LOCAL AUTHORITY TIMES

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#INTHIS TOGETHER

**Responding to Covid-19
Re-starting local economies**

Inside: Innovation during lockdown highlighted by #YourCouncilDay

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#INTHIS TOGETHER

Responding to Covid-19 Re-starting local economies
Laura Shannon

This is the second edition of Local Authority Times to be published during the Covid-19 pandemic. The first, published online in early April, reflected the innovative and speedy work of local authorities to establish supports for the community. It was also focused on the general election, and what it may mean for local government.

Now, in July, we reflect on how things have changed. The pandemic has had a huge impact with over 25,000 confirmed cases and over 1,700 lives lost. People's lives have changed forever. We also, finally, have a new Government.

#YourCouncilDay on July 1st (see page16) highlighted just some of the innovative work of local authorities to respond to the pandemic, and keep communities connected. A significant number of initiatives were carried out by local authorities to meet the challenges presented by Covid-19, with 216 specific actions returned by local authorities in a recent survey by the LGMA. Articles on pages 2,8,20, and 30 provide an in-depth look at some of

these examples from the establishment of 'Community Call' helplines and social inclusions responses, to cultural and transport initiatives.
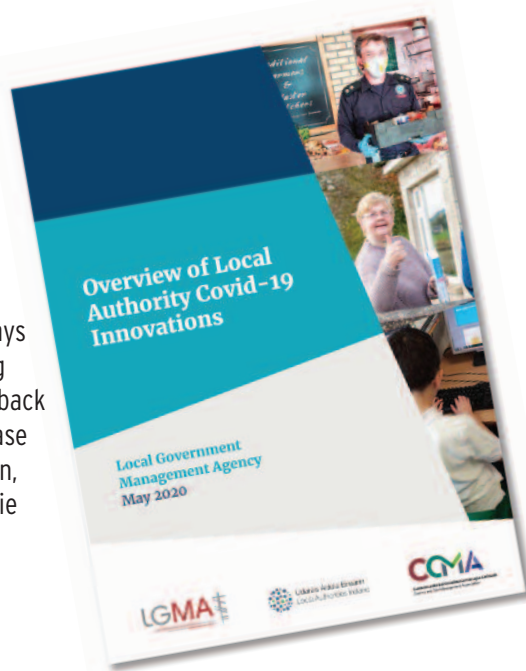
While this work continues, local authorities are working with a host of stakeholders at the local level to focus efforts on restarting local economies and the tourism industry. Some of this work is featured throughout this edition.

Also in this edition, Dr. Brendán Ó'Caoimh writes about how local authorities are working with migrant communities to enhance integration from the bottom-up; while Patrick Malone of UCD's Geary Institute and Publicpolicy.ie presents a useful overview of trends in social housing in the last few years and decades. Many thanks to all our contributors in this edition.

The months (and years) ahead will be challenging for local government. Alongside the challenges presented by Covid-19, local authorities are still grappling with the major challenges such as the housing and home-lessness crisis, and climate change. The new Government has promised to ramp up social and affordable housing delivery, delivered through local authorities, Approved Housing Bodies and state agencies as much as possible.

The new programme for government, 'Our Shared Future', also recognises the need for reform across all levels of public institutions, 'from the town hall to the corridors of government' to ensure a fit-for-purpose system. A commitment has also been made to 'making local government stronger, more accountable, and more responsive to the communities it serves.' Adding that people should 'have a role in shaping the economic and social development of their own area, with participation in local government actively encouraged and facilitated'. Alongside the promised implementation of the Moorhead review, change is undoubtedly on the way for the local government system.

Local Authority Times continues to provide a platform for news, information, analysis and opinion pieces from those working in or closely with the sector, and elected members. We are always interested in receiving submissions and feedback from our readers. Please contact Laura Shannon, Editor at latimes@ipa.ie

The new programme for government, 'Our Shared Future', also recognises the need for reform across all levels of public institutions, 'from the town hall to the corridors of government' to ensure a fit-for-purpose system.

Overview of Local Authority Covid-19 Innovations

Local Government Management Agency May 2020

ANSWERING THE 'COMMUNITY CALL':

The establishment of community support initiatives during Covid-19

Laura Shannon, Institute of Public Administration

This article is based on a case study produced by the Institute of Public Administration (IPA). It forms part of a research study into local government innovation in response to Covid-19 being undertaken by the IPA. Further research is being carried out by the IPA during 2020 to establish lessons learned and implications for future policy and practice.

The IPA and the Local Government Management Association (LGMA) have worked collaboratively to develop these case studies, building on an innovation survey conducted by the LGMA in April. [1]

On March 27th 2020 strict public health measures were announced in response to the outbreak of Covid-19 in Ireland. This effectively resulted in a lockdown of our country; everyone was urged to stay at home and to exercise within 2km from their home, only essential business remained open and public transport was restricted to facilitate these essential workers. Those who are particularly vulnerable to Covid-19 were asked to 'shield' or 'cocoon'. This means they were asked to stay at home as much as possible and avoid face-to-face contact.

Over the course of the following weekend, following guidance from the Government, local authorities successfully put in place support structures for the community, particularly for those most vulnerable who had been asked to cocoon; Community support forums and helplines were established by all local authorities, and are collectively referred to as the 'Community Call' initiative.

This case study draws on examples provided by local authorities in a survey carried out by the LGMA in April 2020.

Interviews with key stakeholders and document analysis supplemented this information and allowed for an initial analysis of lessons learned. Further research and review of the Community Call initiative is merited.

The issue – establishing supports for vulnerable members of the community

All 31 local authorities were asked, over the course of a week-end, to establish community support helplines and forums to lead the coordination of Covid-19 community supports and resilience within their local areas. National guidance and templates were provided to local authorities to ensure vulnerable members of the community were appropriately supported as the country faced the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Some of the most vulnerable members of our community are older people, people with underlying health issues and those living in poverty.

The solutions – localised approach with national guidance

Each local authority in Ireland successfully established a community response forum and a community support helpline. A national dashboard collates all the statistics and information from all local authorities (see Table 1) demonstrating the services that continue to be provided. The following section outlines some of the challenges faced during the establishment and implementation of the support structures, and the solutions achieved.

Coordination and collaboration – establishing the 'Community Call Forum'

Community call forums were established in each local authority, following guidance from national government. Each forum was chaired by the Chief Executive of the local authority, with membership including:

- Relevant local authority staff (e.g. Directors of Service, senior staff from community departments, Chief Officer of the Local Community Development Committee, GIS officers etc.).
- Community Champions.[2]
- Representatives of local and regional organisations, and state agencies (such as the Health Service Executive (HSE), An Post, Community Welfare Service, An Garda Síochána, Tusla, Local Volunteer Centre, Local Development Companies, Red Cross, Civil Defence, GAA, Irish Farmers Association (IFA), Public Participation Network, Age Friendly Network, Local Link, Citizen's Information, Alone, Migrant Forum, religious organisations).

The purpose of the Forum, as specified in the framework document, is to lead the co-ordination of Covid-19 community supports and resilience, including:

- Working with the HSE, An Post, local community groups and the local Community Welfare Office service to identify

TABLE 1: COMMUNITY CALL STATISTICS BETWEEN 31ST MARCH 2020 AND JULY 1ST 2020	
Calls Received	**Forum Meetings**
51,116	**414**
Category of calls	*Number received*
Collection and Delivery Calls	11,280
Social Isolation Calls	10,392
Meals Service Calls	4,032
Other Health Service Calls	2,745
Follow-up calls	19,830
Other Requests Calls	21,096

Source: Government of Ireland, 2020, https://community-call-covid-19-geohive.hub.arcgis.com

vulnerable groups and individuals in each local authority area;
- Ensuring delivery of targeted social care supports and assistance to those vulnerable groups and individuals;
- Identifying issues arising through Older Persons Councils, PPNs [Public Participation Networks], community groups and helpline calls;
- Providing assistance to vulnerable individuals in isolation;
- Ensuring the resilience of existing community services;
- Harnessing offers of assistance from enterprises/ businesses generally; and,
- Collecting and mapping information on services and voluntary groups across the Country to help direct requests for assistance and identify gaps in service.

Survey responses and follow-up interviews with key local authority staff highlight that the forum worked effectively to capture the breadth of information and knowledge required, and to enable coordination across such a diverse range of stakeholders. Kerry County Council, for example, noted that their early work on establishing a response forum, building on existing structures such as the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC), Joint Policing Committee (JPC) and the Public Participation Network (PPN), proved crucial to their response.

[1] A overview report of local authority Covid-19 innovations, based on this survey, has been produced by the LGMA and can be accessed at: https://www.lgma.ie/en/publications/local-authority-sector-reports/overview-of-local-authority-covid-19-innovations.pdf
[2] See https://www.wheel.ie/covid-19-community-outreach for further information

Some local authorities reported adding to the forum membership as the work progressed based on local knowledge and volunteer capacity available on the ground. For example, in Monaghan a representative from a local family resource centre, Teach na nDaoine, who had set up a food hub, was added to the forum. Another local authority interviewed reported a gap in service provision where food hubs were not in place in the local area, and where food poverty was identified as a particular issue.

Establishing the support structures – the role of ICT

As mentioned, each local authority successfully established a range of support structures within a few days. Each organisation had to assess its existing information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure, and either adapt or implement new solutions. Some local authorities effectively started from scratch, others had been planning for the introduction of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems and some had to adapt their existing systems. Regardless of the baseline, innovation was required to establish the bespoke solutions needed. As a result, the systems implemented varied, but all local authorities successfully established helplines, with CRM systems in place to track and respond to calls and to provide updates to a central database (see Table 1).

Geographical Information Systems (GIS) were central to the response, for example using Ordnance Survey Ireland's GeoHive infrastructures (https://geohive.ie/). Monaghan County

Council explained how crucial these systems were in aiding the response, and how their GIS officer, together with Cavan County Council, collaborated to anticipate the challenges and develop bespoke solutions. One example provided was the ability to map community volunteer organisations e.g. Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) clubs to see where there may be gaps in the volunteer network on the ground.

Governance and staffing

Aside from ICT, which was deemed a crucial element of the response, local authority staff members demonstrated their agile and cooperative nature by temporarily adapting their working practices and hours to meet the exceptional circumstances required. Staffing solutions were quickly put in place to enable helplines to be open from 8am to 8pm, seven days a week and to ensure the health and safety of all involved.

In terms of internal governance, the survey of local authorities showed that 48 per cent of governance solutions relied on existing formal governance structures (e.g. senior management teams) while 38 per cent involved the establishment of new or ad hoc structures such as working groups or teams to deal with particular challenges (LGMA, 2020). In Wicklow, for example, an Information Systems Emergency Response Working Group was formed on 28th of March and tasked with identifying the role of IT in the creation of their call centre.

Lessons learned
Local government as a leader

Local government has proved its capacity to act as a leader and coordinator in the face of a crisis. The Community Call Response Forums, led by local authorities, facilitated coordination and collaboration between a diverse range of
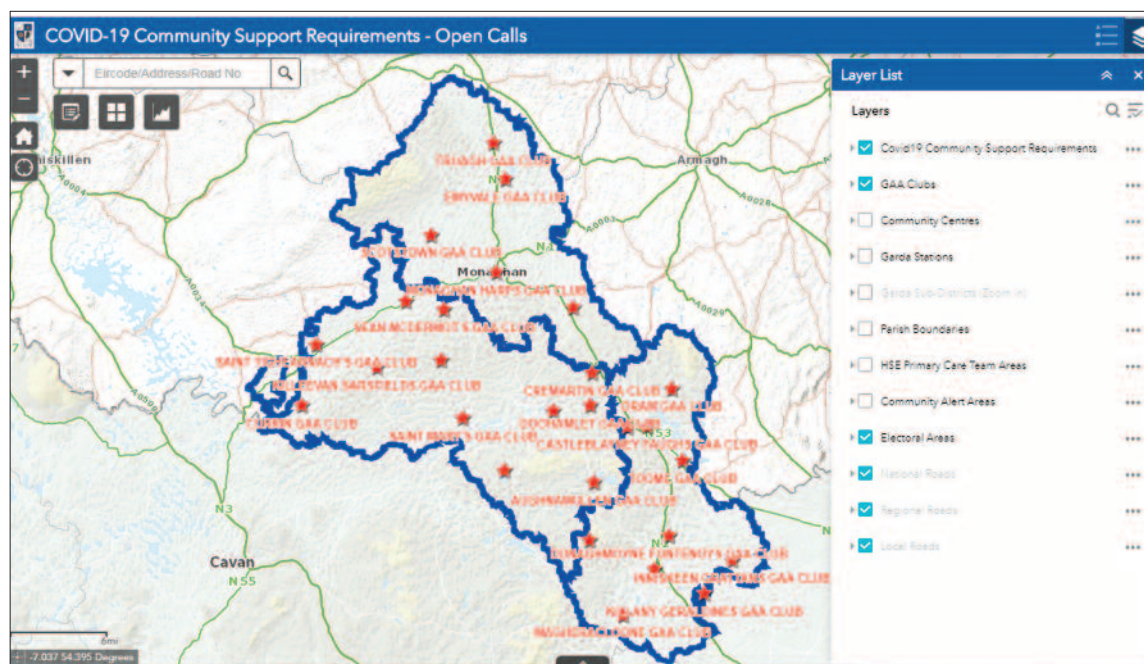
Monaghan County Council's GIS interface, showing GAA clubs in each municipal district area.

Volunteers from Teach na nDaoine FRC deliver food parcels to residents at St Patrick's Direct Provision Centre in Monaghan town.

stakeholders, who were required to work together to respond to the crisis. Interviewees commented on the importance of existing relationships and structures, such as LCDCs, JPCs and PPNs, in addition to bringing on board other organisations with local expertise and knowledge, or volunteer capacity. As one interviewee noted, this experience can be built upon to enhance community partnerships and engagement in the local area, particularly in anticipation of future crises e.g. climate-related events such as flooding.

The establishment of the community response forum and its impact in responding to the pandemic merits further research and review. This should be carried out within the context of existing participatory networks and decision-making structures within local authorities.

Capacity of local authorities to adapt and respond

In the face of a crisis, local authorities showed their capacity to adapt and rise to the challenge. Staff were willing to temporarily adjust and provide support where needed across the organisation. ICT teams worked tirelessly to ensure that adequate systems and support were in place, initially within a very short time-frame. While this level of response is not sustainable in the long-term, it demonstrates immense potential for what local authorities can achieve.

While ICT capabilities have proved crucial, so too has the capacity of local authority staff involved in all aspects of the

response. Interviewees commented on their learnings from this experience, which were diverse, but many focused on the need to build on what has been achieved, with the proper resources and funding in place.

Concluding remarks

Local government answered the Community Call in the face of Covid-19. They could not have done this without the support of the all of the stakeholders involved – the volunteers, community organisations, state agencies, health providers and countless others. This case study has looked at how local authorities responded to the challenge of providing supports to vulnerable people in the midst of a pandemic. This preliminary research has found that there was an extremely high level of support and cooperation, from within and from outside the councils. Further research is required to adequately capture the invaluable lessons that have been learned, and to document the outstanding response to this crisis.
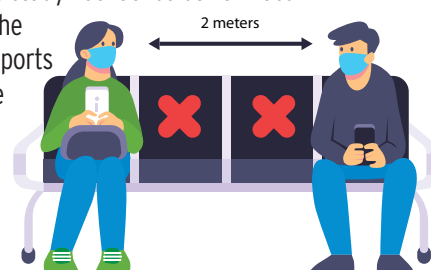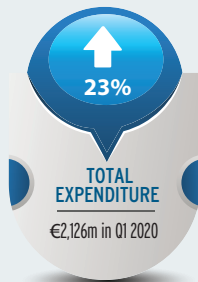

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Local Government Management Agency. (2020). Overview of Local Authority Covid-19 Innovations. Retrieved from: https://www.lgma.ie/en/publications/local-authority-sector-reports/overview-of-local-authority-covid-19-innovations.pdf

LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN NUMBERS

Quarterly Statistical Monitor, June 2020

9% ↑
TOTAL REVENUE
€1,796m in Q1 2020

23% ↑
TOTAL EXPENDITURE
€2,126m in Q1 2020

32% ↓
LOCAL PROPERTY TAX
€184m (collected Q1 2020)

Up 8.8% on same quarter
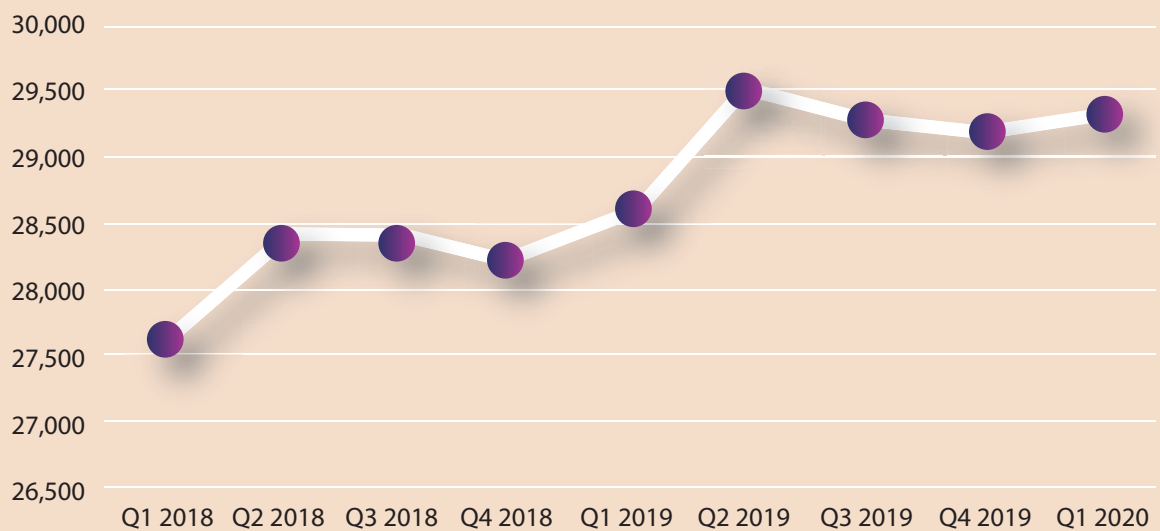the previous year
Source: Department of Finance

Up 23.4% on same period the
previous year.
Source: Department of Finance

Down 31.9% on the same
quarter last year
Source: Revenue

Total number of local authority staff

Number of staff in Q1 2020 was **29,403**. This is a slight drop since Q2 2019, when staff numbers reached the highest peak since 2011. However, they still remain much lower than 2008 levels.
Source: Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Housing & Homelessness

17% ↑
New dwelling completions
4,986 in Q1 2020
Up 17.2% on Q1 2019

Source: Central Statistics Office

2% ↑
Homelessness
9,907 people homeless at end of Q1
(March) 2020. Up 1.8% on the
previous quarter (December).
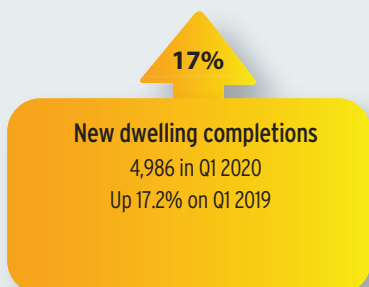
Source: Department of Housing, Planning &
Local Government

97% ↑
Planning Permissions
14,789 planning permissions were granted
for all housing types (including apartments)
in Q1 2020. This represents a 97.4%
increase on Q1 the previous year.
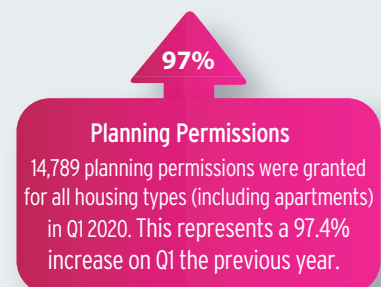
Source: Central Statistics Office

€13 million funding for 24 rural regeneration projects

The funding will support the development of regeneration projects in rural Ireland to enable them for delivery

Minister Ring announces €13 million in funding for 24 projects across the country under the €1 billion Rural Regeneration and Development Fund. The announcement (Thursday 26th June) relates to Category 2 of the Fund which provides seed capital funding for strategic, large-scale projects which will assist in delivering town and village regeneration and contribute to economic development and recovery. The funding provided will allow for further development of the projects to take place enabling projects to reach a stage where they are developed to a high standard and the project is in a position to commence works. This will also provide a ready-made pipeline of projects which can be progressed in the future with the support of the Fund or other funding streams. The applications for funding were subjected to a comprehensive assessment process by the Department, with oversight provided by an independent Project Advisory Board, made up of representatives drawn from key Government Departments along with external independent experts.

Among the successful projects announced are:

- The Re-use and Development of Derelict and Vacant Properties Project, led by Limerick City and County Council - an innovative proposal seeking to bring derelict properties back into use, with an emphasis on the housing, in the core of towns and villages in rural Limerick.
- Portumna Vision 2030, led by Galway County Council, that will further prepare plans to develop the town of Portumna and its natural and built heritage into a key hub for Ireland's Hidden Heartlands.
- The Banagher Regeneration Project, led by Offaly County Council, which will further develop a project seeking to regenerate the town centre and the marina to enhance the town's potential as an attractive and sustainable place to live, work and visit.
- The Kingscourt Regeneration Project, led by Cavan County Council, which will further prepare plans for the transformation of the centre of the town through redeveloping derelict sites.

The full list of recipients can found on the Department's website at: https://assets.gov.ie/77829/5cf27c97-8701-47e6-aea4-5cad9a97dff8.pdf

he marina in Banagher, which will benefit from the funding announced. Source: banagher.ie

THE REGIONAL IMPACT OF COVID-19

The counties, towns and sectors most economically at risk

New economic analysis by the three regional assemblies, alongside surveys and research from Chambers Ireland, details the counties, towns, cities, and sectors in Ireland most economically at risk as a result of Covid-19.

H aving been considered one of the fastest growing economies in the European Union in recent years, the Irish economic landscape has profoundly changed due to the outbreak of Covid-19.

The Department of Finance announced in April that the Irish economy is now projected to decline by 10.5 per cent this year, unemployment is expected to rise to 22 per cent by the second quarter of 2020, while the public finances are expected to record a deficit of around €23 billion. While it is clear that the Covid-19 outbreak will have a significant impact on Ireland's economy, the degree to which this impact will be felt across Ireland's regions, counties, cities and towns remains to be seen.

On this basis, the three Regional Assemblies have prepared a 'Covid-19 Regional Economic Analysis' to identify which geographical areas in Ireland are more likely to be exposed to economic disruption caused by the necessary measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

The degree of exposure varies regionally and sub-regionally. The clear purpose of the report is to inform policymakers at a local, regional and national level to the extent of economic exposure and resilience across Ireland.

Using the GeoDirectory commercial database, and specifically the NACE codes allocated to commercial units as of September 2019, the three Regional Assemblies of Ireland have identified each geographical area's reliance on the sectors that are likely to be severely affected by the public health measures needed to curtail the spread of COVID-19.

Figures 1 and 2 show the counties and towns most at risk economically from Covid-19.

The counties most likely to be exposed to economic disruption are coastal and rural counties due to their reliance on commercial units that generally require human interaction and cannot be operated remotely. This trend continues for towns, with Bundoran (Co. Donegal), Strandhill (Co.Sligo) and

Courtown Harbour-Riverchapel-Ardamine (Co. Wexford), and Dingle and Kenmare (Co. Kerry) making up the top 5 at-risk towns.

With the economy reopening, Chambers Ireland survey shows that regional differentials risk being exacerbated

Chambers Ireland has conducted a series of surveys, on the sectoral and regional impact of Covid-19. The latest results, from June 10th, took a read of the business environment in Phase 1 of our economy's re-opening following the covid-19 restrictions.

The headline findings are:
- Business activity levels are extremely low, for those businesses that have returned to operation under Phase 1
- Businesses that have opened are typically experiencing less than half of their usual levels of business activity for this time of year
- The median expected revenue over the next three months (relative to what they would have expected to be earning in a typical year) has risen from -60% to -50% over the next three months, so most businesses expect their earnings over the coming three months to be half the normal amount.
- 25% of businesses expect to have earnings that are -70% of their usual level
- The impact of revenue decline is being felt more strongly in the regions, notably in the West, Border counties and the South East
- Smaller operators have seen revenue reduced most significantly, again compounding regional effects for areas which do not have large employers
- Invoice arrears are increasing with the value of unpaid invoices (relative to 2019) significantly up across all sectors.
- Almost two thirds of microenterprises and small businesses have experienced both an increase in the value owed to them and an increase in the proportion of debt that is owed to them that is now in excess of 90-days past due.

These findings supplement earlier research highlighting the particular risk to tourism, hospitality, entertainment, and local services. Regionally, the counties along the Atlantic Economic Corridor are feeling the impact of the Covid-19 economic fallout more keenly than in other regions.

The Regional Assemblies' economic report can be accessed in full online at: https://www.nwra.ie/news/coronavirus-the-towns-most-economically-at-risk/

Chambers Ireland has conducted numerous surveys to assess the business impacts of Covid-19. Find out more on their website at www.chambers.ie
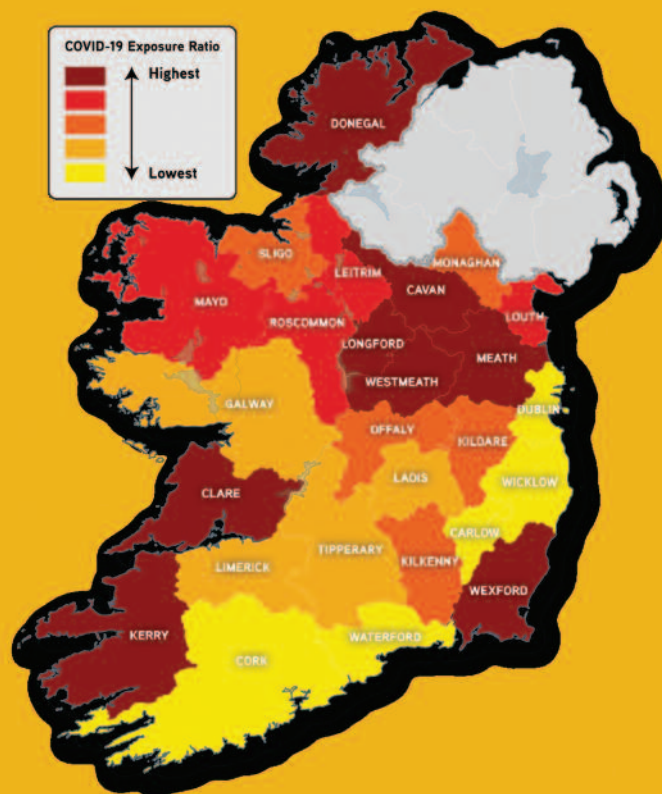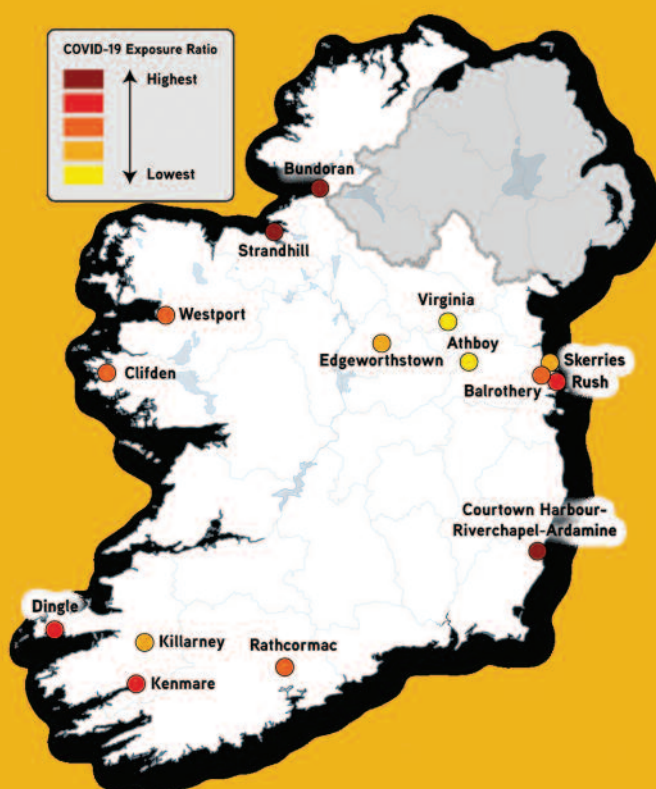
Figure 1. County Exposure

Figure 2. Top 15 Town Exposure

BLUEPRINT
FOR THE FUTURE:

Migrant integration in Carlow and Waterford

Dr Breandán Ó Caoimh

Dr Breandán Ó Caoimh is a human geographer, who works, as an independent consultant, in the fields of local and community development, governance, spatial planning and social inclusion.

Over the past year, several local authorities have been busy developing migrant integration strategies. These strategies respond to *The Migrant Integration Strategy – A Blueprint for the Future*, which the Department of Justice and Equality issued in 2017. This national strategy identified a number of ways in which local government could further integration in Irish society; it recommended the establishment of representative support networks, and it called on local authorities to work with other service providers, statutory and non-statutory, the business community and civil society to promote positive outcomes for migrants. As well as giving effect to national policy objectives with respect to integration, local authorities, local development

companies and other stakeholders are responding to, and are part of, a bottom-up approach to ensuring that Irish society and communities are welcoming, inclusive and inter-cultural. Among the local authority areas to have recently completed their migrant integration strategies are Carlow County Council and Waterford City & County Council. Both strategies are strongly evidence-based, and are characterised by high levels of stakeholder engagement.

Migrant Integration Fora
In line with the national migrant integration strategy, Carlow and Waterford local authorities established Migrant Integration Fora, and these representative platforms provided conduits

through which members of migrant communities were informed about the integration strategies and enabled to input into their formulation. In both Carlow and Waterford, the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) convened dedicated working groups to oversee the formulation of the integration strategies and to progress their implementation over the coming years. These collaborative structures include representatives of migrant communities, the Community Forum, service providers and NGOs. They also include the respective local development companies (LDCs), Carlow County Development Partnership and Waterford Area Partnership. The local development sector has considerable experience in working with migrant communities, and their expertise, insights and approaches ensured that community development principles were reflected in the strategies' processes and outputs.

Evidence base

The Carlow and Waterford integration strategies include demographic and socio-economic profiles of migrant communities. These demonstrate that, on average, migrants are younger than the population as a whole, and stakeholders noted that their social insurance and tax contributions to the Irish Exchequer are essential for the financing of many public services. As employees, migrants are more likely, than are Irish people, to work in agri-processing (meat and mushroom enterprises), the hospitality sector and in caring/medical professions. The socio-economic profiles drilled down into local geographies, and they identified the neighbourhoods with the greatest concentrations of migrants. These were generally, but not exclusively, the urban cores of Tullow, Carlow Town and Waterford City. While migrants have certainly brought life and vitality back into the centres of many Irish towns, there is a risk that ghettoisation may occur. Thus, local authorities and others are challenged to ensure more mixed neighbourhoods.

Engagement with migrants

The evidence-base underpinning the integration strategies in Carlow and Waterford includes extensive consultations with migrants themselves. In both cases combined, almost six-hundred migrants responded to a survey questionnaire that enabled them to document their experiences of life in Ireland and to proffer recommendations for inclusion in the integration strategies. This was available in seven languages. Several focus groups took place throughout Carlow and Waterford, and there were two public meetings in Waterford – one in the city and one in Dungarvan. The consultations with migrants reveal that they are generally happy in Ireland. Among the aspects of Irish life and the services with which they are most satisfied are the following: schools; libraries; An Garda Síochána; social welfare; and shopping/retail. They are least satisfied with public transport, employment and health

> **The local development sector has considerable experience in working with migrant communities, and their expertise, insights and approaches ensured that community development principles were reflected in the strategies' processes and outputs.**

services. The word they use most frequently to describe Ireland is 'friendly'. The survey findings reveal that a sizeable minority of migrants have experienced racism and/or discrimination in Ireland. Persons from Africa and Asia were more likely, than other migrants (e.g., those from Eastern Europe), to have experienced racist name-calling, suspicion, hostility, being overlooked and discrimination in both housing and employment. Thus, the findings indicate that colourism is a barrier to integration, and there is need for work – including training and awareness raising – with frontline staff.

Democratic representation

The consultations with migrants also revealed that they are under-represented in community and voluntary groups/civil society. Only a minority of migrants (46% in Carlow and 40% in Waterford) reported that they are registered to vote. Of these, only one-third (31% in Carlow and 33% in Waterford) stated that they have ever voted in Ireland. In both counties, migrant men were more likely than migrant women to be registered to vote or to be a member of a community group. Thus, these findings, among others, point to the need for specific supports for, and empowerment of, women and families.

Role of service providers and non-governmental organisation (NGOs)

The promotion of integration confers particular responsibilities on so-called host communities (the receiving society). Therefore, the processes to inform the Carlow and Waterford integration strategies involved extensive consultations – mainly interviews and focus groups – with service providers and NGOs. These pointed to the importance of ensuring migrants are provided with opportunities to learn English. Frontline service providers also demonstrated a willingness to participate in inter-cultural training, so that they would be more responsive to the diverse needs of migrant communities. NGOs and service personnel also noted the challenges

Cllr Andrea Dalton, Mayor of Carlow MD, with young citizens from diverse backgrounds, and Dr Breandán Ó Caoimh

associated with promoting respect for, and celebration of, cultural diversity, while ensuring respect for EU/Irish laws and cultural norms in respect of women's and children's rights.

Perception of 'social distance'

The consultations with the host community also incorporated an extensive survey questionnaire to measure what social scientists term 'social distance'. Social distance refers to the degree to which we are willing to accept 'others' to our familial, social, professional and societal contexts.[1] Over five hundred responses were received. In Carlow, the Partnership Company undertook considerable promotion of the survey, while in Waterford, transition year students were among those who engaged directly with the survey, and completed it in school. The survey results reveal that the host community (predominantly Irish people) perceives little social distance from (i.e., are more tolerant and inclusive of) other West Europeans. Among the nationalities/ethnicities towards whom Irish people expressed the greatest social distance are Roma, Romanians, Pakistanis, persons from Sub-Saharan Africa and Irish Travellers. Although the remits of the integration strategies do not relate specifically to Travellers, many of the issues and the recommendations are transferable to their

experiences and the need to enhance their integration and standing in Irish society. Above all, the findings in respect of social distance, in both Carlow and Waterford, indicate that hierarchies exist; not all migrants are perceived in the same ways, and some are more vulnerable than are others to racism, prejudice and intolerance. Thus, a one-size-fits-all approach will not work, and bespoke and differentiated approaches are needed – while ensuring that no cohort feels singled out.

Cross-cutting themes

The large volume of data garnered from the desk-based mapping and spatial analysis and the extensive consultations with migrants and with host communities generated several pointers that have been incorporated into the respective integration strategies in Carlow and Waterford. Among the cross-cutting themes and common approaches are: greater promotion of opportunities to learn English; inter-cultural training for frontline staff; inter-cultural celebrations, based on food and music; working specifically with second-generation migrants and children; outreach to, and empowerment of, women; greater workplace advocacy; citizenship education; capacity building of representative fora/groups and greater integration of migrants into existing civil society organisations. In both contexts, the integration strategies are building on extensive goodwill, considerable expertise and positive approaches on the parts of many community and sporting organisations, and community-based approaches will be integral to the success of both strategies. Both Carlow and Waterford have taken all the action areas in the national integration strategy, and have operationalised them in a bespoke manner – based on local needs and priorities.

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[1] The survey questionnaire used the Bogardus Scale of Social Distance. Respondents were asked to indicate their closest level of social distance to each nationality / ethnicity on the following scale: I would be willing: to marry or accept as a member of my immediate family (kinship); to have as my close personal friend (friendship); to have as my neighbour (neighbourhood); to have as a colleague at work (co-worker); to have as a citizen or my country (citizenship); or I would deport or bar these people from my country (expel).

Minister of State (with special responsibility for Integration), David Stanton TD and Cllr Declan Doocey (then) Mayor of Waterford and members of the Waterford Migrant Integration Forum, including Chairperson, Obianuju Ekedizie

Local variations

While there are overarching commonalities, there are notable differences in terms of approach, in line with local conditions, baselines and potential. Stakeholders in Carlow unanimously decided to add the word 'intercultural' to the title of their integration strategy, and their strategic approach reflects principles of interculturalism. Carlow's strategy also pays particular attention to migrant communities in rural areas, especially those working in agriculture and food processing, as they tend to have low levels of social engagement and have living standards that are evidently below those of the host community. Carlow has also formulated the *Carlow Intercultural Charter* – a statement of principles, which all agencies, organisations, schools and workplaces are invited to embrace and promote. The *Carlow Intercultural Charter* sets out clear commitments with respect to: celebrating diversity; valuing and respecting all and combatting racism; information

and access to services; community and political life; education; and employment and pathways to work. The *Carlow Integration and Intercultural Strategy 2020-2024* was formally launched on January 28, 2020, by John Paul Phelan TD, then Minister of State for Local Government and Electoral Reform. Prior to its launch, the strategy had been unanimously endorsed by the membership of County Carlow LCDC, the Board of Carlow County Development Partnership and the elected members of Carlow County Council.

The *Waterford Migrant Integration Strategy 2020-2023* has been endorsed by the membership of Waterford City and County LCDC, and had been due to come before the full council meeting in March 2020. While the current public health guidelines in respect of Covid-19 have delayed the formal endorsement and launch in Waterford, the work of integration continues at local level.

The formulation of the integration strategies in Carlow and Waterford demonstrates the merits of local-level collaboration and partnership. Both local authorities played key roles in coordinating the formulation of the strategies, and they will continue to work in partnership with other local stakeholders to ensure that national policy objectives are effectively delivered, and indeed exceeded, locally.

Dr Breandán Ó Caoimh acted as the independent facilitator, who worked with stakeholders to compile the integration strategies. Margaret Ward co-facilitated the process in Waterford.

> **Above all, the findings in respect of social distance, in both Carlow and Waterford, indicate that hierarchies exist; not all migrants are perceived in the same ways, and some are more vulnerable than are others to racism, prejudice and intolerance.**

Municipal Districts: A Review

The Institute of Public Administration research team have published a report on the operation of municipal districts in local government. This report is mentioned in the section on local government in the Programme for Government – Our Shared Future, which indicates that the findings will inform a review of how best to strengthen local democracy.

Amongst the local government reforms introduced in 2014 was the establishment of 95 municipal districts that operate at sub-county level. The number of municipal districts increased to 100 following the local elections in 2019. Municipal districts operate in all counties except Dublin, Cork and Galway city councils, and Dún Laoghaire Rathdown, Fingal, and South Dublin county councils.

Despite being in existence for several years now, little has been written about the operation and role of municipal districts. The IPA study examines how municipal districts are operating in practice, looks at their strengths and limitations as an element of local government, and highlights opportunities and challenges for the operation of municipal districts in the future.

The general consensus amongst those interviewed for the study is that municipal districts are a welcome development and are becoming an important part of the planning and delivery of services at the local level. A number of challenges and issues are identified which, if addressed, would contribute to greater efficiency and effectiveness in the operation of municipal districts.

Over the longer-term, and especially if more powers and functions are devolved to the municipal level, municipal districts have the potential to be a significant driver of co-ordinated town, village and rural development, and enhanced community engagement. The extent to which that potential is fulfilled depends on the willingness of all involved to develop a clear vision of local governance below the level of the county.

The report can be downloaded from the IPA website at: https://www.ipa.ie/_fileUpload/Documents/MunicipalReport_June 2020.pdf

Local authorities central to restarting our economies and promoting tourism

Local authorities are central to local economic development and tourism development. In May, a €250 million 'Re-Start' grant was launched by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, to give direct grant aid to micro and small businesses to help them with the costs associated with reopening and reemploying workers following COVID-19 closures.

The Grant will be available to businesses with a turnover of less than €5 million and employing 50 people or less, which were closed or impacted by at least a 25% reduction in turnover out to 30 June 2020. It is a contribution towards the cost of reopening or keeping a business operational and re-connecting with employees and customers.

The grants will be equivalent to the rates bill of the business in 2019, with a minimum payment of €2,000 and a maximum payment of €10,000.

Grants are administered by local authorities. Fingal County Council reported on July 10th that payments to business in Fingal has already reached €5m, with 982 business approved for the grant.

Pictured left to right are AnnMarie Farrelly, Chief Eexecutive of Fingal County Council, Alan Purcell The Cottage Cafe, Swords, Emer O'Gorman, Director of Economic, Enterprise and Tourism Development at Fingal County Council, Cllr Tony Murphy, and Deputy Mayor of Fingal, Cllr. Robert O'Donoghue

Safe Destination Programme launched in Kerry

The Safe Destination Kerry Programme, a collaboration between Kerry County Council, Kerry Education and Training Board, the Kerry Branch of the Irish Hotels Federation, and the Kerry Tourism Industry Federation is an initiative to show both visitors and locals Kerry is a Safe Destination with a shared commitment to safety.

The 'Safe Destination' Badge which will be displayed in premises where staff have undergone specialised training on cleanliness, hygiene and customer interaction in the COVID-19 environment.

Up to 3,000 staff in the tourism and retails industries in the county are participating in this training which has been devised and is being provided by the Kerry Education and Training Board. The aim is to ensure that Kerry tourism and retail staff are trained in infection prevention, hygiene and cleanliness to the highest international standards as they reopen for business.

Activating County Towns in Cork

Project "ACT" is being run across Cork County Council's eight Municipal Districts with the support of Elected Members. The Project will see the creation of multi-sectoral teams with a targeted focus on rebuilding the economy and community life in each area. Project ACT is a series of measures by Cork County Council designed to give confidence to the business, retail and community sectors through prioritised and targeted funding.

Some of the immediate actions being taken include:
·   A deep clean of the main retail and pedestrian areas
·   Decluttering and fixing street furniture
·   Replanting of trees and flowerbeds
·   Additional road/pavement markings
·   Measures to improve public space utilisation for pedestrians and business

Project ACT Town meetings are taking, involving Elected Members, council staff, business and community representatives,

Pictured at the launch of 'Rediscover Cork County' map are Tim Lucey, Chief Executive and Ian Doyle, Mayor of Cork County

members of An Garda Siochána, and representatives from the Cork County Older Persons Council.

An interactive 'Rediscover Cork County' map has been created which provides a wide range of information on attractions and activities to avail of across the county. (https://www.corkcoco.ie/en/rediscover-cork-county).

New Limerick Tourism Taskforce launched

A new Limerick Tourism Taskforce has been established to provide a co-ordinated response to the current challenges faced by the tourism industry as well as longer term planning for enhancing tourism development in Limerick.

The taskforce comprises of the tourism industry representative groups of Limerick City Wild Atlantic Way Gateway Group, Ballyhoura Fáilte and West Limerick Tourism, as well as Limerick City and County Council, Fáilte Ireland and the local development companies Ballyhoura Development and West Limerick Resources.

It will act as a single unified voice for the tourism industry in Limerick, monitor, review and assist in the implementation of existing tourism strategies adopted by the taskforce members

and develop and promote collaboration between local stake-holders across the tourism sector including the cross-selling of products.

The new taskforce will further develop and enhance collaboration with tourism stakeholders to promote Limerick as a destination to both domestic and international tourism ensuring that all the key agencies are represented and working together to positively promote Limerick as a destination and supporting the sector.

The establishment of the Tourism Taskforce, which will be led by the tourism industry, will also assist with implementing of short to medium term priorities as the tourism sector aims to minimise the impact from the ongoing global pandemic.

The Limerick Tourism Taskforce will be co-chaired by Denise Brazil from The Bedford Townhouse and Cafe on Bedford Row, Limerick and John Fitzgerald from The Kennedy Rooms in Bruff.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES STEP UP TO THE PLATE

The innovative work carried out by local authorities during the Covid-19 crisis was highlighted on Wednesday July 1st, as part of #YourCouncilDay.

#YourCouncilDay is now an annual event to showcase what is happening on the day in councils. This year particular attention was given to the innovation shown by local authorities in supporting communities through the recent lockdown – a small snippet of which is demonstrated in these pictures.

'The current crisis has highlighted the true nature of public service in communities across the country,' said Michael Walsh – Chair of the City and County Managers Association (CCMA). 'The unique circumstances of Covid-19 prompted councils to innovate in how they provided both day-to-day services and additional supports to the public.'

Survey of local authorities demonstrates the scale and scope of innovation required

A significant number of initiatives were carried out by local authorities to meet the challenges presented by Covid-19, with 216 specific actions returned by local authorities in a recent survey by the LGMA. Case studies featured here provide an in-depth look at some of these examples from the establishment of 'Community Call' helplines and social inclusions responses, to cultural and transport initiatives.

In 38% of the survey responses, structures did not previously exist and were specifically set up to deliver Covid-19 services on a short-term basis. 13% of these solutions involved direct community / delivery services to the public and businesses such as Community Call Centres, library deliveries, dog walking, heritage initiatives, provision of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) to the HSE and use of 3D printers to produce PPE.

For example, an agreement was reached between LGMA Libraries Development, the Irish Publishers Association and the Irish Writers Union to waive any copyright infringement liability for libraries during the COVID-19 lockdown period, enabling story times to take place online.

Local authority Civil Defence units took on a range of tasks during Covid-19 including transporting patients, delivering medication and other items, delivery of PPE and delivery of food and other essential supplies as part of the Community Call.

Dublin City Council community officer Brian Mongey with musician Martin Rooney and local residents during one of the entertainment sessions at Brendan Behan Court in Dublin.

Dublin City Council social and community development officer Madeleine Ebbs came up with a unique radio show – Cocoontunes – that proved to be a lifeline for older people self-isolating during Covid-19 restrictions.

Case Study
Clare

Clare's swift reaction to the demands of lockdown saw the Library Service introduce several initiatives including a contact and collect service, a cocooning book delivery service and more than 40 online story-time, drawing and craft workshops for children.

The library also offered its 75-piece toy and sensory collection to parents of children with complex needs, and distributed 500 wellbeing packs to those that are cocooning. A writing competition for children and teenagers was launched on 4th May and more than 100 entries were submitted under the theme 'County Clare 2020: A Day in My Life'.

The competition was offered as an alternative creative activity for children and teenagers by the Clare Library Service after the schools were closed on 15th March.

The winning and highly commended stories were selected by award-winning children's writer Patricia Forde.

Pictured with details of the winners of the 'County Clare 2020: A Day in My Life' Clare County Library creative writing competition are (l-r): Patricia Fitzgerald, Executive Librarian, Helen Walsh, County Librarian, Cultural Services, and Cora Gunter, Senior Executive Librarian.

Fingal

Fingal's response to the crisis included ensuring its youngest and oldest citizens had something creative to keep their minds busy while schools and community centres were closed.

In conjunction with Fingal's Housing Department, Fingal Libraries staff prepared gift packs for children in the Traveller community.

Each pack contained colourful storybooks, colouring sheets, puzzle sheets, colouring pencils, pens, pencils and notebooks.

Targeted at the under 10s, the aim of the packs was to encourage reading and a love of books and to ensure they had access to learning activities while libraries and schools were closed.

The packs got a great response, with around 400 delivered around the county.

The COVID-19 Fingal Community Response Project also came up with a book for older people who were cocooning during the pandemic.

'Cocooning – a collection of activities for those self-isolating' was developed through a collaboration between Fingal County Council, Age Friendly Fingal, Castleknock Community Centre Laurel Lodge, Blakestown Community Centre, Corduff Resource Centre and Huntstown Community Centre.

The book was a collection of interesting facts, short stories, poetry, recipes, songs, gardening tips, puzzles, activities and information on support services for those cocooning.

Mayor of Fingal Cllr David Healy said: "The Covid-19 situation has seen Fingal come together in maintaining, providing and adapting services so that our communities have stayed safe and united.

"#YourCouncilDay is an opportunity to showcase the ways in which local authorities help our communities thrive, and Fingal is a great example of that."

Paul Smith from Huntstown browses through 'Cocooning – a collection of activities for those self-isolating'.

Longford

Longford's swift reaction to the demands of lockdown saw the Council's IT Department rapidly set up remote working for all employees so that all critical and essential services could continue throughout COVID -19. The Council's focus over the last number of months was to ensure that employees, Elected Members and citizens were supported and kept up to date with national, sectoral and local guidance and decisions in a timely manner.

Virtual meetings, including Council and Municipal District meetings, were held. Longford Municipal District was the first in the Country to organise such a meeting through a digital platform. Websites and social media provided the most up to date information. Another first for Longford County Council was the introduction of Employee Briefings over Microsoft Teams, where all employees were updated, at the same time, on the Council's response to COVID-19.

Paddy Mahon, Chief Executive said, "Underpinned by responsive leadership, the Council partnered with other principal response agencies and through the Community Call supported and strengthened communities resilience to the COVID-19 emergency."

Paddy said "All local authorities established Community Support Programmes to co-ordinate a multi-agency response to deliver services while Covid-19 restrictions are in force. Councils moved to support those faced with isolation, activating befriending services with regular phone calls and organising book deliveries to combat loneliness. Vital services moved online bringing a range of virtual supports into people's homes such as inclusive exercise classes for all ages and adapted exercises for older people in self-isolation. We have seen live-streamed storytelling, hosted a virtual Bealtaine Tea Dance and organised a very successful Cruinniú na nÓg supporting community spirits through dark days."

Library Assistant Sadhbh Corkery (left) and Deirdre Murphy, Assistant Librarian, having fun with some of the library's musical instruments that are being loaned out to library members. Picture: Brian Lougheed.

Case Study
Cork

Cork County Council's Covid 19 Community Support Programme was established to provide assistance to vulnerable members of the community with their daily needs during the pandemic. Alongside the continuation of essential services, the Council developed several innovative solutions to ensure those cocooning or self-isolating remained supported and connected.

In addition to providing a book delivery service during the crisis, Cork County Council's Library Service came up with an upbeat scheme for those who wished to make the most of their time at home by improving their musical abilities. Musical instrument loans were added to its housebound home delivery service under 'A Sound Initiative' and instruments including violins, keyboards, guitars, banjos and even ukuleles were delivered safely to front doors across Cork County.

Mayor of the County of Cork, Cllr. Mary Linehan Foley praised the

initiative, saying that learning to play a musical instrument has so many proven benefits. "It stimulates the brain, improving your memory and it relieves stress. It has even been shown to lower heart rate and blood pressure, so it's good for your health and it is fun too. It is great to see Cork County Council's Library Service offering such vital services to the community at their time of need. The current crisis has highlighted the true nature of public service in communities across the county."

Cork County Council Chief Executive, Tim Lucey, praised staff and said outstanding work had been carried out in adapting the service "Our Library Service worked quickly to identify a safe system to deliver books and musical instruments to our more vulnerable citizens. Our libraries also played an integral role in Cork County Council's Community Support Programme, acting as community hubs for the provision of supports to those who contacted our Community Call Helpline. The unique circumstances of Covid-19 prompted Cork County Council to develop creative solutions to address the complex problems posed by the new realities of lockdown, adopting innovative ways of delivering both day to day services and additional supports for those who needed them most."

Cavan County Librarian Emma Clancy delivers some very welcome reading material to library member Mary Donohoe. Photo: Adrian Donohoe

Transport mobility during Covid-19:

A case study of national and international responses

Seán Keane

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Covid-19 restrictions over the past few months have brought unprecedented changes to the way in which people work, socialise, interact and travel – both in Ireland and beyond. Transport systems have been massively impacted worldwide with everyone but essential workers required to stay at home. This has led to a significant decrease in the number of people travelling daily. In order to limit the spread of the virus, cities and companies have been forced to adopt remote working policies to keep employees at home. Post-Covid-19, these changes have the potential to 'build a new normal' in cities, reducing the vulnerability of economic, social and environmental systems. However, they might also improve people's lives and stimulate innovation: 'from extensive use of digital innovations, to decentralised production, remanufacturing and restructuring of supply chains to respond to goods shortages' (OECD, 2020).

Background: Preparing public transport for life during Covid-19

Transport mobility is, and will, be integral to the restoration of economic activity and a return to normalcy but the pandemic has provided city planners with an opportunity to reflect and rethink their approaches. New York has seen 100 miles of street opened up for socially responsible recreation, Paris intends to roll out 50km of emergency 'Corona cycle ways' along with a ₊50 incentive to repair old bikes, 50,000 square metres and a four-mile walkway have been liberated in Athens for cyclists and pedestrians alike while municipalities in Flanders can avail of a subsidy to cover up to 50% of the cost for new road markings, traffic signs, road furniture and installation costs (The Guardian; Ville de Paris; Le Monde, Polis Network, 2020).

Despite their geographic diversity, cities across the planet face the same dilemma: how can public transport adapt and respond to these new challenges posed by the threat of Covid-19? Delphine Grandsart of the European Passenger Federation notes that hygiene and social distancing on public transport is vital, although the low capacity at which it is functioning would harm economic recovery and the sustainability of public transport. Some degree of social distancing needs to be combined with the use of face masks, the optimisation of passenger flows (when boarding or queuing), occupancy information and passenger counting (Polis, 2020). How does this play out in the Irish context?

The issue: Public transport during the Covid-19 lockdown

According to the joint Dublin City Council-National Transport Authority (NTA) mobility framework, Dublin city saw a drop of 30% of pre-Covid-19 levels in car traffic in Dublin, 90% in bus usage and 97% in rail. Similar mobility initiatives have been launched by councils across Ireland such as Galway City Council's 'City Mobility Team (CMT) and 'Guiding Limerick through Covid-19'. Cork City Council have launched public consultation initiatives that intend to consider short and medium-term 'practical mobility interventions'. These frameworks are very much 'live' and 'dynamic', so they will depend

on consultation from all stakeholders regarding the re-allocation of roads and other public spaces in order to adhere to social distancing practices associated with Covid-19 restrictions. Dublin intends to see how 'a more pedestrian, cycling and public transport friendly centre can be set out' while Galway is focusing on 'key radical approaches into the city centre' (Galway City Council, 2020). Cork has already seen the pedestrianisation of the historic Marina riverside amenity and of Oliver Plunkett, Tucket and Pembroke streets (Cork City Council).

The commonality evident in the councils' goals is that they wish to support safe access; to provide sufficient movement capacity for changed travel patterns; while supporting the economic recovery of the cities and their surrounding regions. These aims have been translated into transport-specific objectives which include the following: improving pedestrian safety through the provision of additional space for movement and enhanced pedestrian areas enabling more people to cycle by providing safer cycling facilities; providing additional space at bus stops in order to further facilitate social distancing; accommodating certain levels of car use which should be calibrated with other transport needs, including additional parking provision on the periphery of city cores; and reassigning or alternative designating of bus routes to enable the roll-out of cycling and walking measures while still maintaining a strong public transport network.

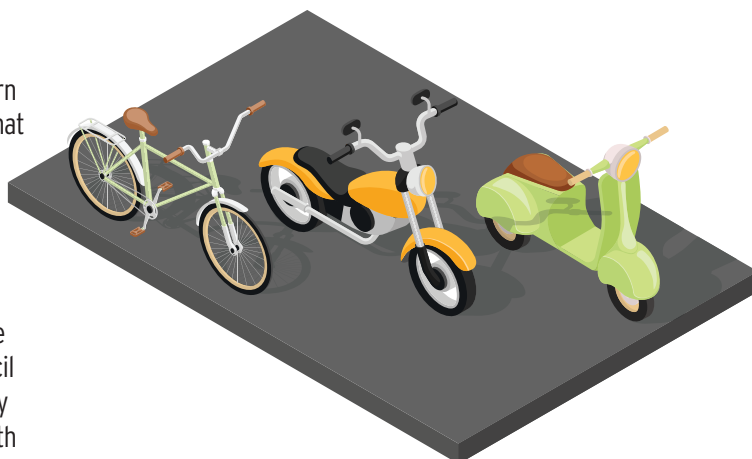### Decisions: In praise of public consultation

Dublin City Council's response to the city's urgent needs with the introduction of temporary measures shall be reviewed periodically to assess their effectiveness, and can be modified as needed in response to changing needs and requirements. Galway City Council ran a consultation period between 18 May and 12 June, during which time they received over 1,000 submissions. Limerick City and County Council followed suit from 29 May until 12 June as did Cork City from 29 May until 24 June. Public consultations invite the public to provide suggestions and feedback on transport-related issues in their areas which will inform the decisions of elected members of the council and other relevant stakeholders. 'This is a defining time in our history', says Cork City Council Assistant Chief Executive, Brian Geaney, 'with so much uncertainty we must try and do what's best and sustainable for the future and turn this challenge into an opportunity. In doing so, it is critical that we listen carefully to all stakeholders across the city and consult all communities and sectors. We are all in this together and I sincerely hope that citizens will participate in the upcoming consultation' (Cork City Council, 2020).

The reduction of speed limits is an example of some of these transport-focused objectives, as seen with Dublin City Council whose plan to introduce a 30km/h speed limit across the city and in suburbs, on most arterial routes', both north and south
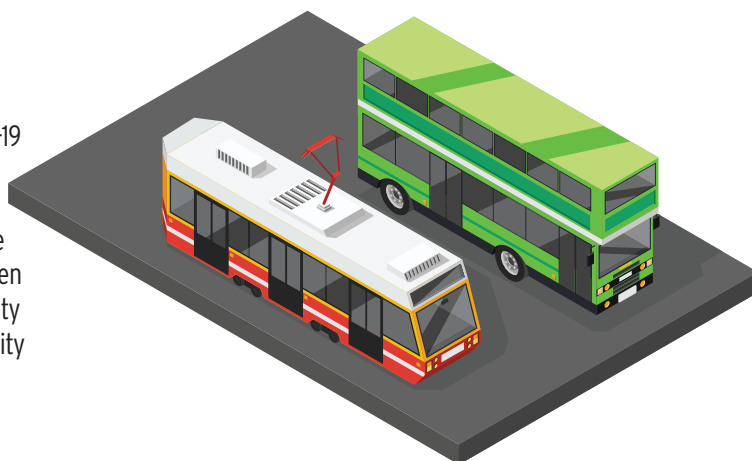
of the Liffey where previous speeds of 50km/h and 80km/h were allowed. Despite the temporary arrangement of Covid-19 measures, such as the removal of car traffic from College Green, should these bye-laws be passed by councillors, they would remain in place until otherwise rescinded at a later date. These proposals have been met with strong support even prior to Covid-19, when almost 900 submissions to the council last year wished for the speed reduction to be extended to all residential areas, 700 of which supported lower limits (The Irish Times, 2020).

In order to reconcile social distancing measures and public transport capacity (which was at 20% in early June), the CEO of the NTA, Anne Graham urged the general public to 'ease any potential pressure on services', by strongly recommending people not to travel on public transport at peak times, to travel to their destinations on foot or by bike. 'Some 350,000 people live within six kilometres of O'Connell Bridge, which means that if they choose to cycle, they could get from their home to the centre of Dublin in less than 30 minutes. With fewer cars and trucks on our roads, cycling and walking has become much safer, and Dublin City Council, working with NTA, is making the city centre more attractive for those opting for these active travel modes' (Dublin City Council, 2020). Additional cycling infrastructure was introduced in College Green, in early June; these included the extension of pavements to accommodate pedestrians, clearer road markings for

through signage and temporary bollards (Galway Daily, 2020). 'Time is of the essence', according to Galway City Council's Chief Executive, Brendan McGrath, given the speed at which the economy is reopening. He adds that the CMT have processed over 1,000 submissions which has led to the widening of footpaths on Eglington and Forster streets, the latter has also been reduced to a single lane for buses and general traffic (Connacht Tribune, 2020). The online portal through which submissions have been made can be viewed on an interactive map to see whether people's ideas have been submitted or not.

Lessons Learned: Bridging inclusivity and resistance

Limerick's 'controversial' mobility plan initially proposed to ban cars from Catherine Street, Denmark Street and from other thoroughfares into O'Connell Street, introduce temporary speed limits and abolish charges for traders who wish to place seating on the streets. Family traders and hospitality business owners have criticised this blueprint due to concern regarding the loss of parking spots. The council have since significantly altered their plans despite more than 450 submissions in favour of pedestrianisation. David O' Brien, chief executive of Limerick Civic Trust said he hoped these changes to the strategy will be made by the community with a

cyclists and 'reusing existing road space by removing on-street parking and protecting that road space for cycling via protection bollards and other cyclist measures' (Dublin City Council and the National Transport Authority).

Similarly, Galway's CMT have enacted temporary measures to completely pedestrianise Cross Street 'with access controlled

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'bottom-up rather than a top-down approach'. He further comments on support provided to cultural and heritage organisations throughout the city and county whose long-lasting sustainable and authentic activities, he stresses the importance of 'engaging the citizen and visitor alike while providing creative impact and a lasting legacy' (Limerick Leader, 2020). This demonstrates the importance of establishing clear terms of engagementfrom the start. Local authorities have certainly been successful in providing an opportunity for citizen engagement during the Covid-19 crisis but consultation alone is not sufficient. Inclusivity, on the part of all stakeholders, irrespective of the number of submissions is imperative in order to balance views from any opposing sides. This should ensure that the decision-making process reflects all parties involved.

That said, these decisions are provisional in nature since the impact of these initial observations remains to be seen. Policy-change post-crisis does illustrate the way in which change can focus on a window of opportunity that may lead to lasting, long-term, positive behavioural changes in how people travel. The scale of the Covid-19 crisis could stimulate long-lasting change – building on the lessons of the past could ensure that sustainable transport behaviours persist. Transforming urban space will also allow individuals adopt positive behavioural change around active travel such as walking and cycling, which are an integral part of an effective overall urban transport system. That would allow public transport service providers concentrate on the longer trips where this is the only alternative to driving a car (Hynes and Malone, 2020).

Concluding remarks

Public trust, including all stakeholders, in the safety of public transport must be ensured. Governments must provide public transport systems with the appropriate resources to maintain reliability standards 'while also catering to commuters' perceptions of safety, through measures to maintain a level of social distancing' (IEA, 2020). Micheals and Solecki note, 'disastrous events do not in and of themselves open up broad opportunities for meaningful and pertinent policy change. Instead, societal and organizational factors play a crucial limiting role' (1994: p. 594). Policy will be crucial in determining whether mobility changes triggered by Covid-19 are positive or negative, in terms of their impacts energy use, safety and long-term environmental and health outcomes (IEA, 2020). The role of transport mobility in Ireland in reconciling economic activity and public health is essential and the precarious nature of this balance and its impact shall be seen in time to come.

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Social housing delivery in 2019

Fergal O'Leary, IPA

The overall figures for last year's social housing delivery programme were released by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in May. So, having come under intense scrutiny over its housing policy in February's general election, did the outgoing government reach its 2019 delivery targets? Partially, is the short answer.

€2.44 billion was spent in 2019 to support the social housing programme, delivered through a combination of building, buying and leasing housing units. The local authorities act as the department's lead delivery agents. A national target of 6,242 new builds had been set for 2019, however, 5,771 were delivered –– an 8% shortfall. The acquisition target of 1,325 was exceeded by 1,447. On the leasing front, the target for the year was 2,130, but only 1,161 leases were signed. In overall terms, Ireland's social housing stock increased by 10,007 units in 2019, this includes the return of 303 voids.

The below table provides a detailed breakdown.

Whilst the acquisition programme enables the local authorities – and approved housing bodies – meet their delivery targets, some experts argue against buying and leasing units as neither approach increases the national housing stock. Rather, they see the construction of social housing on a large-scale as the only effective way to tackle council waiting lists. For others, however, such a policy raises concerns over building capacity and developing large council estates to the detriment of mixed tenure 'sustainable communities'.

In their election manifestos, many of the parties were seemingly intent on building Ireland out of its housing crisis. Indeed, such sentiment carried through to the recent negotiations on the draft programme for government; the five-year plan promises to: 'Increase the social housing stock by more than 50,000, with an emphasis on new builds' (Programme for Government – Our shared Future, p. 60).

The press release also referred to the delay in building new units under Public Private Partnership schemes and the establishment of a new Housing Delivery Co-ordination Office (HDCO) to support housing delivery. Of course, the threat of COVID-19 looms large in society for the foreseeable future. The department acknowledges that it's too early to know how social distancing and other measures on building sites will affect 2020's overall delivery figures.

The full departmental press release can be found at: https://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/details-social-housing-delivery-local-authority-basis-2019

	2019 output	2019 target
LA new build	2,271	
AHB new build	2,174	
Part V new build	1,326	
New build total	5,771	6,242
Voids*	303	
All build total	6,074	6,545
LA acquisition	1,905	
AHB acquisition	867	
Acquisition total	2,772	1,325
Leasing total	1,161	2,130
Increase in stock total	10,007	10,000

* Voids are long-term vacant or derelict local authority housing. An additional 1,200 such properties were rebuilt or returned to use in 2019 but these are not included in the figures above and are in addition to the 303 noted in the table

HOUSING
SOCIAL HOUSING TRENDS

Dr. Patrick Malone

PublicPolicy.ie at the UCD Geary Institute for Public Policy

During the Great Recession and its aftermath, provision of social housing by Local Authorities (LA) and Approved Housing Bodies (AHB)[a] fell sharply. In 2007, the combined provision by LA's and AHB's was 8,673. However, this traditional supply of social housing fell dramatically, to less than 760 units in 2013 and 2014. In more recent years social housing provision has increased again, although not to levels seen before the Recession: in 2019 4,479 additional units were provided by LAs and another 3,041 by AHB's. While provision of social housing by the private rental sector has grown substantially in recent years, LA's still retain a sizable proportion of the social housing stock.

Policy Context

In recent years, the provision of social housing has transitioned from the direct provision of social housing, by mainly LA's and AHB's, to a model of providing housing through the private market. This has been facilitated by a number of rental schemes administered by Local Authorities which include:

- **Rent Supplement (RS)** – provides financial support for renting in the private sector to existing tenants who cannot provide for the cost of their accommodation from their own resources. This payment was first introduced in 1977 and is administered by the Department of Employment Affairs and Social protection.
- **Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS)** – is a social housing support introduced in 2004 to cater for the accommodation needs of persons who are in receipt of long-term rent supplement and assessed as needing social housing. RAS is administered by LAs which source housing from the private rental market and enter a tenancy agreement with a Private landlord and the RAS recipient.

- **Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP)** – is a Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) funded programme that enables LAs and AHBs to acquire dwellings on a long-term lease[b] and let to individuals or families deemed as in housing need or on a waiting list.
- **Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)** – was introduced in 2014 on a phased basis to replace long-term RS and RAS. Similar to the RAS scheme, LAs provide housing assistance for households who qualify for social housing support, including many who would previously have been long-term RS recipients. Under the HAP Scheme, the LA pays the rent directly to the landlord and the tenant pays the relevant differential rent to the LA (a rent that is set by a LA based on income and ability to pay).

According to the *Rebuilding Ireland: an Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness* report, a key benefit to be derived from this transition is the provision of a greater mix between private and social housing as opposed to a heavy reliance on large public housing projects investments seen in the 1960's and 1970's (Government of Ireland, 2016).

Changing Trends in Social Housing Outputs

Figure 1 shows the range of social housing outputs provided

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[a] Approved Housing Bodies (also called housing associations or voluntary housing associations) are independent, not-for-profit organisations. They provide affordable rented housing for people who cannot afford to pay private sector rents or buy their own homes; or for particular groups, such as older people or homeless people) (DHLG, 2019).
[b] Leases can last from 10 to 20 years for LAs or 10 to 30 years for AHBs in duration.

FIGURE 1: SOCIAL HOUSING OUTPUT 2005-2019

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
SCHEP					437	866	1,193	1,259	1,042	1,062	1,477	792	827	1,001	1,161
HAP										485	5,680	12,075	17,916	17,926	17,025
RAS New Transfers	505	2,333	2,918	3,645	3,999	4,258	4,234	3,571	2,875	2,173	1,836	1,256	890	755	1,043
Part V – New Build[1]													522	841	1,326
AHB Completions and Acquisitions	1,350	1,240	1,685	1,896	2,011	753	745	677	211	357	401	897	1,521	2,465	3,041
LA Completions and Acquisitions [2]	5,127	5,121	6,988	5,692	4,089	2,178	819	714	546	285	4,000	4,025	4,209	4,115	4,479

Source: DHLG (2020a). Note: [1] Part V refers to the provisions relating to Housing Supply in the Planning and Development Act 2000-2017. These figures include Part V units delivered under LA Construction, AHBs and SCHEP. All Part V output is included under this heading from 2017 onwards only. [2] Social Housing Data in between the years 2015 and 2018 includes the Voids figure of 7,624 (i.e. local authority units brought back into use through regeneration and local authority construction activity).

over the years 2005 to 2018. Prior to the Great Recession (2005-2007), LAs supplied 5,745 social housing units, with AHBs providing a further 1,425 social housing units on average per year: a combined average of 7,170 units per year. The private rental market (through the RAS) supplied an average of just 1,920 social housing units per year.

During the recession and its aftermath, there was a dramatic decline in the output of social housing units provided by LAs and AHBs. In particular, LA council housing provision declined

from a peak of almost 7,000 social housing units in 2007 to 285 units in 2014. Conversely, the share of social housing units provided by the private rental sector grew substantially. The private rental sector combined supplied near to 9,000 social housing units in 2015 through the various private rental schemes (i.e. RAS, HAP and SHCEP) and HAP accounted for the bulk of this expansion in the private sector.

More recently there has been a rise in the number of social housing units provided by LAs and AHBs. In 2019, LAs supplied

FIGURE 2: SALE OF LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING 1990-2018
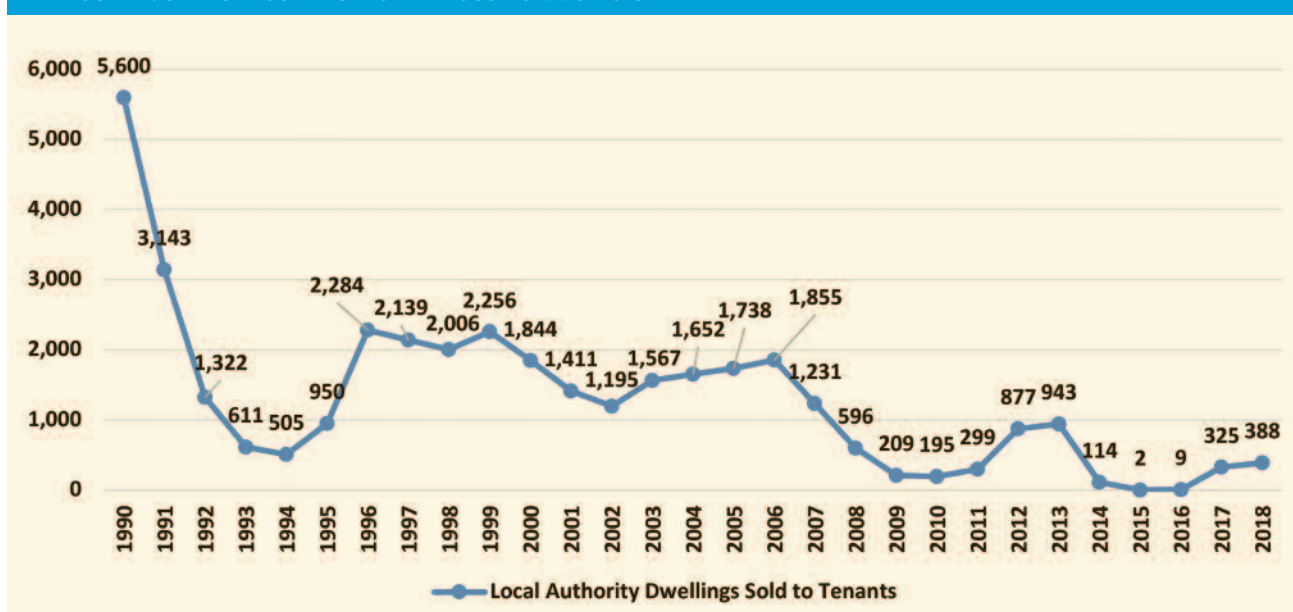
Sources: Norris and Hayden (2018); DHLG (2020b).

4,479 social housing units, with AHBs and Part V New Build combined accounting for a further 4,367 units rented to low income families. Notwithstanding this increase in social housing output, the social housing units provided by LAs (LA Completion and Acquisition) remains below pre-recession numbers. Moreover, the private rental market has continued to increase steadily, supplying almost 19,230 social housing units in 2019 (an increase of over 15,500 units on 2014).

These most recent trends suggest that there has been a greater shift towards the private rental market as a model of social housing provision.

Figure 2 shows trends in the sales of social housing during the years 1990 to 2018. A notable feature in social housing trends has been the rapid decline in tenants purchasing of social housing in recent decades. In 1990, almost 6,000 tenants purchased their homes. Sales averaged just fewer than 1,000 per annum from 1996 to 2006. However, sales dropped sharply during the Recession and have not recovered since then. Only 2 council houses were purchased in 2015 and 388 in 2018. Sales of LA units have thus contributed little to the recent privatisation trend.

Current Social Housing Stock
Figure 3 shows an estimate of the total housing stock under each broad category of scheme during the years 2005 to 2018. In taking a broad view of social housing outside the remit of traditional LA and AHB's providers, it is evident that an increasing number of low income tenants are having their social housing needs met by the private rental sector. During the Great Recession, the number of RS recipients increased

significantly, reaching a peak of 97,000 in 2010 and 2011. While the number of RS recipients decreased to 23,000 in 2018, this has mainly been due to an increased uptake of RAS/HAP schemes by tenants who are eligible to be included on the social housing waiting lists. The number of RAS/HAP recipients increased considerably from approximately 3,000 recipients in 2006 to over 62,300 in 2018. Combined the RS and RAS/HAP accounted for total of 85,239 housing units in 2018.
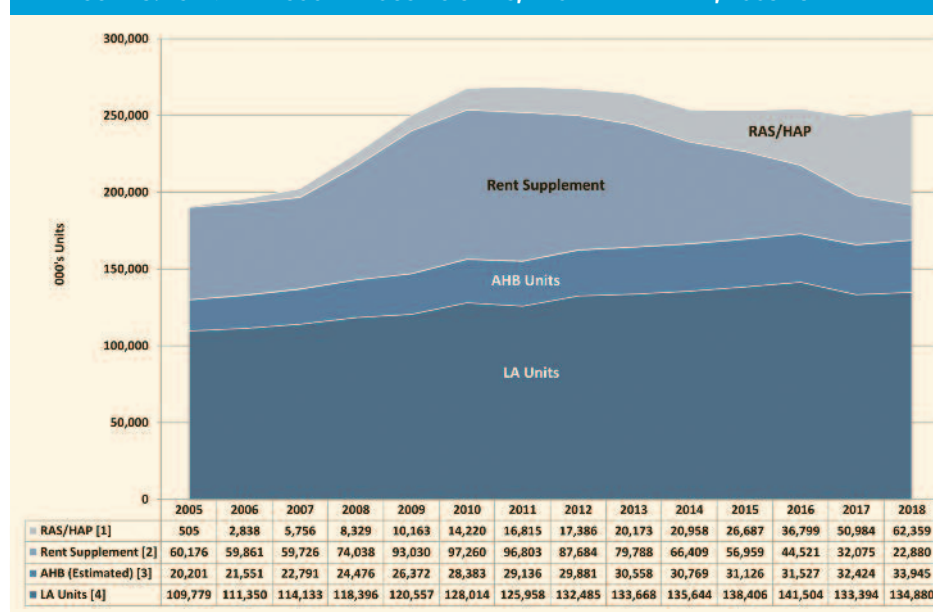
Notwithstanding the rise in social housing outputs provided by the private rental sector under the RS and RAS/HAP rental schemes, the traditional LA housing sector still accounts for the majority of the total social housing stock. In 2018, LA's rented/owned almost 135,000 social housing units, an overall increase of 25,000 units on 2005. This is in spite of the decrease in the output of social housing during the recession-ary period and consistent public policy transition in recent decades from a focus on direct provision (by mainly LAs) towards private sector mechanisms of social housing provision. While the stock of social housing units increased from just over 200,000 in 2007 to over 254,000 in 2018, the public sector has maintained its two-thirds share of the total stock. The increased reliance on the private sector for social housing in 2017 and 2018, evident in Figure 1 above, would have shifted that balance somewhat more towards the private sector.

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For References for this article, please see page 28.

FIGURE 3: ESTIMATED SOCIAL HOUSING UNITS, BROADLY DEFINED, 2005-18

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
RAS/HAP [1]	505	2,838	5,756	8,329	10,163	14,220	16,815	17,386	20,173	20,958	26,687	36,799	50,984	62,359
Rent Supplement [2]	60,176	59,861	59,726	74,038	93,030	97,260	96,803	87,684	79,788	66,409	56,959	44,521	32,075	22,880
AHB (Estimated) [3]	20,201	21,551	22,791	24,476	26,372	28,383	29,136	29,881	30,558	30,769	31,126	31,527	32,424	33,945
LA Units [4]	109,779	111,350	114,133	118,396	120,557	128,014	125,958	132,485	133,668	135,644	138,406	141,504	133,394	134,880

Sources: Corrigan and Watson (2018); [1] Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (2020a); [2] Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, annual statistics 2005-2018; [3] Taking Housing Agency Regulation Office figures for 2018 (total of 33,945), subtracting AHB completions/acquisitions by year; [4] For years 2005-2016 Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (2020c) 'local authority rented sector activity'; for years 2017 and 2018 National Oversight and Audit Commission (2018) (2019). Note method of data collection on LA units stock for 2017 and 2018 may differ from previous years.

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NEWS

Innovative project to provide broadband to disadvantaged students

An exploratory initiative has been launched by Michael Ring TD, Minister for Rural and Community Development, in partnership with Microsoft Ireland and the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) that will seek to deliver free broadband to second-level students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The initiative will look to use the existing high-speed broadband connection in five public libraries across five counties (Carlow, Donegal, Kilkenny, Mayo and Waterford), to deploy Microsoft's cutting-edge Rural Airband technology to enable broadband to be delivered to up to 200 households – roughly 40 per county – which do not have good internet access.

The trial initiative will be targeted primarily at students in Delivering Equality of Opportunity (DEIS) schools.

The initiative is a collaboration between a number of public and private sector bodies on a not-for-profit basis, including the Department of Rural and Community Development, the Local Government Management Agency, the Department of Education and Skills, Microsoft Ireland, and Internet Service Providers. This initiative is separate to the National Broadband Plan, and will not impact on the contracts or the Broadband Connection Points.

Cathriona Hallahan, Microsoft Ireland Managing Director, noted that as Ireland becomes an increasingly digital society, 'it is critically important that no community is left behind.' Microsoft has partnered with local government for over 20 years, in bringing internet access to libraries. Hallahan adds that Ireland is taking 'a leadership position on connectivity challenges' and that this initiative 'leverages the strength of the library network'.

Tom Enright, Chief Executive of Wexford Co. Council and Chair of the Libraries Development Committee added: 'Libraries are all about access and equality so we're delighted to work with Microsoft Ireland, schools and families on this project that will test a new way of providing much-needed reliable broadband to students as they prepare for their senior cycle. This initiative really demonstrates the reach and impact libraries can have, finding new ways to do things, breaking down barriers, and delivering equality of opportunity. We hope to learn from this pilot project to deliver more interventions to support students and others in future.'

Back to Business in Sligo

The Sligo Economic Forum, working in tandem with Sligo County Council, have developed an online directory (https://www.sligo.ie/backtobusiness/) to assist businesses to easily access the relevant supports.

As businesses across all sectors turn their attention to a gradual reopening of services, Sligo County Council have teamed up with the Sligo Economic Forum to establish a 'one stop shop' for getting Sligo based enterprises Back to Business.

Aaron Forde, Chair of the Sligo Economic Forum, sympathetic to traders trying to embark on the difficult journey back, reflected on the suite of supports available to business across the country and the practical impact this Sligo Focused directory will have, "Agencies across all industries are continuing to provide as much support to Irish enterprise as possible, this has come in the form of soft supports in training and information building, as well as financial supports to ensure companies have the best opportunity possible to get Back to Business. The challenge therein lies with navigating our way through the plethora of messages on social media channels or news feeds. This online space will allow businesses to find the supports that are relevant to them and possibly discover other useful

funds that may ease the challenge in reopening and returning to what will be a new structure in commercial trading."

Sligo County Council Chief Executive, Ciarán Hayes, echoed these sentiments and commented on the nature of the Sligo Economy, "Sligo boasts a diverse economy with a busy urban hub, supported by a comprehensive network of multinational and indigenous enterprise. Comprehensive supports have been made available to all types of businesses, whether a small independent retailer, an accommodation provider dependant on tourist trade, or indeed a 'home grown' start up, developing in what was a fast paced and progressive economy. We must also ensure that we work together in restarting our economy, getting back to business is not about competing with one another, but rather working together as a cohesive unit, making the most of our strengths and ensuring that Sligo is front and foremost in adapting to the new economic landscape we are facing".

The newly elected Cathaoirleach Cllr Dara Mulvey said that he is very supportive of the campaign saying that as a new member of the Sligo Economic Forum, since his election to the role of Cathaoirleach of Sligo County Council recently, he wished to acknowledge all partners working together in Sligo city and also across the county, all of whom have one goal and that is to continue to build opportunities for business in Sligo, at this very challenging time for communities. All areas but the rural communities in particular will feel the impact of the crisis he considered.

Ciarán Hayes, Chief Executive Sligo County Council and Aaron Forde, Chair of the Sligo Economic Forum

A case study of social inclusion in Cork during the Covid-19 pandemic

SO CLOSE AND YET SO FAR...

Sarah Conway, public policy student at UCD and research intern at the Institute of Public Administration

This article is based on a case study produced by the Institute of Public Administration (IPA). It forms part of a research study into local government innovation in response to Covid-19 being undertaken by the IPA. Further research is being carried out by the IPA during 2020 to establish lessons learned and implications for future policy and practice.

The IPA and the Local Government Management Association (LGMA) have worked collaboratively to develop these case studies, building on an innovation survey conducted by the LGMA in April.[1]

Responses to the Covid-19 pandemic have highlighted the capacity of local authorities to engage different groups from across the community. Restrictions imposed by the national government to safeguard the population from the virus have altered the daily routines of most citizens. Those asked to 'cocoon' in their homes and teenagers were among the groups particularly affected.

The term cocooner is used to refer to those over the age of seventy and those who are at increased risk from COVID-19 on account of underlying illness.[2] From mid-March, cocooners were asked to self-isolate in their homes. Teenagers, like other students, did not return to school. Cork County Council (CCC) has engaged outreach initiatives and networks to cater to

their recreational and well-being needs. Responses have been conditioned by restrictions and recommendations made by the government, especially around gatherings and social distancing.

This case study will examine steps taken by CCC to continue services to teenagers and older people during the pandemic. It will highlight lessons learned by the Council that may serve Cork County and other local authorities while restrictions are reduced, and into the future. For this research, understanding of the steps taken by CCC to adapt to new circumstances was enriched through a survey conducted by the Local Government Management Association (LGMA, 2020), and an interview given by Noelle Desmond, Age Friendly Programme Manager for Cork County.
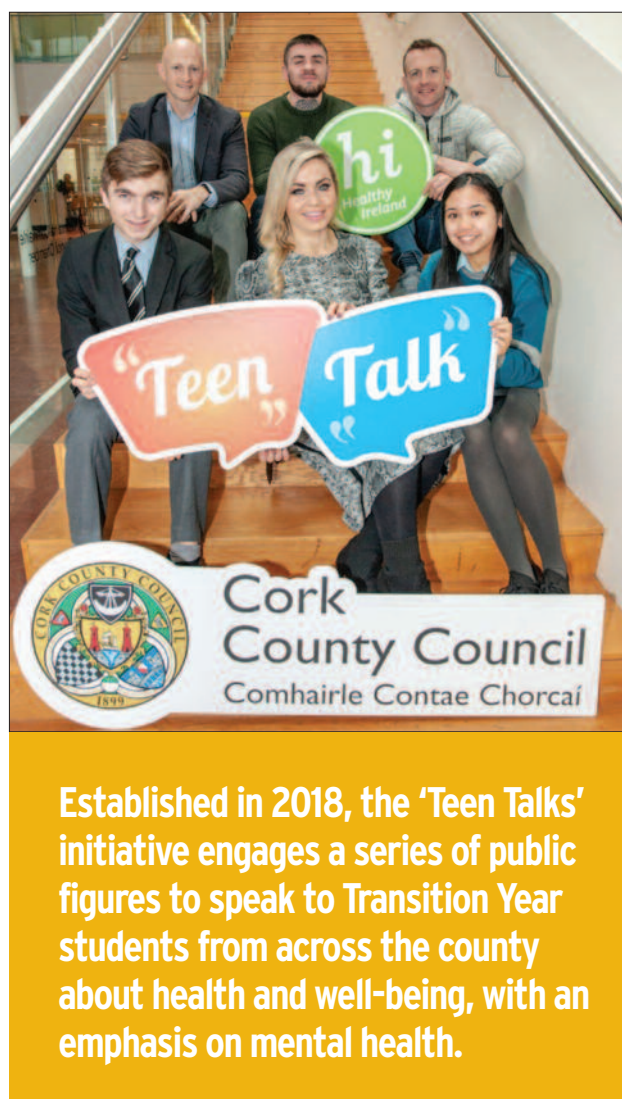
The Issues: Social inclusion in Cork during Covid-19
Teen Talks

Established in 2018 and funded by Healthy Ireland through Cork County's Local Community Development Committees, the 'Teen Talks' initiative engages a series of public figures to speak to Transition Year students from across the county about health and well-being, with an emphasis on mental health. This spring, some 1,500 transition year students were expected to attend 'Teen Talks' events in Charleville, Little Island and Bantry (CCC, 2020a). A parallel talk series was also planned. This second series would target 'Generation Z' (the parents and teachers of teenagers) and emphasise effective communication between the generations (Browne, 2020). Restrictions on gatherings introduced to combat the spread of coronavirus prompted the 'Teen Talks' series to be postponed.

Age Friendly initiatives

Cork's Older People's Council represents older people's needs to CCC, working in conjunction with Age Friendly Ireland. The Age Friendly initiative seeks to foster social and physical environments which are conducive to the 'health, wellbeing, and ability to age in place' of older people (Shannon, 2018). Demands made by the government around 'cocooning' and social isolation, however, challenged the traditional working of this initiative.

The needs of cocooners were impacted by the request to stay at home, self-isolate and avoid physical contact with people from outside the household. Age Friendly Ireland reported work by Older People's Council members nationally, which identified some of the problems faced by older people on account of the pandemic. Many of these issues related to logistical concerns: renewing driving licenses, accessing the fuel allowance and use of telecommunications. Age Friendly Ireland promoted local and regional support for 'cocooning' and other lockdown measures through Older People's Councils (McGuigan, 2020). Moreover, many volunteers involved in the provision of services such as Meals on Wheels were affected by the request to 'cocoon' and their absence added to

Established in 2018, the 'Teen Talks' initiative engages a series of public figures to speak to Transition Year students from across the county about health and well-being, with an emphasis on mental health.

pressures on service delivery (Cork Age Friendly Programme, 2020). The supports provided by CCC to cocooners in the county will be examined below.

The solutions
'Teen Talks'

The 'Teen Talks' series was moved online. Use of technology permitted the recording and distribution of interviews with those public figures who were initially scheduled to speak at the three postponed events.

Niall O'Callaghan, Director of Services, conducted a series of remote interviews with the relevant speakers. Participation

[1] A overview report of local authority Covid-19 innovations, based on this survey, has been produced by the LGMA and can be accessed at: https://www.lgma.ie/en/publications/local-authority-sector-reports/overview-of-local-authority-covid-19-innovations.pdf
[2] For further information on cocooning: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/923825-guidance-on-cocooning-to-protect-people-over-70-years-and-those-extr/

was encouraged by inviting the audience to submit questions to interviewees before recordings. The interviews were conducted with the intention to appeal to a broader audience than the 'Teen Talks' series initially targeted, incorporating topics and advice relevant to teenagers and adults alike. Recordings were distributed via the council's Youtube and Facebook accounts, and advertised across social media.

CCC is now considering adapting 'Teen Talks' to the podcast format. This may provide ongoing support to teenagers and adults, providing them with the skills to improve their mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Catering to the needs of Cork's older people
The immediate response
CCC convened a special meeting of the Age Friendly Alliance on March 30th. The meeting was intended to raise awareness of the government's response measures, to relay the outcomes of the first meeting of CCC's Community Response Forum, and to identify the needs of the older population.

Concern for cocooners' mental health was raised at this special meeting. A book service for the house-bound was established, providing entertainment to those 'cocooning', with books delivered from council libraries to older and vulnerable people. The county also shared a wellbeing programme and mental health resources online. When poor mental health was flagged as a key issue by the Older People's Council, a dedicated sub-committee was established and targeted communication campaigns were put in place.

Establishing the response forum and ensuring representation
The newly-established response forum [3] (see Figure 1) facilitated representation from the Older People's Council. The Council was also represented on the Steering Group and the Delivery Group. Nineteen community support groups were

FIGURE 1: REPRESENTATION OF THE COMMUNITY RESPONSE FORUM ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE:

established, based out of library branches. Support groups were tasked with producing quick, locally-targeted outputs.

A Friendly Call service was established to support older people and identify medical or mental health needs. Older people can schedule a call from a member of the local community for a chat. Some volunteers availed of training from Alone and the Age Friendly Alliance.

On the ground, local Age Friendly Town Committees tried to respond to the needs of their communities. Many of their services were moved online. These committees moved into a new role, acting as liaison between the County and the people of the town, reporting issues up and down from town to council. Committee members were also invited to represent their groups at county level.

Lessons Learned
Overcoming the digital divide
Both 'Teen Talks' and the Age Friendly Initiative availed of the internet and related technologies to disseminate information on the availability of local supports and resources during the period of restrictions. There were concerns around the efficacy of digitally sharing resources as the intended audiences may lack internet, computer or smartphone access. Extending use of communications beyond the digital by availing of radio services and partnering with the Church, the Age Friendly Initiative had a much greater reach than might otherwise have been possible.

Utilising networks
The efficiency of the community support networks in response to the pandemic has been beneficial to CCC. These networks have facilitated the transfer of information both bottom-up, by trouble-shooting and reporting the needs of older people, and top-down, through dissemination of policies and resources. The local Age Friendly Committees have proven themselves in a new role as liaison between local and council level. Maintaining and enhancing these networks should be prioritised.

Staying connected for health and wellbeing
Poor mental health was flagged as an urgent issue earlier than anticipated. Whilst there was an early recognition that older people would 'need to feel connected to others' (Cork Age Friendly Programme, 2020), the escalation of this issue by members of the Older People's Council highlights the importance of balancing care for physical health against care for mental health. The house-bound book service, 'Care Ring' conversations and Friendly Calls were imperative to the wellbeing of older people and emphasise the importance of social needs.

Representing the older population
The Older People's Council has been very proactive in representing the needs of older people during COVID-19 restrictions. In consultations for Project ACT [4] , it highlighted that this
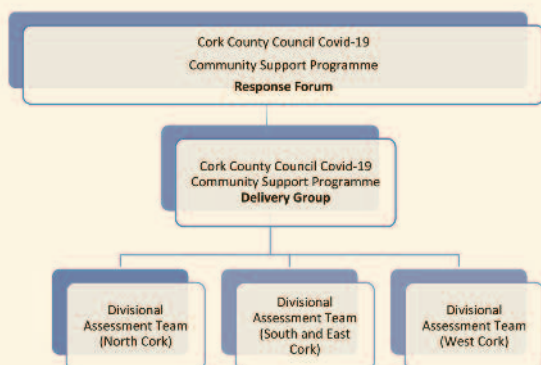
group did not seek to be 'segregated' on a prolonged basis from the community but reintegrated (N. Desmond, personal communication, June 22, 2020). The perspective offered by this Council should be acknowledged and responded to.

Concluding Remarks

Cork County Council's work with teenagers and older people has continued despite complications imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. The adaptation of existing services to the 'new normal' was conducted through the engagement of new and existing networks, and with use of technologies that were not previously employed by the council in its social inclusion work. The role of the Older People's Council as a representative for older people permitted better understanding of the issues facing the community.

There are many lessons to be taken from the manner in which the County Council dealt with implications of the national request for cocooning and social distancing. The importance of using a variety of media to communicate a message, the strength of new-found and existing networks and community groups and the balancing of public health and mental health needs, are among just some of these. Continued focus on social inclusion for all citizens and population groups will help to ensure a fair and just recovery for all.

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[3] A separate case study published as part of this series provides further detail on the establishment of response fora, known as the Community Call Forum, across the country. See pages 2 - 5.
[4] For further information on Project ACT: https://www.corkcoco.ie/en/project-act-activating-county-towns

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Transcending Time: A new immersive mobile digital installation for the Fingal community

"Transcending Time", a new immersive mobile digital installation aims to brighten up the lives of Fingal residents during the Covid-19 pandemic by bringing on-demand uplifting artwork straight to their doorsteps by contacting the artist Aoife Dunne at the designated project website www.transcendingtime.ie where they can request a drive by visit from the installation van.

This insightful new commission is presented under Fingal's County Council's Arts Office's Public Art Programme and forms part of 'Let's Stay Together' initiative. Visual vanguard Aoife Dunne is the inventor of this new outdoor exhibition.

Fingal residents will get the opportunity to request the mobile digital artwork to exhibit outside their houses/area. Starting from Monday, June 8, the Transcending Time installation will be on the road conjuring the fantastic into a travelling wonderland.

The Mayor of Fingal, Cllr. Eoghan O'Brien, said: 'Fingal Arts Office is committed to the local and national 'In this Together' campaign where Departments across Fingal County Council are delivering a range of programmes and initiatives to support people's physical and emotional wellbeing during Covid 19.

Aoife Dunne, artist and art director, said: "I am incredibly excited to create this work for my community, when art is needed now more than ever.

POLICY AND RESEARCH IN-BRIEF

Some of the most recent and relevant policy and research publications.
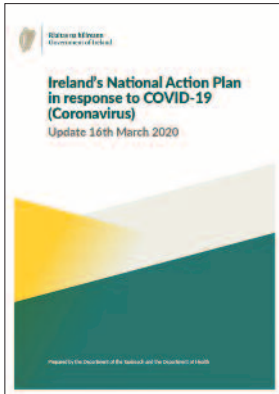
Ireland's National Action Plan in response to COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

In response to the pandemic, the Department of the Taoiseach published a national plan that was prepared with the involvement of all departments and key agencies.
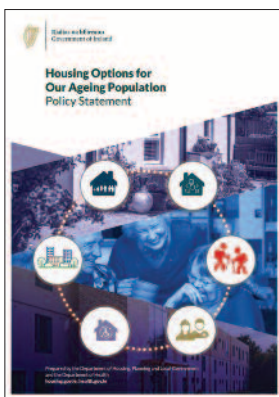
Copy available at:
https://www.gov.ie

Housing Options for Our Ageing Population Policy Statement

The statement provides a policy framework to support our ageing population in a way that will increase the accommodation options available and give meaningful choice in how and where people choose to live as they age.

Copy available at:
https://www.gov.ie

Local Government: Engaging and empowering local communities

This research draws on extensive national and international literature, case studies, policies, guidance and principles of engagement, as well as other research recently carried out by the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) research team.

Emerging trends and some practical recommendations for local authorities are outlined, aiming to aid local authorities in maximising the impact of their citizen engagement initiatives.

Copy available at: https://www.ipa.ie/

Knowledge Management: Lessons for Local Government

The IPA published its latest paper in its local government research series. It considers the benefits of knowledge sharing, reviews good practice in Ireland and internationally, and provides guiding principles to help promote better knowledge management in local government.

Copy available at:
https://www.ipa.ie/

Just Transition Progress Report

The first progress report of the Just Transition Commissioner was completed. It makes recommendations to help ensure a coordinated and effective approach to Just Transition for communities and workers affected by the imminent ending of peat harvesting for power generation in the Midlands region.

Copy available at:
https://www.dccae.gov.ie/

Details of social housing delivery on a local authority basis for 2019

Department of Planning, Housing and Local Government released the overall social housing delivery figures for 2019. In total, 10,007 new units were delivered through the build, acquisition and leasing programmes.
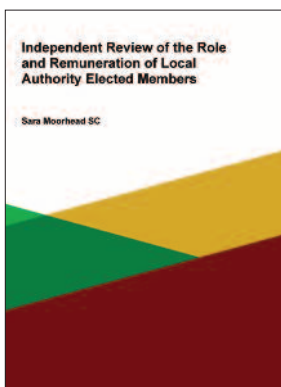
Copy available at:
https://www.housing.gov.ie

Increasing Public Engagement in Local Authority Development Plans: A Communications Toolkit

The Office of the Planning Regulator published a communications toolkit to encourage public participation in the development plan process.
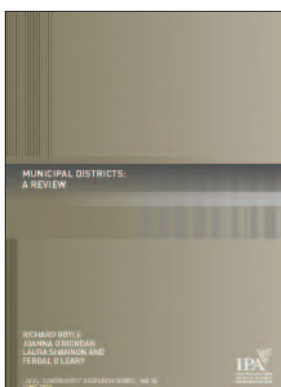
Copy available at:
https://www.opr.ie

Independent Review of the Role and Remuneration of Local Authority Elected Members (Sara Moorhead SC)

This independent review was commissioned by Government in June 2018 to examine the role and remuneration of Local Authority Elected Members (or Councillors).

The final report is now available:
https://www.housing.gov.ie

Municipal Districts: A Review

Despite being in existence for several years now, little has been written about the operation and role of municipal districts. This IPA study examines how municipal districts are operating in practice, looks at their strengths and limitations as an element of local government, and highlights opportunities and challenges for the operation of municipal districts in the future.

Copy available at: https://www.ipa.ie/

Your Mayor - Your Voice!
Public Consultation begins for Directly Elected Mayor for Limerick

Members of the public are being asked what they want from a directed elected Mayor for Limerick, with elections due to take place mid 2021.

The Mayor of the City and County of Limerick, Councillor Michael Collins, and the Minister of State for Local Government and Planning Peter Burke recently launched a public consultation exercise to ask the people of Limerick what they want from their directly elected Mayor.

Since it was established at the end of 2019, the Independent Advisory Group, formed to advise the Minister on the establishment of a directly elected mayor, has been working to shape a new local authority with a directly elected mayor that will deliver fresh possibilities for Limerick. The Group will report to the Minister later this year.

As part of this report, a public consultation exercise was commissioned from and developed by Professor Maura Adshead and her team in the Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Limerick.

Mayor Collins said: 'On 24 May 2019, the people of Limerick voted to be the first county in Ireland where people will directly elect their mayor. We are now asking the people to think about the potential of that role for Limerick and to tell us what they would like of their new Mayor.'

'Limerick has a reputation for being at the forefront of innovation and driving change in the local government sector. And once again here we are going to become the first county with a directly elected mayor. I'm encouraging everyone to have their say and together with our partners in UL we have developed a new and exciting way for people to do that.'

The new Minister for Local Government and Planning, Peter Burke said: 'I am delighted that one of my first acts as Minister is to help launch this exercise in public participation. It gives individuals and communities across the City and County of Limerick the opportunity to help shape the new role of directly elected mayor, in advance of mayoral elections planned for next year.'

Covid-19 has presented challenges for the traditional form of public consultation, and University of Limerick will be creating a forum for people to engage with their work. Tim O'Connor, the Chairman of the Implementation Advisory Group, thinks this is an 'exciting new digital way of asking the public, what they want, has been especially created for this exercise. It will be visual, interactive and provides real-time feedback. People can participate as part of a community group, with their family and friends, or as individuals.'

The online consultation can be accessed at https://ourmayor.limerick.ie.

Dublin City Council wants you to map the capital's trees

In early May, while we were all asked to stay at home and exercise within 2/5kms from home, Dublin City Council launched their 'Dublin Tree Map' initiative.

The new 'citizen science' engagement is aimed at mapping the trees throughout the city, and seeing where the deficits are. It's a sort of health check on our urban forest, a chance to identify what trees we have and learn how important they are.

Announcing the initiative, as part of the City Biodiversity Action Plan, the Lord Mayor of Dublin Tom Brabazon, encouraged public support: "There are probably about 300,000 trees that we need records for – please help us to meet our goal! If you are home from school, maybe you can record trees in your garden or on your street? We would be delighted if you can post on social media your efforts to help spread the word and help us to get more people recording trees! How many trees can you identify within 5 kilometres of your home? The more that people provide information about our trees, the better we can find out about the biodiversity of our trees and all of the benefits they provide us."

The benefit of the Dublin Tree Map and the public collaboration is to raise awareness of the importance of trees in our capital city and identify areas or pockets of the city which have a deficit of trees. In addition, it will provide information

on the species diversity from which we can examine the potential threats from pest and plant diseases due to changes in our climate.

Dublin City Council's Tree Officer Ludovic Beaumont said: "The engagement of the public in the Dublin Tree Map will give us a complete picture of our urban forest, a visual depiction of the species diversity and distribution throughout the city. We are asking everyone to record at least one tree in their locality and to put the information into the Dublin City Trees geoportal (https://www.curio.xyz/orgs/100/profile/ collections) or use the Curio-xyz mobile app. Using the app, the public can view the mapped trees, add any trees that haven't been mapped, photos, stories and - importantly - species information. Observations can be added on any tree in a garden, street or local park.

From the statuesque Plane trees in the city centre, the woodlands in our parks and the smaller trees in residential streets and gardens, all trees add beauty and seasonal colour to neighbourhoods throughout the city. Biodiversity is enhanced by their presence, air quality is improved and trees have significant benefits for human health and well-being. The value of trees to our planet's health by storing carbon, degrading pollutants and improving soils is well acknowledged."

Find out more
This project is a collaboration between Dublin City Councils Parks, Biodiversity and Landscape Services; the School of Geography at University College Dublin and Mapping Green Dublin, whose research was funded by the E.P.A.; and Breadboard Labs, Ltd., Ireland, designers of the Curio app.

Information about Curio can be found on the webpage, www.curio-eco.com, which also contains links to the app on the Google Playstore and Apple Appstore.

Dublin City Council's Parks, Biodiversity and Landscape Services is committed to conserving the City's trees and woodlands, increasing tree population and improving the resilience of our urban forest. You can find details concerning our Dublin Tree Strategy on Dublin City webpage (http://www.dublincity.ie/main-menu-services-culture-and-amenities-dublin...) and you can also follow some of our latest projects on Instagram @dublincitycouncilparks.

For queries on the Dublin Tree Strategy: Ludovic Beaumont, City Tree Officer, Parks, Biodiversity and Landscape Services, Dublin City Council, ludovic.beaumont@dublincity.ie
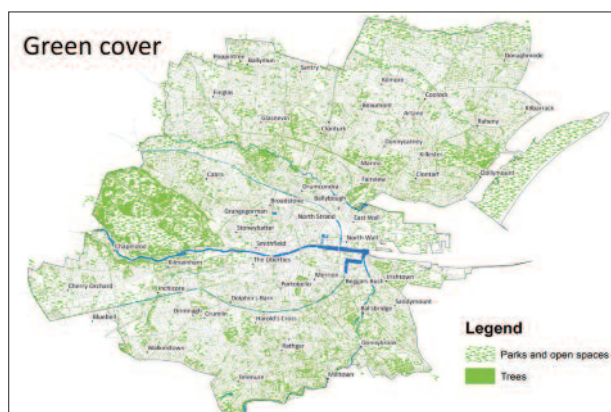
Map showing green cover in Dublin City.
Source: https://dublintrees.wordpress.com/maps/

ONLINE SPECIALIST-LED COURSES AND WEBINARS NOW AVAILABLE

The Institute of Public Administration offers a wide range of online short training courses and webinars, all of which are delivered by subject matter experts with in-depth experience and knowledge of their specialist areas.

Within individual organisations, we are in a position to deliver customised cost effective courses and programmes tailored to meet specific learning and development needs including coaching for individual managers and leaders. Many of our standard courses are now available for online delivery. Courses are offered in the following areas:

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Financial Management and Accounting

Human Resource Management

Leadership and Management

Local Government

GDPR and Data Protection

Project Management

Social Media

GET
INVOLVED.

We are always interested in your views, so if you have any comments, suggestions or ideas for topics that we should address in future issues, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Local Authority Times is also published on the IPA website: www.ipa.ie

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