underway or planned across the city provides a transformative blueprint for Cork to become the fastest growing city in Ireland.

57 LIMERICK GREENWAY

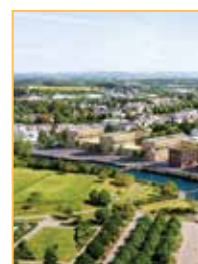
The Limerick Greenway – the largest tourism project ever undertaken by Limerick City and County Council – stretches for 40km through the county's western heartlands, creating a vital piece of infrastructure for sustainable living, transport and tourism in the region.

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Galway's Draft County Development Plan (2022-2028) has highlighted several sites of strategic importance to both the city and county councils. One is the former Galway Airport site, where there are plans to develop a new state-of-the-art film and TV studio.



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COUNCIL REVIEW

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The Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) Cathaoirleach Cllr David Maxwell gives an insight into the work of his Assembly, which is evolving as a key advocate and leader for the northwest region.

66 EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), which continues to support sustainable employment opportunities, has responded to the pandemic by awarding over €311m to the HSE to support the cost of PPE supplies to the Irish healthcare system.

70 CONSTRUCTION SAFETY

Any radical reforms of moving the Safe Pass training programme to an online 'test' are not in the best interests of the construction industry, claims safety consultant Declan Gibney. He says that efforts need to be redoubled to raise safety standards and awareness in saving lives and preventing injuries.

77 HOUSEBUILD.IE SERVICE

Since Housebuild.ie went live in February, Ireland's first ever all-in-one marketplace for home-builds and improvements is now providing homeowners with direct access to construction professionals, products and services in one seamless digital hub.

78 EU HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

It is important that the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, local authorities and NGOs firmly grasp the opportunity presented by the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness, according to Wayne Stanley, Head of Policy at the Simon Communities of Ireland.

81 EUROPEAN FOCUS

The Irish Regions European Office (IREO) will organise a series of seminars across the country later this year to present how effective engagement with the EU will strengthen local communities.

86 AGE-FRIENDLY IRELAND

This summer saw the ministerial launch of a suite of publications to support the joint policy statement 'Housing Options for our Ageing Population', followed by the launch of the first phase of the Healthy Age Friendly Homes Programme.

90 FOUR-DAY WORKING WEEK

Fórsa is asking Ireland's local authority chief executives to engage with a new four-day week pilot programme, and the initiative is the latest move in the public service union's campaign for reduced working time without loss of pay for employees or productivity for employers.

95 LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAMPAIGN

Representing over 30,000 local authority workers, Fórsa, SIPTU and Connect trade unions have launched the second phase of their local government campaign calling for the implementation of an action plan on local democracy, energy, waste, housing and water.

99 EAST BORDER REGION CHARTER

An innovative charter for cross-border co-operation in the East Border Region, recently launched in Newry, Co. Down, has set out the parameters between the six-member local authorities north and south and outlines the future regional cross-border priorities.

104 REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Government has granted a total of €10m in funding to improve the competitiveness of regional enterprises and to support early-stage development projects, in the wake of COVID-19 and Brexit.



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NEWS UPDATE

the latest news from around the country

TIPP COMES OUT TOP IN PILOT PLANNING PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Tipperary County Council has been chosen as one of the local authorities to take part in a pilot programme by the Office of the Planning Regulator in the OPR's first review report into local authority systems and procedures for performing planning functions.

Under the pilot programme, the State's independent oversight body for planning has singled out Tipperary County Council as performing well, given its mixture of urban and rural contexts, recent re-organisation arising from the merger of the former North and South Tipperary County Councils and innovation in service delivery (such as the current piloting of the national e-planning initiative).

Speaking about the report into the review of Tipperary County Council's planning systems and procedures, Ireland's Planning Regulator Niall Cussen said that the council's planning department operates in a complex and demanding environment.

"Despite the challenges and pressures the planning department is generally delivering all of its statutory planning functions effectively, which is demonstrated throughout this report.

"The department benefits from clear leadership, a structured corporate approach and the commitment and



talent of individual staff. These factors have allowed the department to develop and implement good systems and procedures to guide its operational processes and to monitor and evaluate outputs," he added.

In its report, the OPR makes several recommendations on how systems for operational process could be improved or how current standards may be maintained.

The purpose of the review is to highlight good practice and areas for improvement and promote learning across the local authority sector with a view to enhancing the overall planning process.

FINGAL SKILLS STRATEGY IS THE FIRST OF ITS KIND IN IRELAND

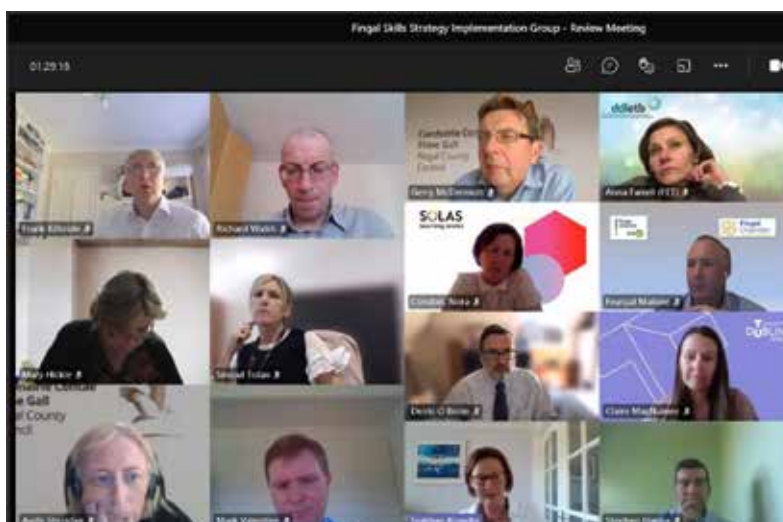
A Fingal Skills Strategy Implementation Group has been set up to deliver the objectives of the Fingal Skills Strategy, which was published in 2019.

The Group is chaired by Siobhan Kinsella, former President of both Chambers Ireland and Fingal Chamber and a director at the Noel Recruitment Group.

She also chaired the Fingal Skills Strategy Advisory Group, which originally produced the Fingal Skills Strategy, the first of its kind in Ireland.

The Implementation Group is starting to implement the recommendations of the strategy, taking a fresh approach considering the post-Covid-19 environment, and will actively promote on-going engagement between enterprise and industry and education and training providers, as well as Fingal County Council.

The group aims to ensure education and training provision aligns with industry needs and that there is a pathway to skills acquisition so that skills are offered in a complementary manner with minimal duplication. Its mandate includes regularly reviewing emerging and future skills needs within the county.



Fingal Skills Strategy Implementation Group members pictured during a recent review meeting.

Fingal County Council's Chief Executive, AnnMarie Farrelly, said: "As the local authority with the youngest population in Ireland, Fingal looks to embed our Skills Strategy amongst industry and academia, because the report showed a skills gap across all sectors which we need to close to ensure Fingal remains a primary location in which to invest, or grow a business."

NEWS UPDATE

the latest news from around the country

EQUALITY REVIEWS RECOMMEND SYSTEMIC CHANGE ACROSS LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The Irish Human Rights and Equality (IHREC) Commission has revealed that local authorities continue to provide inadequate accommodation to the Traveller Community, and has made a series of recommendations, requesting all councils to report back with specific actions and to examine how the barriers to the drawdown of State funding can be removed.

The IHREC (the 'Commission') recently published a series of accounts of equality reviews for Ireland's local authorities, focused on their provision of Traveller-specific



(Spring Lane Halting Site in Blackpool, Co. Cork © David Keane, Irish Examiner)

accommodation to members of the Traveller Community. The accounts include specific recommendations for action by local authorities.

With strong evidence of a consistent underspend of the Traveller-specific accommodation budget, the Commission initiated equality reviews in 2019 to gather information from councils and to allow for a systematic review of the issues driving underspend in some local authority areas and, therefore, nationally.

Between 2008 and 2018 of the €168.8m allocated to local authorities for Traveller-specific accommodation, just €110.6m was drawn down.

The Commission has made recommendations for local authorities and has asked them to report back with specific actions to be taken, or intended, within specific timeframes. It will then consider what further action, if any, is necessary.

Sinéad Gibney, IHREC's Chief Commissioner, said that the State's provision of Traveller accommodation has drawn widespread international condemnation including from the UN, the Fundamental Rights Agency of the EU and the Council of Europe.

"The last 12 months alone have been marked by regular and disturbing reports and testimony on Traveller accommodation, and the Commission's own legal casework has shown the appalling conditions in which many Traveller families are forced to live," she said.

The Commission has requested the city and county councils to also examine the barriers to the drawdown of State funding and how they can be removed.

FUNDING OF €8.8M FOR IRELAND'S CONNECTED HUBS SCHEME

Over €8.8m in funding under the Connected Hubs Scheme will enable existing hubs and broadband connection points to add capacity to remote working infrastructure in every region across Ireland.

The scheme, which is a key part of the 'Our Rural Future' initiative, will also facilitate grants in funding measures to assist hubs to deal with COVID-related challenges.

Set to benefit 117 projects, the funding will support a wide range of relevant works nationwide, including the expansion of existing hubs, installation of privacy booths, access control and security systems.

It will also assist with converting existing open plan space to modular offices, and provide enhanced audio visual, networking, and conferencing facilities.

The funding, announced by Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, will be used to develop remote working infrastructure as follows:

- €2.8m in the Eastern and Midland Region
- €3m in the North-West Region
- €3m in the Southern Region

This investment will support the ongoing development of the National Hub Network –

connectedhubs.ie – which already has more than 100 hubs using the platform and 380 hubs mapped, since it went live.

Minister Humphreys said: "Our Rural Future strategy recognises hubs as ideal locations for people to work remotely, as well as acting as key economic assets for towns and villages. The increased shift to remote working has provided an opportunity for a greater regional distribution of jobs to support a better work life balance for many people."



Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, pictured at Enterprise House in Carlow.

NEWS UPDATE

the latest news from around the country

CODEMA LEADS ROLL-OUT OF €20M ENERGY PROJECTS IN DUBLIN

Codema has secured funding through the EU Horizon 2020 DeliverEE project to lead the roll-out of over €20m energy projects in Dublin, including €1.2m to test and develop a one-stop-shop project implementation unit for energy-efficient and renewable projects in the capital.

The funding under the DeliverEE project will be used to upgrade and retrofit a range of council buildings and facilities within the region, such as leisure centres, fire stations, theatres, libraries, offices, community buildings and landfill treatment sites. This pipeline of projects will be completed over the next four years and is expected to reduce carbon emissions in Dublin by almost 4,000 tonnes.

A key part of the project will involve creating an innovative, standardised finance and delivery system for rolling out energy-efficient and renewable energy projects at mass scale in Dublin. This will enable processing and assessing potential projects quickly and efficiently, to identify the most suitable buildings to upgrade.

Donna Gartland, CEO of Codema, noted that public buildings will need to achieve a Building Energy Rating of 'B' by 2030. "The main challenge lies in how this can be achieved at the scale and speed required. The project will directly respond to this challenge by developing a long-term solution for mainstreaming sustainable energy investments.

"By creating this Project Implementation Unit, not only can we develop energy projects quickly and efficiently, but



Public buildings in Ireland will need to achieve a Building Energy Rating of 'B' by 2030.

we can also find attractive, large-scale, de-risked projects for investors, while establishing a professional marketplace for Energy Service Companies to tender for contracts," Gartland noted.

In addition to Codema as lead partner, the consortium includes Dublin's four local authorities plus a range of legal, procurement and financial experts such as Resourceful Futures Ltd, Philip Lee Solicitors Ltd and Sustainable Development Capital LLP.

CITY EDGE PROJECT SIGNALS URBAN REGENERATION IN DUBLIN

South Dublin County Council and Dublin City Council have collaborated on a unique urban regeneration partnership known as the City Edge Project, which is part of a national strategy to rejuvenate cities and large towns while concentrating on new housing and employment opportunities in existing urban areas.

Located at the western edge of Dublin City Centre, the City Edge Project area is strategically positioned to become one of Europe's largest urban regeneration projects and is part of a national strategy to regenerate Dublin city.

To help achieve this, an international urban design and urban planning led team has been selected to carry out a detailed study of the area and to produce a framework plan as part of the first phase of the project.

In helping to shape this framework plan for the area, a non-statutory four-week public consultation programme is running to 6 October. Feedback and views are being sought on the analysis of the area to date, together with an emerging vision and concept for the framework plan that will follow.

The proposed development area extends to 700 hectares of land around the Naas Road, Ballymount and Park West area. This area is a cornerstone of the Dublin economy with some 1,500 businesses

employing 25,000 people, alongside the well-established local residential communities of 5,000 people.

There are also significant areas of underutilised land, so much so that in the future, this part of the city could be further developed to accommodate up to 75,000 jobs and 40,000 homes.



For further information and project updates visit www.cityedge.ie

NEWS UPDATE

the latest news from around the country

CORK CELEBRATES NAVAL SERVICE 75TH ANNIVERSARY WITH CIVIC RECEPTION

Cork's Lord Mayor Cllr Colm Kelleher hosted a civic reception in City Hall in September to mark the 75th anniversary since Ireland's Naval Service was established in 1946.

The Lord Mayor accompanied An Taoiseach Micheál Martin, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence Simon Coveney, Defence Forces Chief Of Staff Vice Admiral Mark Mellett, Flag Officer Commanding (FOC) of the Naval Service Commodore Michael Malone and Chief Executive of Cork City Council Ann Doherty on board the LE Samuel Beckett as the fleet conducted a sail past Cork Harbour, starting at Haulbowline Naval Base, before disembarking at Kennedy Quay in Cork City.

"It is a great honour and indeed, deeply appropriate to formally mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of the

Irish Naval Service here in Cork City, a city whose motto is 'a safe harbour for ships', with a long and rich maritime heritage," noted the Lord Mayor.

"Since 1946, the Naval Service has been dedicated to protecting the safety of both the Irish nation and our maritime interests, and in the wider global context, has played huge role in international peacekeeping and humanitarian missions."

The Office of the Lord Mayor of Cork has a unique maritime connection, in that the Lord Mayor is also Admiral of the Port of Cork.

Each year, in the capacity as Admiral of the Port, the Lord Mayor takes part in a ceremony at sea known as the Throwing of the Dart, symbolising Cork City's control over the port.



Pictured outside Cork City Hall to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Naval Service (l-r): Defence Forces Chief of Staff, Vice Admiral Mark Mellett; Chief Executive of Cork City Council, Ann Doherty; Minister for Defence, Simon Coveney TD; Lord Mayor of Cork, Cllr Colm Kelleher; Secretary General at the Department of Defence, Jacqui McCrum; and Flag Officer Commanding (FOC) for the Naval Service Commodore Michael Malone. (Pic: Michael O'Sullivan /OSM PHOTO)

LOCAL AUTHORITIES ROLL OUT EXTRA COMMUNITY TRISHAWS

Local authorities are beginning to see the benefits of Cycling Without Age (CWA) trishaws in their communities to benefit people who live locally and want to book a ride for their loved ones, according to Clara Clark, Irish Founder of the CWA initiative.

"We have launched two trishaws in Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, based at the Bike Hub opposite the RNLI shop at Dun Laoghaire Harbour, and online bookings can be made via www.thebikehub.ie.

"Dublin City Council has ordered five community-based trishaws, with more details to follow for these locations and pilot training. So, we will have 37 trishaws operating around Ireland and hopefully more local authorities will join up in due course," Clark added.

Pilot training also started for three new trishaws owned by Fingal County Council. Initially based in St Catherine's Park, Lucan, they will later be available at Baldoyle and Skerries. For further information visit www.cyclingwithoutage.ie.



Clara Clark, Cycling Without Age (CWA) Irish founder, takes passengers Charles Mollan and John O'Keeffe on a spin in their local park in Blackrock Co. Dublin. (Pic: Moya Nolan)

'HOUSING FOR ALL' MAPS OUT NEW PLAN FOR IRELAND

The Government's new 'Housing for All – A New Housing Plan for Ireland', which represents the largest and most ambitious social housing build programme in the history of the State, has set a target to provide over 90,000 social homes and 54,000 affordable homes by the end of 2030.

This latest multi-annual, multi-billion euro national housing plan, to replace the Rebuilding Ireland model which was set up in 2016, aims to improve Ireland's housing system and to deliver a range of housing options for individuals, couples and families.

Essentially, the 'Housing for All' is the Government's plan contains 213 actions, which aim to increase the housing supply to an average of 33,000 units per year over the next decade, providing an optimal mix of social, affordable and private housing for both sale and rent.

The Government's overall objective is that every citizen in the State should have access to good quality homes, to purchase or rent at an affordable price; built to a high standard and in the right place; and offering a high quality of life.

These measures will be supported by over €4 billion in guaranteed State funding every year, the highest level of government investment in building social and affordable housing.

The plan also includes measures to support availability of the land, workforce, funding and capacity to enable both the public and private sectors to meet the targets.

The plan is based on four pathways:

- Support home ownership and increase affordability.



- Eradicate homelessness, increase social housing delivery and support social inclusion.
- Increase new housing supply.
- Address vacancy and make efficient use of existing stock.

The pathways contain actions to be taken by government departments, local authorities, State agencies and other organisations. Overall, the 'Housing for All' strategy contains 213 actions which aim to deliver a range of housing options for individuals, couples and families.

"MOST AMBITIOUS PROGRAMME"

An Taoiseach Michéal Martin described the policy as the "most ambitious programme of social and affordable housing delivery in the history of the State".

Speaking at the official launch of the plan on 2 September, An Taoiseach said that the Government will also continue to support the most vulnerable by significantly increasing the number of tenancies for those experiencing homelessness and who have more complex needs.



“Housing for All will provide the basis for a long-term sustainable housing system for this and future generations,” he added.

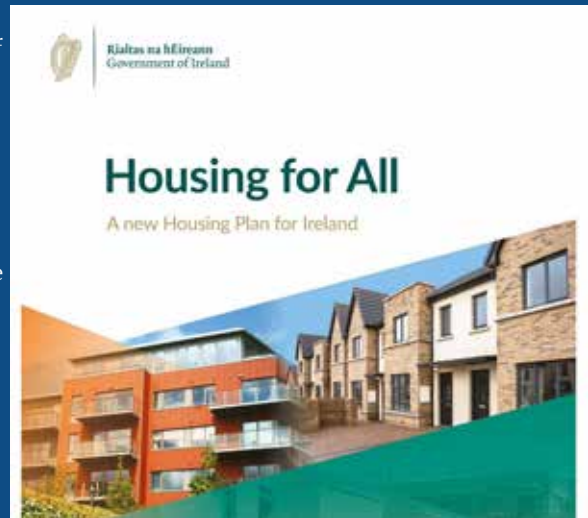
The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O’Brien, noted that the plan would see a radical shift towards more affordable homeownership and secure renting.

“Our measures for affordable purchase, which include significant State investment, will provide opportunities for those who are losing all hope of ever owning their own home.

“Our changes to the rental sector, including the supply of 2,000 ‘Cost Rental’ homes, on average, every year,

MAIN INITIATIVES UNDER THE NEW HOUSING PLAN

- Over 90,000 social homes by the end of 2030, including an average new-build component of over 9,500 social homes by the end of 2030.
- Delivery of 300,000 homes built over the next decade across the four categories of social, affordable and cost rental, private rental and private ownership. On average, over 33,000 homes will be built per annum, rising to 40,000 by 2030.
- Delivery of 54,000 affordable homes between now and 2030 with yearly targets for the provision of affordable housing for the first time ever – 2,000 ‘Cost Rental’ homes and 4,000 local authority Affordable Purchase Homes provided, on average, each year.
- Measures to stimulate supply and address acute viability challenges in urban areas, including provision of up to 5,000 Cost Rental and affordable units through Project Tosaigh, the new Croí Conaithe (Cities) Fund aims to ensure new apartments will be developed for sale to individual households at a lower cost.
- Focus on new builds to provide social homes, with the ending of long-term social housing leasing arrangements through the phasing out of new entrants.
- Focus on those with a history of rough sleeping or long-term use of emergency accommodation and with complex needs through 1,200 new Housing First tenancies over the next five years.
- Delivery of up to 15,000 residential units, to revitalise urban centres, through the provision of State land to the Land Development Agency.
- An expansion in access to affordable homes to buy, through an enhanced Local Authority Home Loan Scheme, which will have an increased income ceiling for single people of €65,000 and lower loan interest rates.
- ‘Land Value Sharing’ measures to ensure that an appropriate level of the increase in the value of development land, which results from zoning for residential development, is shared by the State. This value will be used to provide necessary local infrastructure and social and affordable housing, to support residential development and for the benefit of the community.
- Measures to use vacant lands for residential housing will be introduced, such as a new tax to replace the existing Vacant Site Levy.
- Measures to reduce construction costs and support innovation in residential construction will be introduced.
- Local authorities to purchase and resell up to 2,500 vacant properties in their areas.
- Further reforms to improve protections for people renting.
- New planning arrangements for Large-Scale Residential Developments and broader reforms to the planning process to ensure certainty and stability and reduce delays.



and new protections will make renting more affordable and secure for many. The planning changes, including the concept of the State sharing in the increase in value of land zoned for housing, mark a radical departure in how land earmarked for housing is managed, in line with the aspirations of the Kenny Report of several decades ago," he noted.

RETROFITTING COUNCIL PROPERTIES

The Minister for the Environment, Climate, Communications and Transport, Eamon Ryan, emphasised the importance of environmental sustainability in planning and housing decisions.

"Sustainability will be at the heart of future development, including housing. This policy emphasises compact growth, with future housing to be primarily based in settlements. Higher population densities will have upshots such as minimal transport demand and shorter travel distances. Initiatives such as Urban Development Zones will result in plan-led delivery of residential and urban development.

"The retrofitting of 36,500 local authority-owned properties and the introduction of minimum BERs for rental properties will help move our existing housing stock to a low-carbon future.


"This will assist with delivering on national retrofit targets. Moreover, the focus on the circular economy, waste reduction and keeping materials in use throughout the construction process will reduce resource," Minister Ryan stated.

Meanwhile, the role of taxation in 'Housing for All' was highlighted by the Minister for Finance, Paschal Donohoe, who pointed out that tax reforms will play an important role in increasing housing supply at a time when many sites could deliver much needed residential developments.

"The new tax to activate vacant land should incentivise greater development. Data on vacancy levels will inform our work on introducing a new Vacant Property Tax so that empty properties are brought back into productive use."

LAND DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Under 'Housing for All', the Land Development Agency (LDA) will take a lead role in creating a large-scale affordable



Our measures for affordable purchase, which include significant State investment, will provide opportunities for those who are losing all hope of ever owning their own home" – Darragh O'Brien TD, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage (Pic: Dermot Byrne)

"STRATEGY REPRESENTS A SEA CHANGE" – CHAMBERS IRELAND

The elements of the 'Housing for All' strategy – including a tax on vacant land and properties, changes to preservation orders and increased funding to the LDA are important developments and will help to unlock opportunities for the delivery of housing, according to Chambers Ireland.

The organisation, which represents 40 Chambers of Commerce, said that members have highlighted the need for a coherent housing plan for many years and hoped the strategy would represent a "sea change in how land and housing is managed in Ireland".

Chambers Ireland Chief Executive, Ian Talbot said: "The ambitious targets will need significant investment, substantial skills development within the construction sector and a sizeable expansion in apprenticeships, so that the labour factors of production do not hold back our potential. There will also need to be an expansion of the number of employment permits available to the sector.

"The focus on vacant properties is also welcome and offers a pathway to not only a sustainable recovery, but also the opportunity to reinvigorate our city centres and towns which have suffered gravely over repeated Covid-19 lockdowns.

"Our urban areas were already struggling before that crisis occurred. Action on vacancies is key to creating sustainable cities and towns that are attractive places to live and work long beyond the immediate post-pandemic period. The role of local authorities will also be vital to ensure the interests of communities are served."

HOUSING FOR ALL

Projected Housing Output (New Build) 2022 – 2030									
Tenure	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Social homes	9,000	9,100	9,300	10,000	10,200	10,200	10,200	10,200	10,200
Affordable & Cost Rental homes	4,100	5,500	6,400	6,400	6,100	6,300	6,400	6,300	6,300
Private Rental and Private Ownership homes	11,500	14,400	17,750	18,200	19,800	20,400	21,500	23,000	24,000
Total Homes	24,600	29,000	33,450	34,600	36,100	36,900	38,100	39,500	40,500

Projected Housing Targets (Source: Housing for All Executive Summary).

cost-rental sector in Ireland.

The strategy contains a range of measures to support the LDA's twin-track approach of accelerating near-term construction of affordable homes on both state and private land, whilst also working over the longer term to assemble large state-owned landbanks capable of delivering thousands of new homes.

In addition to its expanded pipeline of state lands, the LDA will target the delivery of 5,000 new homes by 2026 through 'Project Tosaigh', with the agency to have full ownership of homes for affordable cost rental.

The balance will be sold to eligible households under affordable purchase arrangements. An open process to identify sites where housing delivery has stalled that would be appropriate for this scheme

will be launched before the end of the year.

John Coleman, CEO of the Land Development Agency, said that the Agency is addressing a crucial gap in the market to give a fair deal to the many thousands of people who don't qualify for social housing, but who are struggling to pay private sector rents.

"The launch of 'Project Tosaigh' will allow us to supplement the State land we are already working on and accelerate the delivery of cost rental and affordable purchase homes by unlocking private land that is ready to be developed but where construction has stalled or not commenced.

"Whilst our longer-term approach will focus on publicly owned land, it makes sense to use the LDA as a catalyst to speed

up delivery, with the security of knowing all homes will be delivered on an affordable basis," he added.

The LDA chief noted that whilst complex construction projects take time, the Agency is on track to commence construction of the first homes next year. "The combination of the passage of the LDA Act over the summer, and now the publication of 'Housing for All', means that the LDA

"COMMITMENT TO END HOMELESSNESS" – SIMON COMMUNITIES

The commitment to ending homelessness by 2030 has been welcomed by Wayne Stanley, Head of the Simon Communities of Ireland, who believes the commitment to the review of discretion available to local authorities in terms of HAP is also to be welcomed.

"There are several positives in the plan in relation to homelessness. Looking at the overarching figures of social housing, 10,000 social homes will be built by local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies per year for the next nine years and it is an ambitious target.

"However, taking account of the number of households coming onto the social housing list each year and the need to reduce reliance on HAP, we believe that 15,000 new public homes a year are needed. A high percentage of the homes needed are one-bed units. The absence of this type of accommodation has seen single-person homelessness continue its upward climb, even during the pandemic when we saw an overall decline in homelessness.

"The commitment to review the discretion in the level of HAP payment local authorities can allocate to keep people out of homelessness or support them in moving from homelessness is welcome. The Simon Community 'Locked Out' report shows that there should only be one outcome of that review," he noted.

is now positioned to make a major positive impact on Ireland's housing problems."

PLANNING PROCESS MUST 'UP ITS GAME'

Ireland's Planning Regulator Niall Cussen has described the Government's €4bn per annum 'Housing for All' plan as a historic and major policy step forward.

He said it is fully funded, and delivery



Four Pathways to Housing (Source: Housing for All Executive Summary).

HOUSING FOR ALL

focused; centred around plan-led sustainable housing delivery in the right locations; and proposes major reforms to aid supply of land at lower costs in the locations of the greatest housing demand, particularly in cities, towns and villages.

Cussen also pointed out that the plan correctly identifies that Ireland's planning process must "up its game" in terms of the capacity and capabilities of its personnel and systems to ensure sustainable housing delivery. "Through new training initiatives and supporting the digital planning services agenda, the OPR will play its full part in ensuring that planning processes will run smoothly to support delivery under the plan."

The Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) has also welcomed the key role for local authorities in planning for the level, the location and the types of housing needed under the umbrella of



The Land Development Agency is working in partnership with Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, on this flagship development site which will see 597 homes delivered at Shanganagh Castle, with the first homes to be completed in 2023. (Pic: LDA).

the National Planning Framework and the Climate Action Plan.

It says that from housing supply targets to housing needs demand assessments and

updated development plan guidelines, local authorities now have the clarity they need to plan sustainably, prudently and comprehensively.



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COVID-19 Response



On 4th March 2020 the NAS responded to the COVID 19 emergency, the NAS moved quickly to perform COVID19 home testing by redeploying front-line ambulance clinicians from emergency response to COVID19 testing, as solo responders in Rapid Response Vehicles (RRV). NAS staff were trained in nasopharyngeal/oropharyngeal swabbing and sample handling, supply chains for testing kits and PPE were put in place, and arrangements made to facilitate expedited transport of completed tests to the National Virus Reference Laboratory.

NAS then introduced 'pop-up' testing centres to allow for testing of large groups of people in a controlled environment and further developed into static site testing with our colleagues in community health.

The NAS has been maintaining normal operations during the COVID-19 pandemic, and has additional responsibility for COVID-specific initiatives. At a very early stage in the COVID-19 pandemic the NAS was determined to be a key provider of COVID-19 testing, and has carried out in excess of **308,000** tests (07:00hrs 8th Feb 2021). This includes testing in home, community and residential care settings. The NAS also implemented a dedicated COVID-19 command centre with increased clinical capacity, supported by the introduction of an identification system which allows staff on the 112/999 call system to assess patients who may be COVID-19 positive. COVID-19 specific Pre-Hospital patient assessment and treatment protocols were put in place which emphasise treatment at home and ensure transport to an acute hospital is reserved for serious or life threatening cases.





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MAJOR REGENERATION INVESTMENT FOR CARLOW TOWN

A total of €9.79 million has been awarded under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF) for key projects identified in 'Project Carlow 2040', and combined with match funding by Carlow County Council, this will see an overall regeneration investment of €13 million into the south-east town over the next 20 years.

Strategically located in the South-East Region, Carlow Town plays a pivotal role with strong links to the Midlands and the Greater Dublin Area, supported by good access to transport infrastructure. Carlow is a regional centre for education, healthcare, public services, shopping and arts, culture, leisure, and recreation for a wide area extending into Laois, Kildare and Wicklow.

Carlow Town's masterplan 'Project Carlow 2040 – A Vision for Regeneration & Development' will seek to reinforce the critical role of the town centre as the heart of Carlow Town, providing attractive and accessible public spaces with new pedestrian linkages. Project Carlow 2040 has envisaged the development of several intervention areas, which will play a central role in delivering the objectives outlined in the strategy over the next 20 years.

The overall aim of the masterplan is to develop the thriving, vibrant and sustainable town centre as a destination not just for shopping but also for tourists attracted to the unique architectural,

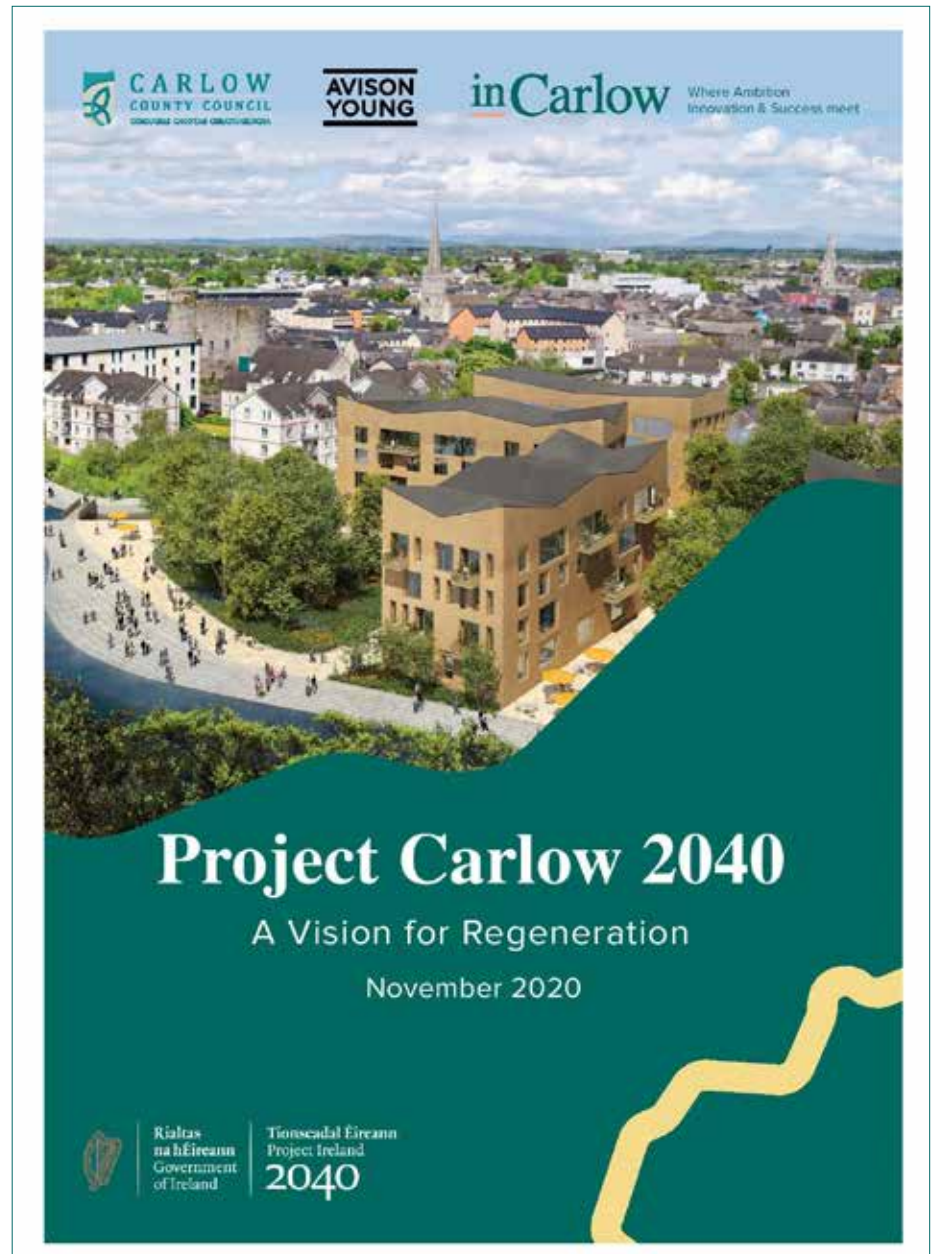
cultural and heritage attributes of Carlow's townscape.

TOWN CENTRE EARMARKED

Welcoming the funding Cllr Tom O'Neill, Cathaoirleach of Carlow County Council, said the people of Carlow can now "look forward to a major regeneration of their county town, including the development

of attractive and accessible public spaces with new pedestrian linkages, which will support an improved quality of life for all who work, live, and visit".

The Cathaoirleach paid tribute to fellow elected members, the Mayor and members of Carlow Municipal District, council officials, community and business representatives who supported the





Pictured at the official launch of 'Project Carlow 2040' in November 2020 (l-r): Kathleen Holohan, Chief Executive of Carlow County Council, Tom O'Neill, Cathaoirleach of Carlow County Council, and Cllr Fergal Browne, Mayor of Carlow Municipal District.

development of 'Project Carlow 2040'.

He also thanked the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien, on behalf of the council and community, for the URDF funding which, he added "will help to start to realise this vision for Carlow Town".

"REAL VOTE OF CONFIDENCE"

The Chief Executive of Carlow County Council, Kathleen Holohan, said: "We're delighted that our application for funding under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund has been successful and it will assist the council in delivering a transformed town centre.

"The allocation of €9.79 million to Carlow Town represents a real vote of confidence by the Government in the future of Carlow Town and recognises the value of local collaboration and consultation when putting resources into rebuilding, recovering, and renewing town centres."

Holohan conveyed her thanks to all those who engaged Carlow County Council during the application development. These included the elected members, public representatives, property owners, Carlow Town Development

STRATEGY'S SIX KEY INTERVENTION AREAS

Following extensive public consultation, six key interventions areas identified in the strategy, will play a central role in delivering 'Project Carlow 2040' objectives over the next 20 years:

- Town Centre – Potato Market and Barrack Street
- Cultural Quarter (including links to the Railway Station)
- The Barrow Track/Civic Spine
- The Pembroke District
- The Burrin Riverfront
- Link Streets (Dublin Street and Tullow Street)

To achieve the masterplan's vision for Carlow to be a more innovative, ambitious and successful place, greater collaborations between the private and public sectors will be encouraged. It has also been acknowledged that the active involvement by key stakeholders and strategic partners in the regeneration process will be critical for its success.



CARLOW REGENERATION

Forum, County Carlow Chamber, IT Carlow, IDA, Enterprise Ireland, Carlow College, Carlow Tourism, Carlow Farmers Market, An Garda Síochána, St Catherine's Community Services Centre, Carlow Regional Youth Services and Failte Ireland, in shaping and developing the URDF application.

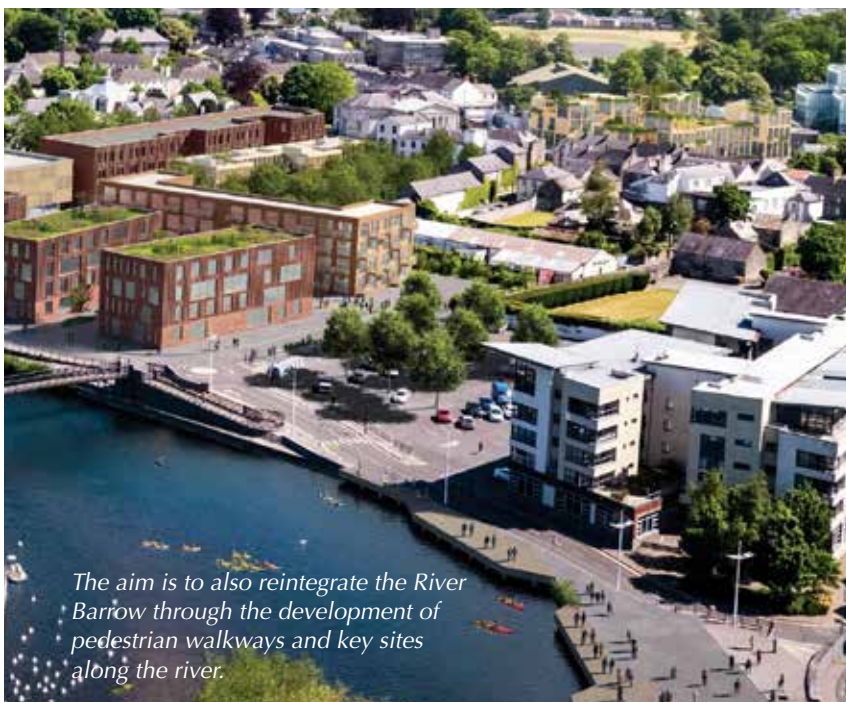
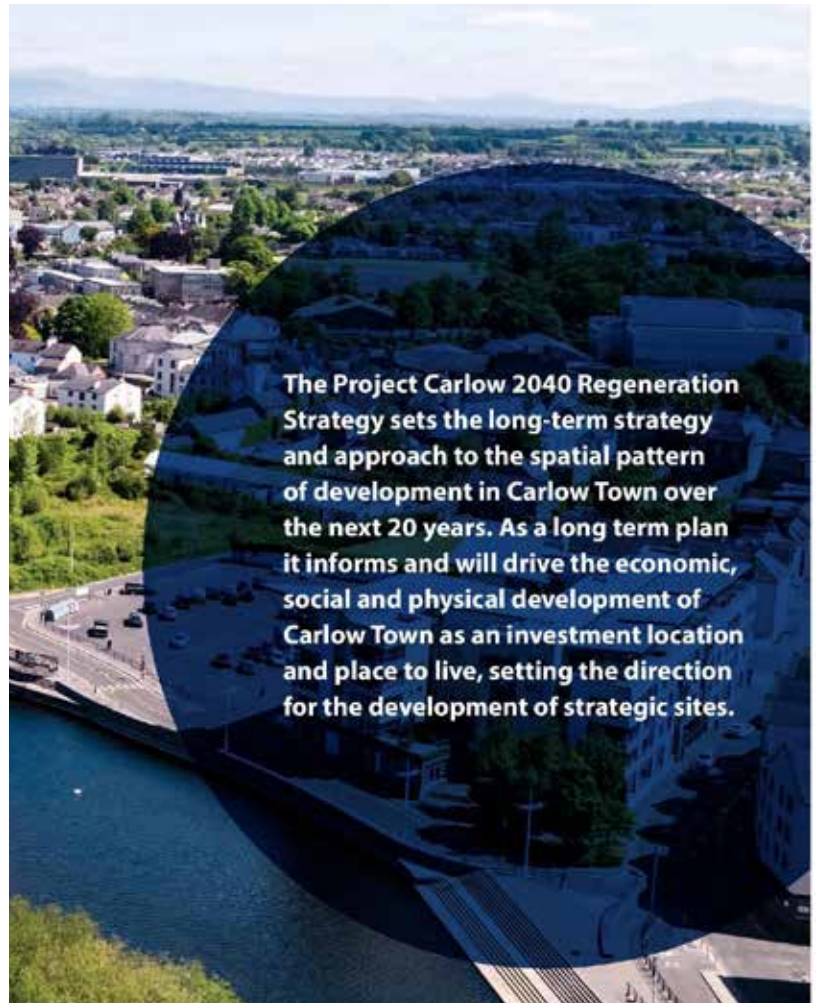
"Carlow County Council is determined to take the lead when it comes to driving economic development and attracting national investment in key capital projects not just in Carlow Town but across the County," she noted.

INNOVATIVE PROJECTS

Outlining the project proposals to be developed under this funding, Michael Rainey, Carlow County Council's Director of Services, explained: "This URDF funding provides for a series of ambitious and innovative regeneration projects to be delivered over the next number of years, designed to enhance the town from the viewpoint of connectivity, experience and wellbeing."

He said that the funding will facilitate three major regeneration interventions. The first element is the Barrack Street Pedestrian Link, which will see the creation of a pedestrian and cycle-friendly space connecting Potato Market to Barrack Street and the introduction of planting and seating to improve the public realm.

The second of these elements will involve major renewal and improvement measures to



Barrack St, Shamrock Square, Kennedy Avenue and Tullow Street. The final element is the creation of a new pedestrian and cycle-friendly linkage from the Railway Station to the town centre through Carlow College.

Explaining the process for the development of these projects, Rainey said that each element of the project will be designed "in partnership with our key stakeholders and will be subject to the Part VIII planning process where we look forward to hearing the views of the public and our continued positive engagement with representative organisations and the general public".

The Mayor of Carlow Municipal District, Cllr Fergal Browne, said, "This is a game changer for Carlow Town and its future regeneration as envisioned in Project Carlow 2040," as he welcomed the funding, and thanked fellow members in Carlow Municipal District for supporting the development of this application.

A LEADING AUTHORITY ON IRELAND'S SUSTAINABLE ENERGY GOALS

Ireland is targeting a 51% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030 to achieve its climate action goals, and William Walsh, CEO of the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), sees both challenges and opportunities ahead. He tells Deirdre O'Flynn that community action will have a central role to play in Ireland's response to the climate crisis.

The pandemic has upended expectations and operations globally, whilst also changing people's perception of what is possible. And therein lie the opportunities for positive climate actions.

On his official appointment as the CEO of the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) in May, William Walsh commented, "To achieve our ambitions, we need a mass movement of society towards new and sustainable ways of living".

He told 'Council Review' that the overarching reason for this is to achieve Ireland's target of 51% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030 and to comply with the 1.5 degrees Celsius global warming as agreed in the Paris Agreement.

Achieving these goals will involve every sector, from the State to multinationals, SMEs, communities, and individual households.

"At household levels, it involves retrofitting and reducing heating bills. As an organisation, we're charged with delivering retrofitting in 500,000 homes through to 2030 – this home energy upgrade will improve people's wellbeing, comfort, and introduce energy-cost savings. And improved BER ratings will increase the value of people's homes – convincing people to invest in their homes will help us to achieve Ireland's climate targets."

At a local level, SEAI has partnered with local authorities to



William Walsh, who was officially appointed CEO of the SEAI on 21 May 2021, first joined the Authority in 2013 as Chief Financial Officer and has served as Chief Operations Officer, and as interim CEO from September 2019.

provide bridge funding to assist communities in achieving their sustainable energy ambitions. Grants valued up to €25,000 will be paid up front, with the local authority involved recouping the initial funding cost from SEAI.

PUBLIC SECTOR PATHFINDER SCHEME

In June, the SEAI announced a partnership with the Atlantic Seaboard North Climate Action Regional Office (CARO), which consists of counties Donegal, Sligo, Mayo and Galway. This partnership is essentially the roll-out of the SEAI's Public Sector Pathfinder Scheme that supports key public sectors in advancing deep retrofit and energy management at scale in their portfolios.



The key to achieving energy targets is sustained senior management leadership, adequate resources and continuous investment, according to recent evidence from the SEAI.

The model has been tried and tested with other public bodies over the last few years, including the Health Service Executive, the Office of Public Works for central government, and the Department of Education for school retrofits.

At local authority level, the model is being developed across the CARO regions, directly with the local authorities. The Atlantic Seaboard North CARO region is leading the adoption of this model for local authorities.

And other CARO regions and sub-regions are now in the process of engagement, including Midlands East (Meath, Kildare and Wicklow), and the counties of Carlow, Kilkenny and Wexford. Dublin CARO, local authorities and other CAROs/sub-regions are actively engaging in getting similar models off the ground, according to the SEAI.

COMMUNITY ACTION

For Walsh, “community action plays a central role in Ireland’s response to the climate crisis”. He points to research on carbon emissions conducted with the EPA during the pandemic.

“Economic activity fell, there were no cars on the roads, no planes flying, and emissions fell by 6%. We have to hit a reduction of 7% year on year, that’s a challenge – and

SEAI ACHIEVEMENTS AND INVESTMENTS IN 2020

The SEAI works with the government, homeowners, businesses, and communities to achieve this, through expertise, funding, educational programmes, policy advice, research and the development of new technologies. SEAI is funded through the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC).

In 2020, the Authority invested €121 million in Government funds, including €90 million into building energy retrofits, while over €5 million was invested in renewable and ocean energy research, development and demonstration projects.

In total, 20,700 homes and 240 community and commercial facilities were upgraded, while 4,843 new electric vehicles and 3,523 home charger installations were supported.



the response to that challenge has to be within the area of sustainable living.”

The SEAI has also targeted the small business sector with its Energy Academy, which was launched in mid-2020. A free online training resource to help businesses reduce their energy costs, the Energy Academy aims to help to lower energy bills by as much as 10% in educating employers and employees on changing energy use behaviours and effective energy management.

With 2,200 subscribers in 2020 alone, the Academy intends to “make modules more sector specific” to meet the different needs of businesses as diverse as a dairy farmer and a jeweller.

GETTING THE TRANSITION RIGHT

At a macro level, the Climate Action Plan 2021 and the Climate Action Bill require sectoral targets, which will compel businesses and the public sector to reduce the impact of their activities on

The SEAI liaises with local authorities given their role around ownership of buildings, housing, depots, transport fleets, and parks; public lighting, planning and development of renewable energy developments.



Tasked with helping to achieve the target of 900,000 electric vehicles by 2030, the SEAI is setting up an Office of Low Emission Vehicles to drive the uptake of electric vehicles.



the environment.

“Carbon will be the measure – how much carbon is produced and how to reduce that,” said Walsh.

The 51% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030 “is realistic and achievable – there’s no other option. It requires a significant ramping up of activity”, he pointed out. This will include ramping up the number of electric vehicles on the road – the Climate Action Plan has set a target of 900,000 electric vehicles by 2030, along with offshore wind energy, and storage of electricity.

“This will produce multiples of what is needed. There are also export opportunities, while storage in hydrogen, or batteries, will allow for a stable source of power. However, it’s also about a just transition and that no one is left behind.

“There will be job losses in certain sectors and opportunities elsewhere. We must get the transition right and have the agencies to help people upskill to new careers.”

SEAI PUBLIC SECTOR ENERGY CONFERENCE

With the Government's Climate Action Plan having set an ambitious vision for the public sector to halve energy-related emissions and for all public buildings to be B-rated by 2030, the SEAI's Public Sector Energy Conference in June focused on how leadership in the public sector is working towards decarbonisation.

Addressing the online conference, Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications, Eamonn Ryan TD said: "The Climate Bill and the Climate Action Plan 2021 has set ambitious targets and a clear path for delivery for the rest of the decade that we can all get behind. The public sector has made significant progress in improving its energy efficiency, reducing costs, and increasing its contribution to our national and EU energy and climate targets.

"We also need to speed up practical and visible measures such as EV procurement and retrofitting more of our public buildings," the Minister noted.

Conference delegates also discussed the issue of decarbonising buildings and transport and strategic planning to secure the necessary supports.



PUBLIC SECTOR ENERGY ROLE

Key to the transition will be the role of the public sector as exemplars and leaders in the country.

In June, the SEAI's online public sector energy conference focused on how leadership in the public sector is working towards decarbonisation.

In addition, the Climate Action Plan has set a 2030 vision for the sector to halve energy related emissions and for all public buildings to be B-rated at that stage.

"The public sector can show what can be achieved to other sectors, create better

buildings, transport systems, and reduce energy costs and related emissions," said Walsh.

The SEAI also liaises with local authorities given their role around on-street electric vehicle charging; ownership of buildings, housing, depots, transport fleets, and parks; public lighting; planning and development of renewable energy developments.

"There are 150,000 local authority houses nationally – they will all require work to get to B2 certification by 2030 – we have the technical expertise and have



The SEAI's Annual Report 2020 shows that over half the number of public sector organisations had achieved, or are on track to achieve, their 2021 energy targets.

partnered with local authorities in the past two years to retrofit the stock," the SEAI chief executive pointed out.

REDUCING EMISSIONS BY 2030

Designated the national retrofitting body in 2020, the SEAI has set up specific units tasked with ensuring that 50,000 homes per year are retrofitted. This will be done through a one-stop-shop infrastructure overseen by the SEAI that will deliver retrofitting to the private sector.

The SEAI is also tasked with helping achieve the target of 900,000 electric vehicles by 2030. "We are setting up an Office of Low Emission Vehicles to drive the uptake of electric vehicles. The retrofitting and electric vehicles are two key objectives and will be included in the SEAI's Strategic Plan for 2021-2025."

The SEAI's wide ranging services require technical expertise in addition to funding of €350 million. Exchequer funding is available to us this year – whereas our budget in 2016 was €70 million. Our role is to reduce energy-related emissions overall by 2030."

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS LIGHT UP MEATH

Meath County Council is leading the way on embracing and integrating the Sustainable Development Goals, with the heritage town of Trim now awarded a place on the URBACT Global Goals for Cities pilot project, which will seek to localise the goals.

Trim Courthouse, in the heart of the heritage and tourist town in Meath, is sporting a colourful image at night-time which is piquing much curiosity and interest from passers-by. The image depicts the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) colour wheel, with each colour representing one of the 17 goals.

The Sustainable Development Goals, also known as the Global Goals, are a collection of interconnected goals around People, Planet, Peace, Partnership and Prosperity (the 5 Ps), designed to be a blueprint to achieving a better and more sustainable future for everyone.

The goals, which every country has signed up to, were established in 2015 by the UN and aim to achieve them by 2030. The goals have a strong ethos of inclusivity and a philosophy of leaving no nation behind and helping those furthest behind to the front.

The Department of Environment, Climate and Communications has launched a public consultation for the second National Implementation Plan.

CORPORATE PLAN

In September 2020, on the fifth anniversary of the goals, a commitment was given to promote the SDGs through

the council's work. Integrating the SDGs into organisational culture is ongoing in Meath County Council, and like any new topic or initiative it will take a little while to bed in and become common practice.

The first task was to align the SDGs to the actions in the Corporate Plan, to ascertain which actions can have the most impact and relevance. Caroline Corrigan, Climate Action & SDG Co-Ordinator, commented: "The good news is that everything we do – every service, plan, project and customer interaction – has an impact on the SDGs, we just haven't joined these actions with the relevant SDGs. To create awareness around the SDGs we must showcase this, highlight it both inhouse and externally."

She further added that people may have noticed in some social media posts from the council that the SDGs are included in the photos, and on the Meath County Council climate twitter account, @MeathClimate, references to the SDGs are used extensively.

In conversations with people outside the courthouse on the night of the 'light-up' it was discovered that many people had never heard of the SDGs, and a social media campaign has been launched in response to this. And FAQs about the SDGs then explored in greater detail each

of the 17 goals and actions that can be taken by individuals and communities.

CLIMATE ACTION FORUM

Meath County Council also has a councillor-led Climate Action Forum, one of only two such forums in the country, that leads out on climate in their communities and supports the Executive in the delivery of the Climate Action Strategy.

Meath's councillors involved in the Climate Action Forum have also included the SDGs and articulated the goals in Meath County Council and Municipal District chambers and in their social media posts, normalising the language of climate action and the SDGs.

Presentations on the SDGs were made at the six Municipal District meetings in July, to all 40 councillors, to give them a high-level overview of the SDGs and the Trim URBACT project. This identified a need for further training, to explore the SDGs in detail and how Councillors can promote these and integrate them into local actions within their communities.

On 3 September 16 councillors will have the opportunity to partake in an interactive SDG workshop with Development Perspectives, leaders in community and adult development



Pictured on the fifth anniversary of the SDGs in September 2020 were (l-r): Meath County Council's Cllr David Gilroy, then Cathaoirleach, Caroline Corrigan, Climate Action & SDG Co-Ordinator, Jackie Maguire, Chief Executive, and Larry Whelan, Senior Executive Officer. trict.

education. It is believed Meath is the first county to offer this training to elected members.

GLOBAL GOALS FOR CITIES

The heritage town of Trim is paving the way in the SDGs having been awarded a place on the URBACT Global Goals for Cities project, which seeks to localise the SDGs. The pilot project will involve 18 other towns and cities across the EU and will use local knowledge to identify the strengths and gaps in the SDGs at a local level. The end goal will be the production of an Integrated Action Plan.

The URBACT Local Group, referred to as the ULG, is made up of people who are active in community work and volunteerism within the Trim and the local community. In developing the ULG it was important to have diversity and include as many people as possible who have a large outreach into the community and who are trusted. And in addition, people of all ages are represented.

As the SDGs are a relatively new topic for the group a training workshop took place in late July to delve deeper into the SDGs and explore further actions we can take. The learnings and ideas from this pilot project can be extended outwards across the county to communities of all sizes.

There is much the local authority and ULG can learn from the other cities, according to Caroline Corrigan, who explained that this is great opportunity for

Trim and County Meath. "Not only do we have access to excellent resources, but we are able to engage in extensive peer to peer learning within the EU group, share ideas and experiences."

GREAT HONOUR FOR TRIM

Meath Chief Executive, Jackie Maguire, commented: "Last year Meath County Council committed to playing their part in promoting and achieving the SDGs. During this time, we have seen greater awareness of the goals across many sectors. The Trim project provides an excellent opportunity for the local authority to deliver on these goals, inclusively at a local level and in the heart

of communities."

Cllr Ronan Moore, who is a member of the Climate Action Forum and sits on the ULG noted that to be selected as the sole Irish participant in this EU pilot project is a great honour for Trim. "It speaks volumes for the council's hard-work and commitment, particularly those directly involved in climate action and the SDGs. We are excited and fully committed to make the most of this huge opportunity and build on the work that is already ongoing in this area," he added.

Caroline Corrigan claimed that the public sector must play its part in achieving the SDGs and, in particular, the local authorities, who are uniquely placed to lead out given their considerable service provision and broad outreach into communities.

"It is encouraging to see the SDGs deeply embedded into such documents as the Rural Development Policy and increased dialogue from many sectors around global goals. Climate action is key to achieving the goals and both have ambitious targets of 2030. While the goals are of equal importance addressing climate change impacts positively on many of them.

"Going forward the awareness work will continue to normalise the SDGs and in doing so to apply the learnings from the Trim project outwards."



"In one of the most popular tweets, the 17 SDGs were given a Christmas make-over which received a huge positive reaction...people respond to material that is creative and different" – Caroline Corrigan, Meath's Climate Action & SDG Co-Ordinator.

FOCUS ON CLIMATE CHANGE RISKS FACING FINGAL

Projected changes to the Irish climate will have long-lasting implications for archaeological monuments, protected structures, geological heritage sites and historic properties, according to the findings of Fingal's climate change risk assessment report – the first assessment of its kind in Ireland.

Rising sea levels, flooding and coastal erosion along with wetter winters and drier summers can be expected to give rise to structural damage to monuments and historic properties. This will mean the loss of ground adjacent to structures, exposure and erosion of archaeological sites, and collapse of unstable masonry elements. Other slow-onset risks identified include the loss of historic landscape features and decay of building fabric.

These were just some of the findings contained in a study of the vulnerability of Fingal's heritage assets, archaeological monuments, protected structures, geological heritage sites and historic gardens to climate hazards.

The aim of this project was to apply the assessment model developed by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) to the Irish context, using Fingal as the pilot study area. This is the first assessment of its kind in Ireland.

This GIS-based project was led by a multidisciplinary steering group, which provided input from the Geological Survey of Ireland, CHERISH, Dublin Metropolitan's Climate Action Regional Office, Climate Ireland along with Fingal's Heritage, Conservation and IT officers.

PROTECTING HERITAGE ASSETS

Landuse Consultants were commissioned to assess the risk to Fingal's cultural heritage, based by analysing the likelihood and severity of risk from six categories of natural hazards: fluvial flooding, pluvial flooding, groundwater flooding, coastal flooding, coastal erosion and land instability on Fingal's heritage assets.

Mayor of Fingal Cllr. Seána O'Rodaigh said: "Climate change poses risk to all sectors of society and local authorities can be at the frontline of responding to these impacts. This report is an important first step in protecting heritage and archaeology for both current and future generations."

While all heritage assets are subject to some level of risk, "the study has shown that over 280 sites in Fingal are at risk from multiple hazards", according to Fingal's Heritage Officer Christine Baker.

"These assets include towers, bridges, houses, field systems, wells and geological sites and this project provides a baseline for us to monitor the effects of climate on our archaeological and built heritage sites," she added.

PROACTIVE STEP BY FINGAL

"This climate change risk assessment report is a proactive step by Fingal County Council," said David Dodd, Co-ordinator of the Dublin Metropolitan Climate Action Regional Office (CARO). "Using data from a range of organisations, the report identifies heritage assets at current and future risk of climate change impacts and provides an approach that could be used by other Local Authorities and organisations," Dodd noted.

The Cultural Heritage and Climate Change report details the methodology used and data analysis with tables, charts and an interactive map to explain the nature of the climate hazards. It also provides four case studies – Rogerstown, Newbridge Demesne, Balbriggan Martello Tower and Malahide – to demonstrate the risks in more detail.

Click on bit.ly/2Xdq4zf to download the report.



Fingal's Heritage Officer Christine Baker, Dublin Metropolitan's Climate Action Regional Office Co-ordinator David Dodd, and Mayor of Fingal, Cllr Seána Ó Rodaigh, pictured at the launch of the Heritage & Climate Change Risk Assessment at Martello Tower Balbriggan.

FRAMEWORK TO GUIDE DUBLIN'S NEW INTEGRATION STRATEGY



DCC's Intercultural Ambassadors Programme for the North East Inner City, launched in May 2021 by the then Lord Mayor Cllr Hazel Chu, aims to promote integration and cultural dialogue between communities.

In response to the growing migrant population in Ireland's capital city in recent years, Dublin City Council has commissioned its new Integration and Intercultural Strategy for 2021-2025. Mary Lynch, DCC's Integration Officer, says it is now an opportune time to consolidate all efforts to address, facilitate and embrace this growth in diversity.

Dublin is now a microcosm of the culturally diverse world in which we live. The landscape has greatly changed since Dublin City Council's inaugural integration strategy (2012-2016) – a strategy that provided initiatives and collaborations under the themes of Training, Inclusive Communities, Language & Education and Employment & Business.

Creating and building relationships, it paved the way for work to begin on the new strategy. Transformation in policy since then and radical changes to the social fabric of the city has now required a broader vision and a commitment to align ourselves not only with national plans but with our European counterparts.

More recent documents such as 'The EU Action Plan for Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027' and 'The EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025' have provided valuable context for the new strategy. And as a core element, the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

also provides significant direction, keeping Dublin City Council's responsibilities to equality and human rights on track.

Reflective and impartial consideration of a growing migrant population is required now, by including those from a migrant background and ethnic minorities specifically the Travelling and Roma Communities. There has never been a more important or opportune time to consolidate our efforts to address, facilitate and embrace diversity.

LORD MAYOR LENDS SUPPORT

Dublin City Council has commissioned a new Integration and Intercultural Strategy for 2021-2025, which forms part of the Local Community and Development Committee's Plan for 2021, under the stewardship of DCC's Housing and Community Services Department.

Work first started on the new strategy in January 2021, which was prioritised and supported by the former Lord Mayor Cllr Hazel Chu, who promoted it as an



Kenya's George Njeri, who has now made Dublin his home, is one of 16 intercultural ambassadors from 12 countries and four continents chosen to take part in the programme.



Dublin City Council's Local Community Development Committee will continue to develop and support the strategy at all stages and remains aware of the national policy and guidelines on integration to issue later this year.

initiative during her 2020-2021 term of office.

The Lord Mayor hosted an online external stakeholder engagement and two internal stakeholder conferences, and also took an active role in advancing the progress of a Framework for the new strategy.

Through consultations with our internal and external stakeholders and individuals, it became clear that Dublin City Council would be expected to take the lead in cultivating a vibrant, multicultural city with diversity, inclusivity, and acceptance at its core. Encouraging active citizenship and participation for all will be paramount.

However, most importantly the need to endorse an ethos of anti-racism for the city was very much at the fore of every engagement. The responsibility of the local authority to set the tone for meaningful connection and relationship-building between communities is evident and pivotal to a better society for all.

A series of actions will be developed for each section within Dublin City Council to initiate positive responses to the issues raised for inclusion in the new integration and intercultural strategy.

ROADMAP FOR THE STRATEGY

Taking responsibility to implement the actions of a new plan, we have created the space and a framework for a variety of stakeholders to actively participate in its development and implementation, both

internally and externally.

'The Framework Towards an Integration an Intercultural Strategy for Dublin City Council 2021-2025', adopted by Dublin City Council in June 2021, is the foundation for the development of the new strategy.

Using the Framework as a guide, our networks, stakeholders and DCC's staff and services will be encouraged and supported to implement initiatives/ actions, transformation, training, funding and the roll-out of specific integrative and intercultural proposals.

When the draft of the strategy is completed in the first quarter of 2022, a series of citywide public consultations will commence to gather input, ideas and feedback. Dublin City Council's new strategy will aspire to create a template, to support, inspire and educate our colleagues and collaborators. It also aims to encourage them to provide the necessary environment, services and understanding to develop a best practice model of meaningful integration and intercultural practices.

In developing a fit-for-purpose plan, the council will seek to address the full spectrum of minority ethnic groups living, working, or visiting Dublin City, with an emphasis on migrants and those of a migrant background and minority ethnic people at the intersections with other grounds exposed to discrimination and inequality.

The freedom to live, work and actively

DUBLIN CITY'S MISSION STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY

Dublin City celebrates, supports and protects the cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity among all who live in, work in and visit the city. Dublin City will ensure that all residents are empowered and enabled to participate in the city's cultural, social, economic, and political life fully and equally, and they can access the benefit from the services they need on an equal and culturally appropriate basis.

Dublin City will ensure that all can pursue their aspirations free from all forms of discrimination and racism, in a manner that reflects and is informed by our Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.

Some facts and figures....

A total of 535,000 people from diverse backgrounds now live in Dublin City; 1 in 5 residents were born outside Ireland or the UK; one in 12 Dubliners with Irish Citizenship do not identify as White Irish; 1 in 4 Dubliners who are Irish citizens do not identify as Roman Catholic; 1 in 20 Dubliners is a person of Asian or African descent; 1 in 12 citizens are not white; 65 languages (other than English or Irish) are spoken at home while all of the world's religions are practiced.



participate in a society without being labelled or discriminated, based on Race, Gender, Ethnicity, Sex, Age, Disability, Religion etc, should be the expectation for every citizen.

FIVE CORE VALUES

Dublin City Council will address the issues and concerns experienced by residents, workers and visitors to the capital city, fulfilling the human rights standards which Ireland has committed to through The Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, through these five core values:

* **Dignity and Respect:** People being treated in a manner that recognises their intrinsic human worth.

* **Diversity and Accessibility:** Difference is welcomed and valued, while diversity is accommodated in access to our services and in employment.

* **Inclusion and Social Justice:** The diversity of people have the resources and opportunities to participate fully in all aspects of life in the city.

* **Participation and Engagement:** The diversity of people have opportunities to have a say on matters and in decisions that affect them.

* **Choice and Autonomy:** The preferences and choices of the diversity of people are acknowledged with appropriate options available in service delivery and employment where possible.

And the local authority also aims to achieve these core values by:

- Advancing and achieving full equality in practice in resources, status, decision-making, and relationships.
- Recognising and adapting for cultural and linguistic diversity.
- Eliminating discrimination and ensuring compliance with equality legislation.
- Respecting, promoting, and fulfilling the human rights standards that Ireland has committed to through various international instruments.

COLLABORATION AND ENGAGEMENT

In order to create the space for a comprehensive and inclusive integration strategy, we sought to engage those stakeholder groups and individuals



Cllr Hazel Chu, who engaged with the strategy as Lord Mayor of Dublin and as a person from a migrant background, spoke publicly about her personal experiences of racism and discrimination.

who wanted to collaborate with Dublin City Council to create mechanisms for progressive change.

The on-the-ground experience, in addition to the expertise of organisations, state agencies, voluntary groups, individuals and NGOs, have been invaluable. Dublin's Lord Mayor Cllr Hazel Chu engaged with the strategy both as Lord Mayor and as a person from a migrant background; her candour in

speaking publicly about her personal experiences of racism and discrimination was both insightful and constructive.

In addition, organisations such as the UN International Organisation for Migration, Dublin City Interfaith Forum, New Communities Partnership, Tulsa, Pavee Point, Intercultural Cities Europe, the European Commission, Euro Cities, Dun Laoighre Rathdown County Council, South Dublin County Council and Fingal



“Dublin City Council will endeavour to create the conditions to provide space and supports for our new and existing migrant and intercultural communities”

www.dublincityppn.ie



Further information integration@dublincity.ie



An online information session for the new migrant and intercultural thematic group, part of Dublin City's Public Participation Network (PPN), was held on 15 July.

Migration to pilot a Migrant Forum for Dublin City.

DCC is working with Dublin City's Public Participation Network (PPN) to create a migrant and intercultural thematic group to provide capacity building and support to minority communities. This will enable them to take part in the decision-making processes of the city.

The first targeted information session was held online on 15 July.

A Pilot Community of Practice on integration and intercultural matters for Dublin's four local

County Council have all greatly enhanced our efforts.

City businesses and individuals have also come on board to collaborate. The input from these groupings is vital to inform our actions in implementing an authentic document. We have really appreciated these opportunities to take the shared learning and experiences of how integration works well and how Dublin City Council could produce a strategy that is liveable, simple to understand and a tool to advance integration and intercultural practices inside and outside of our organisation. These are changes that could also greatly enhance the lives of migrant and intercultural groups and individuals within the city.

FRAMEWORK BUILDS MOMENTUM
Dublin City Council's Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) will continue to develop and support the strategy at all stages and remains aware of the national policy and guidelines on integration to issue later this year.

Aligning Dublin City Council's Integration Strategy with National Policy is imperative for the new strategy and ensures a unified message from all local authorities on integration and intercultural concerns.

While awaiting this direction Dublin City Council has started a series of actions for the Integration and Intercultural Strategy including Collaboration with the UN International Organisation for

authorities has also been initiated by Dublin City Council to facilitate knowledge exchange, combined initiatives and collaboration. It is envisaged that each of the four local authorities will take the lead on a rotational basis with Dublin City Council, convening this year, following the inaugural meeting in July.

COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

The Intercultural Ambassadors Programme for the North East Inner City (NEIC) was launched in May 2021; 16 intercultural ambassadors from 12 countries and four continents were chosen to take part in the programme to promote integration and cultural dialogue between communities. Many other actions are also in development for the strategy.

Social cohesion has always been a crucial point of reference for integration and in our awareness of what it means to belong, a basic but powerful human need. It is a fundamental practice in activating any working integration strategy.

People do not integrate into cities; they integrate into communities. Dublin City Council will endeavour to create the conditions to provide space and supports for our new and existing migrant and intercultural communities to become truly active and welcome citizens of Dublin and a model of best practice in the field of diversity.

Tús maith leath na hoibre (A good start is half the battle)

Mary Lynch, Dublin City Council's Integration Officer, would like to thank her colleagues in Dublin's four local authorities, the LCDC, Dublin City PPN, the external stakeholders and everyone who has continued the process of engagement over the last ten months. "In what was a difficult and trying year due to COVID, we are grateful for the continued support and interest in delivering our strategy," she said.



FINALISTS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AWARDS 2021

A total of 90 projects from 20 local authorities have been announced as finalists for the Excellence in Local Government Awards 2021, following the release of this year's shortlist by Chambers Ireland. The winners will be announced at an online awards ceremony on Thursday 18 November.

This year's Excellence in Local Government Awards will again be held in partnership with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, highlighting the positive impact of local government across Ireland.

The Minister for Local Government and Planning, Peter Burke TD, said that in another year that has had many challenges, local authorities have continued to be at the forefront of serving our communities, the arm of the state closest to the citizen.

"The agility of our local authorities is self-evident again this year as we see the continued delivery of excellent and innovative services to local communities nationwide. These awards provide a platform to showcase the activities of



The winners of this year's Local Government Awards will be announced at an online awards ceremony on Thursday 18 November.

our local authorities, allowing us to display and publicly acknowledge the hard work that is done by officials, community groups and their partners in local government, often carried out quietly and behind the scenes.

"From projects involving our environment, the economy, communities, and the well-being of our citizens to name but a few, we can see the wide range of skills and expertise present in our local authorities and the creativity

shown in the face of adversity."

The Minister thanked all city and county councils for their work over the past year and congratulated them on the frontline projects they have designed and brought to fruition.

RESPONDING TO RAPID CHANGES
Chief Executive of Chambers Ireland, Ian Talbot said: "As an organisation that represents both businesses and communities across Ireland, we have a deep appreciation for the role played by local government in delivering the infrastructure and services needed by towns and cities in every part of the country.

"This has become particularly clear over the last 18 months as local authorities responded to a rapidly changing situation. While this was a significant test for all, we



"Over the last 18 months local councils have responded to a rapidly changing situation" – Ian Talbot, Chief Executive of Chambers Ireland



Mayo County Council made its mark last year by winning the 'Local Authority of the Year' award in addition to a record number of wins across three categories and was also shortlisted in two other categories.

can see from the strength of submissions that local government came through this period with flying colours.

"In that context, this year's awards represent an important opportunity to thank all council members and staff for their resilience and hard work. Our communities are stronger for their

efforts, and we look forward to recognising their achievements in November."

For further information and updates visit www.chambers.ie/events/elg-awards/.

A SHORTLIST OF THE FINALISTS FOR 2021



Supporting Sustainable Communities

Clare County Council – Cappa Village Enhancement strategy
Fingal County Council – Gearing Up For Training
Laois County Council – Abbeyleix Community Climate Action Project
Monaghan County Council – County Monaghan Wetland Action Plan
South Dublin County Council – Redevelopment of Killinarden Park and new Green Link

Best Practice in Community Engagement

Cork City Council – Engaging with Young People on the Future of the City
Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council – County Development Plan Virtual Public Consultation
Limerick City and County Council – First Issues Consultation – Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028
South Dublin County Council – South Dublin County Council Development Plan (CDP) Public Consultation
Wicklow County Council – 'Include Me' Visibility Campaign

Health & Wellbeing

Clare County Council – 'Not Around Us' Towards a Tobacco/Vape Free Clare campaign
Cork City Council – Sports on the Green
Dún Laoghaire Rathdown – Cuairt agus Cultúr 2020
South Dublin County Council – Zooming through Lockdown
Wicklow County Council – Virtual Couch to 3K – Walk to Jog Programme

Supporting Tourism

Clare County Council – Share Clare Tourism Marketing 'Resource Bank'
Kerry County Council – Safe Destination Kerry Programme
Limerick City and County Council – 50 Days of Summer
Monaghan County Council – The Patrick Kavanagh Centre and the branded Kavanagh Trail
South Dublin County Council – The Dodder Greenway
Wexford County Council – The Celtic Routes Project

Promoting Economic Development

Cork City Council – Parklet Partners Project
Donegal County Council – #BuyDonegal
Limerick City and County Council – Happen- Mid West Network of Co-Workspaces
Mayo County Council – Mayo – A World Class Place to do Business
Monaghan County Council – Monaghan Town Voucher
Tipperary County Council – Nenagh Live

Local Authority Innovation

Clare County Council – Online Ethics Register
Fingal County Council – Inside Fingal Podcast
Kerry County Council – Supplygov.ie – Dynamic Purchasing System for Energy Efficiency Retrofitting Works
Kildare County Council – Local Authority Climate Action Training Programme
Limerick City and County Council – 'Council Connect' Staff app
Longford County Council – Longford County Council Strategy

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AWARDS

and Guidance for Rural Working Hubs
Meath County Council – MCC Connect App
Monaghan County Council – Virtual Reality 360-degree tour and house inspection app
Roscommon County Council – My Online Services
South Dublin County Council – Tallaght District Heating Network

Sustainable Environment

Clare County Council – Demonstration of biodiversity management in public open space/recreational areas
Cork City Council – Climate Action Committee – Local Scale Air Quality Monitoring System
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council – dlr's Coastal Mobility Route
Kildare County Council – Kildare Green Kilometre
Monaghan County Council – Reclaimed Asphalt Pilot Scheme
South Dublin County Council – SDCC Pollinator Action Plan 2021 – 2025

Best Library Service

Cavan County Council – Cavan Library Covid-19 Book Delivery Service
Cork City Council – From the Jaws of Disaster: Douglas Library's amazing rebuild
Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council – dlr Scéal Trail (Story Walk)
Kildare County Council – 'Supporting Families, Sharing the Learning'
Meath County Council – Laptops for Loan
South Dublin County Council – The Creative Studio as part of NCL (North Clondalkin Library)

Sustaining the Arts

Cork City Council – Cork City Street Arts Development Programme
Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council – dlr Artworks Home
Fingal County Council – Transcending Time – Artist Aoife Dunne
Kildare County Council – Kildare Covid Notebook project
Meath County Council – RE:Form

Age Friendly Initiative

Clare County Council – Clare Digital Smartphone Project for Older People
Cork City Council – Cork City's Age Friendly Covid Response
Meath County Council – Purls of Wisdom – Joint Age Friendly & Climate Action
Monaghan County Council – It's Good to Talk GAA
South Dublin County Council – Policy for Rightsizing and Allocation of Age Friendly Accommodation

Festival of the Year

Cavan County Council – Cavan Day 2020
Cork City Council – Re-imagine GLOW 2020
Limerick City & Council Council – Limerick St Patrick's Festival 2021: Tune in to Take Part
Monaghan County Council – Cavan Monaghan Online Science

Festival 2020
South Dublin County Council – (SnaGÁCT) Seachtain na Gaeilge Átha Cliath Theas
Wexford County Council – New Ross Christmas Festival 2020

Initiatives through the Municipal Districts

Clare County Council – Restructuring of Municipal Districts to improve community and economic outcomes
Meath County Council – Meath County Council Municipal District Allocation Scheme
Monaghan County Council – Clones Town Interactive Heritage Tour

Enhancing the Urban Environment

Clare County Council – Drain art – Ennis
Cork City Council – Re-Opening a More Resilient Cork City Centre
Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council – Blackrock Village – Liveable Space
Kildare County Council – Kildare Market Square Tactical Urbanism Covid-19 Response Pilot Project
Kilkenny County Council – Ferrybank Neighbourhood Park
Tipperary County Council – Interreg North-West Europe (NWE) Smart Space Project

Heritage and Built Environment

Cork City Council – Infill Housing Conservation Project, 5-6 Shandon Street & JP Curran St
Fingal County Council – Swords Castle Conservation Project
Limerick City & County Council – Limerick Greenway – Barnagh Station House Building Revival
Monaghan County Council – The Carrickmacross Workhouse – Visitor Interpretation & Education Project
South Dublin County Council – Grange Castle Pocket Park

Disability Services Provision

Cork City Council – A Space for All – Tory Top Library Community Garden
Fingal County Council – Digifit For All
Monaghan County Council – My Right to Vote – General Election voter education
Wicklow County Council – Inclusive Online Easter Camp

Commemorations & Centenaries

Cavan County Council – Bringing History to Life Despite the Odds!
Cork City Council – Cork City Council's Decade of Centenaries Programme
Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council – What's in a name? Dun Leary–Kingstown – Dún Laoghaire
Longford County Council – County Longford Decade of Centenaries Programme, 2020-21
Monaghan County Council – Monaghan's War of Independence 1919 – 1921
Wicklow County Council – Wicklow and the War of Independence: The Historians' Project

EMR SUPPORTS DUBLIN CITY'S FLOOD MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

EMR Integrated Solutions, the leading SCADA network and wireless telecommunications supplier, has been awarded a single party framework contract by Dublin City Council to manage and maintain the city's rainfall, river monitoring and tide monitoring network SCADA system, key components of its flood management effort.

The three-year contract, valued at €560,000 includes the option of three annual extensions, bringing the total potential value to € 1.1m. Thanks to a telemetry network of 69 outstations and a hosted SCADA system, staff at Dublin City Council (DCC) have uninterrupted access to real-time data, which alerts them to the threat of flooding in the capital.

The managed telemetry and SCADA network provides actionable data for flood prevention and mitigation. Pre-configured alarm thresholds set for rain gauges, sewer loggers, river level monitors, tide monitors, weather stations and river trash screen monitoring cameras provide valuable advanced warning, allowing council staff to take remedial action and potentially prevent local flooding. This data forms the basis for adjustment of alert thresholds based on past events.

Commenting on the deal, Alan Vickers, DCC's Chief Technician of the Flood Projects and Water Framework Directive, said: "EMR has a full team of field and SCADA engineers that support the DCC regional SCADA system through associated site work, installations, repairs and calibrations to instruments and the company met all the detailed and specific criterion that was asked for, during the tender process."

EMR provides a full managed service to the council. The SCADA and telemetry system is hosted in EMR's data centre with automatic fail-over to a secondary cloud-hosted server farm for business continuity. Using the 'Ignition' platform from Inductive Automation, DCC staff have access to a user-friendly and intuitive reporting dashboard that drills right down to site level.

Real-time data 'on the go' is available through any smartphone device for mobile engineering, technical and maintenance crews. "While DCC looks after the monitoring of the system, setting of alarm thresholds and the response to events, EMR is responsible for ensuring that accurate information is always available in a timely manner," said Brian Martin, EMR's Sales Director.

"This solution serves as the 'eyes and ears' of the council for flood risk and is complemented by our SCADA expertise, available on demand from our mobile engineering teams," he added.

NETWORK PROVIDES CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The SCADA network is a critical piece of infrastructure. For example, staff know that if rainfall amounts consecutively exceed 2.4mm in a 15-minute period at certain locations, then there will

"This solution serves as the 'eyes and ears' of DCC for flood risk and is complemented by our SCADA expertise, available on demand from our mobile engineering teams" – Brian Martin EMR's Sales Director



be a risk of localised flooding if these conditions persist.

As a result of past flooding experiences, it is possible for EMR and DCC staff to have pre-set rainfall intensity warnings. Any pre-set level or rainfall threshold that is breached, is captured in the Ignition System and forwarded in the form of an 'Information Alarm' to DCC engineering and technical crews, on a 24/7/365 basis. DCC engineers or on-call engineers can then take appropriate action if needed.

Predicted high tides are managed in the same way. The SCADA system has the 'City Boardwalk' level on the trend. A real-time graph of tide levels and the fixed 'Boardwalk Level' can be seen, and appropriate action taken if necessary. Dublin City Council expects to oversee the expenditure of €6m-€10m in flood alleviation schemes over the next 12 months.



EMR
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Tel: 01-8013131 – Web: www.emr.ie

DUBLIN STRATEGY SETS OUT FURTHER PARTICIPATION IN EU PROGRAMMES

The summer launch of Dublin City Council's new EU Programme Participation Strategy 2021-2027 was very timely, as it coincided with the visit of European Commission President, Ursula von der Leyen to Dublin to announce a post-Covid investment package, which showcased that the EU and Ireland are now moving towards recovery.

Taking place at a critical time in the history of Dublin, Ireland and the EU, the launch of the strategy on 20 July was hosted by the Lord Mayor of Dublin Alison Gilliland; chaired by Cllr Claire O'Connor, Chair of Dublin City Council Economic Development & Enterprise SPC and contextually set by Richard Shakespeare, Assistant Chief Executive, Dublin City Council.

The 150-plus attendees heard from Willem Noë, European Semester Officer, European Commission Representation in Ireland, and Jim Conway, Director of the Eastern Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) on the Recovery Plan for Europe, the Recovery & Resilience Facility and the opportunities during the seven-year programme period.

Minister of State for European Affairs, Thomas Byrne, noted the proactive approach of Dublin City Council for ensuring policies, procedures and structures are in place for Ireland's capital city to play a leading part in EU Programmes during the new EU Budget cycle (2021-2027).

STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

A year-long process was undertaken for the development of this strategy, bringing together City, Regional, National and European voices to share their focus for the next seven-year programme period and discuss opportunities for Dublin City, to continue to build a better future for those who live, work and visit Ireland's capital city.

Dublin City Council has had major input in to the process from elected council members; Strategic Policy Committee members; the European Commission Representation in Ireland, Eastern Midlands Regional Assembly; Irish Regions European Office; National Contact Points from Enterprise Ireland, Léargas,



The Lord Mayor of Dublin Alison Gilliland hosted the launch event on 20 July, which was contextually set by Richard Shakespeare, DCC's Assistant Chief Executive, and chaired by Cllr Claire O'Connor, Chair of DCC's Economic Development & Enterprise SPC.

The Wheel, the Arts Council; and colleagues from the Higher Education Institutes across Dublin (DCU, Trinity, TU Dublin and UCD); along with DCC's colleagues in Codema, Smart Cities and across the council on shared learnings and opportunities.

This strategy builds on Dublin City Council's track record of participation in a range of EU Programmes, some of which are mentioned below and the Council will further build capacity for future participation.

This thematic approach has focused on Regional & Urban Development; Horizon Europe; Social and Culture & Green and Smart.

Examining a multitude of European Programmes including Horizon Europe, Interreg, Urban Innovative Actions, URBACT, Erasmus+, Europe for Citizens, Creative Europe, the European Commission's New Green Deal and with emphasis on greener, cleaner, digital and smarter in the new EU 2021-2027 budget, the



Pictured at the panel discussion during the launch on 20 July were (clockwise from top left) Wessel Badenhorst, Director of Urban Mode Ltd; Jim Conway, Director of the Eastern Midlands Regional Assembly; Willem Noë, European Semester Officer at the European Commission Representation in Ireland; Cllr Claire O'Connor, Chair of Dublin City Council's Economic Development & Enterprise SPC; and Mary MacSweeney, Dublin City Council's Deputy Head of Enterprise & Economic Development.

Council has developed a matrix for collaborations and policy alignment over the next seven-year programme period.

FOCUS FOR CURRENT PERIOD

Several Dublin City Council's current innovative units have originated through previous European projects and applications, including Smart Dublin & Smart Cities; the Dublin place branding team, Dublin.ie; Dublin City Council Culture Company and Codema, Dublin's Energy Agency.

Dublin City Council has now brought a focus over this year-long developmental process, to identify how best to understand and align European Programmes with the priority areas. The focus for the current period will be Smart & Digital, Green & Climate, Social & Economics and Urban & Regional Development.

The Lord Mayor of Dublin Alison Gilliland commented: "Dublin City Council is confident that this strategy will be a catalyst for the enhancement of the city's involvement at European level.

"It will place emphasis on Dublin's potential within the networks of European cities, such as those formed in EU Programmes and the Committee of the Regions and Eurocities. It will also support the alignment of our Dublin City Council priorities with the goals and policy objectives of the European Union."

EU PROGRAMMES SUPPORT OFFICE

A key pillar of this strategy is the establishment of Dublin City Council's EU Programmes Support Office (EPSO) to provide efficient support services for staff participating or intending to participate in the EU projects.

"The City Council aspires for Dublin to be a proactive and innovative European city. Accessing EU programmes is important in achieving this outcome. The programme office is being established to assist in this regard," according to Owen Keegan, Chief Executive of Dublin City Council.

This office will also act as a contact point for educational and research institutions as well as other organisations wishing to engage with DCC as a potential project partner. It will also



Dublin City Council's Economic Development Office and International Relations Office co-hosted the launch of the EU Programme Participation Strategy 2021-2027 on 20 July.

KEY PRIORITIES OF THE STRATEGY

The key priorities, aims and objectives for Dublin City Council for the next seven-year period is to develop:

- **Policy Alignment:** To ensure that any participation in an EU partnership project by Dublin City Council staff contributes to the goals and policy objectives of the European Union and Dublin City Council.
- **Capacity Building:** To promote participation in EU partnership projects which will measurably contribute to the capacity of DCC to meet its mission and public obligations.
- **Regional Cooperation:** To co-operate with relevant bodies such as national contact points of EU Programmes, the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly (EMRA) and the Irish Regions European Office (IREO) that will assist with the participation of Dublin City Council staff in EU partnership projects.
- **Public Consultation:** To engage with local communities and targeted beneficiaries matching intended impacts with local needs where possible.
- **Networking Opportunities:** To build the international reputation of Dublin City Council and the city of Dublin through participation in EU partnership projects.
- **Innovative Approach:** To use participation in EU partnership projects to promote innovation in the operations of Dublin City Council that is Green and Smart and that enables openness, diversity and social inclusion.
- **Additionality:** To ensure that participation in EU partnership projects brings additionally to the services of Dublin City Council.

EU Programme Participation Strategy 2021 - 2027



A strategy to guide staff participation in EU partnership projects during the EU budget period 2021 to 2027

have a key co-ordination, liaison and communications role both internally among Dublin City Council staff, other local, regional and European authorities and representatives as well as members of the public.

MARKING A SUCCESSFUL YEAR TO DATE

- **Smart Cities** – Dublin is currently ranked as the 26th Smart City in the world, up 15 places on the previous year.
- **Economic Development** – Dublin was chosen as 1 of 8 global cities to partake in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Social Economy peer to peer learning project 2021.
- **Codema** – €1.2 million in EU funding secured to lead project to test and develop a project implementation unit for energy efficient and renewable projects in Dublin including €20 million worth of upgrades to council buildings and sites within the region.
- **Dublin's 14 Henrietta Street** – This street was recently awarded the European Museum of the Year Silletto Prize 2020 for local community engagement.

BACKGROUND TO THE STRATEGY

Dublin City Council started the development of a European Programme Participation Strategy for the current EU Programme period 2021-2027 in September 2020.

DCC's Economic Development & Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee – Working Group on International Relations & European Affairs – sought to ascertain details on existing and past EU projects/EU funded national projects that the Council has either participated in or applied to. This was to prepare for future EU funding and project opportunities.

DCC has collaborated with key stakeholders across Dublin's city, region and on a national basis. Throughout the developmental process baseline data was gathered to reflect on the participation of Dublin City Council departments and sections in EU Programmes during the previous EU budget cycle (2014-2020).

Five information sharing sessions were held to examine the opportunities for participation in the new EU budget cycle (2021-2027). Proceedings from the sessions informed the strategy for DCC's participation in future EU Programmes.

This strategy will support the identification of opportunities within the EU Partnership Programmes and Projects and EU funding streams to realise Dublin City Council priorities. It will also contribute to the target areas identified by the European Commission and set out in the six EU pillars and the seven EC Flagships areas.

It will also allow Dublin City Council to further develop policy alignment; capacity building; regional co-operation; public consultation; networking opportunities and reputation enhancement through innovative approaches and additionally through EU partnership projects.

For details on the Dublin City Council European Programme Support Office (EPSO) visit www.dublincity.ie/ga/node/9212



PLANS ON STREAM FOR CORK TO BECOME FASTEST GROWING CITY IN IRELAND

Cork City Council recently launched its draft Development Plan, and according to Brian Geaney, Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Operations Officer, the long list of projects currently underway or planned across the city has the potential to define the lives and the life-chances of young people growing up in and around the recently expanded Cork City.

Our City, Our Future' provides a transformative blueprint for how as the city embarks upon an exciting phase of growth and change – with sustainability, quality of life, social inclusion, and climate resilience at the plan's core.

The plan is centred around supporting housing, economic development, public realm renewal, transport, more amenity spaces, and community services in existing built-up areas, using the internationally recognised 15-minute city model. This is the first of three critically important city development plans for Cork, leading up to 2040.

"The draft Development Plan, which

is currently out to public consultation, is exciting and significant in many ways; not least being the first local policy-based expression of the ambition for Cork contained in Project Ireland 2040 and the National Planning Framework," according to Brian Geaney, Cork City Council's Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Operations Officer.

CITY TRANSFORMATION

He considers that that this will help shape the transformation of the city over the next six years by way of support in the creation of 20,000 homes and 31,000 jobs.

Geaney is emphatic that plans are only dreams without action and points out

that already the council was busy earlier this year planning and preparing for the reopening of the city on a graduated basis during the sequenced easing of public health restrictions due to the pandemic.

A comprehensive, reimagining, and ambitious programme of events with an emphasis on communities was arranged with a pedestrianisation plan for 17 city-centre streets at its core, which has enabled a more sustainable and 'people-centred' city. The amazing results of this initiative are well documented and are plain to be seen on the streets this summer, he notes.

On the housing front, a critical area for both Cork City Council and the



Cork City Docklands has received approval of €355m in funding from the URDF.

Government, Geaney says, “We are well ahead of our targets, and now having a well-established team in place on the capital delivery side we are well advanced on procurement and plans to deliver thousands of homes over the coming years, far beyond what was previously thought possible, this is exciting.”

HOUSING REMAINS CORE ISSUE

He insists that housing is a core issue for Cork City Council and its primary aim is to invest and to facilitate investment by others in housing and related necessary transport and infrastructure.

The aim is to boost the well-being among residents of the city and its environs by helping to ensure that more people have a safe, affordable place to call home.

“We have systems in place to provide accommodation across all tenure pillars and we are committed to seek further



Cork’s pedestrianisation plan has enabled a more ‘people-centred’ city – the results were seen with more outdoor dining on the city streets this summer.

innovative delivery mechanisms to cater for this important social and economic requirement for the city.”

This is a time of unprecedented opportunity for Cork City, which has up to €1.8 billion ringfenced in central government funding and a further €3.5 billion earmarked for the city over 20 years as part of the Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (CMATS).

This confidence in Cork is proven by



These plans will need widespread stakeholder engagement according to Brian Geaney, Cork City Council’s Assistant Chief Executive and Chief Operations Officer.



‘Our City, Our Future’ is a blueprint for Cork as the city embarks upon the next phase of growth and change.

planned landmark projects such as the €46 million Grand Parade Quarter, currently also under public consultation.

Meanwhile, Cork City Docklands – a project of international significance – has already received approval of €355 million from the Government’s Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF).

However, Brian Geaney points out that “all of these plans will need widespread listening and engagement with stakeholders and then leaning on relationships and taking the action step, every time”.

FUTURE OF LIMERICK'S SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT IS NOW ON TRACK

The Limerick Greenway has been the largest tourism project ever undertaken by Limerick City and County Council. The 40km route stretches through the county's western heartlands along the old railway line, creating a vital piece of infrastructure for sustainable living, transport and tourism in the region.

With a €10 million investment, the Limerick Greenway has already proven its worth as a major draw for domestic tourism, with people holidaying at home this summer. And in just a few short months, the success of Limerick's largest tourism project to date can already be seen with new businesses and jobs in the towns and village along the 40km route, and by the countless walkers and cyclists who travel along the amenity each day.

Carving a path through the countryside of West Limerick, the Greenway links the towns of Rathkeale, Newcastle West and Abbeyfeale with other stops along the way. Offering an authentic experience of rural Ireland to cyclists, runners and walkers of all ages and abilities, the Greenway showcases the unique draws of each town, the deep local heritage, and all the sights and sounds that make rural Limerick unique.

A huge effort went in to getting Limerick Greenway ready for the 2021 summer season as the pandemic caused significant delays to construction. The constant changes to restrictions meant the goalposts kept shifting, but the team behind the project pushed ahead.

ACCESSIBLE OUTDOOR AMENITIES

Limerick City and County Council Chief Executive, Dr Pat Daly, said: "Trojan work has gone into making the opening of the Greenway possible this summer despite the pandemic.

"Although construction ceased earlier this year, causing significant delays to timelines, our ambition for the Greenway never faltered."

Opening the Greenway in such uncertain times has meant not only developing the physical Greenway, but also delivering an amenity that is of the moment. The pandemic has shown the value of accessible, outdoor amenities, and the ongoing shift towards sustainable transport has called out the need to expand Ireland's walking and cycling routes.

With 40km of resurfaced pathways, the Greenway is closed off from main roads, keeping users safe from traffic. This is not only a tourism and leisure draw, but also a vital piece of commuting infrastructure, providing a safe route between several West Limerick towns as part of the county's rapidly expanding cycle infrastructure.

Limerick City and County Council is investing in active transport infrastructure, with the Treaty City having become a leader for sustainable transport since 2012 when

The view from The Limerick Greenway at Barnagh Tunnel, Newcastle West.

LIMERICK GREENWAY



Lisa Ruttle and family walking The Limerick Greenway at the Barnagh Tunnel.



Delam Carter and family from Caherdavin in Limerick enjoying their cycle along The Limerick Greenway at Ferguson's Viaduct.

it received funding for a package of measures for smarter travel.

KEY TRANSPORT PROJECTS

Since then, further investments to support work commuters, students and visitors include cycle lanes and walkways, a shared cycle scheme, and secure bike storage options.

Work is currently underway to give pedestrians priority in the city centre, with wider footpaths and cycle lanes, as well as new seating areas and on-street trading to

create a more open public realm.

In addition to transforming existing infrastructure, key transport projects such as the Coonagh-Knockalisheen Distributor Road and the planned South Canal Bridge have been designed with active transport in mind from the start including cycle and walking paths.

Projects like the Limerick Greenway are extending that approach to sustainable transport outside the city, and the council is now also collaborating with Waterways Ireland, the ESB and Clare County Council

on the new Limerick to Scariff Greenway.

The Greenway has also met people's unique needs for their 2021 holidays, by providing an accessible, safe and family-friendly outdoor amenity. Through a targeted communications campaign, Limerick City and County Council established the Greenway as an authentic experience of rural Ireland, with vibrant county towns and a wealth of historical and natural treasures along the way. The opening came just after Limerick City was named a Wild Atlantic Way Gateway City.



Gerry and Mary Liston walking The Limerick Greenway, pictured at Barnagh Station House.

THE GREENWAY HIGHLIGHTS

Each town on the Limerick Greenway has something to offer, and no stage of the journey is the same as the last. Here are some of the highlights that visitors will see along the way:

Rathkeale to Newcastle West: The first stop on the Greenway adventure is Rathkeale. This town is steeped in local history and surrounded by natural beauty. Visitors will see the ruins of Rathkeale Abbey, which dates to the early 13 century and two fascinating churches, St Mary's, and Holy Trinity, showing the range of architecture on offer in the region.

Following the old Limerick to Kerry railway line, the Greenway itself starts at the former Rathkeale Station, now home to the Irish Palatine Heritage Centre, which explores the lives and influence of a group

of German refugees who made Limerick their home.

This first stage of the Greenway runs through lush rural farmland towards the village of Ardagh, a vibrant rural community. The landscape around Ardagh is dotted with ancient ringforts, and the Greenway runs close to the spot where the iconic Ardagh Chalice was discovered in 1868. The chalice is held in pride of place at the National Museum of Ireland in Dublin, and a replica can be seen at the Hunt Museum in Limerick City.

Newcastle West to Barnagh: After Ardagh, comes Newcastle West, Limerick's largest town. As well as offering boutique shops, local pubs and restaurants for rest, relaxation and retail therapy, the town is also a renowned spot for fishing, golf, and horse riding. Newcastle West is also the perfect place to break the journey and stay the night in one of its many B&Bs and hotels.

The town is steeped in local history too, with Desmond Castle, dating back to the 13th century and the Castle Demesne Park, a 100-acre garden once used by the Earls of Desmond and now open for the public to enjoy. The ascent to Barnagh begins at Newcastle West, offering amazing views of the landscape of Limerick and the surrounding areas.

The Greenway takes in Ferguson's Viaduct, a cast-iron rail bridge that has stood over Garryduff since 1880, followed by Barnagh Tunnel, another Victorian Era railway innovation. At 115-metres long, the tunnel once allowed trains to traverse the steep peak of Barnagh.

Closed for decades, it has recently been restored by Limerick City and County Council along with Barnagh Station House; both can now be seen up close by the public. At the peak of Barnagh is a viewing point where visitors can see out over the whole of Limerick and beyond.

Barnagh to Abbeyfeale: After Barnagh, the next stop is Templeglantine, a welcoming village with a shop and hotel. The village is home to the Holy Trinity Church, built in 1829 and one of the oldest churches still in use in the region. Just outside Templeglantine is Tullig Wood, a tranquil forest rich in native flora and fauna.



The view from The Limerick Greenway at Ferguson's Viaduct, Newcastle West.

The natural surroundings of Tullig Wood soon give way to bustling Abbeyfeale, one of the most culturally unique towns in the region. As part of the Sliabh Luachra tradition, Abbeyfeale is a hub for Irish music and dance, and is home to the Glórach Theatre and the annual Fleadh by the Feale festival.

As the final town on the Limerick Greenway, it's a great place to spend the night and take in a trad session at one of the many local pubs.

PROMOTING LIMERICK TOURISM

Located just east of this major tourist route, Limerick Greenway is an attractive option for road trippers who want to take a break from the car and explore rural Ireland by foot, bike or wheelchair.

It also coincided with the council's hugely acclaimed 'Double Your Summer' campaign to promote tourism across the county, with the Greenway being seamlessly adopted into the wealth of tourist attractions Limerick has to offer.

This campaign led to a bumper tourist season for Limerick, allowing local businesses to expand, create jobs and establish a new base to build upon in the years ahead. According to Gordon Daly, Director of Service at Limerick City and

County Council, those businesses and jobs will be key to supporting a sustainable rural economy in Limerick.

He described the Greenway as a "strategically important piece of economic infrastructure for the region" and a "milestone" for Limerick.

"The past 16 months have shown the value of outdoor amenities, and Limerick Greenway aligns with the Government's strategy to invest in infrastructure that support healthy lifestyles and sustainable travel options.

"Running all the way from Rathkeale to Abbeyfeale, this fully accessible route will allow people from all over the country to safely explore and enjoy County Limerick," he said, adding that the Greenway is perfect for day-trippers or short breaks and can be experienced in one visit or explored in shorter stages.

"Whatever option they choose along this sustainable transport option, visitors will be assured of a genuine welcome from the towns along the way, with delicious food, fun activities and quality accommodation to boot."

For further information visit www.limerickgreenway.ie or follow @limerickgreenway on Instagram.

GALWAY HAS SITE SET ON LOCATION FOR NEW FILM STUDIO

Galway's Draft County Development Plan (2022-2028) has highlighted several sites of strategic importance and mutual interest to both the city and county councils. One is the former Galway Airport site, part of which has been earmarked for a new state-of-the-art film and TV studio, which aims to be open for business by next summer.

Following the ten-week public consultation, which closed on 30 July, it's expected the final County Development Plan will be published by May 2022, providing a roadmap for how the county will be developed and improved over the next six years.

And as part of the new developments proposed for Galway, a new state-of-the-art 40,000 sq. ft., high-tech film and TV studio has been given the green light to move to planning stage with the aim of being open for business for next summer.

The planned film and TV production studios are proposed for development on a section of the site of the former Galway Airport at Carnmore. Atlantic Studios has agreement in principle for a long-term lease with the site's owners – Galway City and Galway County Councils.

This creative project for Galway City, County and the Wild Atlantic Way will be developed on a phased basis. The first phase will involve creative development of the existing hangar building space to provide over 40,000 sq ft of film and TV studio space, along with offices and suites of support facilities. Atlantic Studios' strategic plan and key driver for the development is to capitalise on the global increase in film and TV production.

Phase two will include additional studio space with the objective of the Atlantic Studios facility becoming a prime location and media hub for production companies, who are focused on delivering key services to support film and TV production.

INVESTMENT TO BENEFIT GALWAY ECONOMY

The initial investment in the Atlantic Studios development is expected to yield €10m-€15 million per annum to the Galway economy while creating between 150 and 200 production specific jobs.

As a key economic driver for Galway, Atlantic Studios will also showcase the talent, facilities and scenic locations of Galway and the western seaboard as a key location for high-scale movie and TV production to the world.

This development also ensures that Galway is central to Government's policy making for Ireland as a world centre of high-quality film and TV drama production.

Atlantic Studios has received the support of the Western Development Commission, Údarás na Gaeltachta and a wide range of industry stakeholders, including Screen Ireland and Galway Film Centre.

Siobhán Ní Ghadhra, Director of Atlantic Studios, said that they have a strong strategic plan and vision for what can be delivered for Galway and the West and Ireland as a whole.

"This development will be crucial to fulfilling the current lack of availability of appropriate full-service studio space in Ireland's audio-visual sector. Growth has been severely

restricting in the sector as a result," she noted.

Atlantic Studios Director John Brady described the announcement as "an important step in the right direction", pointing out that Galway has a long-standing history of TV and film production.

"It will allow us and Galway to attract large scale international projects to shoot in the west, which will also have an obvious spin-off for



The first phase of project will involve the creative development of Galway Airport's existing hangar building space to provide over 40,000 sq ft of film and TV studio space, along with offices and suites of support facilities.

the local economy and the tourism industry. We look forward to progressing the plans with Galway City and County Council to bring this project to fruition and to placing Galway on the international map in 2022.”

PRIME LOCATION FOR INCREASED BUSINESS

Ireland is recognised globally as an attractive shooting location for film and TV productions with many leading productions availing of the tax credits available to the film and TV industry and this development will support Galway as a location for increased business in this sector.

Galway Chamber of Commerce, Chief Executive, Kenneth Deery also welcomed the progress on this development, noting that media, TV, film and the creative industries are significant employers for Galway and the region.

“Danú Media have been huge ambassadors in the west and the support locally is a significant step in the right direction for this project at the old Galway airport. Galway Chamber wholeheartedly supports the Atlantic Studios project, which will lead to an increase in jobs and a positive economic impact across the film and TV sector and Galway as a whole,” he added.

Atlantic Studios

was set up by Danú Media, which was established in 2015 by John Brady and Siobhán Ní Ghadhra. It is based in the coastal village of Spiddal, in the Connemara Gaeltacht in South Galway to produce high quality TV and feature drama, for both the domestic and international markets.



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NWRA IS JUST GOING FOR IT!

The Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA) is evolving as a key advocate and leader for its region, as the Regional Assemblies become increasingly prominent players on the public policy landscape. Since taking up the role of Cathaoirleach, and guiding the organisation through a turbulent period, Cllr David Maxwell gives an insight into the work of his Assembly.

As a leader you should not sit in a seat of power and just enjoy the experience. You've got to try and do something extraordinary. You might only have a short time as an elected member, so use the time wisely.

It's all about timing and courage. If you're dodging the issues, are you really doing your job?" We have had change, transition and Covid-19 to deal with, and they have been tackled with great courage and determination, but most importantly results. There's an expression – *'To speak truth unto power. That's the job of a political representative'*.

With the Regional Assembly that spectrum of influence extends locally to Brussels – which is an absolutely critical part of the role particularly, when you are advocating on behalf of a region.

The members of the NWRA have developed a suite of impressive strategies, most notably the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy – all designed to deliver a better place for this and the next generation of communities. Now it is about implementation.

The entire premise of the corporate strategy is unashamedly around improving the wellbeing of our region. The strategy is simple but meaningful and makes no apologies for being ambitious. We managed these challenges because our purpose is clear whilst the NWRA's culture is to:

- Make things happen.
- Work together.
- Think differently.
- Act with integrity.

Over the past year, the results of our actions have been clearly evident.

WORKING VIRTUALLY DURING COVID-19
There's no doubt that the last few months have been a crazy ride with significant lessons learned and areas of adapted along the way. We've had to learn how to work



Most significantly was the work done to support the HSE investment of over €100m in PPE for health care and health service providers across the region.

The PPE helped to protect frontline staff from the Covid-19 virus in hospitals, acute and primary care settings, testing centres, assessment hubs and residential care settings.

In Ireland, the speed of this response was critical to support the provision of care required at multiple locations across the region.

'LET'S BE MORE' CAMPAIGN

Ireland has one of the highest levels of regional inequalities amongst EU member states. Despite the country's economic growth, a very uneven pattern of economic success can be identified where some areas of the country benefit significantly less than our capital region. This presents a less positive micro picture of economic success. What does this mean?

The Northern and Western Region has been downgraded to a 'Transition Region'

virtually, how to work in isolation and we've had to learn how to maintain morale levels with our people with the absence of face-to-face interaction.

The NWRA is one of three Regional Assemblies, working with key stakeholders at EU, national, regional and local level to respond to the complex impact of Covid.



NWRA's Cathaoirleach Cllr David Maxwell – "Ireland has one of the highest levels of regional inequalities amongst EU member states".

by the European Commission, resulting in a pledge to contribute €60 for every €100 invested by the Government in the next wave of ERDF funding. In contrast, the east and south are to get just €40 from every €100 spent by the Government.

Earlier this year, I launched a campaign titled 'Let's Be More' because I believe Ireland needs all of its regions perform. To address complex issues like improving sustainability alongside productivity, international evidence suggests strengthening the institutions that are close to the action, in regions where they have the local knowledge and contacts to improve policy implementation and bring projects to fruition.

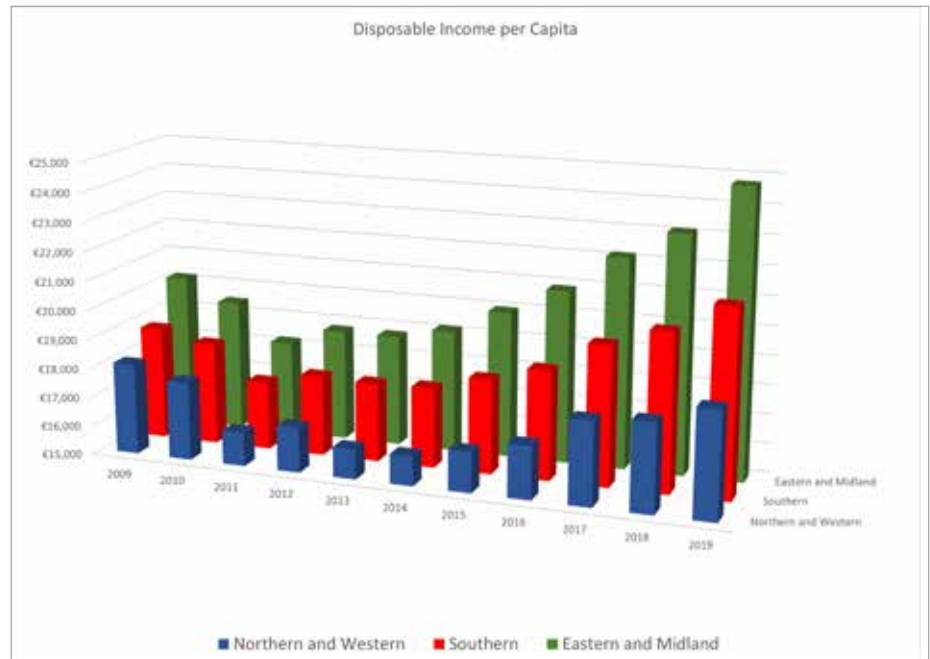
The region needs additional investment. Our biggest challenge is having a weak urban fabric. For example, we need to invest in Galway and the region's designated 'Regional Growth Centres and Key Towns'.

We need to improve the region's human capital levels via our third level institutes, enhance regional infrastructure that enables growth, support SMEs in rural communities and support our further education and training bodies.

This will also underpin the digital transition that will support industry 'Let's Be More' advocates for a sustained policy focus on the border and west regions to ensure long-term economic inclusion.

POWERING UP THE REGIONS

We need to do something 'immediate and different'. The Northern and Western Region's economy was valued at €22.1 billion in 2019, equating to €24,926 per head of population. This is in stark contrast with the state average of €66,716. It is incredible to me that the gap in disposable income per person between the Northern and Western



Region and the State average has increased to €3,869 since 2009.

During the pandemic I published a report by the Northern and Western Regional Assembly calling for a regionally-led approach to unlock regional potential in Ireland. The report notes that for too long regional development has been top-down and centrally driven and that if we are to achieve a sustainable, productive and inclusive economy, as the Government's 2040 Plan calls for, then regions need to be empowered to develop their own economies and specialisations.

I commend the Government for the Project Ireland Funds, but it is time to move to the next level in delivery. This would include our city-regions, improved intra- and inter-regional considerations

for infrastructure, innovation and 'smart specialisations', and a more place-based approach.

I am delighted to see a sustained change under-way and we are working with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment on its new Smart Specialisation Strategy. This is calling specifically for policies that enable regional innovation and specialisation through cluster development and continuing to invest in innovation. Ultimately this will give more strength to our local institutions and local democratic mandate.

SOLUTION FOCUSED

The world is changing and the Northern and Western region is acutely exposed due to its rurality and peripherality. Our Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy' is keen to tackle this. The fact of the matter is that our dispersed settlement patterns and low population density result in a high proportion of journeys being made by private car.

The Northern and Western region is highly dependent on the private car for travel to work and education. This is reflective of the low level of suitable alternative transport options.

Ireland's 2030 decarbonisation ambition will need to address this and we are joining a research partnership led by IT Sligo and GMIT to model our 'transition to a Low-Carbon, Climate-Resilient and Sustainable Transport Model'. For me, this is how we bring about real change. Collective action for mutual benefit.



Shauna Ward from Ward Automation. (a precision engineering company based in Sligo), pictured with NWRA's Director David Minton and Cathaoirleach Cllr David Maxwell at the launch of the 'Let's Be More' campaign.



The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), managed in Ireland by two regional programmes, continues to support sustainable employment opportunities, and helps to develop an environmentally friendly and resource-efficient economy. It has responded to the pandemic by awarding over €311m to the HSE to support the cost of PPE supplies to the Irish healthcare system.

Two such co-funded regional programmes in Ireland – the Southern & Eastern Regional Programme (S&E) and the Border, Midland & Western Regional Programme (BMW) – are managed respectively by the Southern Regional Assembly (SRA) and the Northern & Western Regional Assembly (NWRA).

The programmes focus on specific growth opportunities and sectors identified in Ireland's smart specialisation strategy, to improve quality of life and to contribute to Ireland's targets for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The ERDF aims to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the European Union by correcting imbalances between its regions.

During the 2014-2020 period, approximately €940m was allocated to Ireland by the ERDF through the two regional programmes for the following priorities:



Ireland's two ERDF Regional Programmes awarded over €311m to the HSE to support the cost of essential PPE supplies to the Irish healthcare system, in response to the pandemic.

- Research and innovation.
- Information and communications technology.
- Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
- The promotion of a low-carbon economy.

SMALL BUSINESSES SUPPORTS

The ERDF provides co-funding to 31 Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) around the country.

Two small business owners from Clare and Leitrim, who have benefitted greatly due to invaluable grant aid, share their success stories to date, and what the future now holds for their companies.

In 2017, Clare-based business Get the Shifts received a Business Priming Grant of €35,000 from LEO in Clare, with €14,740 of that grant claimed through the ERDF in 2019.

The idea for Get the Shifts came to Hannah Wrixon due to a pivot from an earlier business, called Last Minute Minders.

Having worked in hospitality in Australia for some years, on returning to Ireland in 2002 she found it difficult to

find high-quality childcare for her four-year-old at the time. As a result, she set up Last Minute Minders, a database of qualified, experienced and available childcare professionals for crèches, hotels and parents.

With her hospitality background, Hannah realised this concept would also work for the sector and saw a gap in the market for a service to match willing staff with needy employers at short notice.

That was the start of her new business Get the Shifts: where pre-vetted, experienced hospitality workers are notified when there is work available. For employers, it has proved a quick and easy way to expand and attract their workforce.

Hannah Wrixon has said the ERDF funding has allowed her to grow the team, invest in software, and create an inclusive platform.

"The support from the ERDF and LEOs strengthens innovation in Ireland. A lot of projects fail because they're not properly resourced. LEOs allow entrepreneurs to have peace of mind by providing a safety net."

HUNGRY FOR SUCCESS IN LEITRIM!

Similarly, Georgia Visnyei, who is originally from Hungary, was able to get her business off the ground with the support from LEO in Leitrim. Georgia moved to Ireland with her husband in 2004 to work as an architect. However, when the recession hit, she lost her job.

She always had a love of coffee, so decided to set up her own business and invested in a coffee roasting machine, while also participating in barista training.

Having approached LEO in Leitrim for help, she recalls that they were an amazing support. "We purchased equipment with the help of various business expansion grants from LEO, but we also got support with mentoring on aspects such as business plans and accounting."

What started as roasting coffee beans in her kitchen soon developed into the Café Lounge in Carrick-on-Shannon, which was the shop window for their Art of Coffee production company. The Art of Coffee supplies freshly roasted coffee beans and equipment to both wholesalers and consumers.

PPE FOR HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

More recently, the two ERDF Regional Programmes in Ireland also responded to the Covid-19 pandemic by awarding over €311m to the HSE to support the cost of personal protective equipment (PPE) supplies to the Irish healthcare system.

PPE has been vital during the pandemic because it helps to stop the spread of the virus. Before Covid-19, few workers needed to wear PPE and it was relatively straightforward to acquire.

As soon as the global pandemic was declared in March 2020, there was a worldwide demand for PPE and the HSE faced the challenge of competing globally to secure and safeguard steady supplies.

The speed of this response was critical to support the provision of care required at multiple locations across the country including testing centres, assessment hubs, and acute and primary care settings.



Hannah Wrixon has said the ERDF funding has allowed her to grow the team, invest in software, and create an inclusive platform.

It was imperative that the HSE was aligned to the WHO guidelines and worked at a fast pace, engaging with the markets to source PPE in an environment that was highly volatile, complex and uncertain.

The challenges included extreme surges in demand as China, which accounts for 65% of worldwide PPE manufacturing, introduced significant restrictions.

CONTINUITY OF ACCESS AND SUPPLY

These included the closure of manufacturing plants and limitations to shipping channels due to port and airport closures. PPE pricing also rose dramatically as the WHO reported requirements for PPE to be 100 times the usual demand, with prices up to 10 times higher than normal as a result.

All global healthcare systems became price-takers within the context of PPE, and it was not always possible to negotiate downward pricing. However, the immediate security of PPE supply lines was absolutely critical to the pandemic response. Added to the sudden and dramatic price hike, was the fact that supplies could take months to deliver and market manipulation was widespread, with stocks frequently sold to the highest bidder.

In any given year, the HSE spend on PPE was between €15m and €17m. In 2020, it was nearly €1 billion. To assist with the purchasing of PPE, the two

ERDF Regional Programmes in Ireland responded by developing a Health Support Scheme, to support the HSE's efforts to secure and sustain continuity of access and supply of essential PPE.

In this regard, ERDF funding of over €311m was awarded to the HSE from the BMW Regional Programme (approx. €103m), and the Southern & Eastern Regional Programme (approx. €207m) for the supply of PPE to the health service across the two regions.

Funding from the ERDF Programmes was facilitated by the EU's Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative and the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative Plus Regulations.

This helped to support operations and foster crisis response capacities in the context Covid-19; and Regulation 2020/558 on specific measures to provide exceptional flexibility for the use of the European Structural and Investment Funds in response to the Covid-19 outbreak.

FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

The ERDF Programmes are developed under an EU partnership model between the European Commission, the Irish Government, the Regional Assemblies, and an extensive consultation involving local government, the private sector, third level and research institutions, and social partners and voluntary groups.

Work is ongoing to develop the new programmes to set out how the ERDF funding allocation will be spent and implemented for the 2021-27 period.



Georgia Visnyei first started roasting coffee beans in her kitchen, and soon moved into the Café Lounge in Carrick-on-Shannon.

These well-established programmes have delivered real benefits for communities throughout Ireland since 2000. The new round of funding over the next seven years will help to support sustainable employment opportunities, combat social exclusion, promote research and development, and cultivate an environmentally friendly and resource-efficient economy.

To contact the Southern Regional Assembly (Waterford) email info@southernassembly.ie or visit www.southernassembly.ie



To contact the Northern & Western Regional Assembly email info@nwra.ie or visit www.nwra.ie



Ireland's European Structural and Investment Funds Programmes 2014-2020
Co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Union



European Union
European Structural and Investment Funds

ADDRESSING THE SAFETY ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

Since the construction industry reopened in May, any likely radical reforms of moving the Safe Pass training programme to an online 'test' are not in the best interests of the industry, claims safety consultant Declan Gibney. He says that efforts need to be redoubled to raise safety standards and awareness in saving lives and preventing injuries.

In the world of work, we talk about developing safety cultures and changing safety behaviour these days, and rightly so.

We also have a reasonable and understandable expectation that we will see progress with time, such as improvements in workplace safety rather than it disimproving over the years.

It appears then that there is surprisingly little interest in the facts that currently contradict this expectation. Firstly, 16 people lost their lives in construction site accidents last year, THREE TIMES the number killed in 2018. To add to this concern, the construction sector was closed for almost two months in 2020 due to the pandemic, so that was a 10-month year, making the figures even more concerning.

If you happen to think that last year was an exception, let me remind you that six people have lost their lives in the construction industry in 2021 to date, and with most sites closed from January to late April this year, the figure is still more than the total for 2018.

Secondly, almost half (7 of 16) the



number of people killed in construction accidents in Ireland in 2020 were self-employed. Thirdly, there is a growing call from certain quarters for Safe Pass training to be scrapped in its current format and provided as an online 'test' with a

simple renewal process, similar to the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) and the driving licence.

SAFE PASS IS NOT A TEST

In reality, Safe Pass training is a well-



There is a growing call from certain quarters for the Safe Pass training programme to be scrapped in its current format and provided as an online 'test' with a simple renewal process.

established and highly effective route for the self-employed and the employees in the SME sector – exactly the risk profile that needs to work hard on developing a genuine safety culture.

Safe Pass training has its weaknesses and there is arguably too much paperwork and too much content for course participants to take in over one day. However, before we scrap the training in its current format, it is well worth to take a step back and give it some consideration.

Safe Pass is a blended awareness programme that, over time, raises awareness of what causes death, ill-health, and life-changing injuries. This in turn changes habits, behaviour and culture. A Safe Pass test will never replicate this, and it is not the answer.

In actual fact, for many people Safe Pass training, provides them with the opportunity to stop and think about their health and safety standards and behaviour.

On the other hand, engaging with and listening to stakeholders, such as the experienced Safe Pass Tutors, may create an opportunity for a radical reform of Safe Pass that ensures that it is fit for purpose for the next 20 years!

SAFE PASS TRAINING PROGRAMME

The SOLAS Safe Pass Health and Safety Awareness Training Programme was first developed and introduced in 2002 following an initiative by the Construction Industry Training Committee (CITC).

This initiative was incorporated into the Construction Safety Partnership Plan, launched by Tom Kitt TD, the then Minister for Labour, Trade and Consumer Affairs.

Detailed consultation took place between FAS (now SOLAS) and Expert Working Groups representing the social partners with the support of the CITC.

The purpose of the SOLAS Safe Pass Training Programme is to ensure, over the course of time, that all construction site and local authority personnel, will have a basic knowledge of health and safety, and be able to work on site without being a risk to themselves or others who may be affected by their acts or omissions.

The one-day Safe Pass training, which is delivered in a classroom environment, is valid for a four-year period. Subjects covered range from working at heights to legislation and include excavations, confined spaces, accident reporting and behaviour-based safety.

Training is delivered in a blended style that incorporates exercises, case studies and discussions based on experience. There is usually a mix of ages and experience in the group, which adds greatly to the learning experience.

For more information visit www.solas.ie/construction-lp/safe-pass/

*In recent weeks SOLAS has published a request for tender for the provision of Safe Pass renewals through a test centre rather than the current course format.





The Elephant in the Room is that at the very time we need to engage with the self-employed and SMEs, we face the real risk of scrapping an established route of engaging with this cohort of the sector.

CHANGES TO CONSIDER

Here are some simple but very effective changes to consider:

- **Redefine the profile of those who require Safe Pass training:** Create a simple system that recognises continuous professional development through engagement with site inductions, toolbox talks etc. If we can create loyalty cards for coffee shops, we can create a system of recognising these activities and allowing automatic renewal of Safe Pass cards every four years for certain workers.
- **Registration forms completed in advance of training with photograph provided by participants:** This would shorten the course by 30 minutes and allow those with reading and writing concerns to complete the paperwork with any necessary assistance.
- **Make more content relating to 'Be Smart':** The Health and Safety Authority's DIY safety statement and risk assessment website.
- **Introduce a significant section on Mental Health:** Males aged 18-65 are the dominant cohort completing Safe Pass training and the most vulnerable when it comes to suffering mental ill-health.
- **Less focus on the 'big site' environment:** The high-risk environment is the small site.
- **Restructure the course content:** This could include several core content modules and tutor selected add-ons depending on the group and relevance.
- **Include a defined section on 'updates':** This could look at what is new over the past four years, and could include legislation, Approved Codes of Practice, decided court cases and statistics for example.

CERTAIN CHANGES NEEDED

The Elephant in the Room is that at the very time we need to engage with the self-employed and SMEs, we face the real risk of scrapping an established route of engaging with this cohort of the sector.

Many will consider this article to be a cry for help from a Safe Pass tutor who sees the end in sight and wants to save their own skin. Let me be very clear; I am a Chartered Safety Professional with over 25 years' experience, and I have seen the tremendous good in Safe Pass training

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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He is Managing Consultant of Synergy Risk Management Ltd, a health and safety consultancy based in the southeast, and assists a range of clients in their strategic management of health and safety.

Declan is also a former Vice President of IOSH and is currently a member of the IOSH Council, which provides advice and guidance on matters of strategy and policy relating to the objects of the Institution, on issues relevant to members, on the membership of IOSH and on the occupational safety and health profession. Email declan@worksafe.ie.



over the years. I accept that there is a need for reform, but it should stop short of a complete transformation as suggested by some.

We are on the verge of populist opinion forcing through changes that will spell the end of Safe Pass training in its current formant. Moving to an online 'test' will not be in the best interest of the industry and comes at the very time that we need to redouble our efforts to raise standards, raise awareness and save lives.

Before we start to sleepwalk into these changes, let's make sure that all options are carefully considered, and all voices heard.



Public Spaces



Parklets are the new way of enlarging a public areas by taking the space on a car parking space with each one.



New to Ireland and maintenance free ;
Thermo transfer wood affect benches
manufactured in steel and aluminium and
a 5 year guarantee



We are your partner when it comes to making your town or village into the most welcoming place to go to meet your friends , to have a coffee or even a meal. We have the largest collection of street furniture in Ireland for you to chose from. We are constantly keeping up with world trends and when something new becomes prominent ,we at Public Spaces bring it to Ireland . So if you are a local authority , a tidy towns committee ar a landscape engineer , contact us and we will be delighted to help.

PUBLIC SPACES – Unit 1A Southern Cross Business Park, Bray, Wicklow

PUBLIC SPACES in your town



Public Spaces has developed over the last 15 years. Based in Bray, we not only service the Irish domestic market we also have taken our services to the UK.

We are the perfect partner for a designer of any open space as we have partners all over Europe and can bring their abilities to the table at any time to help bring a project to fruition.

The Covid pandemic has brought to the surface the importance of open spaces and the development of such areas in our towns. This does not only mean catering such as coffee etc but also nice places to meet, to chat and bring the population of the town together again following months of isolation.



We are working with several local authorities in “public eating areas” and an extension to the pavement called ‘Parklets’. These are portable areas that can be placed in a parking area along beside a pavement and normally contain seating, tables and planters. They are bringing a ‘green area’ right to the middle of our towns and a pleasant place to meet your friend and have a chat. The designs are normally simple and practical and can take up two car parking spaces beside a café or restaurant extending their serving area out into the open and allowing them to serve you in a safe and secure manner while we are still in a position of having to keep ourselves apart from each other.

We offer a huge variety of street furniture most of which you will find on web page. We supply stone, steel, hardwood and even corten steel furniture and are particularly talented at bespoke projects.

Landscape designers and architects can come to us with their concepts, and we will assist them bring their designs to reality. At present we are working on the exciting Google HQ project in Dublin with BAM construction. In this we have sourced a unique new material called EPS and with this material have formed a large island 14 metres long and 6 metres wide. In the centre, a large tree will be planted and all around the structures people can sit at different levels and enjoy the surrounding of the docklands.



In the UK we are one of the largest suppliers of seating in the London area. Our Montseny chair being particularly popular and even more so due to Covid restrictions. We supplied last year the longest self-supporting bench in London to an area in Clapham. It is 26 metres long and all on a curve.

With a stainless-steel frame and hard wood seating slats the people of Clapham will be able to enjoy this bench for many years.

We recently installed bespoke planters and seating at Park House on the North Circular Road in Dublin. This was manufactured to architects strict instructions.

Let us work with you and make the changes in your area to open public areas for all to enjoy.

**Contact us at : Email: sales@publicspaces.eu • Phone: 01 2864995
Web page www.publicspaces.eu**

DIGITAL HUB TAKES STEPS TO TRANSFORM HOME-BUILDS

Ireland's first ever all-in-one marketplace for home-builds and improvements is now providing homeowners with direct access to construction professionals, products and services in one seamless digital hub. Since Housebuild.ie went live in February, over 20,000 users have logged on to the site to date in search of tradespeople in their area.

Housebuild.ie has signed up more than 2,000 professionals nationwide, ranging from bricklayers, plumbers and carpenters, to surveyors, engineers and architects, offering an all-in-one access to products, professionals, ideas and advice.

With more than 20,000 unique users now logging on to the site since its launch in February, in search of tradespeople, they can also buy from retail partners such as EZ Living Furniture and Tile Merchant, and browse the 'inspiration' section for home decor and interior design ideas.

Housebuild.ie has also a Construction Hub with practical guides and easy-to-follow 'how to' videos on everything from building regulations, planning and costing to energy efficient, Passive House and NZEB projects.

ALL UNDER THE ONE SITE

"There is no comparable site in Ireland or the UK like Housebuild.ie, offering everything in one online ecosystem. We have everything you need for home-builds, improvements, and decor. From tradespeople you can rate and review, to furniture, fixtures, fittings, and simple how-to guides designed to take the fear out of any project – it's all there, and it's badly needed," Eoghain Ryan says.

Ryan runs the business with his sister Ailish Ryan as co-director, and Kevin McDonagh, an engineer who has joined as MD following a successful 20-year career in the life sciences sector.

Housebuild.ie has been developed over four-and-a-half years at a cost of about €950,000, including financial investment of €450,000 and thousands of man-hours spanning engineering, software and business development.

The tech stack has been developed in conjunction with James Whelton, the Cork-born Founder of CoderDojo, and Joe Smyth, Co-Founder of Altocloud, the successful Galway SaaS company specialising in Customer Analytics.

Both Whelton and Smyth have joined the Board of Directors at Housebuild.ie, which is headquartered in Salthill, Galway, and currently employs 15 people.

BUILDING REGULATIONS APP

Eoghain and Ailish also run Ryan and Associates, an engineering consultancy based in Salthill which specialises in fire safety. The siblings launched a free mobile app for construction professionals



With plans to launch into the UK later this year, the team hopes to go live in the US by 2024, notes Eoghain Ryan.

in 2015, offering a one-stop shop for building regulations.

The Building Regulations app will now be rolled into the Building Regulations, Planning and Guidelines section of the site, adding further value for professionals using the site.

The business model for Housebuild.ie includes five separate revenue streams, including subscriptions for professionals profiled on the site, advertising revenue from consumer brands, an affiliate sales programme for smaller product suppliers and partnerships with financial and insurance providers.

Professionals can sign up for free for now, but when a certain number of professionals and unique users has been reached, a subscription charge will kick in, starting at €9.99.

"We will have an affiliate sales programme whereby we get a percentage of the sale of products featured on the site. We also want to have full e-commerce capability, and are in talks with mortgage providers and home, professional indemnity, and public liability insurers," Ryan noted.

EUROPEAN PLATFORM HOMES IN ON COMBATTING HOMELESSNESS

It is important that the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Ireland's local authorities and NGOs firmly grasp the opportunity presented by the recently launched European Platform on Combatting Homelessness, according to Wayne Stanley, Head of Policy at the Simon Communities of Ireland.

A pledge to end homelessness has been made by the 27 EU member states, the EU institutions, civil society and local and regional authorities, with the recent launch of the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness.

The EU Platform is an opportunity to learn from European experience and continue to develop our own systems to build on the success of initiatives such as 'Housing First' and to fulfil the ambition of the Declaration.

A hopeful indication is that the Minister for Housing, Local Government



In Ireland, homelessness has more than doubled during the last ten years.

and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien, who joined with his EU colleagues in signing the Lisbon Declaration on 21 June, has been supportive of the initiative from the start.

Beyond the important commitment of all European Ministers, the Declaration was also signed by representatives of local authorities and civil society, as well as the European Parliament and Commission.

EXTREME FORM OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

The Declaration on the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness highlights homelessness as one of the most extreme forms of social exclusion. It negatively affects people's physical and mental health, wellbeing, and quality of life, as well as their access to employment and access to other economic and social services.



Wayne Stanley is Head of Policy at the Simon Communities of Ireland and Vice President of FEANSTA (European Federation of Homeless Service Providers).

HOMELESSNESS CRISIS



“Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O’Brien, who joined his EU colleagues in signing the Lisbon Declaration, supported the initiative from the start” – Wayne Stanley

The Declaration also sets out that the answers to homelessness lie in the provision of homes to support people out of homelessness and to prevent them from experiencing homelessness in the first place.

This initiative has not come about in a vacuum. The pandemic has heightened our sensitivity to the importance of a safe and secure home. Homelessness has increased substantially in the EU over



Portugal's Minister of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security, Ana Mendes Godinho, signs the Lisbon Declaration on the European Platform on Combatting Homelessness.

the last 10 years.

In Ireland, homelessness has more than doubled during that period, and this doubling is in the context of the significant fall in the last year due to the Covid-19 moratorium on evictions.

In April 2021, there were 8,082 people in emergency homeless accommodation compared to 3,258 in 2014 when the Department of Housing first began publishing national data.

The Declaration is a culmination of years of work with colleagues in FEANTSA (the European Federation of Homeless Service Providers). All of the national NGOs who have been working

to address homelessness in Ireland have supported these efforts, because we know that with the right policies and political commitment, we can end homelessness.

We know that there are learnings we can take from across Europe. And finally, we know that the collective ambition of the EU has the potential to direct significant resources to address the issues of homelessness and housing exclusion.

INVESTMENT IN PEOPLE

At the launch event in Lisbon, European Commissioner Nicolas Schmit remarked; *“One euro spent in prevention, combating poverty at its roots, will save us thousands of euros in remedial action. It is investment in people, in their hopes and talents.”*

While this quote reads to most of us as a self-evident truth, it represents an enormous shift in the thinking of homelessness; a recognition that homelessness is most often an issue of a lack of resources to secure and maintain a home, rather than some personal or moral failing.

It is also critical that we see this understanding is operationalised and the commitment to work towards ending homelessness is reflected in the Minister's housing and homeless plans.

All of us should be focused on the opportunity that this EU Platform provides, to further its ambition in Ireland.



The European Platform on Combatting Homelessness was described as “a giant leap” and the beginning of a long road for the 27 EU member states to travel by 2030, by the Portuguese Minister of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security, Ana Mendes Godinho, pictured here with European Commissioner Nicolas Schmit, and (right) UN Goodwill Ambassador Yves Leterme, following the signing of the Lisbon Declaration on 21 June.

IRISH REGIONS EUROPEAN OFFICE TO HOST EU SEMINARS

The Irish Regions European Office (IREO) is set to organise a series of seminars across the country later this year to present how effective engagement with the European Union may strengthen local communities.

The three Regional Assemblies and the Irish Regions European Office (IREO) have been awarded funding from the Department of Foreign Affairs' Communicating Europe Initiative (CEI) for a range of projects to communicate European issues, the role of the EU and Ireland's place in Europe.

As part of these projects, a series of seminars entitled: 'A Duologue for Strength and Resilience – bringing the EU to local communities and local communities to the EU' will be rolled out by the Irish Regions European Office (IREO) in Brussels across Ireland's three Regional Assemblies later this year.

Three events will be organised in each of the Regional Assembly areas during the final months of 2021 with the duologue exploring how the European Union

helps local communities thrive and grow whilst providing tools for their citizens to engage with the EU from a bottom-up perspective.

These events will demonstrate how EU funding programmes and policy developments can support that two-way process. Communicating with citizens and local communities and providing them with the tools about how best to engage in EU policy making will be a key feature, particularly in light of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

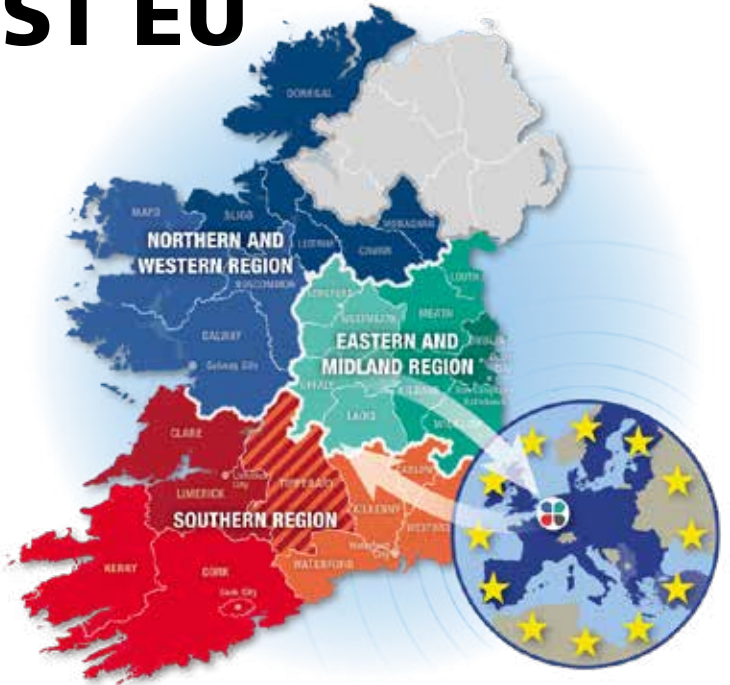
The series of seminars across Ireland will highlight, on the one hand, how EU Cohesion Policy funding (European

Territorial Co-operation programmes) can benefit local communities, and on the other hand, how local communities can participate in a duologue with the EU. The topics of the events will be aligned to the 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy priorities.

The events will include panels of speakers around these themes including the Irish Committee of the Regions (CoR) members and MEPs. In addition, they will also provide examples of how local communities across Ireland have benefitted from EU policies and programmes to date.

Events will also feature experts on citizen engagement from the European Movement Ireland and they will ensure that local communities are equipped to engage in the EU process.

The events will be aimed at local and regional authorities, both elected members and officials, local enterprise offices, civil society and members of the public.



For further information visit:
<https://www.ireo.eu/a-duologue-for-strength-and-resilience-communicating-europe-initiative/>



NEW EPA WEBSITE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND YOU!

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has launched its new website www.epa.ie to provide accurate and trusted information, making it easier for people to become more involved in protecting Ireland's environment.

According to recent surveys on Irish people's attitudes to the environment, 57 per cent of people in Ireland are extremely worried about environmental issues and 80 per cent of Irish people reported taking action to help the environment.

Responding to this, the new *Environment & You* section on the EPA's new website features practical advice on what actions you can take in your home or in your community in relation to areas such as waste, drinking water, radon, air quality and climate change.

The new mobile-friendly website is designed to provide high quality, targeted and timely environmental data, plus assessments and evidence to inform decision-making by citizens, businesses and government.

In this way the EPA continues to engage the public in the protection and improvement of the environment.

According to the EPA, our homes, and the choices we make influence our health and wellbeing and that of our family and neighbours.

Choices such as the fuel we use, the

water we drink, how we manage our waste, and the chemicals we use in our homes and gardens all impact our environment and our health.

The new EPA website covers simple actions that individuals, groups, communities and businesses can take to both save money and improve their environment. Every topic section has key actions to be taken such as Top Five Ways to Reduce Food Waste, or Take Action on Air Quality, to assist people to improve their local environment and be a positive influence for a better future.

The EPA's new website features a section, 'Environment and You' written with you, your life and your concerns in mind. Visit www.epa.ie.



What is 'circular economy'?

What is the air quality like in your area?

How will climate change affect Ireland?

Is your drinking water safe?



DESIGNING FOR AN ACCESSIBLE IRELAND



Best Practice Access Guidelines

Designing Accessible Environments



Edition 4, November 2020

Available at www.iwa.ie/access

Irish Wheelchair Association's Best Practice Access Guidelines are a central source of information for official bodies, developers or architects, offering essential guidance on designing accessible environments and buildings to the highest standards. These guidelines are based on the lived experience of people with disabilities and international best practice.

Great outdoors

A guide for accessibility



Available at www.iwa.ie/access

Ireland is renowned for its natural beauty, incredible landscapes, and breath-taking coastlines. Accessing the great outdoors and engaging in outdoor pursuits can present many challenges, particularly for people who may have a range of disabilities. The Great Outdoors is a Guide to Accessibility for Ireland and a great resource for the development of Ireland's National Strategy on Outdoor Recreation.

For further information email Rosaleen Lally, IWA National Access Programme Manager Rosaleen.lally@iwa.ie, or mobile: 087 2128215



ACCOMMODATING IRELAND'S AGEING POPULATION

This summer proved to be ground-breaking for Age Friendly Ireland, with the ministerial launch of a suite of publications to support the joint policy statement 'Housing Options for our Ageing Population', followed by the launch of the first phase of the Healthy Age Friendly Homes Programme. Report by Jason Corbett, Age Friendly Ireland Shared Service, Meath County Council.

As the population in Ireland ages, it is becoming increasingly necessary for procedures in housing to adapt to the needs of the people; these launches have provided a firm, pro-active step towards this goal which is the approach required for healthy ageing across the country.

The first of the two ministerial launches saw publications released in support of 'Housing Options for our Ageing Population', in addition to the website www.agefriendlyhomes.ie.

In the presence of Ministers Peter Burke and Minister Mary Butler, both avenues of guidance and information were unveiled and will strive to steer people in a direction of housing that better suits their, needs or those of a loved one.

The goal of this suite of resources is to guide in the process of making a home lifetime adaptable and age friendly, acting as a checklist for what is required in this process. As it is a fundamental right, housing must cater to the needs of the occupant and this, in turn, will act as a foundation for making communities across Ireland age friendly in nature. These resources will provide a framework that can be easily followed and replicated, making the large-scale implementation not only possible, but achievable.

According to Minister Peter Burke, "housing stock is to increase by over 50,000 in the next five years", while Minister Mary Butler noted that: "These resources and website will make a valuable contribution in enabling older people to lead healthy lives at home for longer".

More housing available that is also following the list of guidelines to be made futureproof, and cater to the needs of an ageing population, are an important step to meeting the needs of these communities in the coming years and are inherently pro-active by design.



Pictured at the launch of the Healthy Age Friendly Homes Programme on 13 July were (l-r): Minister of State for Local Government and Planning, Peter Burke, TD, Cathaoirleach of Meath County Council, Cllr Sean Drew, and Minister of State, Department of Health with responsibility for Mental Health and Older People, Mary Butler, TD.

GLOBAL AGE FRIENDLY FRAMEWORK

These guidelines follow the global Age Friendly Framework, set out by the World Health Organisation, which identified housing as one of the eight fundamental domains of Age Friendly communities. This has been of particular concern due to the ever-increasing population and inevitable future demand for housing across the board.

Ireland continues to strive in this field by embracing this global Age Friendly Framework and now, being recognised as the first fully affiliated Age Friendly Country in the world.

By implementing these guidelines on a wide scale across the country, not only will the practical quality of the housing improve but also the overall health and safety of older people as well as their quality of life. As noted by the Healthy and Positive Ageing Survey, a large proportion of older people said that they did not have the right facilities in place, housing conditions were poor,



Pictured outside the Custom House, following the launch of Age Friendly Housing Resources on 22 June were (l-r): Meath County Council's CE Jackie Maguire; Matthew Hornsby, Department of Health; Minister Mary Butler, Department of Health with responsibility for Mental Health and Older People; Laura Behan, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage; Leo Kearns, Implementation Group Chair of Housing Options for Our Ageing Population Policy; Roslyn Molloy, Housing Agency; Peter Burke, Minister for Local Government and Planning; and Catherine McGuigan, Age Friendly Ireland.

while they also pointed out that even their houses were just too large and difficult to maintain.

Examples of some of the resources relating to the built environment include primary care centre guidelines, the Age Friendly Homes rating tool, recommendations on ten universal design features to include in an Age Friendly Home, and the Age Friendly seating and parking toolkits.

The launch of these guidelines, which coincided with the launch of the website www.agefriendlyhomes.ie, ensures a method of accessing them with ease for people who will need them including, but not limited to, developers, local authority staff, policy writers, academia, and citizens. A list for all to follow ensures a combined approach towards a better, more prepared national community signposted to cater to the needs of our ageing population.

HEALTHY AGE FRIENDLY HOMES PROGRAMME

The second of the two launches revealed Phase One of the National Healthy Age Friendly Homes Programme, a new initiative funded by Sláintecare that aims to enable older people to continue living in their homes or in a home more suited to their needs. This new joint programme is being rolled out across nine local authority areas whereby up to 4,500 homes aim to be reached over the next two years.

The older people in these homes will have been identified as having significant social care needs as this programme aims to target supports at these people that will ultimately improve their living conditions and allow them continued access to health and social care supports within their community.

When following the substantial research done around healthy ageing, most people want to remain in their own home and community as they age but a consistent hurdle to overcome is that their home is simply not suitable when their needs become more pronounced and their financial means or mobility declines.

It is the aim of this initiative to support the avoidance of early or premature admission to long term residential care, enable older people to continue living in their own home or to 'right-size' by moving to a home that better suits their needs; allowing

them to live with a sense of independence and autonomy and to be and feel as a part of their communities.

Abiding by these principles can ensure that a person's living environment can be changed from one of a significant health risk to one of providing a health support, both physically and mentally.

VALUABLE ALTERNATIVE

This programme offers a valuable alternative to individuals who may otherwise transition into long-term residential care prematurely, or even for those who may not need to do so at all. Keeping the care close to home and expanding the range of health and social care services in the community aims to enable everyone to live longer, healthier lives by adhering to the various wraparound services to be implemented.

A National Manager has been appointed to oversee the first phase, while a local co-ordinator has been appointed in each of the nine local authorities (Cork County, Dublin City, Fingal County, Galway County & City, Limerick City & County, Longford County, South Dublin, Tipperary County and Westmeath County) to ensure that it meets its goals and objectives to continue the upward trajectory of the initiative.

Integration of health, housing, community, and social services are paramount in improving the efficiency of services for older people with complex needs, providing them with interactions with many professionals, services and organisations.

The combined effort of these services will aim to support older people to live in their own home with dignity and independence, for as long as possible, which will lead to everyone living longer and healthier lives.

Older people can remain close to the friends and family within their communities where they can continue to actively participate to the best of their ability. Ageing in place options are to be embedded within these communities during phase one, which will strive to expand across the country.

And, in conjunction with the suite of publications found at www.agefriendlyhomes.ie Ireland's ageing population will be prepared for a happier and healthier future.

DOORS OPEN TO STATE-OF-THE ART LIBRARY IN NORTH CLONDALKIN

The Minister of State with responsibility for Community Development and Charities, Joe O'Brien TD, joined the then-Mayor of South Dublin County, Cllr Ed O'Brien, in North Clondalkin in June to open South Dublin County Council's newest library.

This brand-new state-of-the-art library in the heart of the North Clondalkin community was identified as a priority in South Dublin County Libraries' Development Plan.

An expanding youth population and a strong demand for services from local schools and community groups underpin the need for innovative services to be implemented for young people in this locality. The new library will be ideally positioned as a key resource in the North Clondalkin area to promote inclusiveness and help young people to reach their potential.

South Dublin County Council invested €5.2 million towards the overall cost of the library with the Department of Rural and Community Development contributing €1 million from its Library Capital Programme.

North Clondalkin Library includes a lecture hall, an exhibition space, a digital training suite as well as a smaller meeting



Pictured at the official launch of North Clondalkin Library in June were Daniel McLoughlin, Chief Executive of South Dublin County Council, Cllr Ed O'Brien (the then Mayor of South Dublin County), and Joe O'Brien TD, Minister of State with responsibility for Community Development and Charities.

room. Further facilities include easy to use self-service units, extensive seating, a large study area, an internet café, as well as printing and photocopying facilities, adult tablets and free wi-fi available throughout the building.

The children's area has a dedicated storytelling area, junior tablets, a sensory wall for those with additional needs, child friendly shelving and seating, and a wide range of books and DVDs for the little ones.

INNOVATIVE CREATIVE STUDIO

The North Clondalkin Library also includes an innovative Creative Studio. The Creative Studio is a free to use digital maker space facilitating the creation of music recordings, podcasts, videos, digital stories, and oral histories. At the centre of this space is a recording booth providing library patrons with access to a variety of audio and video recording equipment and software.

The idea of introducing The Creative

Studio is to engage with younger people in particular – energise them and upskill them in digital media, with a view to expanding their horizons on future career possibilities.

On opening North Clondalkin Library, Minister Joe O'Brien said: "The public library strategy, 'Our Public Libraries 2022' seeks to establish a modern, progressive library service that connects and supports communities and provides a go-to-place for a range of integrated public services.

"This wonderful facility in Clondalkin certainly delivers on that. It realises the potential of a modern, evolving library service and offers lifelong learning opportunities - supporting literacy, and provides access to a wide range of online resources and modern technology."

North Clondalkin Library is one of two new libraries to open in South Dublin County this year. A library in Castletymon is also expected to open its doors later this year.



North Clondalkin Library is one of two new libraries to open in South Dublin County this year, while a second library in Castletymon is also expected to open its doors later this year.

COUNCIL CHIEFS URGED TO PILOT A FOUR-DAY WORKING WEEK

Fórsa is asking the chief executives of Ireland's local authorities to engage with a new four-day week pilot programme, and the initiative is the latest move in the public service union's campaign for reduced working time without loss of pay for employees or productivity for employers. Report by Grace Heneghan.

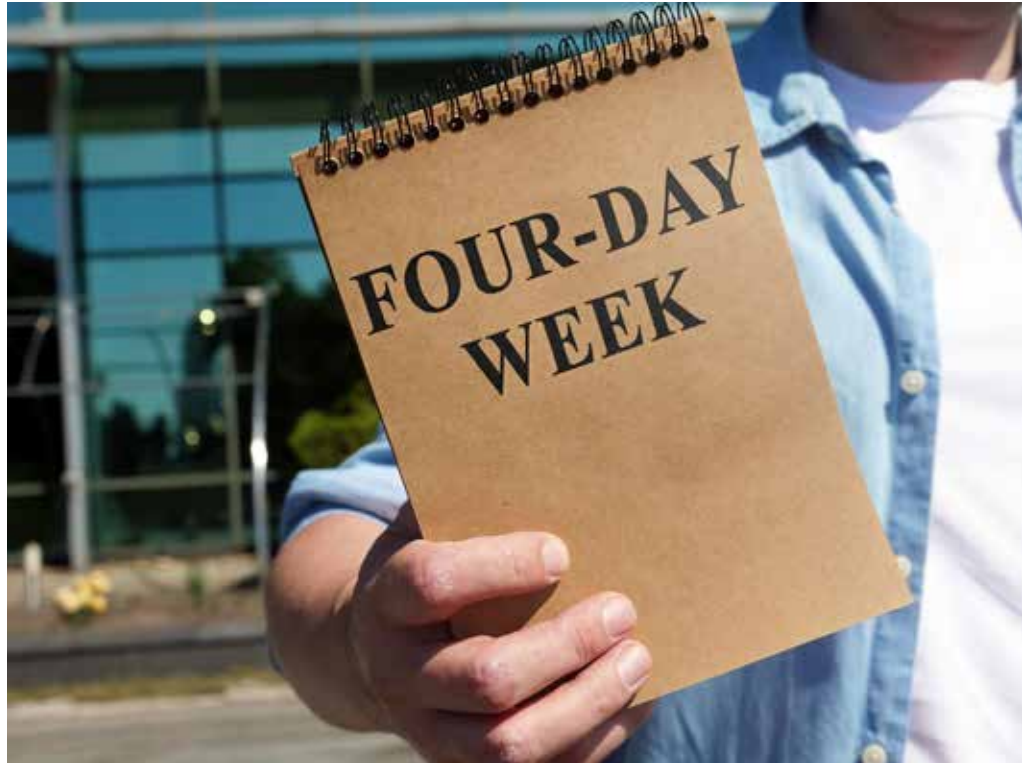
Local authorities are highly suitable for four-day working week trials, according to Peter Nolan, who heads Fórsa's Local Government Division. "Local government has a diverse workforce and produces a range of services that are highly valued by communities. It would be great to have the sector involved in a pilot exercise, which benefits workers while maintaining, or even increasing, productivity," he added.

Fórsa is part of a coalition of employers, unions, environmental and women's campaign groups, which is calling for a gradual, steady, and managed transition to a four-day working week in all sectors of the economy.

And Ireland's largest public service union has had an incredible response from Irish employers to the Four Day Week Ireland pilot programme, which was officially launched in June, according to Fórsa's Campaign Director Joe O'Connor.

"Over 100 companies have contacted us requesting to discuss the pilot in more detail, and more than 50 of those businesses have formally expressed strong interest in participating in the trial," added O'Connor who is also Chair of the 'Four-Day Week Ireland' campaign.

He said the union hopes to involve



Dublin City Council recently became Ireland's first local authority to pass the motion, which would see a four-day working week introduced for council staff.

both public and private sector employers in a national four-day week pilot programme, which is due to be rolled out in Ireland next January on a six-month trial basis.

CITY COUNCILLORS PASS MOTION

Dublin City Council recently became Ireland's first local authority to pass the motion, which would see a four-day working week introduced for council staff. The proposal has also called for the local authority to pilot the reduced timetable for its 6,000 or so employees.

The motion stated: *"This council calls on the Chief Executive to engage with the relevant trade unions for City Council staff with a view to piloting, and introducing, a four-day working week."*

The plan, which was put forward by Labour's Cllr Kevin Donoghue, received unanimous backing from all 63 councillors

at Dublin City Council's monthly meeting in July. "Directly, it would affect a lot of the workers on Dublin City Council, but I have a view that it would affect the entire community," Cllr Donoghue noted, following the meeting.

"For the families of those workers, I'm hopeful that it would go some way towards addressing significant gender imbalances that exist, say in the likes of caring responsibilities. But it also gives people a chance to be more involved in their local community."

He said that the Covid-19 pandemic had illustrated how those changes to working could be successfully introduced, and studies from abroad had shown that a four-day week was feasible. "Companies are talking now about doing things that would have been unimaginable a year ago," he added.

According to the Green Party's Cllr

FOUR-DAY WORKING WEEK



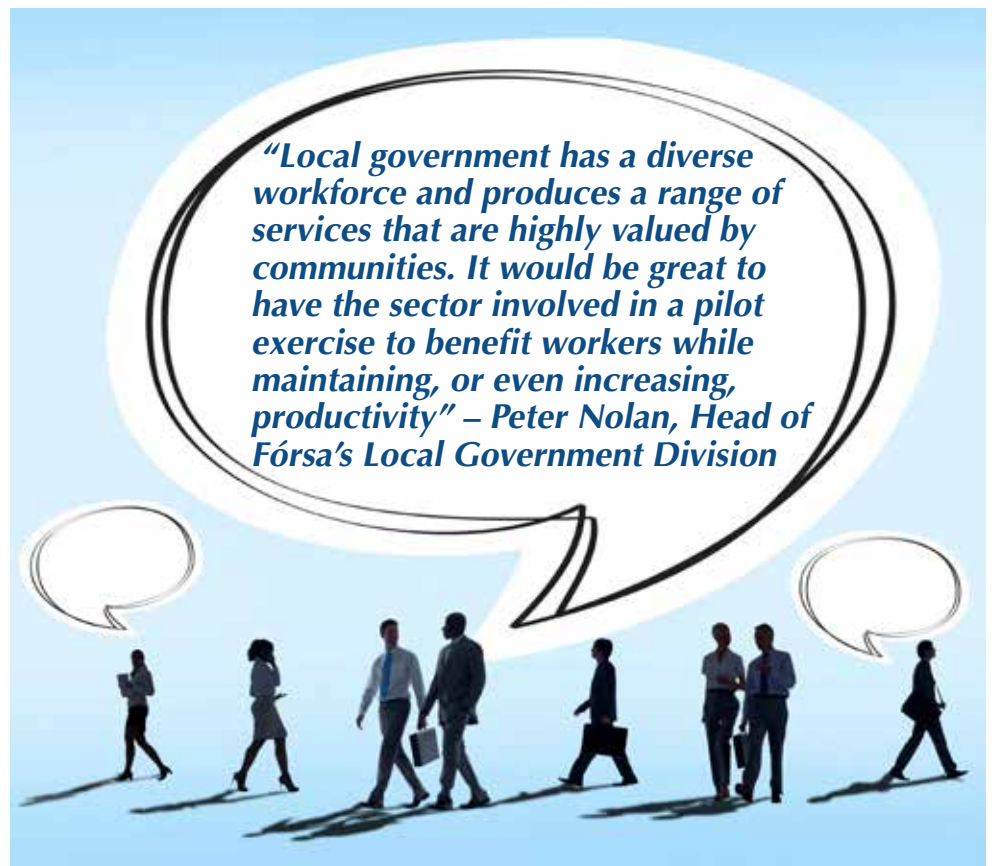
Fórsa is urging its members to back the four-day week campaign, which launched a six-month pilot programme, by signing up to a global petition to encourage employers to trial the concept.

Hazel Chu, reducing the working week to four days would mean better productivity in terms of how physical and mental wellbeing is looked after. The former Lord Mayor of Dublin also pointed out that it will impact climate change and will lower carbon emissions if people are travelling to work on a four-day week basis.

‘4-DAY WEEK GLOBAL’ FOUNDATION

Fórsa’s local government conference in May heard from Andrew Barnes, Chief Executive of New Zealand firm Perpetual Guardian, who said his company had doubled per capita productivity and halved sick leave rates since it adopted a four-day week in 2018.

He said the policy had helped his company maintain productivity and profitability during the Covid lockdown. Following the successful introduction of the four-day week by Perpetual Guardian, Barnes established the ‘4-Day Week Global’



FOUR-DAY WORKING WEEK

Foundation to support businesses and campaigners.

“This is the employment model in the 21st century. Thousands of companies worldwide have followed our lead and experimented with the four-day week. It’s an issue facing workers across the world, regardless of country and culture, because there’s a mismatch between the amount of time we spend working and the amount of time we spend with our families and communities,” he said.

According to Barnes, the Covid experience of a rapid shift to remote working had boosted the case for the four-day week by removing “a barrier of trust” regarding time management and productivity.



Fórsa received an incredible response to the Four Day Week Ireland pilot programme, which was officially launched in June, according to Joe O'Connor, Fórsa's Campaign Director.

POSITIVE PUBLIC OPINION POLL

Last year Fórsa, which represents over 80,000 public service members, published Ireland’s first ever public opinion poll on the concept. Three-quarters of respondents said they supported a government exploration of its introduction, while almost half the number of Irish employers said it would be feasible to trial a four-day week in their own workplace.

Joe O'Connor said the four-day week, with no loss of pay or productivity, offers the potential of a genuinely better future for workers, employers and the environment.

“The strong support for a four-day working week among Irish people is consistent with similar studies internationally. What may once have seemed like a radical concept is now, for many, a reasonable and rational ambition,” he said.

RESEARCH TO ASSESS THE IMPACT

More research into the implications of a four-day working week has been undertaken both in Ireland and abroad over the past few months.

In June, the Government announced it was seeking proposals from the research community on the economic, environmental and social impacts of introducing a four-day working week in Ireland, and launched a six-month trial programme.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, and the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, opened a two-week call for research submissions on 1 July, and up to €150,000 will be made available to support the research.

Organisations participating in the scheme will be eligible to receive supports, training and mentoring on the implementation of a shorter working week, and employees should not experience any loss of pay.

Tánaiste and Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment Leo Varadkar described the concept of achieving the same outcomes and productivity, for the same pay with 20% fewer hours worked as an “ambitious idea”. Noting that while it may work for some sectors, he said it was hard to see how it would work, for example, in health, education and manufacturing.

“However, we need to keep an open mind when it comes to innovations in the world of work. This research will give us a much greater understanding of the potential of this idea and that’s why the Department has agreed to co-sponsor it.”

CONCEPT WORKS ELSEWHERE

Earlier this year the Spanish Government passed legislation to support employers moving to a four-day week, while in Iceland, the world’s largest-ever trial of a four-day working week recently concluded.

Just over 1% of the Icelandic population took part in the study in Reykjavik, which saw their working week reduced to 36 hours, with no reduction in pay. Researchers found the trial to be an “overwhelming success” with workers reporting boosted productivity and wellbeing, while at the same time, feelings of stress and burnout were reduced.

It is understood that trade unions in Iceland have already started to negotiate plans for reduced working hours on a wider scale.

More research into the implications of a four-day working week has been undertaken both in Ireland and abroad over the past few months.



For more information on the six-month pilot programme visit www.fourdayweek.ie or email contact@fourdayweek.ie

TRADE UNIONS CONTINUE CAMPAIGN FOR 'MORE POWER TO YOU'

Fórsa, SIPTU and Connect trade unions, which collectively represent 30,000 local authority workers across Ireland, officially launched the second phase of their local government campaign to continue their call for the implementation of a five-point action plan on local democracy, energy, waste, housing and water.

The 'More Power To You' campaign was launched by the three trade unions in 2019 in a bid to substantially increase revenue and funding powers for local authorities. The campaign also called for legislative changes to facilitate directly elected mayors and restore and expand town councils, which were abolished in 2014.

And now the second phase of the local government campaign to reclaim the role of local authorities, which was launched at a meeting with officials from the three unions on 9 June, seeks to set up a Citizens' Assembly to examine the role of local democracy in Ireland.

This will include lobbying at national level for enhanced local government, briefings with Ireland's local authorities, submissions to local development plans, the development of local frameworks to tackle outsourcing and making the case for specific actions under the five main pillars of the campaign – Local Democracy, Energy, Waste, Housing and Water.

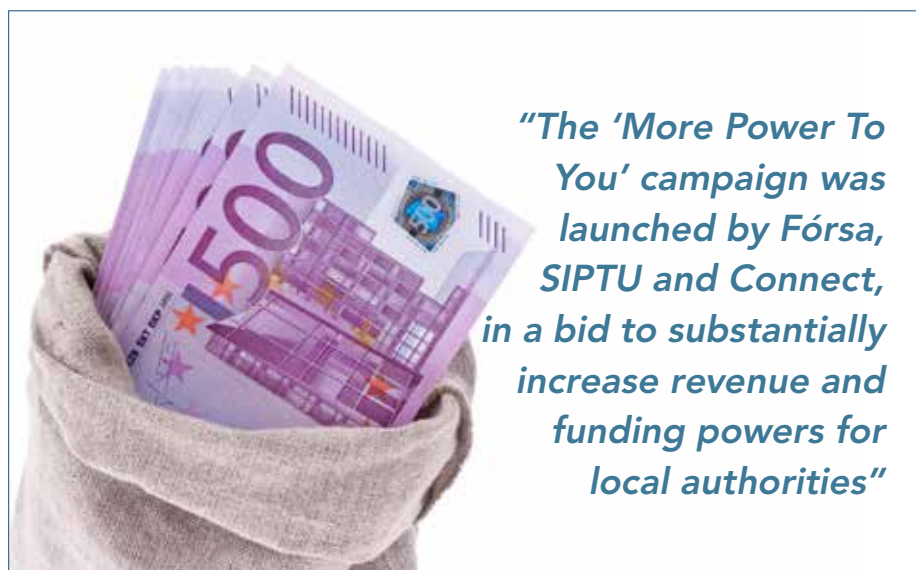
ACTIVE LOCAL AUTHORITY RESPONSE
Fórsa's National Secretary Peter Nolan has said the pandemic had revealed how much the State relied on local authorities to lead the response.

"What we've seen since March 2020 is a strong and active response, with enhanced service delivery from local authorities, limited only by a widely recognised need for greater investment," he added.

"The capacity of local authorities to respond to an expanded role, in crisis



Pictured at the launch of the 'More Power To You' campaign in Dublin in March 2019 (l-r): SIPTU's Adrian Kane, Fórsa's President Ann McGee and National Secretary Peter Nolan, and Connect's Public Sector Official Derek Kelleher.



"The 'More Power To You' campaign was launched by Fórsa, SIPTU and Connect, in a bid to substantially increase revenue and funding powers for local authorities"

conditions, was widely demonstrated. So, now is a good time to look to the future of local democracy and plan a better, more ambitious model that responds to the unique challenges of our times, which is reflected in the five pillars of this campaign,” Nolan noted.

SIPTU’s Public Administration & Community Division Organiser, Adrian Kane, said that local government expenditure only constitutes 8.4% of general expenditure, ranking Ireland lowest in the EU for local government spending. “We see the same low ranking for Irish local government when we look at its autonomy relative to 39 other OECD countries, second only to Moldova.

“This is based on an examination of the size and structure of local authorities and the balance of power between the administrative and elected parts of local government, as well as the range of functions for which local government has responsibility and, crucially, the financial autonomy of Irish local government.”



Local government expenditure only constitutes 8.4% of general expenditure, ranking Ireland lowest in the EU for local government spending, notes SIPTU’s Adrian Kane.

AN OPPORTUNITY TO RE-EVALUATE

“However, this is a time to be ambitious, and to recognise that the biggest challenges we face, including climate change and housing, present a genuine opportunity to re-evaluate the role of local government in solving those problems, and reinvigorating real, participative local democracy,” he said.

Connect’s South-East Regional Secretary, Ger Mooney, pointed out that currently, there are now almost 20% fewer people employed in local authorities than in 2008.

“We need to upskill our workforce, create more direct employment, and reverse the trend over the last four decades where public services are continuously outsourced. That needs to change, and that’s what this campaign seeks to do.

“All across the EU, previously out-sourced services are being brought back in-house because it leads to increased efficiencies and better service quality outcomes for communities,” Mooney said.

For more information visit www.morepowertoyou.irish

FIVE-POINT ACTION PLAN



1. DEMOCRACY

Introduce directly elected mayors and a new town council system. Provide adequate investment and independent funding powers for local authorities.



2. ENERGY

Enable local authorities to lead micro generation and community ownership of renewable energy projects. Establish a primary role for local government in setting carbon reduction targets, plus the promotion and education of the low carbon transition.



3. WASTE

Guarantee all households an affordable waste collection service. Enable local authorities to re-enter bin collection services.



4. HOUSING

Establish a new, local authority led, cost rental public housing model. Increase investment in existing local authority maintenance and retrofitting schemes.



5. WATER

Hold a referendum to enshrine public ownership of water in the Irish constitution. Establish a local authority water customer service to protect the right to water.

EAST BORDER REGION CHARTS CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

An innovative charter for cross-border co-operation in the East Border Region, which was recently launched in Newry, Co. Down, has set out the parameters between the six-member local authorities north and south and outlines the future regional cross-border priorities.

This year the East Border Region (EBR) celebrates 45 years of cross-border local authority led co-operation and is one of the longest established cross-border local authority-led groups in Europe. EBR is currently involved in the implementation of INTERREG VA Projects to the value of €104 million.

EBR Chairman Cllr Kyle Savage noted at the launch of the Charter that it represents “a renewed mandate for EBR to be a principal mechanism for continued cross-border co-operation between the six local authority members”. Cllr Savage also acknowledged the funding from the Reconciliation Fund which enabled the development of the Charter.

The Local Authority Declaration of Commitment as outlined in the Charter.

‘We the member authorities of the East Border Region hereby declare our joint commitment to continue to work together to address the issues arising from the Ireland/Northern Ireland border, in order to protect and improve the prosperity of the citizens of the Region and the public and private services that they can access’.

LOCAL AUTHORITY COMMITMENT

Ireland’s Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence Simon Coveney and Northern Ireland’s Finance Minister Conor Murphy gave keynote addresses at the event in Newry, Co. Down on 23 June.

Minister Murphy stated, “EBR has a 20-year track record in delivering cross-border EU funding and is currently involved in a number of INTERREG projects. EBR has always been an organisation that leads on cross-border co-operation, and it is timely that the EBR Charter reaffirms and refreshes the organisation’s mission in light of Brexit, and the ongoing commitment of the six-member local authorities to cross-



Pictured at the official launch of the East Border Region Charter in the Canal Court Hotel, Newry, on 23 June, were Northern Ireland’s Finance Minister Conor Murphy, Chair of the East Border Region Cllr Kyle Savage, Cathaoirleach of Meath County Council Cllr Sean Drew with Councillors Paddy Meade, Gerry O Connor, Tom Behan and Paul McCabe, and Meath County Council’s Senior Executive Officer Larry Whelan.

border co-operation.”

Minister Coveney said he was very pleased that the Reconciliation Fund has provided support for the development of the EBR Charter.

“EBR has a long and proud history of practical cross-border co-operation for the benefit of the citizens of the region. It has done invaluable work in terms of capacity building between elected members, council officials and key stakeholders. EBR is a first-class example of cross-border regional co-operation, and it needs to be supported and enhanced,” he noted.

Key themes of the Charter include:

- Economic Development and Regeneration
- Tourism
- Biodiversity
- Energy
- Climate Change
- Social Inclusion

EBR Member Local Authorities:

- Newry Mourne and Down District Council
- Ards and North Down Borough Council
- Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
- Louth County Council
- Monaghan County Council
- Meath County Council

Outlining of the proposed implementation of the EBR Charter along these six thematic lines, Pamela Arthurs, Chief Executive of the East Border Region, described the €1 billion PEACE PLUS Programme as “an exciting opportunity to implement practical cross border co-operation projects”. For further information contact Pamela Arthurs, pamela@eastborderregion.com

NO TIME TO WASTE ON TRAINING ELECTRICAL REPAIR TECHNICIANS

Ireland is set to train a new generation of electrical repair technicians under a unique Circular Economy Skills Initiative course, as part of an industry-wide drive to prevent thousands of tonnes of electrical appliances from going to waste every year.

The new 'Circular Economy Skills Initiative' course aims to produce enough experts to ensure that thousands of white goods (washing machines, fridges and dishwashers) are given a new lease of life in homes and businesses across the country. The initiative has been fast-tracked to combat a major shortage of electrical repair experts throughout the country.

WEEE Ireland, the White Goods Association and technical training agency FIT (Fast Track to IT) have joined forces to create the innovative curriculum and career pathway. The free training course will be run with the support of Louth Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB) in a state-of-the-art centre in Dunshaughlin, Co Meath.

Up to 20 trainees will complete the initial pilot 26-week programme, followed by 12 weeks' guaranteed work placement with white goods industry supporters of the programme. "This new course is a fantastic solution to some of the circular economy challenges faced by WEEE Ireland members," according

to Leo Donovan, CEO of WEEE Ireland.

ELECTRICAL REPAIR CULTURE

"It helps address a skill that is vital to ensuring we can keep householders' electrical goods in circulation for longer. However, we must go further in encouraging circular activity by including the repair and reuse of electrical products in the EU takeback target, and not solely end-of-life recycling targets."

"The key aim of this full-time course is to address the growing need for the maintenance, repair and recycling of white goods," said Elizabeth O'Reilly, Head of Membership and Circular Economy Lead at WEEE Ireland.

"In order to create a truly circular economy where products are kept in use for longer, we need skilled technicians. The longer we can extend the life of appliances and keep resources in circulation, the more we can reduce waste.

"WEEE Ireland and our key partners, supported by the



Declan McElwaine from Electrical Appliance Services in Donegal (centre front) with the key partners who support an industry-wide drive to combat a major shortage of electrical repair experts. Pictured (l-r): David McCormack, Director of Sustainable Manufacturing at IMR & Circul@ire Innovation Fund; Peter Davitt, CEO of FIT; Patrick Meehan, Area Business Manager at BSH Home Appliances; Declan Collins, Service Manager at Beko Ireland; Declan Dunne, Technical & Training Manager at Fisher Paykel; Michael Coogan, Customer Service Manager at Glen Dimplex; Thomas Lee, Head of Aftersales at Electrolux Group; Ian Collins, Commercial Director at Beko Ireland, and Chairperson of the White Goods Association; Phoebe Schofield, Brand Activation Manager at Miele; Paul Slattery, Area Service Manager at Whirlpool; Beryl Gilmore, CESI Project Lead at WEEE Ireland, and Leo Donovan, CEO at WEEE Ireland.

ELECTRICAL REPAIR TRAINING

Circul@ire Innovation Fund, is kickstarting a change in the electrical repair culture in Ireland with this white good producer-led training programme, designed to free the skills bottleneck that has arisen here,” she added.

GUARANTEED WORK EXPERIENCE

In 2020, WEEE Ireland recycled over 470,000 white goods appliances – but no Irish training programme for the next generation of repair technicians has been available for a decade.

When Declan McElwaine (35) took the only previous course of this type in Ireland in 2007, the Donegal man was one of the few classmates who managed to stay in the industry. He always had an interest in how things work, and now runs his own successful appliance repair company.

“Back then there was only one course, in Shannon, and a lot of people couldn’t get work experience, which was the key to getting the qualification,” said Declan. “It’s great that this new course comes with a guaranteed work experience in the sector,



Up to 20 trainees will complete the initial pilot 26-week programme, followed by 12 weeks’ work placement with white goods industry supporters of the programme.



“The ‘Circular Economy Skills Initiative’ course aims to produce enough experts to ensure that thousands of white goods (washing machines, fridges and dishwashers) are given a new lease of life in homes and businesses across the country.”

which will launch trainees on what I have found to be a rewarding and much in-demand career.”

The value of repair and reuse is proven in research by European home appliance association APPLiA, which found that 91% of requests to manufacturers for product fixes in 2018, resulted in an actual repair, keeping these appliances in use for much longer.

GROWING NEED FOR EXPERTISE

And the technical training agency FIT (Fast Track to IT) is committed to rolling out further programmes in response to the emerging Circular Economy skills needs, in collaboration with the Education and Training Boards and the industry in Ireland to address the growing need for such expertise.

Last year, WEEE Ireland also partnered with the White Goods Association to promote the repair of electrical appliances on RepairMyStuff.ie. This site connects consumers with over 800 professionals in Ireland who are able to repair everything from watches to washing machines and as well as toys, textiles, furniture and more.

The Circular Economy Skills Initiative course is free of charge and applications can be made at: <https://fit.ie/circular-economy-skills-initiative/>.

€10M FUNDING TO SUPPORT REGIONAL ENTERPRISE PROJECTS

The Government has granted €9.5 million in funding to improve both the capability and competitiveness of regional enterprises in the wake of COVID-19 and Brexit, coupled with €500,000 feasibility study funding to support early-stage regional enterprise development projects.

The €10 million in government funding, which has been available under the Regional Enterprise Transition Scheme, was recently announced by Ministers of State with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Damien English TD and Robert Troy TD.

Through Enterprise Ireland, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment will provide grant funding under the scheme to regional and community-based projects focused on helping enterprises to adapt due to COVID-19 and Brexit. The funding will also aid projects supporting digitalisation and assisting in the transition to a green economy.

Minister of State for Business, Employment and Retail, Damien English TD said that the strategic funds will support projects with regional impact to increase internationalisation opportunities and create sustainable job opportunities right across the country.

“Crucially, the Transition Scheme will help build COVID-19 and Brexit resilience and enable applicants to support enterprises and SMEs to respond to recent economic and market challenges which also includes the transition to a low carbon economy, digital transformation and smart specialisation.

“As well as supporting the expansion of existing projects, the scheme includes a new €500k Feasibility Fund of up to €50,000 per project being made available by Enterprise Ireland to advance very early-stage projects.”

NINE NEW REGIONAL PLANS

Minister of State for Trade Promotion, Digital and Company Regulation, Robert Troy TD said: “The €10m funding scheme will help stimulate transformational regional projects to support enterprises embrace the opportunities of digitalisation, the green economy as well as navigate the changed landscape due to COVID-19.”

The Tánaiste, Ministers English and Troy are currently overseeing

the development of nine new Regional Enterprise Plans to 2024. Minister Troy said the scheme will help unlock regional potential identified in these plans from “the bottom-up and through continued collaboration between public and private sectors, will have an impact in all regions”.

The government is targeting the €9.5 million at existing regional and community-based projects previously supported under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund and Border Enterprise Development Fund.

Grants of up to €1.8m or 80 per cent of the project cost are available. The projects should aim to address COVID-19 impacts and improve the capability and competitiveness of regional enterprises and encourage entrepreneurial activity, innovation and productivity.

Applications for the Regional Enterprise Transition Scheme closed on 8 September and the successful projects will be announced in October, with funding provided to the successful applicants before the end of the year.

The €500,000 Feasibility Fund is open to new projects, with grants available of up to €50,000 or 50 per cent of project cost. It will allow promoters to test their project concept and deliver virtual or site-based solutions to their target audience. The closing date for applications closes on 1 October.

Leo Clancy, CEO of Enterprise Ireland, said that the scheme will help to create and sustain jobs in the regions impacted by COVID-19. “Following a rigorous evaluation process, the previous calls for both the Regional and Border Enterprise Development Funds provided funding totalling €117 million, which funded 68 regional projects and 11 border projects. We look forward to working with the regional stakeholders on innovative proposals to provide additional support to these projects at a regional level.”



Damien English, Minister of State for Business, Employment and Retail.



Robert Troy, Minister of State for Trade Promotion, Digital and Company Regulation.



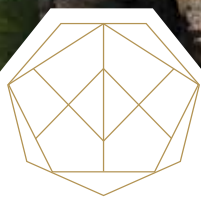
Leo Clancy, CEO of Enterprise Ireland.



For further details: www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/funding-supports/regional-enterprise-transition-scheme/



SKELLIG MICHAEL, CO. KERRY IRELAND.

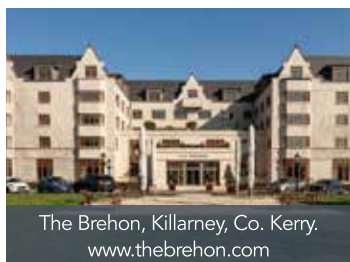


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Kingspan's Commitment to Sustainability



Kingspan's products sold in 2020, will make a significant positive contribution to the environment over their lifetime.

164m
tonnes

164 million tonnes of CO₂e will be saved over the life of our insulation systems sold in 2020



15
years

Enough to power a major airline for 15 years¹

34bn
litres

Over 34 billion litres of rainwater will be harvested by our tanks produced in 2020²

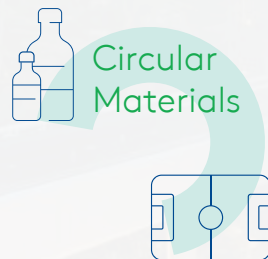


400m

Enough water to fill over 400 million baths

573m

In 2020 alone, we upcycled 573 million waste plastic bottles

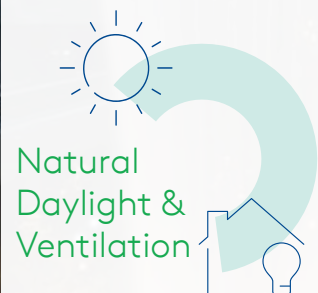


800

Enough bottles to fill over 800 football pitches

9bn
lumens

The capacity to create 9 billion lumens of natural light annually through our daylighting systems



1m

Enough to light up 1 million homes³



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1. Assumes 60 year product life; based on an EU airline disclosure of 10.5m tonnes of CO₂e emissions in 2019
2. Assumes a 20 year product life
3. Assumes 10 x 60W bulbs per home

Image
Jewel Changi Airport | Singapore