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IPA
AN FORAS RIARACHÁIN
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GOLDEN YEARS

PREPARING FOR THE
AGEING POPULATION



Inside: Mapping Environmental Sensitivity to Support Evidence-based Spatial Planning

■ Sharing Lessons Learned from Water Governance

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Policy and Research in Brief

A round-up of the recent policy and research publications relevant to local government.

FROM THE OLD TO THE NEW

For this edition of the *Local Authority Times*, we received a number of very good articles from contributors.

Emer Coveney, with Age Friendly Ireland, writes on the expansion of the Age Friendly Programme as it seeks to support older people throughout the country. The work being undertaken and the factors contributing to the programme's success are examined.

Joe Boland, of the Eastern and Midlands Regional Climate Action Office, provides an overview of examples of international best practice in climate action and looks at how Ireland is doing internationally. He sets out ways in which local authorities can help to push Ireland up the global league table in the climate transition.



The team behind an Environmental Sensitivity Mapping webtool, Ainhoa González (UCD), Justin Gleeson (Maynooth University), Owen Douglas (Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly) and Suzanne Wylde (EPA), explain its benefits for the national, regional and local plan-making processes.

This edition also contains a mix of news, information and updates relevant to local government.

We are thankful to our contributors for submitting articles. The *Local Authority Times* is always interested in receiving submissions from our readers. Please drop an email to: latimes@ipa.ie

Local Government in Numbers: An overview of key indicators

Key Quarterly Data



Down 15.2% on Q3 2020
Source: Department of Finance



Down 14.9% on Q3 2020
Source: Department of Finance

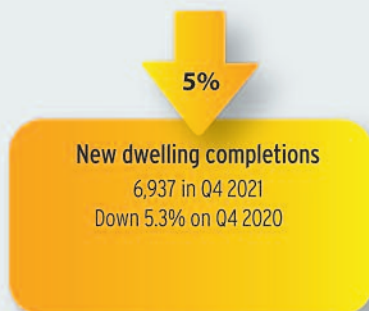


Up 2.2% on Q4 2020
(*data provisional and will be revised)
Source: Revenue



Up 3.8% on Q4 2020
Source: Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Housing & Homelessness



Source: Central Statistics Office



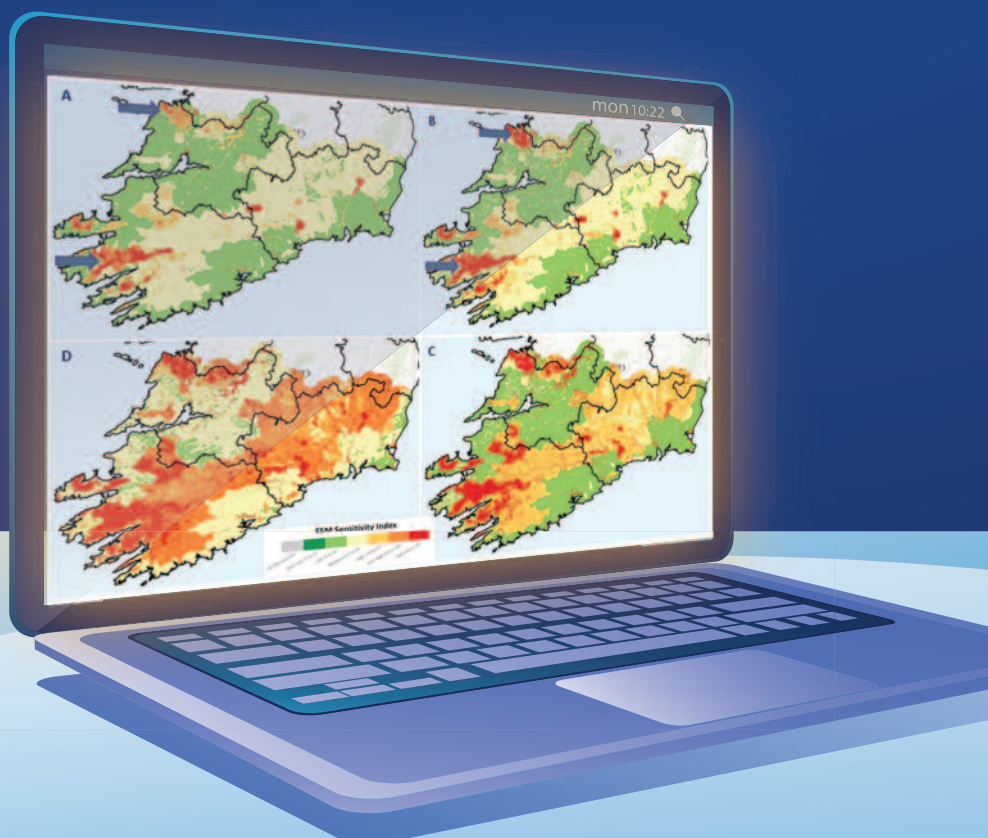
Source: Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government



Source: Central Statistics Office

MAPPING THE FUTURE

Mapping Environmental Sensitivity to Support Evidence-based Spatial Planning



In the context of the climate and biodiversity emergency declared by Dáil Éireann in May 2019, there is a significant impetus on Local Authority planning departments and governmental agencies to ensure that environmental awareness is at the heart of decision making. In planning for future development, planning teams have worked hand in hand with environmental consultants to comply with European mandates for environmental integration relating to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Appropriate Assessment (AA) and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The Environmental Sensitivity Mapping (ESM) webtool (*Figure 1*) - developed by researchers at University College Dublin and the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) at Maynooth University - has created substantial opportunities to further support the work of planning departments.

'The development of the ESM tool has provided an effective, straightforward to use mechanism whereby professional planners have the capacity and the confidence to gather and interrogate data directly and place the insights derived at the heart of the planning process.'

(Planning Regulator and Chief Executive at the Office of the Planning Regulator)

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The ESM webtool is a novel and freely accessible decision-support resource which facilitates environmental data analysis and interpretation - an integral part of policy- and plan-making processes at national, regional and local levels. By highlighting the location of natural assets, their overlap and vulnerability, the tool provides immediate and objective information to guide development to suitable areas for environmental protection. In doing so, it places the environment at the centre of decision making and prevents land with significant natural value from being zoned for development.

How the ESM tool works

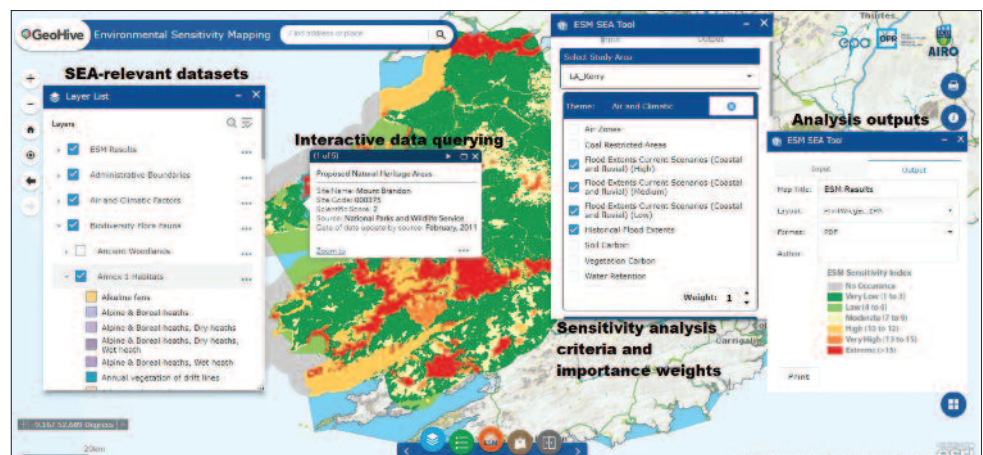
The tool is now routinely used by planners and consultants in supporting SEA, EIA and plan-making. It breaks through technological barriers by enabling centralised, visual, interactive and user-friendly access to geographically explicit

‘It is very accessible for a wider audience including planners, engineers, environmental specialists and stakeholders making it a practical tool that can be used widely to support decision making. We have used it to support SEA on a number of plans since its launch, including the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, and we regularly recommend it to clients and colleagues as a tool to assist their decision making.’

(Technical Director - Environment, RPS Group).



Figure 1. Screenshot of the Environmental Sensitivity Mapping (ESM) webtool interface illustrating datasets and data query functions, as well as the ESM widget that enables undertaking plan-specific environmental sensitivity analysis - a sensitivity map output is presented in the screenshot.



environmental and socioeconomic information, while also enabling their joint examination. Before the webtool was published, environmental sensitivity mapping required GIS skills and expertise, and weeks of time and effort by dedicated teams, to gather and analyse data from a wide range of sources. This made it difficult for planners, stakeholders and the general public to scrutinise the information. The webtool overcomes this obstacle and saves time and resources by making relevant data readily available to all, and producing sensitivity maps in a matter of minutes.

To support evidence-based decisions and sustainable development, the ESM webtool brings together over 130 environmental and socioeconomic spatial datasets relevant to environmental assessment and planning. It enables data visualisation and querying at regional and local levels, allowing planners to examine details about the location, quality and status of natural assets and man-made infrastructure within their plan area.

'Its core principle of ensuring that environmental information is readily available and accessible in an easy-to-use web-based tool completely simplifies the task of conducting Strategic Environmental Assessments whilst ensuring that all assessments are conducted against the authoritative, core reference data'

(General Manager of Business and Marketing, Ordnance Survey Ireland)

Plan-specific maps

Perhaps more importantly, the webtool enables the creation of plan-specific environmental sensitivity maps. These maps can help planners to anticipate potential land-use conflicts, thus informing the identification of suitable development locations while protecting the environment. The case study above is an example of the application of the webtool to the making of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region, which was adopted in June 2019.

The sensitivity mapping is based on multi-criteria analysis, which means that multiple user-selected environmental considerations are brought together to capture their overlap and thus the overall sensitivity of the various areas to change. Users can adjust the weighting related to each environmental dataset incorporated into the analysis so that stakeholders' concerns can feed into the outputs, as illustrated in the case study. Each sensitivity map created through the ESM webtool includes key associated metadata indicating date of production,

Case Study: Applying the Environmental Sensitivity Webtool: The case of the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, 2019-2031

The planning and SEA teams in charge of the preparation of the Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) applied the ESM webtool to inform the drafting of the strategy, more specifically the development of the growth strategy for the region. An environmental sensitivity analysis was undertaken for each of the settlements using the ESM tool, which influenced discussions around alternatives as well as the assessment of policies.

Multiple sensitivity maps were prepared to examine various considerations jointly, with regard to environmental and man-made assets and constraints. These included: availability of wastewater capacity, presence of sensitive and/or designated habitats, water-quality issues, presence of industrial facilities requiring IPC licence, discharge licences and flooding issues.

The sensitivity maps enabled creating an 'environmental profile' for each of the proposed settlements to inform the growth strategy. These were also shared with the local authorities in the preparation of their development plans at the local level.

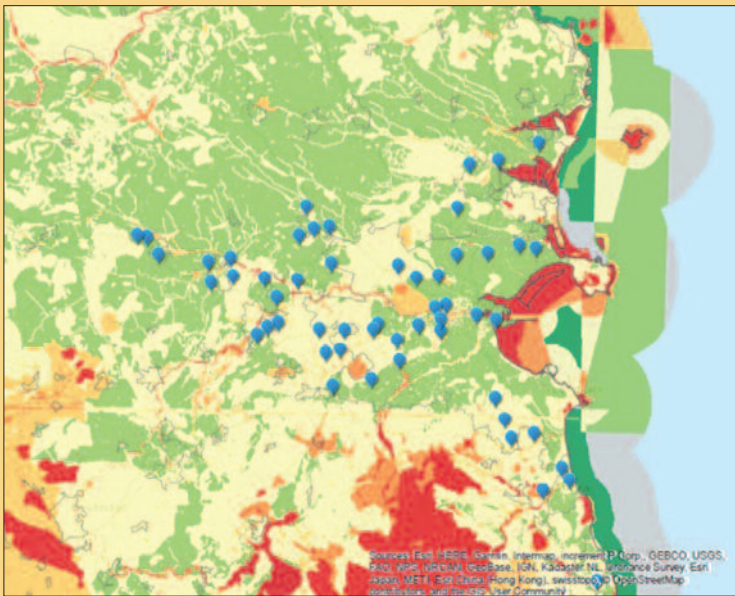
who created it, what data are brought into the analysis and any weightings applied, thus ensuring transparency of findings to stakeholders of the relevant SEA process.

Statutory development plans

In addition to regional planning, the tool was used in the making of the National Planning Framework, and it is now being applied to support the review of County Development Plans. The National Planning Framework acknowledges how the webtool was used in its development:

'In preparing the NPF, an Environmental Sensitivity Mapping (ESM) tool was used in the SEA and environmental assessments. ESM is a method for identifying at a strategic level, environmentally sensitive areas and to help inform cumulative and in-combination effects on the environment. It also provides a visual overview of the relative sensitivity of areas, particularly where they overlap, in order to provide a more strategic and informed approach to planning.'

(National Planning Framework, Government of Ireland, p. 155)



ESM of the named 54 sites in the Dublin MASP (Source: Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly planmaking team).

Legend

Air & Climactic Weight: 1

Variables: Flood Extents Current Scenarios (Coastal and fluvial) (High), Flood Extents Current Scenarios (Coastal and fluvial) (Medium)

Biodiversity, flora and fauna Weight: 2

Variables: Annex I Habitats, Margaritifera Sensitive Areas, Natural Heritage Areas, Proposed Natural Heritage Areas, Salmonid Waters (S.I 293 Only), Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas

Cultural Heritage Weight: 1

Variables: National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH), Sites and Monuments Record

Population and Human Health Weight: 1

Variables: WFD RPA Groundwater Drinking Water, WFD RPA Surface Water Drinking Water (Lakes), WFD RPA Surface Water Drinking Water (Rivers)

Soils and Geology Weight: 1

Variables: County Geological Sites, Geoparks and Geosites, Peat Bogs

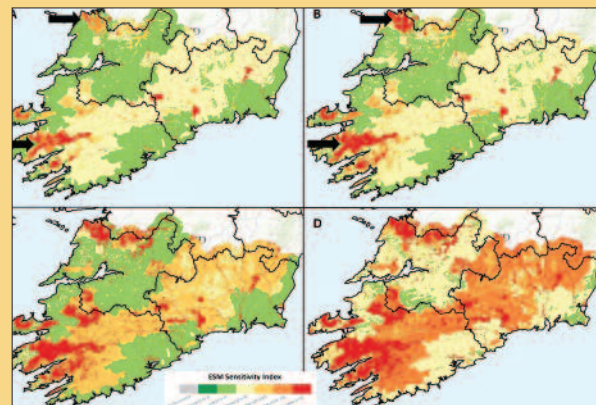
Water Weight: 1

Variables: Aquifer Vulnerability, WFD Coastal and Transitional Water Bodies Status, WFD Groundwater Status, WFD Lake Status, WFD River Status, WFD RPA Nutrient Sensitive Areas (Lakes, Coastal and Transitional Water Bodies), WFD RPA Nutrient Sensitive Areas (Rivers), WFD RPA Recreational Waters (Coastal and Transitional Water Bodies), WFD RPA Recreational Waters (Lakes), WFD RPA Shellfish Areas

Understanding environmental sensitivity mapping outputs

The sensitivity analysis relies on a selection of criteria and associated weights that aim to capture the relative importance of the issues at stake within the plan area. Therefore, sensitivity mapping outputs will vary depending on the applied criteria and weights. In the context of SEA, informed and consensual criteria and weights should be implemented which may derive from scoping consultation, for example. In any case, the ESM widget can be repeatedly applied, varying the criteria and weights brought into the analysis, to examine how different considerations and (changing) importance weights, capturing differing stakeholder/public values, may alter the relative sensitivity of the receiving environment.

The sample ESM widget outputs shown here illustrate contextualised environmental sensitivity maps for the Southern region of Ireland: (a) biodiversity, flora and fauna and water sensitivities; (b) sensitivities associated with biodiversity, water, cultural heritage and soils where all have the same weight/importance; (c) sensitivities associated with biodiversity, water, cultural heritage and soils where the biodiversity themes are given greater importance (i.e. a weight of 2); and (d) sensitivities associated with biodiversity, water, cultural heritage and soils



where the biodiversity and water themes are given greater importance (i.e. a weight of 2).

The mapped outputs need to be interpreted for what they are: a reflection of criteria, issues and relative concerns brought into the analysis. It should also be noted that red areas do not represent 'no-go' areas but rather areas where development needs to be carefully planned and where environmental impacts are more likely at project level. These red areas also represent natural assets which provide significant ecosystem services and natural value nationally.

Beyond its application to support SEA and spatial planning, the ESM webtool has also been used by certain Local Authorities to develop an environmental sensitivity score for the settlement hierarchy (e.g. Cork County Council), to support the preparation of rural housing policies and to prioritise monitoring and mitigation action on active quarries (e.g. Kildare County Council).

The significant contribution of the ESM webtool to environmental governance has also been acknowledged at European level. As part of the Interreg Europe PROGRESS project on which the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly is a partner, the ESM webtool was ranked first out of a series of European good practice case studies on improved landscape governance for economic and environmental sustainability, with 'evidence of success' a key assessment criterion. In recognition of its potential as an example of good practice which can be emulated in other European regions, the webtool has been included on the Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform. For more detail, see: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/5876/environmental-sensitivymapping-esm-webtool/>.

Training available on the ESM tool

The ESM webtool is funded by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR), and it is hosted by Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSi) on GeoHive - the National Geospatial Data Hub. It has been developed and it is maintained by researchers at University College Dublin's School of Geography and the All-Island Research Observatory (AIRO) at Maynooth University. You can find out more about the ESM webtool at: www.enviromap.ie

Associate Professor Ainhoa González and Mr Justin Gleeson, the core team behind this project, provide training to build the capacity of Local Authorities, governmental agencies, NGOs and the general public to use the webtool effectively. Several training workshops have been delivered over 2020 and 2021 and more are planned for 2022.



If you are interested in attending one of these workshops, please email Ainhoa at: ainhoa.gonzalez@ucd.ie

NEWS

Local Authorities Organise Events to Mark International Women's Day

International Women's Day took place on 8 March 2022. Local authorities around the country marked the day in different ways.

Cork County Council's library service held a series of events. Libraries throughout the county organised book and information displays, as well as special events to celebrate and support women. For example, as part of the 'Women in STEAM' (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths) initiative, Mary Flynn and Denise McCarthy, senior executive engineers with the council, took part in an 'Engineering as a Future Career' online talk for secondary school students.

The library service in Wicklow County Council held different events to mark the occasion. For example, local historian, Joan Kavanagh gave a talk in Wicklow town library on the story of Eliza Davis who had been sent to Van Diemen's Land in 1845 for committing infanticide. Elsewhere in the county, the library in Blessington celebrated women's poetry.

To mark International Women's Day and to shine a light on gender bias and safety issues for women, Fingal County Council's community office organised a commemorative tree planting and walk in the Millennium Park, Blanchardstown. Over 100 people registered for the 'Shine a Light' event.



At Fingal County Council's event in the Millennium Park, Blanchardstown: (L-R) Deputy Mayor Daniel Whooley, Cllr Siobhan Shovlin, Cllr Tania Doyle, Chief Executive FCC AnnMarie Farrelly, Cllr Tom Kitt, Cllr JK Onwumereh, Cllr Mary McCamley, Acting Mayor, Cllr Natalie Treacy and Robert Burns, Director of Housing and Community.



Meath Women's Caucus Chairperson, Cllr Maria Murphy; Vice Chairperson, Cllr Aisling Dempsey; Secretary, Cllr Sarah Reilly; PRO, Cllr Yemi Adenuga; with caucus members Cllr Gillian Toole, Cllr Deirdre Geraghty Smith, Cllr Emer Tóibín, Cllr Elaine M. McGinty, Cllr Sharon Tolan and Cllr Amanda Smith.

The Meath Women's Caucus was launched in the Solstice Arts Centre on the eve of International Women's Day. The caucus was established to promote women in politics and to enhance female participation in local government. Its objective is to further gender equality among elected members of the council and in society generally.

Wexford County Council's Women's Coalition was launched in Enniscorthy. The coalition was established to support an increase in the number of women in politics, to support each other as female members of the council, and to encourage other women who are interested in politics to get involved. The coalition members are its inaugural chairperson, Cllr Maura Bell, Wexford County Council Cathaoirleach Cllr Barbara-Anne Murphy, Cllr Kathleen Codd-Nolan, Cllr Mary Farrell, Cllr Lisa McDonald, and New Ross Municipal District Cathaoirleach Cllr Brídín Murphy. Its launch was one of a series of events intended to champion women in the week of International Women's Day.

Women continue to be underrepresented in local government. Nationally, 226 women took seats in the local elections of 2019, representing 24% of all councillors across the country.

War in Ukraine and the humanitarian response

Local authorities have been involved in many efforts to help relieve the suffering of Ukrainians after the Russian army invaded their country. For example:

- Cork City Council supported the MyCork Polish Association and the Polish Scouting Association in Cork, which organised the collection of goods to help in the relief of Ukrainians. The council also helped to organise an evening of Irish and Ukrainian music in City Hall, with the proceeds going to help the people of Ukraine.
- Limerick City and County Council supported the 'Help for Ukraine' campaign to send medical supplies to Ukrainian hospitals from Limerick.
- Longford County Council is donating the proceeds from sales of its *Longford Landscapes* book to the charity GOAL to assist with the emergency in Ukraine.

With the arrival of refugees into Ireland, fleeing war-torn Ukraine, councils have been busy working with different agencies to help arrange accommodation and the provision of services. The Minister of State for Communities and Charities, Joe O'Brien TD, held a meeting with over 150 stakeholders from across local government and the community and voluntary sector; participants discussed the community response in Ireland to the Ukrainian crisis.

To ensure that local capacity, resources and knowledge are fully utilised in Ireland's humanitarian response to the war, the Government has been working closely with local authorities to provide a coordinated and effective approach.

Following the outbreak of the war, special meetings of elected councils took place around the country, to discuss the crisis.



The 17 winning projects of the Public Service Innovation Fund 2022 have recently been announced, including a number of local authority initiatives. On 8 March, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Michael McGrath, announced winners of the funding, totalling €725,000. Projects have been selected throughout Ireland across three different themes - digital transformation, citizen support innovation, and green and sustainable initiatives.

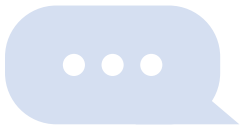
INNOVATION IRELAND

Public Service Innovation Fund 2022 - Local authority projects selected

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

CITIZEN SUPPORT INNOVATION

GREEN AND SUSTAINABLE INITIATIVES



Among the new proposed public-sector projects awarded funding are:

- A remote technology system to host video identification parades by An Garda Síochána
- A virtual facility that provides court users with a 360-degree audio-visual tour of court complexes
- A historic and real-time data science hub on women in political life
- A project on bottle-bank sensors that record the level of capacity left in a recycling container, alerting collection contractors and via an app for the public.

Six local authorities were awarded funding for their innovative projects under each of the three themes as outlined below.

Digital transformation

Cork City Council aims to create the first Irish local government Information Sharing Analysis Centre (ISAC) to counter cyber threats and allow two-way sharing of information between the private and public sectors. The ISAC would comprise all 31 local authorities and the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA). There are five collaborating partners in this proposal: Cork City Council, the LGMA, the HIS Liaison Group, IVI Maynooth University, and the NCSC.

Citizen support innovation

Leitrim County Council will use GIS technology based on ArcGIS to develop a new way of communicating key emergency and non-emergency information to the widest community possible. ArcGIS will facilitate the single entry and issue of geo-targeted alerts, across multiple channels (SMS, a dedicated messaging app, social media platforms), which will be of benefit both to the agencies operating the system and to the citizens of Leitrim. Alerts can be targeted to citizens based on a number of criteria such as community area, distance from a location and a route corridor.

Dublin City Council will establish a BETAhood online platform that will enable local neighbourhoods to request and trial 'tactical urbanism' solutions in their area and community. This urban environment project will focus on the rapid deployment of innovative improvements to local neighbourhoods and communities in Dublin.

Green and sustainable initiatives

Waterford City and County Council will deploy sensors to bottle banks across pilot sites to manage the capacity and send alerts to bin companies when full. In addition, the sensors will be used to develop an app that can be used by the public to determine the capacity of a bottle bank before they make the journey.

Donegal County Council will use a specially prepared compost to tackle the challenges posed by Japanese knotweed infestations, in order to reduce costs associated with its treatment and reduce its impact on the environment and infrastructure. Japanese knotweed is regarded as one of Ireland's top invasive plant species. Using the results of a pilot project co-ordinated by the Inishowen Rivers Trust, this project will examine the impact of mulch and extract to reduce the growth of Japanese knotweed in a controlled manner and will identify any challenges.

Louth County Council intends to use AI solutions to improve intelligent identification of road defects and provide valuable information on other road assets, including traffic signs and road markings. The data collected will be incorporated into deterioration models and lifecycle planning models aimed at forecasting future condition of the road network and the required maintenance spend.

INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICE IN ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE

How is Ireland doing and what can we learn from the success of other countries?



Joe Boland, Eastern and Midlands Regional Climate Action Office
(Edited by Seán Ó'Riordáin)

Climate change impact is increasingly being recognised as the most critical challenge confronting countries across the globe. The pace of change in living conditions as a consequence of the increasingly challenging weather patterns, the pressures on our environments, not to mention sustaining water supplies, biodiversity and simple day-to-day living are without parallel. Hugely significant shifts are required to ensure that civilisation copes. A short- to medium-term public policy response to 2050 will be required across all countries, especially those considered to be highly developed, which are mainly found in Northern Europe, North America and Australia.

Unsurprisingly, governments are now beginning to confront the many changes that will need to be made in our economies, as well as wider societal and behavioural changes which are often the drivers of our fossil-fuelled ways of life. This article provides an overview of global best practice in the area of climate change and sustainability. Varying approaches are used to establish the current world leaders, with some insightful examples of international best practice cited. Where does Ireland rank in this context and can it learn from the successes of other countries? In particular, can Irish local government contribute to such an impetus?

World leaders

In 2021, the World Energy Council (WEC) ranked some 127 countries on energy performance across three dimensions: energy, equity, and environmental sustainability. The combined ranking indicates that performance tends to be dominated by OECD countries. A continued strong performance on the part of the Nordic countries is noted - perhaps not a big surprise. Ireland - surprisingly to many people, given that it was until very recent times seen as a laggard - is among those countries placed in the top 15.¹

According to the WEC, those countries that have shown the greatest improvement on energy management and performance over the past two decades have focused, in particular, on the critical importance of both 'increasing access and diversifying energy systems.'²

According to the foreword of the WEC's 2021 report:

Today's energy leadership landscape is crowded, competitive, often confusing and increasingly costly. Confrontation and extreme polarisation have become commonplace.³

This progress, at least in the OECD, is also demonstrated in recent research published by the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU). The LGIU suggests that the momentum in an

EU/UK context has been in the direction of prioritising climate change both at policy and operational levels. The following examples from the LGIU are instructive.

Sweden

The Swedes take climate action very seriously. The main interventions include:

- Each municipality having a dedicated 'energy adviser' to give guidance to its citizenry at a local/individual level on energy-saving initiatives
- A move towards total reliance on renewables for energy generation
- Transitioning to underground waste-management systems
- A continued emphasis on wider and more sustainable public transport.

Finland

As with its Scandinavian neighbours, for Finland the concept of individual buy-in is also to the fore. In addition, the spirit of 'partnership' is strongly emphasised. In this context, partnerships have been established between central government, local government, commercial businesses and NGOs. In the case of Helsinki, for example, such a model has resulted in a strategy that aims to reduce the city's greenhouse gas emissions by one-third by 2030 (compared to 2004 levels).

France

This country has set aside a budget of €168m to assist in the delivery of its National Climate Change Adaptation Plan. As in the Nordic countries, personal responsibility as well as partnerships on the part of public and private-sector organisations are key features. In particular, at the municipal level, authorities must develop energy, climate, and air-quality plans in conjunction with central government. According to the LGIU, the French government noticeably demonstrates its conviction that a bottom-up approach is the best way forward.⁴

United Kingdom

Again, according to the LGIU, public bodies in Scotland must report on compliance with the national Climate Change Adaptation Programme, while in England, there is limited legislation.⁵ In both jurisdictions, there has been an impetus towards climate proofing social-housing landscapes and, indeed, some exemplars are beginning to emerge. Speaking at a COP26 event in Glasgow in 2021, Sally Thomas, Chief Executive of the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, stated:

Without a doubt, Scotland's housing associations and co-operatives are already playing their part in the climate emergency. Hard work, vision and a determination to deliver for tenants has resulted in their housing stock being the most energy efficient in Scotland.⁶

A similar account was given by Brian Evans, Glasgow's first City Urbanist, at the 2021 annual conference of the Institute of Planners of Ireland.⁷

Steven Bland (LGIU) assessed some 15 case studies across a number of UK cities relating to the 'climate proofing of social-housing landscapes', flood alleviation, local collaboration, etc. The Manchester Climate Change Partnership, which brings together the council with academia, the third sector and the private sector, is cited as a particular model of good practice.⁸ Ireland's National Economic Social Council noted that 'Northern Ireland is the only devolved administration in the UK that does not have its own climate change legislation and emissions targets'.⁹ A public consultation process on two draft Climate Bills was launched by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland; however, this may be held up given prevailing political conditions.¹⁰

Looking to the future - emerging global exemplar projects

As a possible portent of global best practice, it is worth focusing on emerging projects in Denmark. The Danish government has agreed to take a majority stake in a €25 billion artificial energy island to be built 70km offshore:

The island to the west of the Jutland peninsula will initially have an area of 120,000 sq. metres - the size of 18 football pitches and in its first phase will be able to provide 3m households with green energy.¹¹

It is projected to be the largest construction project in Danish history. On a related note, the city of Copenhagen plans to be carbon neutral by 2025! This will require:

- 100 new wind turbines
- 20 per cent reduction in both peat and commercial electricity consumption
- 75 per cent of all journeys to be by bike, on foot, or by public transport
- The bio-gasification of all organic waste
- 60,000 sq. metres of new solar panels
- 100 per cent of the city's heating requirement to be met by renewables.¹²

Indeed, the city has reduced its CO₂ emissions by 42 per cent since 2015. More significantly, according to Derek Robertson in *The Guardian*, Copenhagen has achieved this 'while continuing to grow in traditional economic terms'; there having been a 25 per cent growth in its economy over two decades. According to the city's Lord Mayor, Frank Jensen, these measures have widespread popular support and can be traced back to its long-standing political traditions:

There is a general awareness that climate change now calls for immediate, ambitious and collective action ... our visions have to be grounded in the everyday lives of people to be politically feasible.¹³

How is Ireland doing?

Clearly, the aforementioned World Energy Council ranking is good and reflects reasonably well on this country. However, closer to home, Ireland's Climate Change Advisory Council (CCAC) is far more cautious, whilst acknowledging some positive steps. In particular, it cites a number of 'crucial gaps in implementation where our policy and ambition are not yet translating into the necessary action':¹⁴

- Ireland has failed to meet its 2020 EU target of a 20 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and it will also be challenging to reach its 2030 targets.
- Many of the measures in its 2019 Climate Action Plan have been delayed, with the transport and peat sectors being of particular concern.
- Despite some progress at sectoral and local level, climate adaptation 'is still not adequately considered or represented in a range of policies and initiatives'.¹⁵
- The most recent Climate Action Plan (November 2021) was published 'without the annex giving details of timelines and responsibilities'.¹⁶

So, can Ireland become a major international force?

There is much to learn from our Scandinavian colleagues, particularly in terms of ambition (at both national and individual level), strategic collaboration and innovation. Again, according to the CCAC, the future journey *'will require significant societal change with rapid and technological transformation across all sectors of the economy'*.¹⁷ A whole-of-government approach will also be critical. In its view, urgent action is required, particularly the following:

- Ireland has not yet fully published a long-term strategy. This needs to be *'comprehensive and integrated with key policies across the range of relevant services'*.¹⁸ It should include, for example, decarbonising challenging sectors such as freight and industry, electricity supply and agriculture.

- While the Climate Action Plan 2021 contains a significant range of actions and ambitions, the associated funding requirements will also have to be addressed in terms of the exchequer and businesses, as well as households.
- It will be essential to maximise the potential of the National Dialogue, public participation being vital to effective climate action, this being a key learning from some of our European colleagues.
- Just transition is crucial *'and must be considered beyond the energy sector'*.¹⁹ The key learnings of the Midlands Regional Transition Team should be replicated nationally.
- Further progress needs to be made with carbon pricing.

All in all, according to the CCAC, a greater level of ambition needs to be shown across most sectors wherein to date *'measures have not been sufficient, and are being overwhelmed by absolute growth in consumption, requiring consideration of more than energy and carbon efficiency'*.

What about Irish local government?

Arising from international experience, particularly among current world leaders on climate transition, it has become clear that the Irish local government system has a key role to play in pushing Ireland up the global league table. In this context, there are already a number of key interventions needed:

1. It is apparent that the main ingredient in the success of the more progressive countries is the 'bottom-up approach' - the winning of hearts and minds locally. Local authorities have a key leadership role and, indeed, this is reinforced in the new Climate Act. In particular, significant opportunities (and resources) will be made available to them as part of the soon-to-be-announced Community Climate Activation fund. The mobilising of communities through the establishment of Sustainable Energy Communities represents a very important and further opportunity.
2. The area of 'strategic collaboration' represents another potentially significant and key intervention, as emphasised in the case of Finland. In this regard, the partnership agreement between the Irish local government sector and the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) may well emerge as an exemplar in an Irish context. This initiative will involve the 'greening' of all GAA clubs on the island of Ireland, and this will also have strong local permeability. There will be many more opportunities in the future; for example, teaming

up with the private sector as well as other national agencies in driving retrofit projects of significant scale (similar to UK models). Indeed, in this context, it is worth mentioning some ground-breaking current initiatives:

- South Dublin County Council's partnership with Amazon Web Services to capture heat from its data centre and feed it into a district heating scheme
 - Wicklow County Council's signing of a power-purchase contract for the solar panels installed in its car park
 - Kildare County Council's collaboration with Green Energy Ltd (Nurney) for the use of the parks department's grass cuttings in anaerobic digestion.
3. Ireland has the potential to excel in the area of adaptation, notwithstanding the concerns of the CCAC. In this regard, all 31 Irish local authorities have adopted their climate adaptation strategies before the statutory deadline (end of September 2019) with the guidance of the Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs). These are very ambitious in nature, encompassing actions across a range of themes, including: governance/business operations, infrastructure and built environment, land use and development, drainage and flood management, community health and wellbeing, etc. It is worth noting that some 87 per cent of such actions have either been delivered or commenced to date. Key governance interventions included such actions as the establishment of Climate Action Teams in each local authority and the establishment of a dedicated Strategic Policy Committee to strengthen the sector's hand in the area of mitigation.

4. The question of having sufficient skills and capacity in local government does need to be examined, a point of note given the expectations of the Climate Action Plan 2021. Clearly, for a sector such as local government to move in a different direction, it will need the skills and confidence to effect such change. This is a challenge confronting local government systems across the globe, with the LGIU noting, in regard to the UK, the challenges confronting local government in that country relating to 'a lack of skills and knowledge', particularly from a project management aspect.²⁰
5. The Irish local government climate action training plan is now at an advanced stage of roll-out with some 16,000 staff and elected members having received training to date, ranging from advanced to introductory. In global terms, it is unique, as the LGIU highlighted in its research, as the only whole-of-system approach to enhancing capacity and awareness on climate matters. Indeed, there is potential here to replicate this initiative in other sectors within the public service, and interest in such is now emerging. Local government in Northern Ireland is also keeping a watching brief.
6. Climate action is not all about risk. As identified in Denmark, there are also significant opportunities, particularly in the area of enterprise and the local economy (refer to the Local Authority Times, winter 2021.)²¹ The work of the CCMA sub-committees to date in this area has been critical. Arising from a far-reaching collaboration on the part of the CCMA, EPA, IBEC, Chambers Ireland, various government departments, the Regional Assemblies and others, the extent of such business opportunities is now well highlighted nationally. There is a rich vein of material, as well as ideas/case studies to inform economic development strategies and the review of Local Economic and Community Plans, as well as the work programmes of a range of entities including the Local Enterprise Offices. This also represents a very good example of the local government sector demonstrating its key leadership role.
7. Another key emerging area is the link between climate action and spatial planning. In this context, the current list of candidate decarbonising zones (DZs) - one pilot in each county - is a likely portent of things to come. Climate action is also a key strategic objective of the National Planning Framework and has cascaded down to the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and ultimately to County and City Development Plans. While formal guidance is awaited, it is expected that the proposed DZs will be highly collaborative, with significant opportunity for local innovation in terms of, for example, more sustainable spatial planning models, public transport, biodiversity, sustainable energy communities, housing retrofits, public lighting, etc. This resonates with European models of more sustainable planning frameworks (e.g. Vauban and Freiburg in Germany).

Will the people of Limerick get to vote for their Mayor in 2022?

The election of Limerick's first directly elected mayor (DEM) is due to take place this year. This election will mark a major change in the landscape of local government, in Ireland, with Limerick City and County becoming the first local authority in the country to directly elect its own mayor with executive powers. The landmark election will follow three years after the people of Limerick voted in a plebiscite to introduce a DEM.

Many local and national politicians and other local figures have repeatedly called for the progression of the legislation and

holding of the election. In November 2021, the 'We Want Our Vote' campaign was launched, led by chair of Liveable Limerick John Moran. The campaign called for urgent action by the Government and called on the people of Limerick to sign a petition for the right to choose their mayor without further delay.

However, also in November, Limerick City and County Council only narrowly voted against a proposal to defer the election of the DEM to 2024 (the vote was defeated by 15 votes to 14, with three abstentions). The vote was called after debate in the chamber over a motion to demand full implementation of the recommendations of the Implementation Advisory Group (whose report had been published in early 2021), and to request that the Minister set a date for the election.

As national challenges loom larger, coherence at the several levels of governance (local, regional, and national) will be critical. The important role of the CAROs in ‘pulling things together’ will, therefore, be critical. Indeed, in passing, it is worth mentioning that the CARO structure, which is based on ‘topographical’, as opposed to administrative or geographical, regions is possibly unique in the European context and may emerge as a model of good practice internationally.

Conclusion

All in all, the local authority sector can play a very significant role in the national climate action impetus, to the extent that its input can potentially result in Ireland moving up the global table of world leaders. Apart from local drive and innovation, there is also considerable learning to be gleaned from international experience. While acknowledging challenges in meeting EU targets, it is nevertheless pleasing to note that there are many positive developments in Ireland which will greatly assist in terms of the more significant challenges that lie ahead.

Footnotes

- ¹ World Energy Council (2021), *Trilema Index: Summary*. Available at: https://www.worldenergy.org/assets/downloads/WE_Trilemma_Index_2021_-_Executive_Summary.pdf?v=1634811254
- ² Ibid, p. 6.
- ³ Ibid, p. 2.
- ⁴ Local Government Information Unit (2019a), Natalie Heritage, ‘Briefing: Local Government’s Latest Challenge: Combatting climate change across Europe’.
- ⁵ Local Government Information Unit (2019b), Steven Bland, ‘Briefing: Climate Change Adaptation Actions in UK Cities - What can we learn in Ireland?’
- ⁶ Scottish Housing News (2021), ‘Sally Thomas: Social housing’s role in tackling climate change cannot be underestimated’. Available at: <https://www.scottishhousingnews.com/articles/sally-thomas-social-housing-sole- in-tackling-climate-change-cannot-be-underestimated>

- ⁷ Brian Evans (2021), Presentation to Annual Conference of Institute of Planners of Ireland. For more, see: <https://ipi.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Conference-sales-brochure-Oct-2021-v5.pdf>
- ⁸ Local Government Information Unit (2019b), Steven Bland, ‘Briefing: Climate Change Adaptation Actions in UK Cities - What can we learn in Ireland?’
- ⁹ National Economic and Social Council (2021), Shared Island Consultation: *Climate and Biodiversity Challenges and Opportunities*, Paper No. 21. Available at: http://files.nesc.ie/nesc_secretariat_papers/no_21_cbd_consultation.pdf
- ¹⁰ Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (2020), ‘Poots launches public consultation on Climate Change legislation’. Available at: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/news/poots-launches-public-consultation-climate-change-legislation>
- ¹¹ *The Guardian* (2021), Richard Orange, ‘Denmark strikes deal on £25bn artificial wind energy island’. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/feb/04/denmark-strikes-deal-on-25bn-artificial-windenergy-Island>
- ¹² *The Guardian* (2019), Derek Robertson, ‘Inside Copenhagen’s race to be the first carbon-neutral city’. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/oct/11/inside-copenhagens-race-to-be-the-firstcarbon-neutral-city>
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Climate Change Advisory Council (2021a), Press Release: ‘More focus on implementation and adaptation needed’. Available at: <https://www.climatecouncil.ie/media/climatechangeadvisorycouncil/Climate%20Change%20Advisory%20Council%20Annual%20Review%202021%20Press%20Release.pdf>
- ¹⁵ Climate Change Advisory Council (2021b), Annual Review 2021, p. ii. Available at: https://www.climatecouncil.ie/media/climatechange_advisorycouncil/contentassets/publications/CCAC_AnnualReview_2021.pdf
- ¹⁶ Ibid, p. ii.
- ¹⁷ Ibid, p. ii.
- ¹⁸ Ibid, p. 77.
- ¹⁹ Ibid, p. 70.
- ²⁰ Local Government Information Unit (2019b), Steven Bland, ‘Briefing: Climate Change Adaptation Actions in UK Cities - What can we learn in Ireland?’
- ²¹ For more, see: Joe Boland et al. (2021), ‘Climate Action Brings Business Opportunities’, *Local Authority Times*. Available at: https://www.ipa.ie/_fileUpload/Documents/LAT_WINTER_2021.pdf

How exactly the office will function, and what powers the mayor will have, is still being decided. The legislation, which has been delayed, is due before the Dáil in the coming months. The Joint Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage made recommendations for the legislation, including around what powers and functions should be considered for devolution to the mayor, how the mayor will be able to manage staffing, and many other matters.

Meanwhile, in the capital, the Citizens' Assembly on a Directly Elected Mayor in Dublin is progressing, with the Assembly's work due to commence with an introductory meeting on 9 April. Jim Gavin, former manager of Dublin Men's Senior Football team, has been announced as Chair of the Assembly, which will include 67 random citizens of Dublin, along with 12 councillors.



The 'We Want Our Vote' campaign points to the fact that on 17 February 2022, it will be 1,000 days since the vote took place. (L-R) Mary Fitzgerald, Woodlands House Hotel in Adare; John Moran, Chair Liveable Limerick; Linda Ledger, St Munchin's Community Centre, Moyross; Stephen Kinsella, Economist. (Courtesy of The Irish Examiner)

A National Day of Remembrance and Recognition

A National Day of Remembrance and Recognition for those who lost their lives to COVID-19 took place on Sunday, 20 March. Ceremonies were organised by local authorities across the country to remember the departed and to give special recognition to frontline workers. The ceremonies included formal wreath laying, tree planting, music and song, as well as other special ways to pay tribute.



Co. Tipperary

Frontline workers and representatives of Tipperary alongside the planted oak tree and the new memorial stone.

Photo courtesy Tipperary County Council.



Dundalk, Co. Louth

Members of Louth Fire Service prepare to present wreaths to Ms Martina Ralph, HSE; Cllr Jim Tenanty, Cathaoirleach Ardee MD; Cllr Maria Doyle, Cathaoirleach, Dundalk MD; and Cllr Pio Smith, Cathaoirleach, Louth County Council.

Photo courtesy Louth County Council.

Politics, People and Public Policy: Case studies in policy engagement

At the start of the year, the IPA published a special edition of *Administration* (its peer-reviewed journal) on the theme of public engagement in public policy. Guest edited by Deiric Ó Broin (Dublin City University) and Jordana Corrigan (Technological University Dublin), this edition brought together several papers delivered at the Martin McEvoy Annual Conference 2020 in the School of Law and Government at Dublin City University.

In their introduction to the special edition, Ó Broin and Corrigan briefly discuss the nature of public engagement and participation in policy making. They note that the motivations for greater public involvement in the policy cycle are not always

clear; also, it can be unclear who the public is, and how the public is constructed.

The editors refer to significant developments in the area of public engagement in recent years. These include the establishment of deliberative mini-republics (e.g. the Citizens' Assembly 2016-18) at the national level and participatory innovations (e.g. public participation networks) at the local level.

Each article in the special edition is a case study in policy engagement; many are relevant to local government. For example, the role of local authorities (north and south of the border) is considered in the development of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor. Another paper takes a critical look at strategic policy committees in respect of their policy-making function and identifies key challenges that these long-standing structures face. Other papers look at collaborative planning between a local council and citizens on a climate adaptation



Co. Clare

Pictured leading the procession to wreath laying at the COVID-19 Ceremony of Remembrance and Reflection at Áras Contae an Chláir, Ennis, Co. Clare, is Cllr PJ Ryan, Cathaoirleach, Clare County Council.

Photo courtesy Clare County Council.



Cork City

Barrack Street Band performing at the ceremony held by Cork City Council. The ceremony was led by the Lord Mayor of Cork, Cllr Colm Kelleher and by Ann Doherty, Chief Executive, Cork City Council.

Picture by Brian Lougheed.



Co. Leitrim

Pictured at Leitrim County Council's event are (L-R) Tommy McCartin, Michael Harding (Guest Speaker), Cllr Paddy Farrell, Cllr Brendan Barry, Cllr Paddy O'Rourke (Cathaoirleach, Leitrim County Council), Cllr Caillian Ellis, Rev. Linda Frost (Leitrim Community Response Forum), Cllr Sean McDermott, Cllr Ita Reynolds Flynn, Joseph Gilhooley (Deputy Manager, Leitrim County Council). *Photo courtesy Leitrim County Council.*



Co. Carlow

At Carlow County Council's remembrance event, music was provided by musicians Kieran Moynihan on flute, Jane Hughes on cello, Vincent Lynch on keyboard, Mick O'Brien on uilleann pipes, and soprano Méav Ní Mhaolcatha.

Picture by Michael O'Rourke.

project; the public participation network during the COVID-19 pandemic is also examined.

The full list of articles in the *Politics, People and Public Policy* special edition includes:

- 'Irish Rural Social Enterprises and the National Policy Framework' (by Lucas Olmedo, Mara van Twuijver, Mary O'Shaughnessy and Alan Sloane)
- 'Structured, Formal Engagement of Stakeholders in Public Policy - The case of An Fóram Uisce/The Water Forum' (by Richard Boyle, Joanna O'Riordan, Fergal O'Leary and Laura Shannon)
- 'Planning a Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor: Networks, engagement and creating opportunities' (by Eoin Magennis, Jordana Corrigan, Neale Blair and Deiric Ó Broin)
- 'The Role of the Community and Voluntary Sector in Identifying Vulnerabilities to Climate Change in Coastal Areas

and Implementing Climate Adaptation Responses' (by Paul Lawlor)

- 'Collaboratively Planning Climate Action: What would it mean for Dublin? An analysis of the Clontarf flood defences' (by Ali Grehan)
- 'Public Participation in a Time of Crisis: A case study of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown residents' associations' response to COVID-19 (by Simone Sav and Colette Downing)
- 'Strategic Policy Committees: Talking shops or active participants in local policy development?' (by Fintan Phelan)

Administration special edition link:

<https://sciendo.com/issue/ADMIN/69/4>

To follow Administration on Twitter, please see: @AdminJournal

GOLDEN YEARS

Preparing for the Ageing Population:
The expansion of the Irish Age Friendly programme signals a high level of commitment in Ireland to supporting older people

Since 2019, Ireland has been recognised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as the first Age Friendly Country in the world. The national Age Friendly programme is making great inroads into enhancing society's preparedness for population ageing. The programme has been operational for over a decade and became formalised as a shared service of local government in 2017, hosted by Meath County Council. This shared service structure has accelerated the development of the programme considerably, creating pathways to work across all local government service provision areas, and more directly with government departments.



**Dr Emer Coveney, National Programme
Manager, Age Friendly Ireland**

The programme has a strong emphasis on creating walkable, attractive and accessible communities and age-friendly spaces. It also introduces actions to address participation and inequality, working to ensure that people of all ages will be supported to enjoy healthier, more active and connected lives.

The national programme operates through a team-based framework of 31 local Age Friendly programmes. These multi-agency programmes are hosted by local government.

Around the country, successful Age Friendly programmes are working to create the kinds of communities in which older people live autonomous, independent and valued lives. These programmes have implemented real changes in terms of accessibility in the built environment, the inclusion of older people in decision making, visibility of older people in society, Age Friendly services and specific initiatives that will benefit the ageing population.

Ireland is demonstrating great leadership in being age friendly, and is spearheading many developments in an international context, with Age Friendly Airport and Train Station Guidelines to be launched later this year, and a significant body of work just completed to develop Croke Park as the first age-friendly stadium in the world.



Croke Park - the first age-friendly stadium in the world.

Population ageing

Population projections from the Central Statistics Office estimate that there will be 1.6 million people aged 65 and over living in Ireland by 2051, with the greatest increases being seen in the over 80+ age group. A similar trend is evident across Europe and internationally. Demographic ageing means that as the number of older people increases, the proportion of people of working age decreases in comparison. Hence population ageing will present increased pressure on public finance, especially in the

areas of health, housing and social protection. The report *Population Ageing and the Public Finances* indicates that while there are currently around four people of working age to support each person aged 65 and over, this number is expected to fall to just over two by 2050. The importance of ensuring that society is fully prepared for this change is increasing, as reflected in national policy documents.

Developing an age-friendly Ireland

Around the country, local Age Friendly programmes are developing Age Friendly Towns, Age Friendly Housing and public-realm initiatives, and are delivering cultural programming, health and wellbeing initiatives, and projects to support the digital inclusion of older people, among other actions. This work is co-ordinated by a high-level Age Friendly alliance in each local authority area, hosted by the local authority and involving multi-sectoral partners.

Data on programme outputs from 2021 showed that 26 programmes provided devices to older people such as tablets or mobile phones. Sixteen provided digital training for older people. Over 200 age-friendly car-parking spaces have been



A partnership with Creative Ireland brought Covid Care Concerts to nursing homes in 2021, delivered by cellist Gerald Peregrine and a team of musicians and performers.

installed across the country, and there is a developing network of Age Friendly Towns (currently around 55 towns are included). Intergenerational initiatives were delivered in 19 counties and cities, and 21 programmes delivered crime prevention and community safety initiatives under their age-friendly strategies.

Staffing and structures

The shared-service staffing structure has expanded significantly in recent years, with additional administrative staff and the introduction of the Healthy Age Friendly Homes Programme. The core shared-service team also includes six Regional Managers, and two Principal Advisors (for Housing and Public Realm, and Age Friendly Business).

The shared service developed a strategic partnership with Maynooth University, which has resulted in an established research office with a shared Research Manager post operating between local government and the university to focus on research on population ageing.

Age Friendly Ireland collaborated with the HSE in 2021 to collate information on health and wellbeing initiatives for older people, which were developed during the pandemic. This information is now available as a legacy document publication and in an online searchable repository on www.agefriendlyireland.ie.

A partnership with Creative Ireland brought Covid Care Concerts to nursing homes in 2021, delivered by cellist Gerald Peregrine and a team of musicians and performers.

Assigned Age Friendly Programme Manager positions in each of the 31 local authorities are the central co-ordinating point for local age-friendly strategies and interagency work. Under



A legacy document collating information on health and wellbeing initiatives delivered for older people during the pandemic by local government, HSE and community and voluntary groups.



New age-friendly seating installed in Cork City.

the 2019 *Housing Options for our Ageing Population* policy statement, there are also 31 Age Friendly Housing Technical roles assigned to work on Age Friendly programming.

Age-friendly housing and public-realm projects

One of the most tangible developments in very recent years has been the range of age-friendly and Universal Design housing and public realm developments that are being progressed by local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) throughout the country. In Tipperary, the local authority is developing a masterplan for the Gantly area, which is being put forward as an age-friendly neighbourhood development. In Wicklow, the Rathcoran estate in a renovated

convent site co-located with a Primary Care Centre will be a lifetime community including Age Friendly Units, managed by Respond Housing.

These are very visible examples of how local government, working with AHBs and other stakeholders, is working to deliver supportive infrastructure to enable older people to age in place.

In other developments, Avondale House is being developed as an age-friendly tourist destination in Wicklow. Counties Clare and Mayo have worked with regional airports to develop their age-friendliness, which has great potential to enhance tourism opportunities for older people, presenting an economic opportunity as well as being a social inclusion measure.

The shared-service training module on Housing and Public Realm is now accredited by Engineers Ireland and the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland as a continuing professional development (CPD) module. Last year, it was delivered to 17 local authorities, with remaining sessions scheduled for 2022.

A suite of housing and public-realm resources is available, including an Age Friendly Homes Rating Checklist, a Guide to Rightsizing, a site-selection tool for older people's housing, and a brochure on Ten Universal Design Features to include in an Age Friendly and Lifetime Adaptable House. Local authorities and private tenants can use this to assess how suitable housing is for the ageing population.



Fingal County Council has undertaken an assessment of new social housing at Rolestown using the Ten Universal Design Features of an Age Friendly Home guide.



Members of Mayo Older People's Council were reunited in Breaffy House Hotel on Valentine's Day. For some members, it was their first time seeing each other face-to-face since the pandemic began.

Age-friendly business

The Age Friendly Business Recognition Programme is one of the core areas of work for the shared service. This programme is aimed at upskilling the business community to future proof their service for population ageing. Businesses are encouraged to consult with their older customers and commit to making changes to ensure that the business is age friendly. In June 2021, Age Friendly Ireland recognised leading nationwide businesses, awarding Age Friendly Charters to Bank of Ireland, Vodafone, Dalata Hotels, Specsavers, FBD Insurance, Cara Pharmacy, Kilkenny Design, and Member First Credit Union. The Age Friendly Business Programme is also supported by Chambers Ireland.

Voice of the older person

A fundamental principle of the programme is listening to older people. The voice of older people is represented nationally and locally through Older People's Councils. Older People's Councils are active in consultation, research, strategy development and monitoring, as well as in the delivery of initiatives such as information sessions, crime prevention and safety initiatives. Older People's Councils are returning to face-to-face meetings this year, having adapted to online platforms during the pandemic. They are planning their AGMs and looking forward to the return of the National Convention of Older People's Councils annual event, which will take place in May this year in Trim, County Meath.

In another recent development for the programme, Age Friendly ambassadors were appointed in each programme area. These are honorary positions for selected high-profile public figures who are recognised for their contribution to the community. They are invited by the Chief Executive of the local authority to act as spokespeople for the Age Friendly Programme. Among the prestigious list of Age Friendly ambassadors are former GAA President Nickey Brennan, country music star Sandy Kelly, businesswoman Celia Holman Lee and Communications Consultant Gavin Duffy.

Ensuring the voice of older people is prevalent throughout the programme means that the shared service is responding to the real issues experienced by older people. It also plays an important role in addressing ageism by bringing the voice of older people into the public domain and policy-making settings.

Healthy age-friendly homes

The Healthy Age Friendly Homes Programme Phase 1 was launched in July 2021. This is a Sláintecare-funded support co-ordination service delivered through local government. It aims to support older people to remain living at home for longer, and avoid premature transfer to residential care. Nine local co-ordinators are in place in the following host local authorities: Cork County, Dublin City, Fingal, Galway, Limerick, Longford, South Dublin, Tipperary, and Westmeath.

Co-ordinators undertake an assessment of the home environment aligned to four main areas of support: housing, community supports, health needs and digital supports.

Phase 1 of the programme is being evaluated by Maynooth University; researchers are seeking to understand the benefit of the programme in terms of quality-of-life and capacity to manage.

Nine months into Phase 1 of this two-year programme, we are already documenting demonstrable positive outcomes. By March 2022, the programme had received over **1,104** referrals, and carried out **927** assessment visits, with **2,166** actions in progress. Housing adaptation grants are one of the principal areas of need. Significant work is progressing in this area to enable older people to access the support they need to adapt their homes, leading to many positive outcomes, such as longevity of tenancy, falls reduction, safety and security, and better housing conditions.

International context

As an affiliate member of the WHO Global Network of Age

Friendly Cities and Communities, the Irish programme is a regular contributor to international conferences, including the recent International Federation on Ageing Conference in Canada.

The shared service is currently hosting an international webinar series, with each event aligned to one of the eight domains of the WHO programme. The recent webinar on 12 April looked at the topic of transport, including public transport, rural services, walkable environments, active travel, and how we can make transport infrastructure such as airports and train stations more age friendly.

Age Friendly Ireland is also running a virtual Town Hall series with the Centre for Ageing and Brain Health in Canada, which connects Older People's Council members with their counterparts in Canada for thematic conversations and shared learning opportunities.

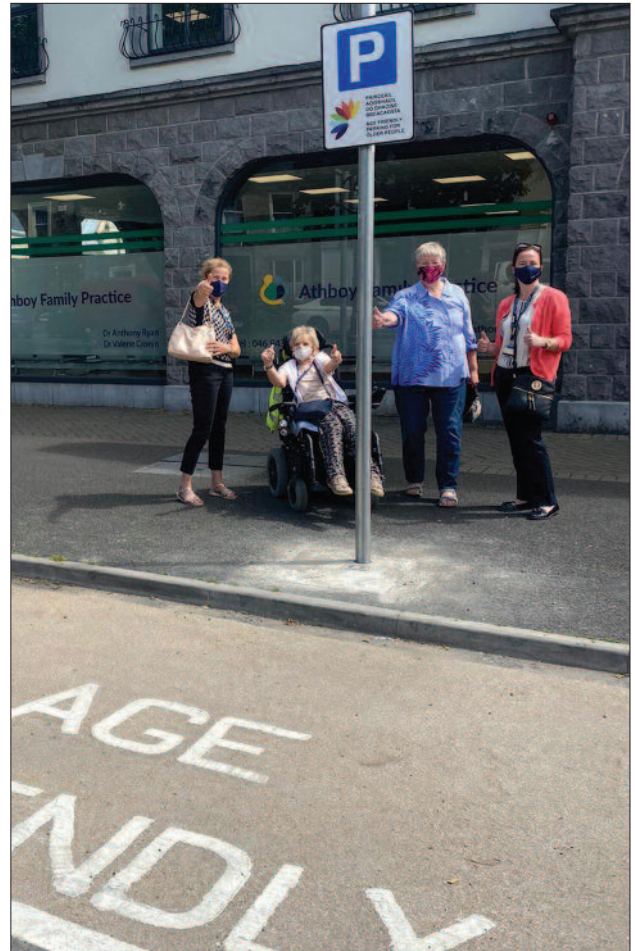
Climate-action agenda

Age Friendly Ireland is cognisant of the strong alignment between the ageing and climate-action agendas, and has been working alongside the Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) - also a shared service of local government - to deliver climate awareness workshops for older people. This body of work will be continued in 2022. Older People's Council members have expressed a strong interest in climate action and many of them are personally involved in local biodiversity, recycling, Tidy Towns and other community-based environmental initiatives.

Critical success factors

So, what is behind the exponential growth of the shared-service structure? Undoubtedly the leadership by local government has given the programme a very firm footing. Around the country, Chief Executives chair the high-level Age Friendly Alliance inter-agency structures. Another important factor in sustaining and growing the programme has been a high level of cross-departmental government support. The programme operates under a National Advisory Group that comprises five government departments, An Garda Síochána, the Health Service Executive and the Chamber of Commerce. This cross-governmental support for the programme, and the embedding of age-friendly objectives in policy documents and funding streams, is helping to put in place the necessary infrastructure and services for the growing ageing demographic.

Age Friendly is clearly referenced in national policy documents, including the Programme for Government, which sets out a vision for an age-friendly Ireland, particularly in the context of healthcare that will be needed by the ageing population, and supports to age in place in their own homes and communities. Other high-level policies that place a significant emphasis on preparing for population ageing are the health-



Age-friendly car-parking space outside Athboy Medical Centre, Co. Meath.

care reform programme *Sláintecare*, *Housing for All*, *Healthy Ireland* and the *National Sports Plan*.

Where to next?

The plan for the next phase of the programme is to extend Healthy Age Friendly Homes to all local authority areas. Continuing in the vein of collaborative working, six regional creative initiatives will be delivered in 2022 with funding from Creative Ireland. Research capacity is expanding with numerous linkages to academic studies. The shared service will continue its international webinar series this year. Age Friendly Ireland continues to publish a weekly newsletter. The highlight of this year will be the return of the annual Age Friendly Recognition and Achievement awards in the autumn; they showcase the wide range of initiatives being delivered by various agencies, private-sector bodies, and the community and voluntary groups around the country.

For more information on this, please visit:

www.agefriendlyireland.ie

www.agefriendlyhomes.ie

www.decadeofhealthyageing.org

Or please email: ECoveney@meathcoco.ie

HOUSING IN IRELAND

BEYOND THE MARKETS

EDITED BY: LORCAN SIRR

What the book is about

Good housing policy is good social policy. Indeed, what is little appreciated is that good housing policy is good transport policy, good health policy, good fiscal policy, good planning policy, good gender policy, and so on. The list is almost endless. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given how much money is spent on housing from multiple perspectives, there is a lot of discussion and analysis of housing – from policy to delivery. In other words, the physical manifestation of housing should be the culmination of other processes and not the start.



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Sharing Lessons Learned from Water Governance

Compiled by Cáit Ní Chorcora, IPA

In March, the EPA published the final report from a two-year programme of research with the IPA. The research paper, *Sharing Lessons Learned from Water Governance*, aims to draw out the learning from an innovative approach to tackling the challenge of improving water quality in Ireland. The research by the IPA reviewed changes in the governance approach made under the Second-Cycle River Basin Management Plan (RBMP). These sought to ensure a more coherent, cross-government approach to achieving better water quality and also involving non-government stakeholders. The report is essential reading for anyone involved in the implementation of complex policy where a joined-up approach is required.

This sixth and final publication shares the learnings from this research programme with the wider public service, in order to assist the refinement of governance arrangements for other complex policy issues.

The six areas highlighted in the report are:

1. Clearly assign roles and take ownership of responsibilities
2. Encourage experimentation, a willingness to engage with varying perspectives and responsiveness to local contexts
3. Make data central: its generation, monitoring, reporting and review
4. Focus on building capacity and sharing learning
5. Ensure a targeted and diverse approach to regulation
6. Carefully manage stakeholder engagement.

The section on 'Making Data Central' notes that, in complex policy areas, *'solutions are rarely true or false, but are usually better or worse to varying degrees'*. This difficulty points to the importance of good data to support evidence-informed judgments. In particular, the report highlights the benefits of using intermediate outcome indicators, which help us to recognise short- and medium-term achievements when engaging with stakeholders and can also flag the need for mid-course corrections.

The section on ensuring *'a targeted and diverse approach to regulation'* underlines the lack of policy coherence

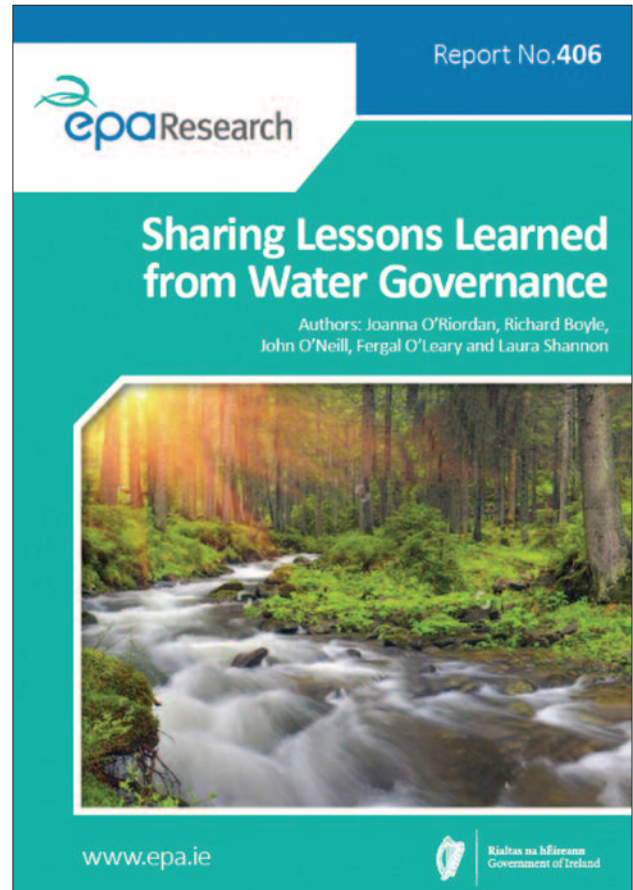
surrounding many of these complex issues. This creates difficulties in the development of proper regulatory measures. The report emphasises the importance of regularly reviewing policy to assess its impact on regulation and enforcement. In doing this, there should be a particular emphasis on improving policy coherence across government departments.

The section on *'carefully managing stakeholder engagement'* notes that involving stakeholders is particularly important when dealing with complex policy areas. The importance of the Water Forum's status as a statutory body in securing appropriate recognition by policymakers is also particularly highlighted. The report notes that this status has *'enhanced the level of access afforded to it'* and increased its credibility with other government organisations.

Ultimately, the effectiveness of any policy can be seen in the outcomes for the citizen. This report seeks to examine how to unite better structures and processes with improved capacity in order to ensure better public-service governance and ultimately better policy outcomes.

A copy of the report is available on the EPA website:

<https://www.epa.ie/publications/research/epa-research-2030-reports/research-406-sharinglessons-learned-from-water-governance.php>



CITY AND COUNTY MANAGEMENT IN IRELAND, 1929-2020
EDITORS
RICHARD BOYLE
FERGAL O'LEARY

IPA
INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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Local authorities play a major role in Irish life. The introduction of the management system in 1929 represented a new and innovative approach to how local authorities were run.

In *City and County Management in Ireland, 1929-2020*, contributions by renowned academics and practitioners describe the origins and development of the management system and its role in local and national development. The volume also includes brief career profiles of those who have held the offices of city/county manager, and more recently the office of chief executive. These profiles give a fascinating glimpse of the men and women who have been attracted to the service.

A chronology highlights developments in local government over the period examined, while a bibliography provides an overview of selected literature available on local government in Ireland.

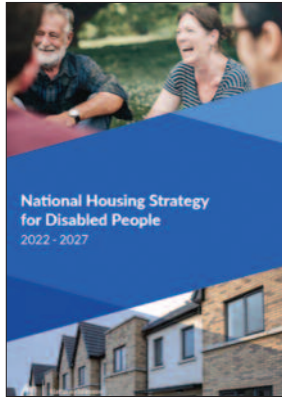
This work will be of particular interest to those who wish to understand how the management system in local government in Ireland has evolved, and to researchers and students with an interest in local government.

ISBN: 978-1-910393-37-6 Pages: 256 Price: €30.00 (hbk)

POLICY AND RESEARCH IN BRIEF

Some of the most recent and relevant policy and research publications.

Compiled by Cáit Ní Chorcora, IPA



National Housing Strategy for Disabled People 2022-2027 (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage)

This document sets out the Government's strategy for delivering housing and related supports for disabled people. The strategy aims to place a greater emphasis on community inclusion and on facilitating disabled people to live independently with the appropriate choices

and control over their living arrangements. It is based on the premise that more equal access to housing for disabled people with integrated support services promotes their inclusion in the community.

Stated outcomes include the improvement of effective collaboration between local authorities, aligning housing and support services and improving sharing of relevant information between agencies.

Under this strategy, Housing and Disability Steering Groups in each local authority area will continue to have a key role as the forum for delivery of the strategy's outcomes, ensuring that the strategy is implemented at local level.

The *Strategy* can be found at:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/60d76-national-housing-strategy-for-disabled-people-2022-2027/>

Two new publications on social housing (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage): *Design Manual for Quality Housing* and *Review of Pre-Construction Processes for Social Housing Construction and Mixed Tenure Projects*

These publications aim to improve the quality, cost-effectiveness and speed of delivery of social homes and mixed-tenure developments and shorten the required approvals processes.



Design Manual for Quality Housing

The design manual seeks to guide local authorities, and Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) and their consultants, on the design of social housing site layouts and the internal layouts of individual social homes or larger mixed-tenure developments. It includes sample site layouts and standard internal layouts for houses, duplexes and apartments. This will

allow proposals received, which adopt standard internal layouts, to be approved more speedily as the Department will not need to re-evaluate such standard internal layouts, as is necessary with unique, bespoke designs.

The *Design Manual for Quality Housing* can be found at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b3e02-design-manual-for-quality-housing/>



Review of Pre-Construction Processes for Social Housing Construction and Mixed Tenure Projects

This review outlines practical actions to shorten the approvals and other precontract processes, while ensuring cost-effectiveness for the taxpayer.

Actions include:

- De-risking potential delays
- Better guidance for Local Authorities (LAs), Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) and the Land Development Agency through the Approvals Process for Mixed Tenure
- Greater use of the single-stage approval process
- Fast tracking through Approval Stages, focusing urgently on any project road blocks
- Central online resources
- Further Project Management training for LAs and AHBs.

The *Review of Pre-Construction Processes* can be found at:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/639a8-review-of-pre-construction-processes-for-social-housing-construction-and-mixed-tenure-projects/>

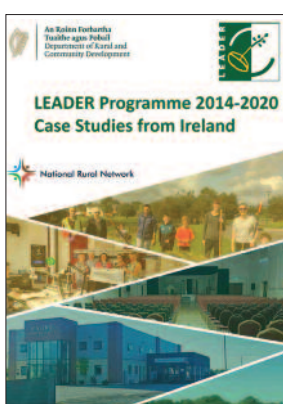


The Review of the Flood Risk Management Plans: Report - December 2021 (Office of Public Works)

In May 2018, Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs) were published under the 2007 EU 'Floods' Directive (2007/60/EC). The Office of Public Works (OPW) has now undertaken a review of the FRMPs to consider:

- Progress on the capital flood-relief scheme projects and other measures set out in the plans
- Other developments in flood risk management over the past three years
- The actions set out in the Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan for Flood Risk Management, 2019
- Consultation with the Inter-Departmental Flood Policy Coordination Group, the National 'Floods' Directive Coordination Group and the CCMA
- Ongoing public consultation on the progression of the measures set out in the Plans

The *Review of the Flood Risk Management Plans* can be found at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/bab83-review-of-the-flood-risk-management-plans-frmps-2021/>



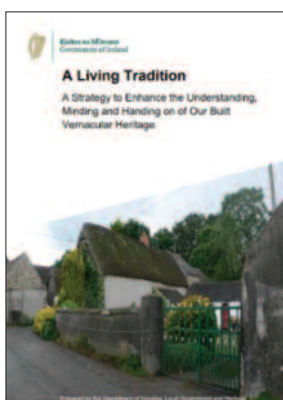
National Rural Network booklet on LEADER (Department of Rural and Community Development)

This booklet marks the thirtieth anniversary of the LEADER programme and outlines 72 successful case studies which have been funded through the LEADER measure of Ireland's Rural Development Programme. The publication aims to help future applicants to

develop viable community projects using the locally led 'bottom up' approach, recognising the diversity of rural areas and the importance of tailoring projects to meet local needs.

For a copy of the booklet, see:

<https://www.nationalruralnetwork.ie/leader-news/new-bookletcelebrates-30-years-of-leader-programme/>



A Living Tradition: A Strategy to Enhance the Understanding, Minding and Handing on of Our Built Vernacular Heritage (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage)

Our built vernacular relates to buildings and other items that were almost always built or made by the occupants and users themselves, drawing on long-standing traditions. These buildings are closely linked to

the local environment and their associated crafts are strongly local and regional. As these methods and materials tend to be environmentally friendly, they can provide us with inspiration on how to deal with the effects of climate change and other challenges.

This strategy seeks to address the continuing loss of buildings,

features and settings, and the erosion of building traditions and skills.

The themes outlined in the new strategy are: *'understanding'*, *'minding'* and *'handing on'* – this is in recognition of the fact that the vernacular is not only a part of our past but should also be considered part of our future.

A Living Tradition can be found at:

<https://www.buildingsofireland.ie/app/uploads/2021/12/ALiving-Tradition.pdf>



Town Centre First: A Policy Approach for Irish Towns

The stated aims of this new policy are:

- To tackle vacancy, combat dereliction and provide towns with resources they need to become more viable and attractive places to live, work, visit and run a business, and
- To help towns to function better as service, social, cultural and recreational hubs for the local community.

This policy aims to bring together businesses, local authorities and town teams in community planning. Each local authority will initially be provided with €100,000 to develop Town Centre First Plans. A network of Town Regeneration Officers with technical expertise will assist local Town Teams in formulating their Town Centre First Plan and in accessing regeneration funding. A National Town Centre First Office will lead this new approach and co-ordinate stakeholder engagement at a national level and across the local government sector.

Investment in this policy is spread across major government schemes such as the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF), the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF), Croí Conaithe (Towns) Fund, and the Town and Village Renewal Scheme.

Town Centre First can be found at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/473d3-town-centre-firstpolicy/>



Heritage Ireland 2030: A Framework for Heritage Strategy

This cross-government strategic policy sets out a framework for the protection of Ireland's heritage for the next decade and beyond. The strategy was developed following stakeholder consultation, which included the heritage and environmental sectors. The views of the diaspora were also gauged.

The principal themes outlined in the strategy are communities, leadership and partnerships. The need for ongoing collaboration between government and communities, stakeholders and local authorities for

successful delivery of this strategy is specifically highlighted. The strategy's framework sets out structures to allow all of these groups to come together to advance the protection of Ireland's heritage. The goal of the strategy is to enable the integration of heritage policy principles into decision making across the whole of government.

A comprehensive implementation plan for this strategy is now being developed to elaborate on the formation of delivery structures and to provide a clear roadmap for delivery of its actions.

Heritage Ireland 2030 can be found at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/778b8-heritage-ireland-2030/>



Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024

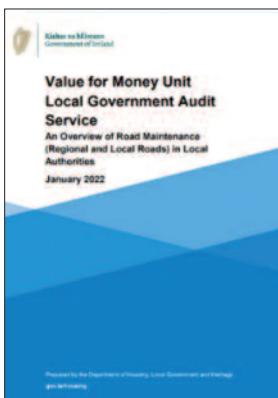
The new *Mid-West Regional Enterprise Plan to 2024* includes projects and initiatives across the three Mid-West counties (Clare, Limerick and Tipperary). Stakeholder engagement on the plan included consultation with industry, the public sector and higher education sectors from within the region.

The five stated strategic objectives are:

- Digitalisation and innovation
- Sustainability
- Enterprise in regional towns/rural areas
- Supporting SMEs, start-ups and microbusiness
- Social enterprise and tackling areas of high unemployment

Provision of education, training and skills initiatives to support each of the objectives is also included as part of the plan, with an overall goal to continue building regional capacity by leveraging regional strengths and opportunities.

The Plan can be found at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/0be91-mid-west-regional-enterpriseplan-to-2024/>



An Overview of Road Maintenance (Regional and Local Roads) in Local Authorities

The purpose of this report is to quantify the cost and funding of road maintenance for the Regional and Local Roads Network in all local authorities, covering the three years to 31 December 2019.

The report can be found at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/3df60-anoverview-of-road-maintenance-regional-and-local-roads-in-local-authorities/>

Recent events, initiatives and launches

Some memorable moments from local authority events from around the country caught on camera.



The Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall receive a warm Déise welcome at Reginald's Tower from the Mayor of Waterford City and County, Cllr Joe Kelly; Mary Butler TD, Minister for Older People and Mental Health; Michael Walsh, Chief Executive of Waterford City and County Council; and Director of Waterford Treasures, Eamonn McEaney. *Photo courtesy Julien Behal Photography.*



Official ribbon-cutting by Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, on the completion of the first 5km of the Barrow Blueway at Lowtown. The project is being delivered in partnership between Kildare County Council, Waterways Ireland and Laois County Council and is being funded through the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund. *Photo courtesy Ronan Melia.*



In a gesture of solidarity with the people and the country of Ukraine, the Ukrainian national flag was raised at County Hall, Swords, by the Mayor of Fingal, Cllr Seána Ó Rodaigh, in the presence of the Ukrainian Ambassador to Ireland, Her Excellency Ms Larysa Gerasko. *Photo courtesy Conor Healy/Coalesce.*



The St Patrick's Day Festival 2022 in Waterford City attracted record crowds. Over 70 contributors, including Spraoi, drama societies, community groups, sports clubs and youth groups took part in this year's festival. *Photo courtesy Digicol Photography.*



Mayor of the County of Cork, Cllr Gillian Coughlan at the launch of Cork County Council's Healthy Ireland County Strategy, in the presence of Minister of State for Public Health, Wellbeing and the National Drugs Strategy, Frank Feighan, TD, at Cork County Hall. *Photo courtesy Cork County Council.*



At the launch of a new brochure from Longford Tourism, Farrell Clan Chieftain, Connie O'Farrell, and his wife Rose are pictured (centre) with (L-R) Longford County Council Chief Executive Paddy Mahon; Tara Cunningham of Longford Tourism; Cathaoirleach of Longford County Council, Cllr Peggy Nolan; and Longford Tourism Officer Dympna Reilly. *Photo courtesy Longford County Council.*



'Clean it up you dirty pup!' - Galway City Council's novel community engagement approach to tackling dog litter in Galway City achieved a reduction of 60% in dog fouling in five trial areas. Pictured with one of the stencil markings around the city are Tiarnan McCusker, Environmental Awareness Officer with Galway City Council, and Malachy Duggan of Galway's Westend, with Gizmo. *Photo courtesy Galway County Council.*



The Chief Executive of Wicklow County Council, Brian Gleeson, and Cathaoirleach, Cllr Shay Cullen, pictured with the award for Council of the Year at the recent LAMA All Ireland Community and Council Awards.



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.

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