

## The Irish Housing Crisis.

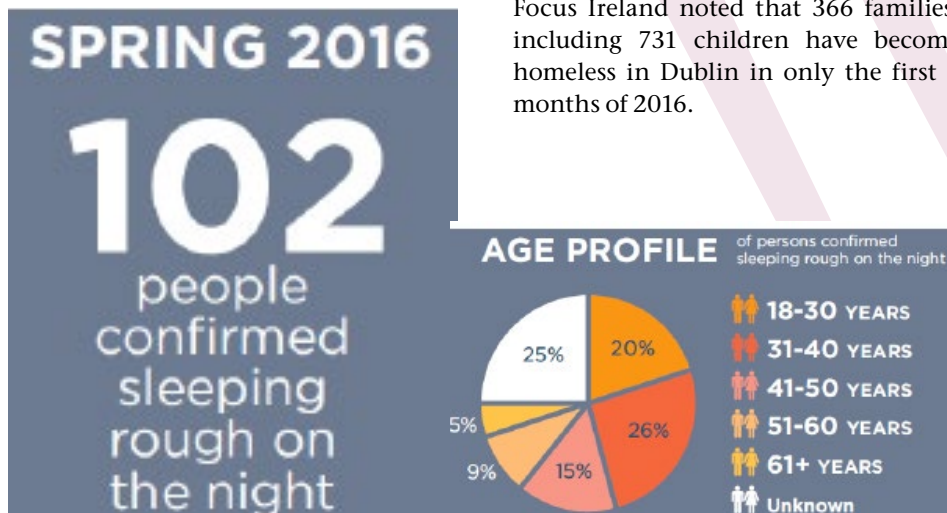
*By Facundo Daniel Méndez and  
Daniel Doyle of IPA Publications Division*

Six years of recession have contributed to the most severe housing crisis this country has ever faced. In February 2016, there were 5,811 people “officially homeless” in emergency accommodation, an increase of 48% over the previous February. Although this figure includes adults (3,930) and children (1,881), it excludes the “hidden homeless”, who languish in squats or domestic violence refuges or resort to “sofa surfing” with friends and acquaintances. Further excluded are those “sleeping rough”, a total of 102 in April 2016, an increase from 91 in December 2015. It is concerning that 16% of these were female and 5% over 61 years of age. These are precisely the ones that are most at risk and most vulnerable to aggression or inclement weather.

Brother Kevin Crowley has been running the Capuchin Day Centre in Dublin’s

inner city since 1969. He has noted that, between 2011 and 2015, there has been a 40% increase in the total meals served and food parcels distributed at the centre, with an exponential increase of 82% in the number of children attending for meals. In 2011, 4,389, an already elevated figure, were having meals at the centre. The number is now 8,000. Only last year, 218,400 meals were served on site, with 108,500 food parcels being distributed.

In the past, most of those availing of emergency homeless accommodation were single adults, but, throughout the last three years, there has been an exponential increment in the number of families becoming homeless. According to figures from the Department of the Environment, only in Dublin, there were 888 homeless families, of which 588 were single-parent. In total, they had 1,786 children to provide for. Focus Ireland noted that 366 families, including 731 children have become homeless in Dublin in only the first 4 months of 2016.



Dublin Region Homeless Executive, April 2016 Report.

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CAPUCHIN DAY CENTRE FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE FOOD SERVICE ACTIVITY - 2011 TO 2015				
Year	Meals served on site	Food Parcels Distributed	Total Food Units	NOTE Children Attending for Meals
2011	218,400	52,000	270,400	4,389
2012	236,000	73,000	309,000	4,612
2013	251,000	85,000	336,000	4,747
2014	264,000	95,500	359,500	5,148
2015	272,000	108,500	380,500	8,000
<b>NOTE</b>			<b>Increase of 110,200 = 40.72%</b>	<b>Increase of 3,611 = 82.27%</b>

Capuchin Day Centre Service Activity.

**Family homelessness during the week of 18-24 April**

Family homelessness during the week of 18-24 April				
Region	Total Families	Total adults	(of which) single parent families	Total dependents
Dublin	888	1188	588	1786
Mid-East	31	49	13	86
Midlands	23	24	22	39
Mid-West	20	25	15	48
North-East	2	4	0	2
North-West	2	2	2	5
South-East	16	23	9	27
South-West	33	36	30	75
West	22	28	16	53
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1037</b>	<b>1379</b>	<b>695</b>	<b>2121</b>

Department of the Environment, April 2016 Report.

The most recent official assessment of social housing requirements, published in May 2013, showed that 89,872 households qualified for social housing. One out of five had been on the list for over five years.

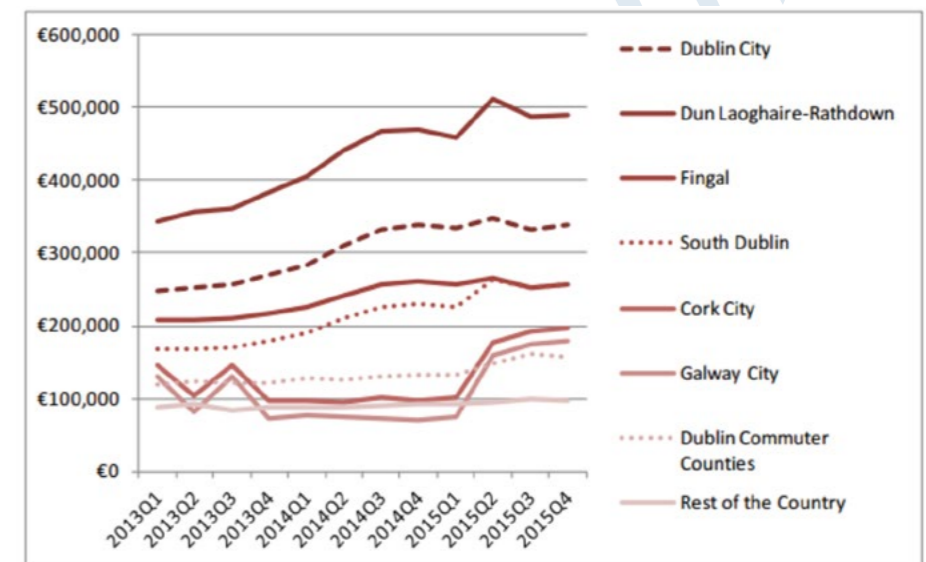
Homelessness is caused by manifold factors. Some of these can be structural, such as insufficient affordable housing, inadequate mental health services, unemployment and poverty. Others can be personal, such as mental health issues, family breakdown and addictions. Seeking to differentiate between both is a profitless exercise, since they mutually reinforce and compound each other. For instance, unemployment and poverty lead to all of

the personal factors mentioned, which, in turn, lead to further poverty and unemployment. Although the structural factors mentioned were always present, the crisis has immeasurably exacerbated them.

For instance, the vast number of homeless families had a stable home in the private-rented sector, before being plunged into their present plight by the crisis, owing to soaring rents, landlords selling up or being repossessed or a shortage of properties available to rent. Most of these families had never endured homelessness, let alone thought that this could transpire. Thousands more families daily eke out an existence on social welfare benefits or meagre incomes. As rents continue to increase, these are increasingly vulnerable to housing difficulties. According to an ESRI Report on housing trends published earlier this year, there has been an increase in purchase prices for housing nationally of 35% since early 2013. Meanwhile, rental prices by increased by 20% since early 2012.

Multitudes are succumbing to homelessness as paltry Rent Supplement payments fail to cover spiralling renting costs. They fall into arrears and finally lose their home. To make matters worse, other families are unable to find affordable rents, since their income is too low and most landlords do not accept rent supplement. Focus has been on facilitating affordable access to suitable housing for the most destitute, a number which is growing exponentially.

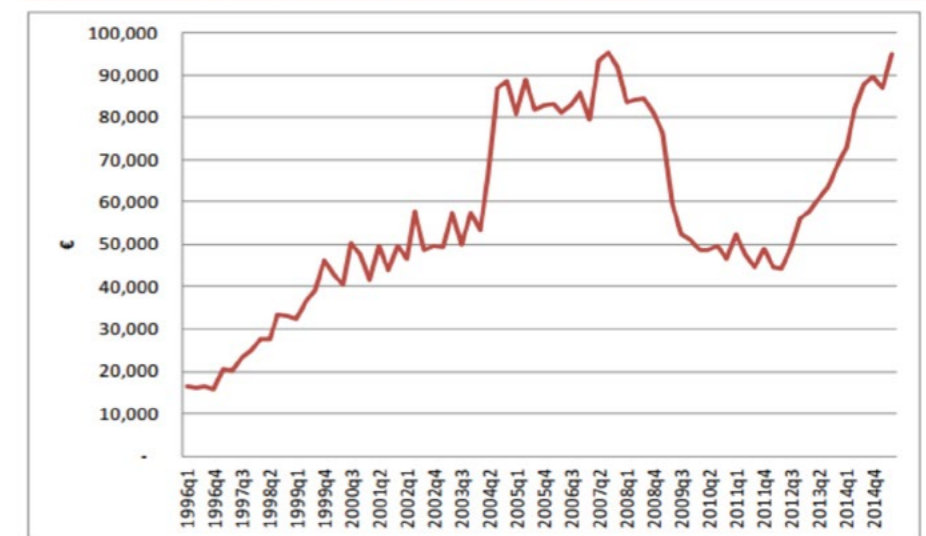
Certain government policies may also have exasperated this crisis, such as the decision to slash housing spending by 72% between 2008 and 2012, from €1.38bn to €390m. Additionally, reducing welfare rates for those under 25 may have contributed to the destitution of vulnerable young people. These



Source: The data are from Daft.ie. and refer to three-bedroom semi-detached houses. The figures for Dublin Commuter Counties and

ESRI Research Note, 2016: Housing Supply and House Price Trends: A Country-Level Analysis.

FIGURE 2 Standard Deviation of House Prices across Counties, 1996 to 2015



Source: Own calculations using data from the ESRI/PTSB House Price Index and Daft.ie

ESRI Research Note, 2016: Housing Supply and House Price Trends: A Country-Level Analysis.

have been among the first victims of the housing crisis, since social housing bodies, local authorities and landlords refuse to rent to them. In the absence of robust and effective intervention, experiencing homelessness at such a young age can lead to chronic or long-term homelessness.



### Current Policy Solutions to the Housing Crisis:

As set out by the National Statement of Housing Supply and Demand 2014 and Outlook for 2015-2017, affordable rent is said to be 35% of net income. Taking data from work commissioned by the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB), a person earning €36,000 in 2014 would have to allocate 41% of their income towards rent, when average rent at the time was € 957. In May of this year, the nationwide average rental price reached €1,006 per month, the highest level since May 2008. Implementing some form of rent control is one of the most commonly proposed solutions to the housing crisis, where current provisions are failing to constrain landlords raising rates, particularly in areas where housing supplies are limited.

Rent control can exist in a variety of forms, such as pricing set by local authorities or linked to the consumer price index. Due to the housing crisis and continually rising rents, some calls towards implementing rent controls have been made. Dr. Rory Hearne of the National University of Maynooth, recently made the case for rent controls as rental prices within Dublin remain too high for certain individuals and families, even in circumstances where they receive rent supplement or the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP). Economist David McWilliams also promoted the idea, “if only to prevent the tenant bearing the individual cost for the collective failures of the Irish housing market”. Mr. McWilliams also points towards Germany as a successful example of rent controlling, where effective systems have been in place for decades. Germany has recently passed updated legislation in June of 2015, where authorities limit rent prices to the average rates within an area from the last 4 years.

At present, the Irish government has attempted to address high rent prices with ‘rent certainty’ initiatives, rather than control measures. Signed into law on the 4th of December, 2015, the



Daft.ie Report, ‘We need to escape 10% rental inflation being the new normal’

Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act, 2015, increases the rent review period from one to two years and establishes that landlords must give ninety days’ notice of such reviews, up from twenty-eight. Further amendments to the Act were added on the 9th of May, 2016, providing for more comprehensive information to be disclosed by the landlord in the event of a review of rent or tenancy. This legislation to help alleviate the housing crisis shows unwillingness by the government to commit to firm rent control measures, stemming from fears of the negative ramifications of such policies.

Criticism of rent control measures come from both the government and private sector and have resulted in an apprehension in pursuing such policies. In September of 2014, after reading the aforementioned PRTB commissioned report, previous Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Mr. Alan Kelly, was “not convinced” rent control would be an efficient policy solution to the housing crisis, as it may “run the risk of encouraging a large number of so-called accidental landlords to leave the sector, thus exacerbating the supply problem and leading to yet higher rent levels”. Similarly, in SIPTU’s 2014 discussion paper, it is noted that rent controls can only work if “accompanied by a steady increase in housing supply. Otherwise,

they are likely to be detrimental to the private rental market and will exacerbate existing rental conditions”.

Current Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, Mr. Simon Coveney, has not entirely dismissed the idea of implementing rent controls, but also remains “cautious” about it. On the 8th of June, Mr. Coveney addressed the Third Annual Housing Policy Conference at Trinity College Dublin entitled “Homelessness and Social Housing: Policy Solutions”. While the focus of the conference was on social housing, the Minister explicitly stated how “interwoven” social housing and the overall housing market were and how housing was “an absolute priority” for the government. In conjunction with the Minister of State for Housing and Urban Renewal, Mr. Damian English, Mr. Coveney is currently preparing an “Action Plan” to alleviate the housing crisis. While rent control is not directly mentioned, the Action Plan will focus on ensuring “that most of the additional houses and apartments are affordable”.

What was heavily focused on within the Action Plan however, was the issue of housing supply. Attention was drawn by Mr. Coveney to figures from a 2016 Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) Research Note, where it was shown there is a need for approximately 25,000 homes to be built per year, a great

deal more than the 12,600 built in 2015. Ireland’s first set of modular homes were recently wrapped up in Poppintree, Dublin, and while the success of these 22 homes has yet to be seen, they show the capability of producing social housing units quickly, making such increases to the housing supply a possibility. Further modular housing sites have emerged all around Dublin, showing increasing interest in the method. Such a need for fast-paced building could be aided by the large amounts of land now owned by the State, or by State-owned bodies such as Irish Rail, that are not being made use of, nor are going to be used in the near future. Land-banks owned by the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA), could also be availed of, yet this may be at the expense of the tax-payer.

An important distinction was also made by Mr. Coveney in his address, where he clarified that the location of such new houses is also of vital importance. “We need to be building somewhere in the region of 25,000 units per annum to meet the need and we need to ensure that these are in the right locations”. In an earlier Research Note by the ESRI from 2014, attention is drawn to the



Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, Mr. Simon Coveney.

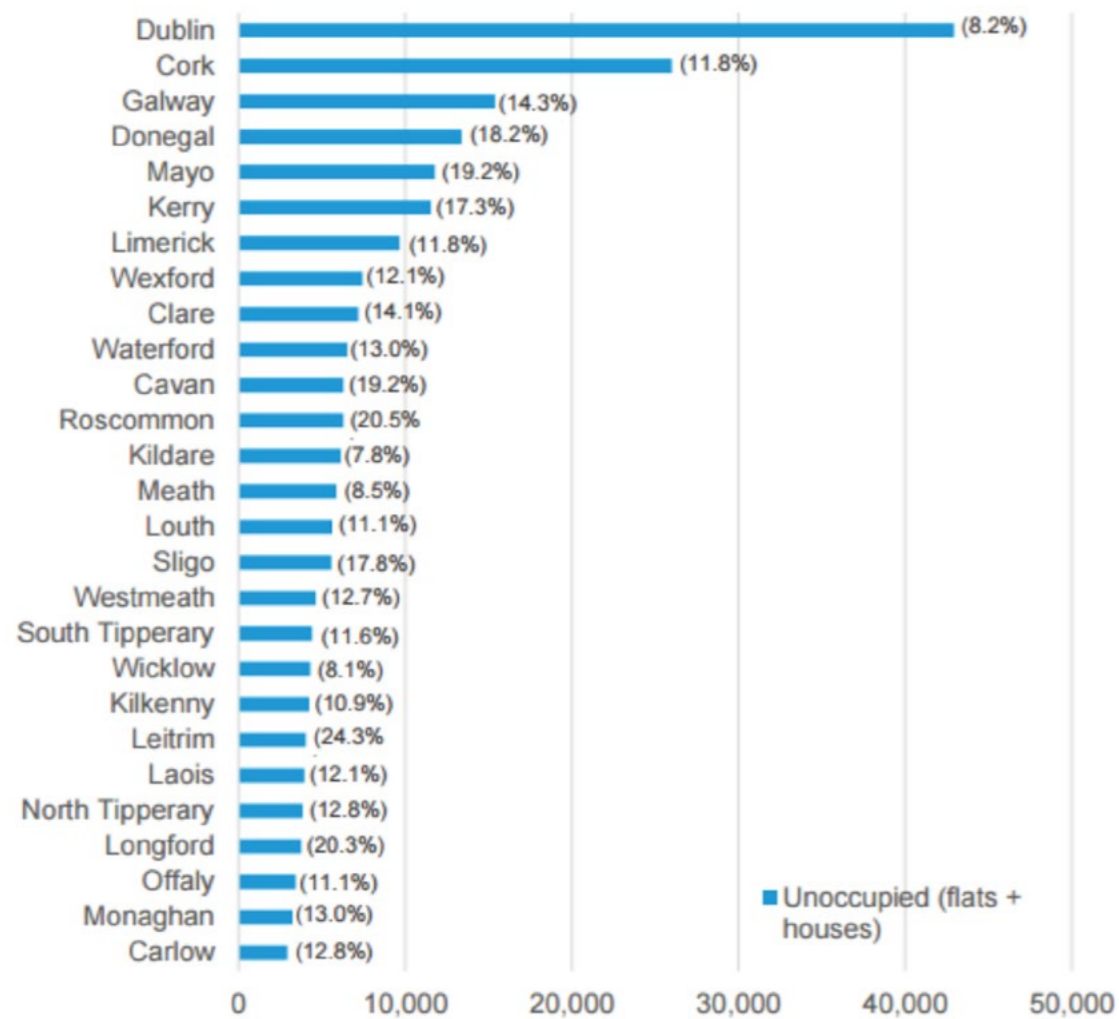
issue of vacant properties, where it was shown from data in the Census of the Population, 2011, that some 230,000 homes were vacant across Ireland. It was also noted that some 180,000 households would need to be added over the ten-year period from 2011 – 2021. This illustrates that the need for additional housing is not evenly spread across Ireland. It is estimated that 60% of the required additional homes would be concentrated in Dublin, with the rest

being disseminated across the Dublin Commuter Belt, encompassing Kildare, Louth, Meath and Wicklow. Other larger cities, particularly Cork and Galway would also require more dwellings than other areas. These regional disparities evince that a county-level analysis of supply is more fruitful than one executed at the national level, since the latter fails to identify housing pressures in specific areas.



Borrisoleigh wastewater plant new dewatering beds, with decanting doors and covers





Housing Agency – Tackling Empty Homes – Number of vacant homes by county, excluding holiday homes. Vacancy rate as a percentage of each country in brackets.

Furthermore, it is important to make the distinction between houses built for the private market and those used for the provision of social housing. Published on the 26th of November, 2014, the Social Housing Strategy 2020 (SHS) plans for the delivery of some 35,000 social housing units by 2020 under a budget of €3.8bn, in addition to support provided for a further 75,000 homes through an enhanced private rented sector using rent supplements, the HAP and the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS). As part of the Minister Coveney’s Action Plan, it is hoped that the

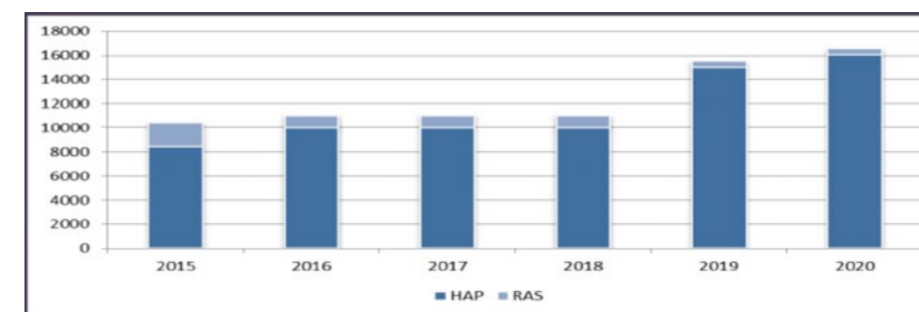
targets set within this strategy will be accelerated and exceeded. This initiative is a step in the opposite direction from recent spending in social housing where in 2015, out of the approximate 12,600 homes built, only 476 of these were social housing units. Additionally, last year also brought a reduction in the social housing provision quota from 20% to 10%, halving the amount of social homes required to be built by contractors, when building ten or more private homes. Although this measure would seemingly reduce the number of social housing units built, it has been

predicted to encourage the building of “at least 4,000 extra units of social housing between now [2015] and 2020” by making it more attractive for large quantities of homes to be built privately.

This housing crisis also poses many challenges for local authorities in particular, as housing has become their largest area of service provision, as well as being responsible for enforcing such social housing quotas on private contractors. Of the 476 social housing units built last year, a meagre 75 of these were built by local authorities, the



Social Housing Units to be Delivered – Social Housing Strategy, 2020



Social Housing Units to be Delivered – Social Housing Strategy, 2020



TheJournal.ie – Only 75 local authority houses built in 2015.

lowest figure on record, dating back to 1970. While there is a clear deficiency in this area, these figures come as a result of poor funding to local authorities, amongst some of the highest levels of homelessness Ireland has ever faced. Appearing before the Oireachtas, the Association of Irish Local Government (AILG) has claimed to reach the targets set out by the SHS, funding to the tune

of €5.5bn would be needed. The AILG also supported comments made by the Housing Finance Agency (HFA) who have stated they would be willing to loan local authorities up to €10bn to finance additional social housing units, at a fixed rate of 1.75%. As the frontline of the State amidst the housing crisis, local authorities could benefit drastically from increased funding

to help provide social housing to the homeless of Ireland and those in need. Returning to the subject of vacant homes, local authorities may also be tasked with a larger role in the oversight of such premises, with suggestions from Sinn Féin to implement compulsory purchase orders, and from the Housing Agency to introduce ‘Empty Dwelling Management Orders’, which would bring properties back into use without change of ownership.

While the housing crisis has been a creeping issue over the last number of years, recent developments in homelessness and a steep decline in social housing construction, in addition to the establishment of the 32nd Dáil, has propelled the problem into the forefront of the government agenda. It still remains to be seen if current and recent measures will meaningfully mitigate the problems and negative outcomes of the crisis, or if further policy intervention will be necessary at a later date.

**Hyperlinks of reports:**

MerrionStreet.ie – Social Housing Strategy Document – November 2014: [http://www.merrionstreet.ie/en/ImageLibrary/Social\\_Strategy\\_Document\\_20141126.pdf](http://www.merrionstreet.ie/en/ImageLibrary/Social_Strategy_Document_20141126.pdf)

SIPTU – Discussion paper on Ireland’s Housing Crisis – July 2014: <http://www.siptu.ie/bulletin/pdf/1406896980HousingCrisisPaper31.07.14.pdf>

PRTB & DKM Economic Consultants – Rent Stability in the Private Rented Sector – September 2014: [http://dkm.ie/en/news/dkm\\_reports\\_on\\_private\\_rented\\_sector\\_published1](http://dkm.ie/en/news/dkm_reports_on_private_rented_sector_published1)

ESRI Research Note – Projected Population Change and Housing Demand: A County level Analysis – 2014: <https://www.esri.ie/pubs/RN20140203.pdf>

ESRI Research Note – Housing Supply and House Price Trends: a County Level Analysis – 2016: <https://www.esri.ie/pubs/RN20160101.pdf>

Housing Agency – National Statement of Housing Supply and Demand 2014 and Outlook for 2015-17 – July 2015: <https://www.housing.ie/getattachment/News/Current-News/Increasing-Demand-for-Housing-Requires-Significant-National-Statement-of-Housing-Supply-and-Demand-2014-and-Outlook-for-2015-2017.pdf>

Irish Statute Book - Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2015: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/act/42/enacted/en/pdf>

David McWilliams – Why we need rent controls – November 2015: <http://www.davidmcwilliams.ie/2015/11/02/why-we-need-rent-controls>

Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government – Homelessness Report April 2016: [http://www.environment.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/homelessness\\_report\\_april\\_2016.pdf](http://www.environment.ie/sites/default/files/publications/files/homelessness_report_april_2016.pdf)

Housing Agency - Tackling Empty Homes – May 2016: <http://www.housing.ie/getattachment/Our-Publications/Latest-Publications/16-05-17-Vacant-Homes-Paper-Housing-Agency.pdf>

## Key Recommendations on Housing and Homelessness

On Friday, June, 17th, 2016, the Committee on Housing and Homelessness published its report into the shortage of housing supply and the related problem of homelessness. The Committee has identified a large number of recommendations that need to be acted upon and attaches particular importance to a number of key recommendations, and calls on the Government, the local authorities and other State bodies to prioritise these.

### Committee Membership:

#### Chairman:

John Curran TD (Fianna Fáil)

#### Deputies:

Colm Brophy TD (Fine Gael)

Mary Butler TD (Fianna Fáil)

Ruth Coppinger TD (AAA-PBP)

Barry Cowen TD (Fianna Fáil)

Bernard Durkan TD (Fine Gael)

Kathleen Funchion TD (Sinn Féin)

Dr Michael Harty TD (Independent)

Kevin Moran TD (Independent)

Eoin Ó Broin TD (Sinn Féin)

Fergus O'Dowd TD (Fine Gael)

Maureen O'Sullivan TD (Independent)

Brendan Ryan TD (Labour)

Mick Wallace TD

(Independents 4 Change)

The Committee had its first meeting on 20 April 2016 and was required to present a final report to the Dáil on 17 June 2016.

The Executive Summary of the Report underlines that “the number of people affected by homelessness has increased substantially in recent years, and the public funding made available to meet the needs of those people has also risen substantially. There are essentially two broad cohorts among homeless people – those who cannot afford to meet the cost of homes, and those who have complex needs and require support to live independently. Analysis of the data reveals that almost 70% of homeless adults are in Dublin and that there has been increase in homelessness among families. Emergency accommodation is frequently not suitable for families, and it is also becoming more difficult to obtain. People who seek assistance from local authorities and other bodies in relation to housing frequently experience a diverse range of related complex needs. This includes people with a disability, an addiction, or mental health issues, as well as young people and those leaving care, travellers, prisoners and asylum seekers. In such cases, the provision of standard housing on its own would be an incomplete response to the needs arising. A more complete response that gives consideration to such issues as the maintenance of socially inclusive and sustainable communities, and access to a full range of services and facilities is necessary.”

The Report also notes that “having considered the range of issues arising, the Committee has identified a large number of recommendations that need to be acted upon. It attaches particular importance to the following key recommendations, and calls on the Government, the local authorities and other State bodies to prioritise these.

### Priority Recommendations

- Increase the social housing stock (owned by local authorities and approved housing bodies) by at least 50,000 units (an annual average of 10,000 per year) through a programme of acquisition, refurbishment and new build.
- Reduce the Part 8 planning process from 8 to 6 weeks. Where there are unreasonable delays beyond the 6 weeks, emergency powers (such as the statutory provisions of section 179 of the Planning and Development Act) should be invoked. Also, encourage greater use of Part 8 for AHBs where appropriate as it is for local authorities for a period of 18 months.
- The Minister should consider the establishment of a Housing Procurement Agency with staff from the Housing Agency, NTMA, Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, and the Department of Finance to assist local authorities and approved housing bodies to deliver their social housing programme through supports including funding and procurement.
- Introduce a system of rent certainty by linking rent reviews to an index such as the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and review annually.
- Increase security of tenure and protection from evictions for tenants by:
  - o Introducing a scheme whereby a housing association or local authority can purchase a rental property from an exiting investor (Rent switch programme).

o Increasing security of tenure from the current 4 year period.

o Establishing legal safeguards to allow tenants to remain in situ during and after sale of property

o Amend the Residential Tenancies Act to outlaw the sale of property as grounds for evicting a tenant, except in exceptional circumstances where severe financial hardship can be proven by the landlord.

• The Government should, at a minimum, before the summer Recess and as a matter of urgency, fully and quickly implement the programme for Government's strategy to deal with mortgage arrears.

• Subject to advice of the Attorney General, the Government should introduce legislation for a moratorium on home repossessions until such time as the Government's proposals are in place.

• Increase the use of long-term solutions to mortgage distress, including Mortgage-to-Rent (MTR), split mortgages, debt writedowns and downsizing.

• The Government should urgently seek flexibility from the European Commission on the application of the EU fiscal rules to the financing of social housing.

• The Government should provide the maximum possible direct Exchequer investment in the provision of social housing in the Capital Programme.

• The Government should establish an off-balance sheet funding mechanism to provide additional investment in social and affordable housing.

• The Government should seek to mobilise as quickly as possible, all possible sources of funding, including funding from the Housing Finance Agency, Strategic Investment Fund, the Irish League of Credit Unions and Irish Pension Funds, to increase

the supply of social and affordable housing.

• Rent Supplement and Housing Assistance Payments should be increased to reflect current market rates, and appropriate legislative safeguards should be put in place to ensure rent certainty.

• Amend the National Asset Management Agency Act 2009 (S.2 and S.10) to allow NAMA to be an agent for the provision of social housing.

• NAMA should use its cash reserves to tackle the housing and homelessness crisis.

• Reinstate the policy of ring-fencing 50% of local authority allocations to the priority list in Dublin and other areas where homelessness is acute. The policy should be reviewed every six months and should ensure that the needs of longterm homeless people are met.

• Ensure that no homeless shelters are closed until alternative accommodation is available elsewhere.

• Housing First should be significantly expanded and prioritise the long-term homeless.

• There should be increased resourcing for and improved coordination between HSE mental health services and homeless service providers to ensure that the needs of people with mental health issues are met within the homeless system.' (pages 5-7, Executive Summary, Houses of the Oireachtas Report of the Committee on Housing and Homelessness June 2016)

At the launch of the Report, the Committee Chairman, John Curran TD, outlined that “the report we are launching today is one which our Committee believes makes an important contribution towards tackling the

ongoing housing and homelessness crisis. Homelessness remains a very real issue in Ireland and as well as those people sleeping rough, it is also important to acknowledge the swathes of people who are not immediately identifiable as homeless – those who are waiting on housing lists; living in temporary, unsuitable accommodation and those desperately trying to find affordable rental accommodation. This report represents our findings after hearing from many witnesses and accepting over 80 written submissions from the public and interested stakeholders. The focus of the Committee has been to identify how the obstacles that are currently impeding progress on the issues can be surmounted, as well as the specific actions that need to be taken to achieve urgent implementation of measures to address the problems involved. In so doing, we hope to inform and assist the actions planned under the Programme for a Partnership Government. In this report, the Committee identifies a number of recommendations which it believes are a necessary part of the national response to the challenge. As Chairman, I would like to thank all those who appeared before the Committee during the course of our hearings and, in particular, all those who met with the Committee delegation during our visit to Focus Ireland. It is our hope that the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, Mr. Simon Coveney TD, will consider carefully our recommendations in his future policy formulation.”

Read the full Report:  
<http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/media/committees/32housingand-homelessness/Final-Report-.pdf>

#### Source:

<http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/mediazone/pressreleases/2016/name-38464-en.html>





**Call for Papers: Regional Studies Association Irish Branch Annual Conference, in conjunction with The Western Development Commission**

# Planning for Regional Development: The National Planning Framework as a Roadmap for Ireland’s Future?

Friday 9 September 2016, NUI Galway

**Theme:**

The island of Ireland is on the cusp of an unprecedented period of historical importance with the population of the island set to finally bridge the gap of population loss which arose through the Great Famine some 160 years ago. Pre-famine Ireland had one of the densest populations in Europe and the century following the famine was marked by a population decline which created a largely rural population with low densities across the island, most noticeably in what is now the Republic.

Current trends suggest that the next 30 years could see the Republic’s population reach up to 6.5 million while Northern Ireland’s population will top 2 million. The island and both jurisdictions need to plan for such growth. This is going to require an enormous shift in thinking in how and where people live, work, recreate and travel. The development pressures arising, along with the need to address development legacies from the past require innovative and long-term thinking if both jurisdictions are to avoid unnecessary congestion, inadequate housing provision as well as meeting the hugely challenging environment of change from the international arena.

In the Republic efforts are underway to develop a new National Planning Framework (NPF) while the Northern Ireland Government is also looking to address the Region’s oncoming growth. Is it possible that both are finally beginning to grapple with the need for long term planning underpinned by an effective island-wide investment programme which will equip both urban and rural communities to meet this oncoming dynamic policy environment?

Marking the development of the National Planning Framework the Regional Studies Association Irish Branch is using its national conference to, amongst others, look at the many challenges and possible initiatives which would help position the island to confront such pressures. We will examine best international practice in spatial planning and will look at what should be at the heart of Irish regional development and planning policy so that the growth envisaged will, finally, equip the people across the island to have a real understanding of current spatial processes and what vision for Ireland should be at the cornerstone of local, regional and national development over the next 30 years.

**Submission themes:**

We call for presentations from, policy makers, academia and practitioners active in the field of regional studies. Post-graduate students are encouraged to submit. We call for presentations dealing with, amongst others, the following themes:

- The new National Planning Framework
- One island, two jurisdictions
- Visioning Ireland
- The NPF and Governance
- The NPF and Housing
- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies
- Local and regional economic forums
- New approaches to regional development
- International comparator cases
- Other contributions dealing with the topic of regional studies are invited and will be included in focussed sessions

**Submissions:**

Please submit proposals for presentation in the form of a 250 word abstract through the Regional Studies Association – Irish Branch online portal by 31st July 2016.

Submissions should be forwarded to [chris.vanegeraat@nuim.ie](mailto:chris.vanegeraat@nuim.ie)

**Venue:**

NUI Galway

Registration and Conference updates:  
Conference fees: 70 Euro (including lunch)

Registration and conference updates are available on the Regional Studies Association, Irish Branch website at: <http://rsa-ireland.weebly.com/>

Any queries regarding registration should be send to [justin.doran@ucc.ie](mailto:justin.doran@ucc.ie)

## Launch of Cultúr: A Strategic Vision for Cultural Services in Donegal County Council 2016-2020

At the launch of the Cultúr: A Strategic Vision for Cultural Services on Monday 27th June, 2016, at the Regional Cultural Centre in Letterkenny, Mr. Seamus Neely, Chief Executive of Donegal County Council underlined the Council's firm commitment to cultural development and its value to the county: "cultural development is a serious and substantial part of the work of Donegal County Council. By 2020, we want Donegal's reputation as a leader in culture to be strengthened by our commitment to its development. Donegal County Council believes that to invest in arts, culture, heritage and language is a commitment to a healthier, more fulfilled, prosperous, successful county and the staff and members of Donegal County Council are very committed to its implementation. This year, 2016 is a special year in Ireland. It is a time to reflect on the motivation of those who sought to build a new Ireland 100 years ago. It is with a new economic optimism



Pictured at the launch of Donegal County Council's Cultúr: A Strategic Vision for Cultural Services 2016 - 2020 on Monday in the Regional Cultural Centre, Letterkenny is Joe Mulholland, Guest Speaker and Director of MacGill Summer School with Eileen Burgess, Divisional Manager of Cultural Services, Donegal County Council.



Pictured at the launch of Donegal County Council's Cultúr: A Strategic Vision for Cultural Services 2016 - 2020 on Monday in the Regional Cultural Centre, Letterkenny left to right: Joe Mulholland, Guest Speaker and Director of MacGill Summer School, Seamus Neely, Chief Executive, Donegal County Council, Cllr. Terence Slowey, Cathaoirleach, Eileen Burgess, Divisional Manager of Cultural Services, Donegal County Council and Joe Peoples, Director of Service, Donegal County Council.

that we can look forward again to a cultural vision that seeks to build and move forward our cultural development for the coming years".

Also speaking at the launch Cllr Slowey, Chairman of Donegal County Council, outlined that "County Donegal's unique and varied culture is a source of immense pride and our county and its culture have always been intertwined. This culture is an all encompassing, evolving force that helps us express and celebrate who we are as a diverse, traditional and modern people. Through our arts, libraries, language and heritage, we showcase a county that strikes a unique cultural beat. We believe that this beat should be heard loudly, clearly and confidently across the mountains and lakes of Donegal, Ireland and the world. To protect and promote our culture, language, arts, libraries and heritage in county Donegal and encourage existing and new cultural forms to flourish, we must think laterally, aim high and chart

out a vision for the future".

In developing the Cultural Services Strategic Plan for the next five years, the public were invited to identify what were the key cultural issues, how could Cultural Services realistically address or support these issues and finally what should Cultural Services focus on as key priority areas from 2016 to 2020. Through careful consideration, Cultúr: A Strategic Vision for Cultural Services in Donegal County Council 2016-2020 was developed under the following six key areas of Public Participation, Life Long learning and Social Inclusion, Supporting Arts & Arts Organisations, Conserving and promoting Cultural Inheritance, Building relationships with stakeholders and partners and finally developing a sustainable, high quality Cultural Service.

Source:

Donegal County Council Communications Office.

## Irish Planning Institute Annual Conference, 2016

- Call for the establishment of the Office of the Planning Regulator
- Appointment of a Minister for Planning & Housing
- Institute also calls for establishment of free Planning & Environmental Advice Service for the public
- Urges financial incentives for refurbishing buildings and review of listing system for heritage buildings, as current system is "too crude"
- Tara Buckley of RGDATA calls for Town Centre Health Checks to avert decline of rural towns;
- Richard Guiney of DublinTown urges towns to plan for future or risk dying

At its annual conference in Athlone (April 14 and 15, 2016), the Irish Planning Institute called for the establishment of the Office of the Planning Regulator if Ireland is to avert repeating its past planning mistakes. The Institute also believed in the appointment of a Minister for Planning & Housing at Cabinet level in recognition of the crucial role that planning has to play in addressing the current housing crisis and in creating sustainable and vibrant living communities. This request for a Ministerial appointment, has come to fruition with the appointment of Mr Simon Coveney as Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government on May 7th, 2016.

The two-day conference in April, 2016 was officially opened by Deirdre Fallon, President of the Irish Planning Institute, who used her address to outline some key planning priorities for the Government. Among the Institute's key recommendations are:

- the need to set up a free Planning and Environmental Advice Service, along the lines of the UK's Planning Aid service, for members of the public, and to encourage greater public

- participation in the development plan process and planning system
- the need to update the current "crude" listing system for heritage buildings and to introduce financial incentives to offset concerns about the cost of refurbishing buildings
- the need to provide legislative clarity around the term "planner"

Founded in 1975, the Irish Planning Institute is the all-island professional body representing the majority of professional planners engaged in physical, spatial and environmental planning in Ireland. Members work in central government, private practice, agencies, third level institutes, and planning authorities in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and overseas. The conference was attended by planning professionals, engineers, architects, surveyors, regulatory officials, property and housing professionals, and policy-makers. Among the key speakers were Conall Boland, Deputy Chairperson of An Bord Pleanála, Gregory Jones QC, chair of the recently-published review of An Bord Pleanála, Tara Buckley, RGDATA, Richard Guiney, DublinTown, and Karl Deeter of Irish Mortgage Brokers.

### Planning for the Future

**Deirdre Fallon, President of the Irish Planning Institute sounded a note of caution on repeating the planning mistakes of the past:**

"There are clear pressures to deliver on new housing but we must be careful not to repeat the mistakes of the past. Rather we must continue to focus on the right development in the right place with the right infrastructure, to ensure quality and long-term viability. We need to address the significant shortage of planners in local authorities around the

country. New legislation is required that provides for clarity on the term 'planner' to reinforce public confidence and to emphasise that professional planners are suitably qualified professionals with high educational standards and are bound by a professional code of ethics. Further, there is a clear need for the immediate establishment of the Office of the Planning Regulator, with full enforcement powers to ensure that the recommendations of the Mahon Tribunal are fully implemented and that the Office of the Planning Regulator can operate as an independent body. A new Minister for Planning and Housing at Cabinet rank should be appointed to take senior responsibility for the critical planning and housing issues facing our communities and to co-ordinate a comprehensive cross-Government response. [Mr Simon Coveney, T.D., was appointed as Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government on May 7th, 2016]. We also need to encourage greater public engagement and community involvement in planning, through public education on the development plan process and on the planning system so that people can make a real contribution at a critical stage in the planning process. Consideration should be given to the establishment of a free Planning and Environmental Advice Service, such as the UK's Planning Aid service, aimed at individuals and communities who perhaps do not have the knowledge and the resources to access the planning system. Ireland's historic environment and heritage is an economic asset and in 2011 was estimated as accounting for €1.5 billion or 1 per cent of the State's Gross Value Added (GVA) and approximately 65,000 jobs (Economic Value of Ireland's Historic Environment. Final Report to the Heritage Council, prepared by Ecorys in partnership



with Fitzpatrick Associates. Available at <http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/>). A comprehensive package of financial incentives would offset concerns about the cost of refurbishing buildings and encourage living in city and town centres to improve quality of life and the vibrancy and attractiveness of city and town centres. Furthermore, the Irish Planning Institute believes that the current system of listing of heritage buildings is too crude and that a grading system for protected buildings should be introduced.”

### Town Centre Health Checks

**Tara Buckley, Director General of RGDATA—the Retail, Grocery, Dairy and Allied Trades Association—called for the development of a National Town Centre Management Strategy that would include mandatory Town Centre Health Checks:**

“We all know that a lot of our ‘ugly planning’ has been driven by people who are not professional planners. Local Authorities have a central responsibility to drive new initiatives to regenerate towns. A key step to assist them is the adoption of a National Strategy on Town Centre Management. To do this properly we must start with Town

Centre Health Checks. RGDATA and the Heritage Council have devised a draft Town Centre Health Check pilot strategy to assist in the development of Town Plans. Town centre revival will not happen if we do not develop policies that encourage people to live in town centres. New urban regeneration tax schemes will be required to kick-start investment in some towns and villages. Out-of-town and edge-of-town retail development act as a counter-attraction to town centres and suck trade from town centre businesses. If these are the models of retailing that Irish people want to support, then they must be aware of the collective societal price in terms of desolate towns and villages.”

**Richard Guiney, CEO of DublinTown, is sounding a warning bell for the future of towns that fail to act now:**

“Towns in Ireland are experiencing a time of rapid change. If they do not plan for the 21st century, there is no guarantee that towns on the map today will be still viable destinations in 25 years’ time. In assessing their long-term viability, towns need to engage with their local populations, assessing how relevant their town is to their needs and understanding how they can best hold onto their best and brightest

young people. Shopping malls and retail parks continuously use consumer research techniques to ascertain public perceptions of their offer—towns have to do likewise. One common theme in successful locations and particularly those which have been transformed into vibrant destinations is a genuine partnership and shared vision between the public and private sectors. Things will change and towns will die if they do not start to take action now. Standing still is not an option.”

The conference included delegates undertaking a number of field visits, including a Town Centre Revitalisation Walking Tour and an Urban Synergies Bus Tour. The Athlone town centre tour by Westmeath County Council took place in Athlone Shopping Centre, Luan Gallery, Athlone Castle and the Left Bank Quarter. The Urban Synergies tour included Athlone Institute of Technology and the International Arena, the restoration of the old railway buildings in Garrycastle, the greenway to Moate, and the Dún na Sí Heritage Centre.

**Source:**

*Don Delaney, d2 communications, email don@d2communications.ie and The Irish Planning Institute, for more information, visit [www.ipi.ie](http://www.ipi.ie)*



(I-R) Deirdre Fallon, President, Irish Planning Institute, and Simon Leask, recently-retired Head of ATLAS, Homes & Communities Agency UK, pictured at the Irish Planning Institute’s annual conference in Athlone on April 14 and 15.



(I-R) Deirdre Fallon, President, Irish Planning Institute, and Karl Deeter, Compliance Manager, Irish Mortgage Brokers, pictured at the Irish Planning Institute’s annual conference in Athlone on April 14 and 15.



(I-R) Deirdre Fallon, President, Irish Planning Institute, and Conall Boland, Deputy Chairperson, An Bord Pleanála, pictured at the Irish Planning Institute’s annual conference in Athlone on April 14 and 15.



(I-R) Deirdre Fallon, President, Irish Planning Institute, and Gregory Jones QC, Chair, An Bord Pleanála Review Group, pictured at the Irish Planning Institute’s annual conference in Athlone on April 14 and 15.



(I-R) Deirdre Fallon, President, Irish Planning Institute, and Gregory Jones QC, Chair, An Bord Pleanála Review Group, pictured at the Irish Planning Institute’s annual conference in Athlone on April 14 and 15.



# Brexit Implications Critical for Ireland

By *Facundo Daniel Méndez and Daniel Doyle of IPA Publications Division*

On June 23rd of this year, UK voters decided to leave the European Union (EU). 51.9% (17,410,742) voted to leave the EU compared with 48.1% (16,141,241) who voted to remain. Given this outcome, there may be significant economic and social consequences for Ireland. Prior to the referendum, the UK government had secured concessions from fellow EU members regarding a number of relevant concerns they had raised. Given the outcome of the referendum, Brexit could be formalised, at the very earliest, by mid-2018. However, both the EU and UK could benefit from a further delay, as such would facilitate the negotiations and implementation of appropriate post-Brexit arrangements. In practice, however, the process of a Brexit may take much longer.

## Implications for the Irish economy:

Uncertainty about the implications of the referendum is already affecting job recruitment and investment decisions. Recent surveys have shown that economic activity has fallen to its weakest level in three years (IMF Report). Brexit would impose a major negative economic shock, propagated through manifold avenues that could vary with the time horizon. Not only could it act as a tax on GDP; constituting a persistent and mounting cost to the economy (OECD Report), but it could also “precipitate a protracted period of heightened uncertainty, leading to financial market volatility and a hit to output” (IMF Report).

## Trade

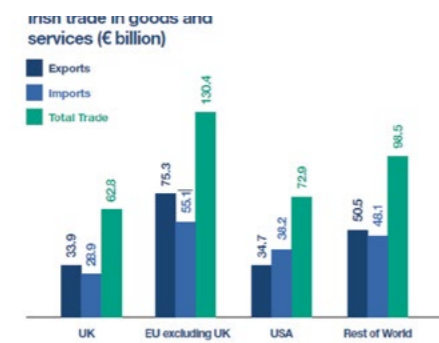
Estimates from the literature indicate



IBEC report on the UK Referendum on EU Membership, p.17.

that Brexit could significantly decrease bilateral trade between the UK and Ireland by over 20%. This will be one of the most severe repercussions of Brexit, since the UK is one of Ireland's most important trading partners, along with the EU and the USA.

On June 24th, 2016, Cliff Taylor underlines in his analysis in The Irish Times, entitled ‘Brexit means an inevitable economic “hit” for Ireland,’ that ‘the UK vote to exit the EU throws



IBEC report on the UK Referendum on EU Membership, p.6.

doubt on the future shape of our trading relationship with a country with which we trade well over 1 billion euro of goods and services each week.’ (<http://www.irishtimes.com/business/economy/analysis-brexit-means-an-inevitable-economic-hit-for-ireland-1.2697706>)

Albeit this is only an average, its impact would considerably differ across products and sectors. Merchandise trade in particular is concentrated in a few product types, implying that increased trade barriers for the principal products would substantially affect total trade volumes.

Although certain sectors, such as chemicals and pharmaceuticals, constitute a sizeable share of exports to the UK, sectors such as basic metals, food, beverages and agriculture are relatively more dependent on exports to the UK, which would make repercussions for them even more severe.

Trade between Ireland and Northern

Ireland has been declining as a share, with the overall volume being below the level expected for two trading partners located on an island. Ireland is altogether more important to Northern Irish exporters than Northern Ireland is for Irish exporters. Hence, impacts of Brexit would differ across sectors.

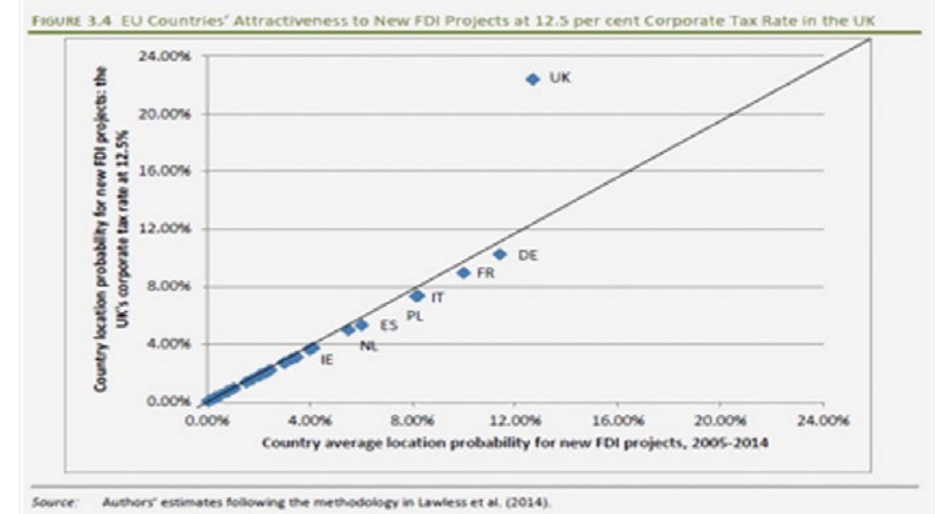
In an interview conducted in May, Linda Barry, Assistant Director for the SFA (Small Firms Association), voiced her concerns that Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs – under 250 employees and less than 50 million euro annual turnover), which base themselves primarily in Ireland, are at risk of being the most affected. Most recent figures from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in 2012 show that 99.7% of businesses in Ireland are SMEs and although they export less than large companies, a greater amount of their exports are to the UK. Moreover, she has observed that, despite the severe economic effects of Brexit, Ireland remains unprepared, with businesses simply waiting to see what will happen. She has encouraged Irish people with a UK passport to go out and vote in June. Ireland has greater bargaining power and a greater say than is commonly believed, and everything possible must be done to avert Brexit.

## Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

Abandoning the EU may render the UK less appealing to FDI, due to uncertainty and restricted access to the EU single market. Decreased FDI influx would result in a lower potential growth for the UK, with pernicious repercussions for Irish economic growth.

The latter negative effect would be offset by a positive boost for Ireland due to a mass relocation of FDI projects from the UK. Taking into account, however, location choice patterns of new FDI projects in Europe throughout the last decade, Ireland remains unlikely to gain considerable increased attractiveness to new investors.

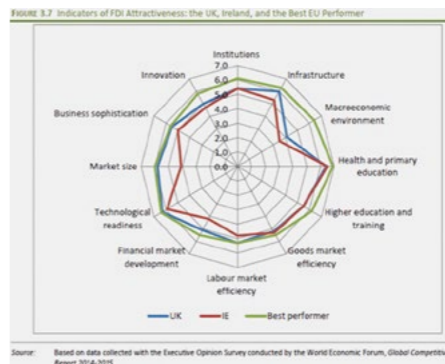
Recent intimated corporate tax reforms in the UK (proposed reduction of UK corporation tax to 15%) could potentially increase their attractiveness



ESRI Report, p. 37.

to new FDI projects, whilst the extent of their negative repercussions on Ireland is expected to be minor.

These circumstances owe partly to the fact that Ireland is already highly attractive to FDI, despite its size and geographical location in the EU. Compared to Ireland, the UK enjoys several advantages that render it more attractive to investors, such as a larger market size and better performance respecting financial market development, technological and innovation capacity, macroeconomic environment and labour market efficiency. Such advantages are potentially likely to secure a continued FDI inflow, both from within and outside



ESRI Report, p. 4.

the EU. Ireland's advantage relative to the UK lies in its more competitive corporate taxation (12.5% for trading income in comparison to the UK's 20%).

## Energy

With regards to the energy market, the first point of importance is the existence, since 2007, of an all-island electricity market. This linkage is instrumental for Northern Ireland, which relies chiefly on Irish electricity imports to compensate for an insufficient local electricity-generation capacity. Should the electricity market in Britain remain independent from the rest of the EU, an improved interconnection with Britain would expose Ireland to any issues with the British market. Under these conditions, improved Irish connections to the EU, particularly France, could lead to much-needed diversification, ensuring greater security for Irish consumers. This, however, would require a considerable infrastructural investment.

Given the recent referendum outcome, the UK does not have to comply with EU rules on renewables and climate change. Outside the EU, chances of resuming discussions on renewables trade would be decreased, and the UK would no longer be under EU regulatory measures for crisis situations in the event



of an oil or gas shortage. Ireland would then be forced to consider how to protect itself in this adverse situation.

### Migration

Brexit entails the possibility of restrictions on the free circulation of workers between Ireland and the UK. Since the latter remains a key destination for Irish emigrants, particularly in crisis times, such restrictions would have repercussions on Ireland's labour market.

Furthermore, implementing passport controls at the Northern Irish border would be both regressive and inconvenient for both economies. The ESRI, among others, submit this is the strongest motivation in terms of fostering cooperation between both countries.

Last, but not least, approximately 400,000 people born in Ireland resided in the UK in 2011, with 230,000 born in the UK resident in Ireland in that same year. Although many in these jurisdictions possess passports indicative of their residence, rather than their country of birth, many others risk finding themselves living a country where their right to residency is threatened.

### Implications for the North and South Border of Ireland:

As Ireland shares the only land-border with the UK, we also stand to be heavily affected by a Brexit on a local and regional level. The Common Travel Area (CTA) was established in 1923, allowing for free movement between the Republic and the UK. The CTA has never been a binding agreement but the special relationship between the UK

and Ireland has been recognised at EU level within the Treaty of Amsterdam, 1997. "The United Kingdom and Ireland may continue to make arrangements between themselves relating to the movement of persons between their territories ("the Common Travel Area")." The CTA is the major factor as to why Ireland and the UK are not party to the Schengen Agreement and with Brexit, Ireland's position amongst these travel agreements seems uncertain.

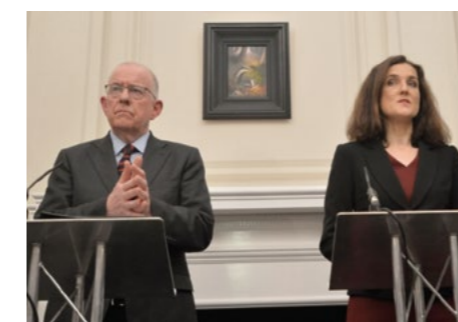
As a Member State of the EU, Ireland is not permitted to enter into bilateral trade or travel agreements with non-Member State countries, as all agreements must be negotiated through the EU. Speaking on RTE radio, chief economist at the Institute of International and European Affairs (IIEA), Mr. Dan O'Brien, responded to this point. "The notion that Ireland can do a bilateral deal, a country-to-country deal with Britain, if it leaves, is simply factually incorrect." Although the UK would make strides to establish a new trade relationship with the EU following a Brexit, it would take a period of two years for the UK to actually leave the EU and then anywhere from four to ten years to finalise a trade agreement. With such an indeterminate timeframe, the border region of Ireland will be put in a precarious position in regards to trade, travel and their own relationship with the North.

Negotiator	Time (years)
Switzerland - China	4
EU - Korea	4
EU - Mexico	4
US - Australia	3
EU - Canada	5 (not yet in force)
EU - Switzerland	10

Length of Free Trade Agreement Negotiations - OECD compilation.

This uncertainty is evident within the public debate also, consisting of contradicting opinions. Northern Ireland Secretary Ms. Theresa Villiers has been a strong proponent of a Brexit, and dismissed the notion of a more secure border. "Special status for Irish citizens and a common travel area allowing free movement for Irish citizens predates our membership of the EU by decades, and there's no reason why it can't continue

in the same way after we leave the EU". Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr. Charles Flanagan, T.D. responded to Ms. Villiers concluding that this may not be the case. "The Border's destiny would not be determined by the sole wishes of the Irish and British governments". While it would be in the best interest of the two countries to continue the CTA, it is impossible to predict the outcome of such a scenario when left in the hands of the remaining EU 27 as a withdrawal from the EU is unprecedented. Regardless of the form, there will be changes at the border, as Ireland will have to comply with EU directives. In 2014, Ireland exported goods and services worth €30bn to the UK (Irish Exporters Association), making them



Mr. Charles Flanagan and Ms. Theresa Villiers

our largest exporting market. As mentioned previously, our closest and only bordering neighbour, the UK is the most attractive exporting destination for SMEs. With possible trade customs and limitations on travel looming following a Brexit, it is likely that smaller businesses will be most heavily impacted, even more so for the those situated in the Border, Midlands and Western (BMW) regions of Ireland. This is evident in a study entitled 'Scoping the Possible Economic Implications of Brexit on Ireland' where the ESRI identify that in particular, Monaghan, Cavan, Longford, Laois and Roscommon (all BMW counties) are vulnerable to a Brexit because of their exports in the Agricultural and Food and Beverages sectors.

The pound sterling has also seen a sharp devaluation due to Brexit fears, falling to a value of 1.39 US dollars in February, the lowest in 7 years, and 1.24 Euro in April, the lowest since June 2014 (Bloomberg Markets). Moreover, the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR) predict that following a Brexit, a further devaluation of 20% of the pound sterling could occur. Aside from the economic impacts to the UK, with a rapidly devaluing currency, this puts SMEs in the Republic

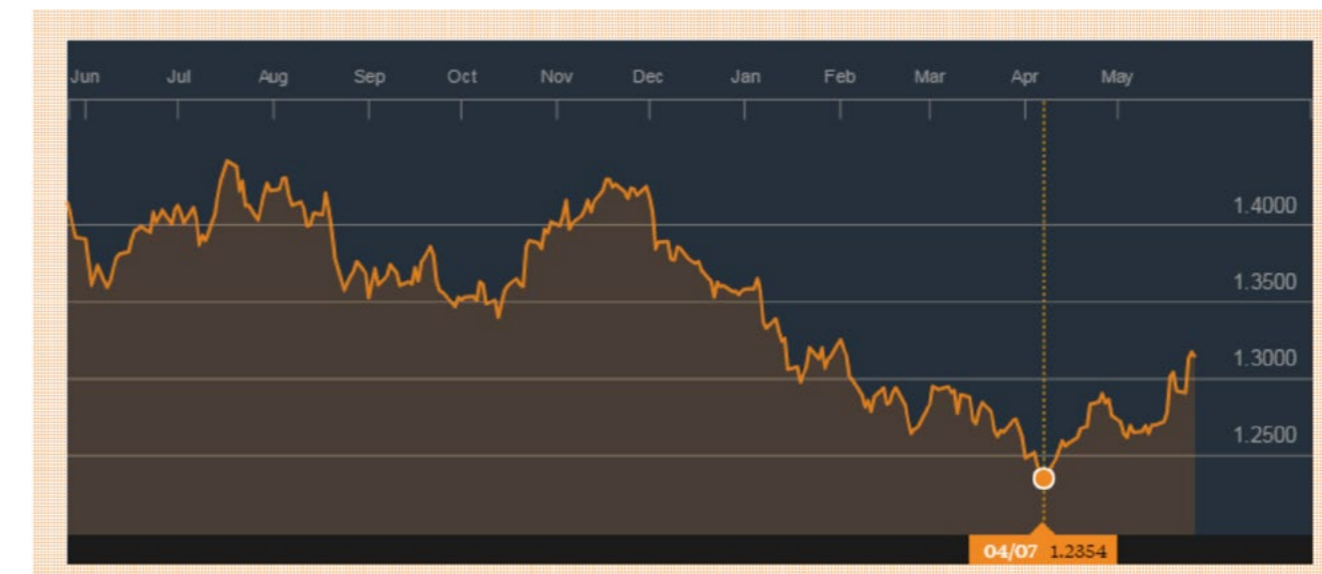
at further risk, where exporting goods to the UK will not be as competitive against the pound sterling. Again, the border counties of Ireland are at most risk here, where any barriers to trade will hurt small businesses as it is accessible for consumers to buy from the competitively priced UK market in Northern Ireland, thanks to a lower value currency.

Implementing an economic or physical border may also negatively impact many collaborative efforts made between the North and South in a number of different areas. All co-operative programmes between the Republic and Northern Ireland operate under the policy direction of the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC).

The Good Friday Agreement was signed in 1998 and did much in the way of building peace between Northern Ireland and the Republic, but even it recognises the role the EU has played, "wishing to develop still further the unique relationship between their peoples and the close cooperation between their countries as friendly neighbours and as partners in the European Union." The PEACE IV programme (2014-2020), which is managed through the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), provides structural funds "aimed at reinforcing

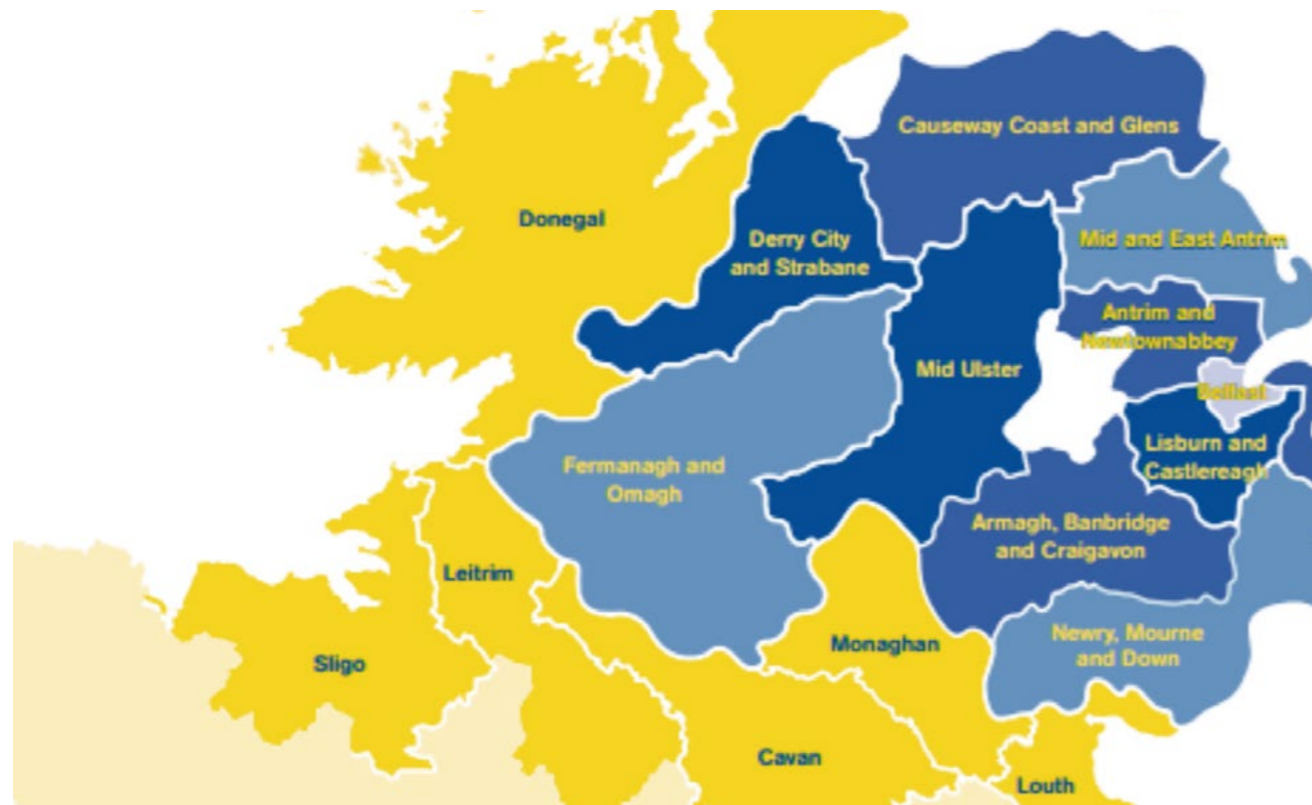


Source: BBC News - April 24 2016



The pound sterling value in comparison to the Euro, 2016. Bloomberg Markets.





The eligible area of the PEACE IV Programme: Northern Ireland – Border Region of Ireland.

progress towards a peaceful and stable society in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland” through shared education, spaces and services and building positive relations at local level. Another SEUPB programme, INTERREG VA (2014-2020), “aims to promote greater economic, social and territorial cohesion” between Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland, with funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) of €240m.

The NSMC also meets to discuss co-operative issues regarding Agriculture, Education, Environment, Health, Tourism and Transport, all of which rely on EU grants and support to operate smoothly.

The fate of these EU funded/ aided programmes is unclear following a Brexit; in the best case scenario, these programmes would continue for the shortest period allowed, at worst,

funding would be pulled immediately. The benefits of programmes such as these can be far-reaching and impactful, but it is uncertain whether they would be followed through if the EU interest on the Northern Irish side disappeared. This could pose a burden (both financially and administratively) on the Irish government and local authorities to uphold such initiatives, as the EU Member State in the relationship.

It remains a daunting task to quantify the socio-economic implications of Brexit, in light of the manifold uncertainties surrounding this watershed in the history of the EU. Nevertheless, the outcomes across time and model specifications are seemingly uniformly negative. An expanding number of studies, employing a wide range of channels and modelling techniques such as the OECD report ‘The Economic Consequences of Brexit: A Taxing Decision’, consistently arrive at the same conclusion that Brexit would be

prejudicial to the economies of Ireland and the UK alike. Indeed, such concerns are already having negative implications for both markets as seen in the recent IMF Concluding Statement from May 2016. Long-term challenges loom dangerously near given the Brexit outcome, calling for immediate remedial action.

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**Workplace Drugs and Alcohol – Expert Group Meeting, Dublin, Ireland 22nd September 2016.**

**Expert group of Health and Safety, Equality and Drug testing practitioners will update delegates on recent developments in employee drug testing**

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (SHWW) Act 2005 came into force in September 2005 and contained two provisions. Section 13 (1) b required employers to remove an employee from their place of work, who reported for work under the influence of an intoxicant (defined as drugs and alcohol). Section 13 (1) c contained proposals for employee intoxicant testing which would require regulations before this section could be implemented. The Irish Government decided that no regulations would be developed. This resulted in a major anomaly in the legislation and resulted in much uncertainty and confusion amongst employers who wished to address workplace intoxicants.

It was against this background and employer’s concerns on workplace drugs and alcohol and the health and safety legislation that the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) Institute developed the concept of an expert group on workplace drugs and alcohol who would meet to put forward clear drug testing guidelines and experiences on all aspects of intoxicant testing for Occupational Health Specialists, EHS Managers, HR professionals and EAP practitioners.

According to Duncan Carmichael one of the expert group speakers: “The new EWDTs guidelines for Oral Fluid, Hair and Urine were approved by the board for publication on November 1<sup>st</sup> 2015. The guidelines sought to harmonize and standardize drug test panels and collection and laboratory procedures throughout Europe.”

Additional speakers will include Maurice Quinlan, Director of the EAP Institute who will outline employer’s health and safety obligations on workplace intoxicants, Eilis Barry, Barrister at Law (BL) who will present on reasonable accommodation, Duncan Carmichael who will outline the European Workplace Drug Testing Society (EWDTs) guidelines on drug testing and Mike Doyle, Country Manager (Ireland), Alere Toxicology, presenting on the Irish experience of drug testing.

**Further information contact Maurice Quinlan on 087 2399 087 or email [maurice@eapinstitute.com](mailto:maurice@eapinstitute.com)**



## Dublin Docklands Scheme, Wild Atlantic Way and Ballina Killaloe Community Development Group successful at the Irish Planning Institute (IPI) National Planning Awards, 2016

A landmark planning scheme to regenerate Dublin's Docklands - bringing new communities and businesses to the area - has won the overall national award at this year's National Planning Awards.

The North Lotts and Grand Canal Dock Planning Scheme by planners at Dublin City Council is the biggest urban redevelopment and regeneration project in the history of the State and is now seeing multiple planning permissions being granted across the area. The North Lotts and Grand Canal Dock masterplan was approved by An Bord Pleanála and will provide for 2,600 residential units and up to 360,000 sq. metres of office space, as well as retail, community and public amenity facilities which will create 23,000 jobs.

The winners announced on February 22nd, 2016 at the Irish Planning Institute (IPI) National Planning Awards in Dublin. The Irish Planning Institute (IPI) is the independent professional body representing professional planners engaged in physical, spatial and environmental planning in Ireland. IPI President Deirdre Fallon said the winning entry represented the challenges Ireland has faced in its economic crash and how best to overcome development and regeneration challenges. "Following the wind up of the Dublin Docklands Development Authority (DDDA) in 2012 this was the biggest

stalled urban redevelopment and regeneration project in the history of the State. Against massive challenges a multi-disciplinary Dublin City Council Team delivered. Over 60% of the plan area is now benefiting from permissions granted giving a sustainable vision to this major part of the city. There has been a lot of criticism of planning in Ireland, however the entrants at this year's Irish Planning Awards show highly positive planning which contribute to quality of life for both urban and rural citizens and these examples can positively influence all practice across Ireland."

Other winners of note include Fáilte Ireland for the Wild Atlantic Way tourism brand which coordinated a tourism route stretching approximately 2,500km along Ireland's Atlantic coast. The Wild Atlantic Way won the Tourism and Economic Development category and was commended for showing the opportunities for coordinated regional development and also its focus on balanced economic growth. The Judges noted that "The Wild Atlantic Way represents a truly regional planning initiative. We welcome its scale, stakeholder and local authority engagement and ambition and commend its emphasis on balancing economic growth with protecting and enhancing the authenticity of the wild and natural environments."

A voluntary community group in Ballina Killaloe won an award in the Opportunity and Empowerment category. The Clarisford Park facility is developed and operated by Ballina Killaloe Sports and Recreational Facilities Development Ltd. to address a lack of amenities in the local area. Community volunteers developed and operate a facility consisting of playing fields and training pitches, a running / walking trail, sports hall and community park in Ballina Killaloe. The Judges acknowledged that "this is an excellent example of community led infrastructure provision and was developed following positive engagement with Clare County Council, elected members, planners and local groups and clubs. Clarisford Park's multifunctional approach is an excellent model of maximising the use of scarce land and resources, avoiding duplication and empowering and connecting communities. It is a model for the development of future community sports facilities."

The President's Choice Award went to Fingal County Council for training in planning and mapping skills it has provided to planners in Lesotho. For the past three years Fingal County Council been working to upskill local planners in the use of planning practice and state of the art information and mapping systems, with a particular focus on climate change. IPI President Deirdre Fallon said the project has involved



Dublin City Council wins at Planning Awards: Deputy City Planner Mary Conway accepts the Overall Winner Award for the North Lotts and Grand Canal Dock Planning Scheme from Irish Planning Institute President Deirdre Fallon, at the National Planning Awards.

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formal training of all urban planners in Lesotho and has also mapped the whole country using the latest GIS planning systems. IPI has also taken part in the project by helping to establish a new national planning Institute in Lesotho. “This is unique initiative spearheaded by Fingal County Council supporting the work of the Action Ireland Trust charity in Lesotho which could be replicated in different countries by local authorities throughout Ireland. It acknowledges and supports the importance of a properly functioning planning profession and system within a developing country.”

The full list of winners includes:

### Category 1: Plan Making

**Winner: Longford County Council**  
**Project: Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021**

The Longford County Development Plan 2015-2021 by Longford County Council was commended for being the first development plan in Ireland to receive the plain English stamp from the National Adult Literacy agency (NALA). The Judges commended the team at Longford County Council and said the plan is a model on how a complex, multifaceted planning document can be made accessible to the community.

The Longford County Development Plan came into effect in March 2015 and represents the most important policy document for the county as an agreed strategy for its economic, social, cultural and environmental future. The Judges said: “The Plan includes summaries using NALA’s plain English guidelines at the start of each chapter and helpful questions and answers, written with simple short sentences. The maps are clear and stunning images from local photographers are included. This makes the plan highly accessible and engaging for the public and also assists them in understanding the art of good planning.”

### Category 2: Opportunity and Empowerment

**Winner: Ballina Killaloe Sports and Community Facilities Development**  
**Project: Clarisford Park**

The Clarisford Park facility is developed and operated by Ballina Killaloe Sports and Recreational Facilities Development Ltd. to address a lack of amenities in the local area. Community volunteers developed and operate a facility consisting of playing fields and training pitches, a running / walking trail, sports hall and community park in Ballina Killaloe. The Judges acknowledged that “this is an excellent example of community led infrastructure provision and was developed following positive engagement with Clare County Council, elected members, planners and local groups and clubs. Clarisford Park’s multifunctional approach is an excellent model of maximising the use of scarce land and resources, avoiding duplication and empowering and connecting communities. It is a model for the development of future community sports facilities.”

### Category 3: Planning and Media Communications

**Winner: Irish Independent, Paul Melia and Philip Ryan**  
**Project: Future Proof, Planning Where we Live**

Paul Melia and Philip Ryan of the Irish Independent won a Planning and Media Communications award for their series Future Proof – Planning Where We Live which demonstrated the impact of planning on the day to day quality of life of people – their health, home and childcare. The Judges commended the series as robust and factual and said that it broke down complex issues presenting them in a manner which citizens and communities could understand, enabling them to contribute to debate on planning in an informed and responsive manner. The Judges said: “The use of online polls, videos and social media were particularly useful in engaging readers. 5,000 responded to the online polls and 20,000 people a day viewed

an interactive zoning map. The level of reader engagement showed that quality journalism can effect change in policy and attitudes for the better.”

### Category 4: Responsive Urban and Rural Design

**Winner and OVERALL WINNER: Dublin City Council**  
**Project: North Lotts and Grand Canal Dock Planning Scheme**

The North Lotts and Grand Canal Dock Planning Scheme by planners at Dublin City Council is the biggest urban redevelopment and regeneration project in the history of the State and is now seeing multiple planning permissions being granted across the area. The North Lotts and Grand Canal Dock masterplan was approved by An Bord Pleanála and will provide for 2,600 residential units and up to 360,000 sq. metres of office space, as well as retail, community and public amenity facilities which will create 23,000 jobs.

The winners announced on February 22nd, 2016 at the Irish Planning Institute (IPI) National Planning Awards in Dublin. IPI President Deirdre Fallon said the winning entry represented the challenges Ireland has faced in its economic crash and how best to overcome development and regeneration challenges. “Following the wind up of the Dublin Docklands Development Authority (DDDA) in 2012 this was the biggest stalled urban redevelopment and regeneration project in the history of the State. Against massive challenges a multi-disciplinary Dublin City Council Team delivered. Over 60% of the plan area is now benefiting from permissions granted giving a sustainable vision to this major part of the city. There has been a lot of criticism of planning in Ireland, however the entrants at this years Irish Planning Awards show highly positive planning which contribute to quality of life for both urban and rural citizens and these examples can positively influence all practice across Ireland.”

### Category 5: Emerging Sustainable Technologies

**Winner: iCon Architecture with Cummins and Voortman**  
**Project: Village Framework Development Plan for Rowlestown**

The Village Development Plan for Rowlestown by iCon Architecture with Cummins and Voortman won the Emerging Sustainable Technologies category and particularly impressed the judges with how technology was used. The judges commended the virtual model which was created for the entire village which served as a canvas on which changes to the village were tested and developed. The Judges said: “Building Information Modelling was used to model the terrain, existing buildings, proposed sites, shadow studies, and wind patterns allowing proposals to be tested and validated. Interactive visualisations and drive through video showcases enabled the community to engage and assist in decision making.”

### Category 6: Smart Travel

**Winner: South Dublin County Council**  
**Project: Walking and Cycling to School Pilot Project, Ballyboden Schools Cluster**

### Category 8: Planning for Climate Change

**Winner: South Dublin County Council**  
**Project: South Dublin Spatial Energy Demand Analysis**

South Dublin County Council won a Smart Travel Award for its Walking and Cycling to School Pilot Project in Ballyboden because it highlighted the importance of getting local communities behind a project and putting theory into practice. South Dublin Council won a second award in the Planning for Climate Change category for developing a spatial energy demand analysis of

the area. The Judges said that too often there can be more emphasis in smarter travel initiatives on simply providing infrastructure rather than working to find out how local communities view the alternatives of walking, cycling and public transport. The Judges said: “In the project planners moved out of their offices to work proactively with school management and local communities in Ballyboden, listening to their ideas and then putting these into the design. Other planning authorities would benefit from studying the ways that South Dublin County Council went about its work.” “South Dublin County Council’s second award for its Spatial Energy Demand Analysis provides an understanding of energy needs, energy efficiency and renewable energy responses across the commercial, residential and municipal sectors in the county which provides a template for local authorities in planning strategically to reduce carbon usage.”

### Category 7: Tourism and Economic Development

**Winner: Fáilte Ireland**  
**Project: Wild Atlantic Way**

Fáilte Ireland won for the Wild Atlantic Way tourism brand which coordinated a tourism route stretching approximately 2,500km along Ireland’s Atlantic coast. The Wild Atlantic Way won the Tourism and Economic Development category and was commended for showing the opportunities for coordinated regional development and also its focus on balanced economic growth. The Judges noted that “The Wild Atlantic Way represents a truly regional planning initiative. We welcome its scale, stakeholder and local authority engagement and ambition and commend its emphasis on balancing economic growth with protecting and enhancing the authenticity of the wild and natural environments.”

### Category 9: International Innovation

**Winner: SLR Consulting**

**Project: East Pit / Lakes at Rhosamman Regeneration & Wales and Paisley Town Centre Heritage Asset Strategy**

SLR Consulting, which is based in Dublin and Belfast, won the International Innovation category for two projects that it carried out abroad, one in setting out a strategy for Paisley Town Centre in Scotland and the other masterplanning the future development of a former coal pit in Wales. The judges said that both projects worked with communities to take bold and enterprising approaches to creating new and vibrant places.

### President’s Choice

**Winner: Fingal County Council**  
**Project: Lesotho Planning and Mapping Project**

The President’s Choice Award went to Fingal County Council for training in planning and mapping skills it has provided to planners in Lesotho. For the past three years Fingal County Council been working to upskill local planners in the use of planning practice and state of the art information and mapping systems, with a particular focus on climate change. IPI President Deirdre Fallon said the project has involved formal training of all urban planners in Lesotho and has also mapped the whole country using the latest GIS planning systems. IPI has also taken part in the project by helping to establish a new national planning Institute in Lesotho. “This is unique initiative spearheaded by Fingal County Council supporting the work of the Action Ireland Trust charity in Lesotho which could be replicated in different countries by local authorities throughout Ireland. It acknowledges and supports the importance of a properly functioning planning profession and system within a developing country.”

Sources:

Ronan Cavanagh, Communications Consultant, MPRII, Cavanagh Communications, www.cavanaghcommunications.ie and the Irish Planning Institute, www.ipi.ie



## New CEMR study reveals all the latest numbers on Europe's towns and regions

- 60% of the decisions taken by our towns and regions are influenced by European legislation
- Almost 70% of public sector investments in Europe come from local and regional governments
- Europe is made up of 129,472 towns and cities, 1,401 provinces and counties, and 401 regions
- number of regions in Europe has increased by approximately 10% since 2012
- number of local entities in Europe has decreased by approximately 15% since 2012

Frédéric Vallier, Secretary General of the Council for European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), states in the foreword of the new study entitled, "Local and Regional Governments in Europe: Structures and Competences" that "60% of the decisions taken by our towns and regions are influenced by European legislation and almost 70% of public sector investments in Europe come from local and regional governments. These two figures alone show the increasingly important part local and regional governments play in the European economy and in the life of our citizens."

From Sweden to Cyprus and from Portugal to Georgia, CEMR's new study published in June 2016, gives you all the information you need on the structures and competences of towns and regions in over 40 countries in Europe.

### What you will find in the study:

- An infographic map on local and regional Europe
- 42 country fact files with the most important data on towns and regions in each European country: key figures, competences, structure...

### Did you know?

- These past few years, the number of local entities in Europe has remained almost unchanged (-1,6%), except if you count Turkey (-15%)
- Nowadays, Europe is made up of 129,472 towns and cities, 1,401 provinces and counties, and 401 regions
- The number of regions in Europe has increased by approximately 10% since 2012
- In most cases, mayors are elected for a four-year term

Vallier acknowledges that "on the global level, the role of towns and regions is recognised as being a vital factor in the transformation of society to reach the goals set by the United Nations. Towns and regions come across as key players on topics such as climate change or international cooperation. They are also on the forefront of overcoming challenges Europe has to face: welcoming refugees, social and economic challenges..." He outlines

that "unfortunately, just when the role of towns and regions seems vital, their financial resources are put into question, and we have to constantly fight to defend their capacity to invest and manage local public services in the interests of their population."

Vallier notes that "Local and Regional Governments in Europe: Structures and Competences" is a regular publication of CEMR, that gives an up-to-date overview of European towns and regions. "Since its last edition in 2012, the number of local entities in Europe has decreased by approximately 15%. Indeed, many reforms have been launched - more than ten - claiming to fight against the fragmentation of local governments and achieve economies of scale, taking the risk to lose proximity with citizens." Vallier explains that "on the contrary, the number of regions has increased by approximately 10%. The majority of countries now have a regional level (28, so 4 more than in 2012). This echoes a certain type of modelling of territorial organisation and the debates on regionalisation, inter-municipal cooperation, metropolisation... as many initiatives more or less formal, more or less bottom-up, which reveal the need to associate public local policies to the right territory level. Finally, the competences dilution and their distribution between sector of governance calls for a stronger coordination according to the principle of governance in partnership advocated by CEMR." - Frédéric Vallier, CEMR Secretary General, 2016

"Local and Regional Governments in

Europe: Structures and Competences" is the outcome of a study that was conducted with CEMR's member associations. The full report is available at: [http://ccre.org/img/uploads/piecesjointe/filename/CEMR\\_structures\\_and\\_competences\\_2016\\_EN.pdf](http://ccre.org/img/uploads/piecesjointe/filename/CEMR_structures_and_competences_2016_EN.pdf)

Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) brings together more than 130,000 cities, towns and regions federated through 60 national associations from 42 European countries. It constitutes the most representative association of local and regional governments in Europe. CEMR is also the European section of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), through which it represents European local and regional governments at international level. CEMR's mission is to promote the construction of a united, peaceful and democratic Europe founded upon local self-government and respect for the principle of subsidiarity. With this publication, CEMR want to highlight the territorial diversity of European countries and strengthen mutual knowledge on how all towns, cities and regions work. We hope it will contribute to creating a real partnership between all spheres of governance: local, national, European and global.

Source:

*Georgina Mombo Rasero, CEMR Press Officer, and Pierre Vander Auwera, Press adviser, CEMR, [www.ccre.org](http://www.ccre.org)*

### Establishing the Urban Agenda for the EU

'Pact of Amsterdam' agreed at the Informal Meeting of EU Ministers Responsible for Urban Matters on 30 May 2016 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

"The European Union is one of the most urbanised areas in the world. Today, more than 70% of Europe's citizens

lives in an Urban Area. The UN projects that by 2050 this percentage will reach 80%. The development of Urban Areas will have a major impact on the future sustainable development (economic, environmental, and social) of the European Union and its citizens. Urban Areas of all sizes can be engines of the economy which boost growth, create jobs for their citizens and enhance the competitiveness of Europe in a globalised economy. At present, 73% of all jobs and 80% of people aged 25-64 with a tertiary education are based in European cities, towns and suburbs. Urban Areas are, however, also places where challenges such as segregation, unemployment, and poverty are concentrated. Considering the above, Urban Areas play a key role in pursuing the EU 2020 objectives and in solving many of its most pressing challenges, including the current refugee and asylum crisis. Urban Authorities play a crucial role in the daily life of all EU citizens. Urban Authorities are often the level of government closest to the citizens. The success of European sustainable urban development is highly important for the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the European Union and the quality of life of its citizens." (page 3 of the Preamble of Establishing the Agenda for the EU 'Pact of Amsterdam, 30th May, 2016)

### Establishing the Urban Agenda for the EU

On 30th May 2016, at the informal meeting of EU Ministers responsible for Urban Matters, the Ministers reached agreement on the establishment of the Urban Agenda for the EU as set out in the 'Pact of Amsterdam'. "The 'Pact of Amsterdam' describes the main features of the Urban Agenda for the EU. However, the development of the Urban Agenda for the EU is an ongoing process. The Urban Agenda for the EU will be taken forward by Member States together with the European Commission, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions (CoR), the European

Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the European Investment Bank (EIB), representatives of European Urban Authorities and other relevant stakeholders." (page 4, of the Preamble of Establishing the Agenda for the EU 'Pact of Amsterdam,'30th May, 2016)

The 'Pact of Amsterdam' document highlights that along the road towards the Urban Agenda for the EU many milestones have been reached, the latest one being the Riga declaration (June 2015), which provides political support for the development of the Urban Agenda for the EU; acknowledging its potential contribution to balanced territorial and sustainable development and the achievement of common European goals.

### The need for an Urban Agenda for the EU

"In order to realise the full potential of the European Union and deliver on its strategic objectives, the Urban Agenda for the EU strives to involve Urban Authorities in achieving Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge (knowledge base and exchange):

- EU legislation is to a large extent implemented in Urban Areas and has direct and indirect implications for Urban Authorities. EU legislation sometimes has conflicting impacts and its implementation at local level can be difficult. Therefore, EU regulation should anticipate these difficulties.
- Urban Authorities are among the key beneficiaries of EU funding. Access to existing funding is however sometimes administratively burdensome. The Urban Agenda for the EU aims to improve accessibility and coordination of existing funding possibilities and to contribute to their simplification.



- Knowledge on how Urban Areas evolve is fragmented and successful experience can be better valorised, diffused and exploited. The Urban Agenda for the EU therefore intends to enhance a better urban policy knowledge base and the exchange of good practice.

Delivering the full potential of Urban Areas requires a joint approach between both sectoral policies and the different levels of government. A balanced, sustainable and integrated approach towards urban challenges should, in line with the Leipzig Charter on sustainable European cities, focus on all major aspects of urban development (in particular economic, environmental, social, territorial, and cultural) in order to ensure sound urban governance and policy. There is a need to enhance the complementarity of policies affecting Urban Areas and to strengthen their urban dimension. This can be achieved by involving all levels of government, by ensuring coordination and effective interaction between policy sectors, in full respect of the subsidiarity principle and in line with the competences of each level. The Urban Agenda for the EU offers a new form of multilevel and multi-stakeholder cooperation with the aim of strengthening the urban dimension in EU policy. Each stakeholder is free to determine its own level of participation in the Urban Agenda for the EU.” (Page 3 and 4 of the Preamble of Establishing the Agenda for the EU ‘Pact of Amsterdam,’ 30th May, 2016)

The document also notes that “in order to address the increasingly complex challenges in Urban Areas, it is important that Urban Authorities cooperate with local communities, civil society, businesses and knowledge institutions. Together they are the main drivers in shaping sustainable development with the aim of enhancing the environmental, economic, social

and cultural progress of Urban Areas. EU, national, regional and local policies should set the necessary framework in which citizens, NGOs, businesses and Urban Authorities, with the contribution of knowledge institutions, can tackle their most pressing challenges.”

“The Urban Agenda for the EU acknowledges the polycentric structure of Europe and the diversity (social, economic, territorial, cultural and historical) of Urban Areas across the EU. Furthermore, the Urban Agenda for the EU acknowledges the importance of Urban Areas of all sizes and contexts in the further development of the European Union. A growing number of urban challenges are of a local nature, but require a wider territorial solution (including urban-rural linkages) and cooperation within functional urban areas. At the same time, urban solutions have the potential to lead to wider territorial benefits. Urban Authorities therefore need to cooperate within their functional areas and with their surrounding regions, connecting and reinforcing territorial and urban policies.” (page 4, of the Preamble of Establishing the Agenda for the EU ‘Pact of Amsterdam,’ 30th May, 2016)

Some priority themes agreed by Ministers at the informal meeting held on 30th May 2016 are: “That, taking into account the priorities of the EU 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, the initial list of Priority Themes (in no particular order) for the Urban Agenda for the EU is as follows:

- Inclusion of migrants and refugees.
- Air quality.
- Urban poverty.
- Housing.

- Circular economy.
- Jobs and skills in the local economy.
- Climate adaptation (including green infrastructure solutions).
- Energy transition.
- Sustainable use of land and Nature-Based solutions.
- Urban mobility.
- Digital transition.
- Innovative and responsible public procurement

“That the complexity of urban challenges require integrating different policy aspects, to avoid contradictory consequences and make interventions in Urban Areas more effective.” In line with the competences and responsibilities of the different participants and taking into account that the EU does not have competences on some of these issues, the Partnerships shall consider the relevance of the following cross-cutting issues for the selected priority themes:

#### Governance

- Effective urban governance, including citizens participation and new models of governance.
- Governance across administrative boundaries and inter-municipal cooperation: urban-rural, urban-urban and cross-border cooperation; link with territorial development and the Territorial Agenda 2020 (well-balanced territorial development).
- Sound and strategic urban planning (link with regional planning, including ‘research and innovation smart specialisation strategies’

(RIS3), and balanced territorial development), with a place-based and people based approach.

- Integrated and participatory approach.
- Innovative approaches, including Smart Cities.
- Impact on societal change, including behavioural change, promoting, among other things, equal access to information, gender equality and women empowerment.
- Challenges and opportunities of small- and medium-sized Urban Areas and polycentric development.
- Urban regeneration, including social, economic, environmental, spatial and cultural aspects, also linked to the brownfield redevelopment with the objective of limiting greenfield consumption.
- Adaptation to demographic change and in- and out migration.
- Provision of adequate public services of general interest (within the meaning of Article 14 TFEU in conjunction with Protocol Number 26).
- International dimension: link with the New Urban Agenda (Habitat III) of the UN (to be agreed upon), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development) of the UN and the Paris Agreement on climate change of December 2015.” (page 7 and 8 of Establishing the Agenda for the EU ‘Pact of Amsterdam,’ 30th May, 2016)

“That the governance of the Urban Agenda for the EU will work as follows:

The activities of the Urban Agenda for

the EU will be coordinated by the DG meeting on Urban Matters.

The DG meeting on Urban Matters will:

- Ensure that the actions are organised in such a way that they are transparent, conceived with and supported by (representatives of) Member States, Urban Authorities and the European Commission, mutually reinforcing and having the most effective impact on EU policy making;
- Report to the Informal meeting of Ministers responsible for Urban Matters and Territorial Cohesion;
- Monitor progress on the actions of the Urban Agenda for the EU;
- Provide feedback on the Action Plans to the Partnerships;
- Give informal guidelines for future developments of the Urban Agenda for the EU;
- Evaluate the current and future set of actions of the Urban Agenda for the EU at the latest by 2020;
- Review the initial list of Priority Themes which will be revised by the Informal Meeting of Ministers responsible for Urban Matters.

In the Working Programme, the Operational Framework of the Urban Agenda for the EU is described in more detail. The DG Meeting on Urban Matters will review the Working Programme and suggest amendments to the Ministers responsible for Urban Matters for approval. A report on the amendments made will be submitted to the General Affairs Council (GAC).” (page 9 of Establishing the Agenda for the EU ‘Pact of Amsterdam,’ 30th May, 2016)

#### Partnerships

“The Ministers agree:

- That Partnerships are the key delivery mechanism within the Urban Agenda for the EU.
- That the aim of the Partnerships is to develop a multilevel and cross-sectoral governance approach in an open and transparent way in order to achieve the wider objective of the Urban Agenda for the EU as listed under Part I and based on a strong involvement of practitioners from Urban Authorities. The Working Programme explains the working method of the Partnerships in more detail.
- To ensure focus and real impact on the ground, Partnerships should have a bottom-up approach analysing, inter alia, concrete cases in Urban Areas which exemplify bottlenecks and potentials.
- That each Partnership will formulate an Action Plan with concrete proposals for Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge, related to the theme of the Partnership, which can be regarded as nonbinding contributions to the design of future and the revision of existing EU legislation, instruments and initiatives.
- That the input of the Partnerships for future and existing EU regulation with an urban impact will be submitted for consideration, after informal guidance by the DG Meeting on Urban Matters, to the European Commission. Furthermore, these proposals could be brought to the attention of incoming EU Presidencies in view of their possible inclusion in the working programme of these Presidencies.



- That participation in Partnerships is voluntary.”

(page 10 of Establishing the Agenda for the EU ‘Pact of Amsterdam,’30th May, 2016)

#### Member States

The Ministers agree:

- To take the appropriate steps for the implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU and engage, as appropriate, relevant bodies at all levels of government in the implementation of the Urban Agenda for the EU, in line with their respective competences and the principle of subsidiarity.
- On the need for better involvement of relevant key partners, including representatives of urban and regional authorities, in the preparation as well as the evaluation of EU policy through existing opportunities for consultation available to Member States.

- To strengthen dialogue with the European Commission about how to improve the exchange of data on Urban Areas at the EU level (including the urban audit), taking into account the need to minimise administrative burdens as much as possible.
- To promote, as appropriate and in line with the proportionality principle, the improvement of the knowledge base and the proportionate collection of data on urban development issues, referring to different types of urban units at EU level, taking into account the need to minimise administrative burdens as much as possible and using existing tools and instruments.
- To engage with Urban and Regional Authorities, the European Commission, the European Parliament, the CoR and the EIB, whilst respecting the principle of proportionality, in the debate on

improving existing instruments in Cohesion Policy and other EU policies aimed at urban development, the more wide-spread and effective use of financial instruments by Urban Authorities, and the deployment of the European Fund for Strategic Investments in relation to funding in Urban Areas. This includes simplification of rules across funding programmes and instruments.

- That the Urban Agenda for the EU should be regularly discussed by Ministers responsible for Urban Matters, preferably at least once every 18 months.
- To take note of the Council Conclusions of 12 May 2016 on the New Urban Agenda prepared in the framework of the third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Development (Habitat III). (page 11 of Establishing the Agenda for the EU ‘Pact of Amsterdam,’30th May, 2016)

#### Urban Authorities

The Ministers agree:

That Urban Authorities are invited to take an active role in the Urban Agenda for the EU and to provide the required expertise for all Urban Agenda for the EU actions, since they play a crucial role in the Urban Agenda for the EU, providing political guidance locally and crucial insights on needs as well as expertise on how best to tackle the challenges they face.

- To encourage Urban Authorities to capitalise on the knowledge and capacity of specialist EU Urban networks in the relevant Partnerships.
- To call upon Urban Authorities to continue to work together with Regional Authorities, the private sector, local communities, knowledge institutions and civil society in

bringing forward the Urban Agenda for the EU.

- To invite the CoR, as the Union’s advisory body formally representing regions and municipalities at EU level, to contribute to the further development of the Urban Agenda for the EU.
- To call upon and directly involve EUROCIITIES, CEMR and other bodies representing Urban Authorities, to contribute to the further development of the Urban Agenda for the EU and the exchange of good practices, and to make use of the outcome of the Urban Agenda for the EU actions, especially the work of the Partnerships.
- To encourage networking and exchange of knowledge between Urban Authorities of Urban Areas of all sizes and between different levels of government.” (page 12 of Establishing the Agenda for the EU ‘Pact of Amsterdam,’30th May, 2016)

#### European Investment Bank (EIB)

The Ministers agree:

- That the EIB plays an important role, also in cooperation with other international financial institutions and national promotional banks, in the financing of investments in areas covered by the Urban Agenda for the EU, in grant-loan blending for urban investments, and in advising Member States and cities about urban project preparation and financial instruments.
- To invite the EIB to support the development of better funding approaches in the urban context, including through financial instruments, in cooperation with the European Commission.
- To invite the EIB to contribute to the work of the Partnerships in particular

with regard to better funding and better knowledge.

- To invite the EIB to reflect, where relevant, the outcomes of the Urban Agenda for the EU as appropriate in its urban lending, grant-loan blending and advisory services approach in the urban context taking into account the need to support sustainable urban development strategies and without jeopardising its financial discipline.” (page 15 of Establishing the Agenda for the EU ‘Pact of Amsterdam,’30th May, 2016)

#### Civil Society, Knowledge Institutions and Business

The Ministers agree:

- To recognise the potential of civil society to co-create innovative solutions to urban challenges, which can contribute to public policy making at all levels of government and strengthen democracy in the EU.
- To invite the EESC to contribute, within its competence, to the further development of the Urban Agenda for the EU.
- To invite civil society organisations, knowledge institutions and businesses to provide informed advice on all actions within the framework of the Urban Agenda for the EU aimed at Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge.” (page 16 of Establishing the Agenda for the EU ‘Pact of Amsterdam,’30th May, 2016)

Source:

<http://english.eu2016.nl/documents/publications/2016/05/30/pact-of-amsterdam>

#### Urban Agenda: 3 reasons why ensuring its implementation will be crucial for better EU law making

The adoption of the Urban Agenda for the EU will definitely help towns and

regions face current urban challenges, for example, migration, housing or urban poverty.

#### How?

By leading to greater coherence in EU policies that affect urban areas, namely, by ensuring there is an urban dimension in EU policies and by involving them when shaping EU legislation.

However, without the support of European institutions and Member States to ensure its continuity, the Urban Agenda will remain only a political declaration.

This is the message the Council of European Municipalities and Regions European Section of United Cities and Local Governments (CEMR) addressed at the adoption of the Pact of Amsterdam by EU ministers for urban affairs, on 30 May, 2016.

On this occasion, CEMR put forward three reasons why Member States and EU institutions must guarantee its implementation beyond the Dutch EU Council presidency.

1. To ensure better EU law making About 70% of the EU population lives in urban areas, where most European legislation is implemented, for instance, in air quality, energy efficiency or state aid. Nevertheless, local governments currently play a very limited role in shaping this legislation. If implemented, the Urban Agenda will ensure better access to EU funding sources to municipalities. It will also ensure municipalities’ contribution in shaping EU lawmaking, for instance, by systematically assessing the impact of EU policies in our territories, so as to ensure that the local perspective is reflected in EU policies. Talking on behalf of CEMR, Councillor of Malmö (Sweden) and CEMR spokesperson on Urban Affairs, Ilmar Reepalu, claimed: “there is a clear link to the Better Regulation Package of the European Commission which pursues the objective to improve the European legislation.”

2. To truly reflect Europe’s diversity at the local level Europe is made up of 92,261 towns and cities, 913 provinces and counties and 349 regions. Despite such diversity, in many cases, “larger cities may already have capacities to access information, to invest time in seeking to shape policies and to access EU funds; while smaller municipalities often lack the resources to get engaged,” points out Ilmar Reepalu. This is why including all types of local governments - small, medium and large cities - in the Urban Agenda represents a step forward for the EU to reflect the diversity that exists on the ground.

3. The European multilevel governance model should be encouraged abroad The Urban Agenda, as it has been adopted by EU ministers for urban affairs, represents what CEMR has been promoting over the past years: the concept of multilevel governance.

“As President of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, I am proud of having contributed to achieve establishing this new governance in partnership model we fought for,” declared CEMR President and Mayor of Santander, Iñigo de la Serna, in a message addressed on the occasion of the launch of the Urban Agenda. 2 With respect to current negotiations on global sustainable urban development, CEMR President stated: “The United Nations is currently debating a similar global urban agenda – Habitat III. This is why CEMR calls for Member States to establish the same system of governance in partnership also during international negotiations.” CEMR believes that, if the EU is serious about multi-level governance and if it wants to be coherent at the international level, it should encourage its Member States to include representatives of urban areas in their delegations to the UN Habitat negotiations.

Source:

Georgina Mombo Rasero, Press Officer, CEMR, [www.ccre.org](http://www.ccre.org)



## Publication of Guide to Local Economic Development Highlights Opportunities for Government to Support Economic Growth at Local Level

On February 12th, 2016, Chambers Ireland published a guide highlighting initiatives to support local economic development. The guide contains best practice examples from twenty two Chambers of Commerce, Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Offices. Speaking at the launch, Ian Talbot, Chief Executive of Chambers Ireland, acknowledged that “Chambers of Commerce and Local Authorities have always played a key part in driving business growth and developing local economies. In advance of General Election 2016 we are calling on the next Government to prioritise strategic economic planning to provide for sustainable economic development in all regions. The publication of this guide is timely as it shows just how much hard work and great initiatives are being taken throughout the country to make our towns and cities more attractive places to work and live.” He also stressed that the Government must build on such initiatives by publishing and committing to a National Planning Framework that works for the economic development of the regions and for Ireland as a whole.

Mr Talbot outlined that “the Local Economic Development guide highlights initiatives being adopted at local level to support economic growth by attracting new business, supporting existing business, developing town centres and increasing competitiveness. These are all key issues for the Irish Chamber Network during this election campaign and are outlined in our manifesto, A Vision for 2021. With the publication of this guide, Chambers and their local partners will have a ready resource to assist them in

driving local growth and transforming local areas by learning from each other.”

“Ireland is entering a challenging phase in its economic history. As we emerge from a period of deep recession, our recovery has been characterised by economic growth that has been uneven across the country and a legacy of youth and long term unemployment. The role of Local Authorities in advancing the economic growth of their communities has never been more important. Local Authorities have always played an integral role in the economic development of their local area, but with the ongoing reforms of Local Government, a new emphasis has been placed on Local Authorities as drivers of local economic development. Chambers Ireland and its affiliated network have long worked in partnership with the County and City Management Association, the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, and the network of Local Authorities to advance and support our mutual goal of local economic development. To this end, Chambers Ireland has compiled this document to highlight some of the initiatives being undertaken by Local Authorities to support enterprises in their area. Twenty-two Chambers worked with Chambers Ireland to identify initiatives and projects being undertaken by their respective Local Authorities that they viewed as having a positive impact on the business community. A number of these initiatives are being delivered by Local Authorities in partnership with Chambers. The purpose of this document is to give a snapshot of some of the positive actions currently being undertaken to foster

enterprise development at local level, and to provide a ready resource for Local Authorities and Chambers as they seek to develop programmes within their own communities. The document is structured as follows: 1. Section 1 describes current initiatives adopted at local level to support economic growth 2. Section 2 outlines former Local Authority winning projects recognised as best practice in supporting local development 3. Section 3 provides examples of innovative international approaches to generating growth which potentially could be implemented in an Irish context. In addition to this document, the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation recently published a report outlining 15 practical options which can be replicated throughout the country in support of local economic growth. This report contains a number of Chambers Ireland’s suggestions and can be accessed here. It is our belief that Local Authorities and Chambers must develop ever closer partnerships if we are to successfully drive economic development at a local level. To achieve this, Chambers Ireland will continue to support the constructive engagement of Local Government and local businesses. We expect that this document will inspire new ideas for how local cooperation can be improved to pursue our common objective of economic growth. Conor Brennan, CEO of Zurich Insurance Ireland, sponsors of this publication and corporate partners of Chambers Ireland, concluded: “Zurich Insurance is delighted to support this important publication by Chambers Ireland. As one of Ireland’s leading insurers, Zurich recognises the crucial

role businesses play in driving sustainable economic growth. The many outstanding examples of cooperation show how local government in cooperation with enterprises have a significant positive impact on our country by developing and growing local economies. When working together, anything is possible”. [pages 8-10, Initiatives to Support Local Economic Development, Chambers Ireland, 2016]

### Current Initiatives Adopted at Local Level to Support Growth

In early 2015 Chambers Ireland asked our affiliated network of Chambers for feedback on initiatives adopted by Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) in support of local economic growth.

The guide to local economic development has been developed based on feedback from 22 of Chambers Ireland’s affiliated Chambers. Twenty-two Chambers throughout the country worked with Chambers Ireland to identify numerous initiatives which highlight the importance of Local Government in developing and growing local economies.

- The guide to local economic development has been developed based on feedback from 22 of Chambers Ireland’s affiliated Chambers. Twenty-two Chambers throughout the country worked with Chambers Ireland to identify numerous initiatives which highlight the importance of Local Government in developing and growing local economies.
- The guide outlines current initiatives adopted at local level to support economic growth under the four headings of:
  - i. Attracting new business
  - ii. Supporting existing business
  - iii. Town centre development
  - iv. Increasing competitiveness
- It is our expectation that some of these initiatives will inspire other Chambers, Councils and LEOs to continue the important work of implementing projects that have a positive impact on the business community and through this strengthen local economic growth.
- The guide additionally describes innovative international ideas to

drive economic growth.

- Chambers Ireland annually recognises best practice in local government through our Excellence in Local Government (ELG) Awards
- One of the ELG Award categories specifically commends promotion of economic development. In 2015 this award was won by Cork City Council for their project ‘TWISH’ which seeks to inspire young women to investigate opportunities in STEM.
- The last winning projects of the ELG Award in economic development are profiled in the guide
- This publication has been sponsored by Zurich Insurance, Ireland
- The guide to local economic development can be accessed at <http://www.chambers.ie/assets/media/LED%20Final.pdf>

For further information contact Susan McDermott, Chambers Ireland, email [susan.mcdermott@chambers.ie](mailto:susan.mcdermott@chambers.ie)

Source:

[www.chambers.ie](http://www.chambers.ie)



At the publication of Chambers Ireland Guide to support Local Economic Development, are from left to right, Conor Brennan, CEO of Zurich Insurance Ireland, and Ian Talbot, Chief Executive of Chambers Ireland.



## Historic first for LYIT & Donegal County Council

Letterkenny Institute of Technology and Donegal County Council made history on Wednesday 8th June 2016, when they became the first organisations of their kind in Ireland to formally sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU). This memorandum of understanding formalises the strong working relationship between both organisations and recognises the very important

responsibilities that both the Council and LYIT have in delivering on national and regional policy objectives.

This five-year MoU was signed by Seamus Neely, Chief Executive of Donegal County Council and Paul Hannigan, President of Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT), in the presence of Cllr. Ciaran Brogan, on behalf of their respective

organisations. This partnership will focus on promoting sustainable economic development and job creation by working with stakeholders to address their various education and training needs, to develop the region's capacity for Research and Innovation and to promote and support Entrepreneurship, Investment, and Enterprise. There is particular emphasis on cross-border

collaboration. This focus is consistent with the Council's Corporate Plan 2015-19, the Donegal Local Economic & Community Plan 2016 - 2022, and LYIT's Strategic Plan 2014-17.

Speaking at the signing, Cllr. Ciaran Brogan, Cathaoirleach of Donegal County Council stated that "this is an historic first, as it is the first agreement of its kind in Ireland between a higher education institution and its local authority. The agreement emanates from a strong working relationship over the years and both partners wish to further develop their capacities to achieve their respective missions through enhanced cooperation". Paul Hannigan, President of Letterkenny Institute of Technology

(LYIT) stated that this memorandum is "a formal recognition of the excellent working relationship that exists between Letterkenny IT and Donegal County Council. This has been built up over many years with respective staff cooperating and collaborating on many projects". Seamus Neely, Chief Executive of Donegal County Council believes that this MoU will solidify what is an already very strong relationship between both organisations and will further support the strategic cross-border collaborative approach that both the Council and LYIT have been pursuing. "Although we have many challenges in Donegal, we also have many strengths and one is our capacity to work in a collaborative way for the betterment of our county and our

region. Both the Council and LYIT face similar challenges mainly due to our geographical location and by working together and in a regional context with our partners in Derry City and Strabane District Council we will continue to promote sustainable economic development and job creation in Donegal and the region".

Source:

Communications Office, Donegal County Council  
Website: [www.donegalcoco.ie](http://www.donegalcoco.ie)



Cllr. Ciaran Brogan, Cathaoirleach, Donegal County Council with Seamus Neely, Chief Executive, Donegal County Council and Paul Hannigan, President of Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT), signing a 5-year memorandum of understanding on behalf of both organisations on Wednesday.



Cllr. Ciaran Brogan, Cathaoirleach, Donegal County Council with Seamus Neely, Chief Executive, Donegal County Council and Paul Hannigan, President of Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT), signing a 5-year memorandum of understanding on behalf of both organisations on Wednesday along with members of the executive board at LYIT and senior staff from Donegal County Council.



**SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS:  
A REVIEW OF NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EXAMPLES**

**ORLA O'DONNELL**

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## News items

### €200m Local Infrastructure Fund announced to increase the supply of housing

On Tuesday, June 14th, 2016, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Paschal Donohoe T.D and the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, Minister Simon Coveney T.D welcomed the Government's approval to establish a Local Infrastructure Fund of €200m to provide public off-site infrastructure to stimulate an increase in private housing in Dublin and in urban areas of high demand for housing.

The fund is a doubling of the one provided for in the Programme for Government which committed to re-prioritising the capital programme to put in place a new €100 million Local Infrastructure Fund, from which local authorities could deliver local projects needed to unblock land in high demand areas. Local authorities can avail of the new fund to provide access infrastructure such as distributor roads, bridges, surface water management, amenities and utility diversion to facilitate the opening up of private development on major housing sites and to significantly increase the supply of housing.

Minister Donohoe underlined that "we urgently need to take action to remove impediments to the supply of private housing so that we can make more rapid progress towards achieving our target output of 25,000 houses per annum to meet housing needs. The €200 million fund which we are establishing will help to activate existing planning permissions for large scale housing developments and should facilitate in the region of 15,000 to 20,000 new houses and apartments. I would urge local authorities and developers to take advantage of this opportunity to cooperate closely on the ground and to provide much needed

housing which the availability of this fund for the next few years presents". Minister Coveney highlighted that "this is clear recognition and action by the Government in response to the housing crisis in order that people will be able to secure a home for themselves and their families within a reasonable timeframe. This funding intervention will help improve the economic viability of new housing projects, by moving key sites from inactivity and slow release to active and accelerated delivery of homes. I am accelerating plans to get Government approval to publish the final Action Plan on Housing no later than mid-July, and the activation of this new funding provision as announced by Government will be a key action under the Plan."

Source:

<http://www.environ.ie/housing/ministers-donohoe-and-coveney-announce-eu200m-local-infrastructure-fund-increase-supply>

### Minister Simon Coveney invites proposals for social housing accommodation for people with special housing needs

On Friday, 24th June, 2016, Mr. Simon Coveney T.D., Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, directed all local authorities to invite Approved Housing Bodies to develop and submit cost effective and sustainable proposals to provide independent living accommodation for people with special housing needs under the Capital Assistance Scheme.

Local Authorities will issue a 'Call for Proposals' to invite construction and/or acquisition proposals from Approved Housing Bodies to meet this important need. Minister Coveney stated that "the Capital Assistance Scheme is my Department's main capital funding scheme for the provision of independent

living accommodation for the more vulnerable in our society. There is a strong level of project already approved following announcements made last year. I am delighted that with the projects already in train and those that will now be newly proposed, the Government is enabling additional social housing accommodation to be delivered across the country to meet these important needs".

This new 'Call for Proposals' under the Capital Assistance Scheme is in the context of the Social Housing Strategy 2020, as well as the commitments in the new Programme for a Partnership Government to expedite the delivery of social housing. €86 million has been set aside in the Department's vote to facilitate the delivery of units this year under the Scheme, which is a significant increase on last year. The Minister said "this announcement will assist in delivering on our ambitious targets for social housing. That focus must encompass our citizens who have particular needs and for whom a sheltered housing solution is appropriate. The focus on delivery must also encompass the Approved Housing Body sector which delivers strongly in relation to special needs, but is also key to the broader delivery of the housing services that our country needs."

Source:

<http://www.environ.ie/housing/social-housing/voluntary-and-cooperative-housing/minister-simon-coveney-invites-proposals>

### Increased Commitment to Capital Expenditure Welcomed

'Rainy Day Fund' Positive Step in Prudential Economic Management

On Tuesday, 21st June 2016, following the Government's announcement of the Summer Economic Statement,



Chambers Ireland Chief Executive, Ian Talbot welcomed the increased commitment to capital expenditure but cautioned that further investment increases are likely to be necessary in the coming years. "Increased Government spending should be weighted towards strategic investment in the infrastructure necessary to sustain our economic growth. A lengthy period of under investment in infrastructure has led to bottlenecks emerging, particularly in transport, housing and broadband and these areas need substantial investment as a matter of urgency. We welcome the increased allocation of €1 billion to the capital investment programme over the coming years and the commitment to bring levels of capital expenditure up to 3.8% of GNP by 2021. However, as Ireland faces increasing demographic pressures, and the economy moves towards operating at capacity, it is very likely that further increases to the capital budget will be necessary. The establishment of a Rainy Day Fund is another positive development which will help address the vulnerability of the Irish economy to cyclical shocks. As a small open economy, a Rainy Day Fund will provide a prudential counter-cyclical buffer to help smooth income and expenditure profiles in times of volatility."

Source:

[www.chambers.ie](http://www.chambers.ie)

### €20m awarded in Community Energy Grants - 38 Community Groups Across the Country to Benefit

On Thursday, June 23rd, 2016, Mr. Denis Naughten T.D., Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment announced that 38 community energy projects are to receive €20m in grant funding through the Better Energy Communities scheme operated by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland. This year's funding will provide for energy efficiency upgrades to more than 2,600 homes and

almost 300 community and commercial facilities. The total investment in energy efficiency is almost €48 million, supporting more than 700 direct and indirect jobs right across the country.

Minister Naughten outlined at the launch that he "firmly believes that people will become more energy efficient not just because it helps to save the world but because it helps them to save money and makes their homes and businesses warmer, healthier and more comfortable. By supporting Community Groups in upgrading our schools, crèches, sports clubs and community halls we can demonstrate to everybody the real and practical benefits of energy efficiency. It also reduces the amount of money we spend on imported fossil fuels and instead ensures that this money supports local employment throughout the country."

Also speaking at the launch, SEAI Chief Executive Jim Gannon stated that "as communities mature so too does their ability to identify and secure funds independently, gradually reducing their reliance on government funds. Most encouraging though are the innovative ways homeowners are being helped with funding the upfront works costs. SEAI are trialling and overseeing a range of these including bridging finance mechanisms, pay-as-you-save models, enhanced credit union loan terms, employer finance with some commercial participants investing their savings into community energy funds."

Some of the notable projects that have been successful in this year's scheme include:

- A project with Mayo county council, will use an Energy Service Company (ESCO) model to upgrade the town Hall, fire station and library in Castlebar along with community creches, arts buildings, community buildings, one hotel and one business. The works also include energy retrofits of 43 homes in Charlestown and Castlebar which are owned by the St Vincent de Paul (SVP).

- A partnership with the HSE will upgrade the efficiency of twelve local Health Centres, eight daycare buildings, Cherry Orchard Hospital and a risk assessment service in Ballyowen.
- An energy efficiency upgrade for a homeless shelter for women and children operated by the DePaul charity in Dublin 1.
- 12 transport companies will enter into an agreement to reduce their fuel spend through driver training and the installation of a vehicle management system. The resultant energy credits will be donated to finance energy efficiency upgrades to schools, sports clubs and community buildings.
- Grants to help make Arranmore Island energy independent by upgrading the housing stock and installing renewable technologies and the use of wind turbines to power community group water scheme in Galway

Geoff Corcoran, Director of Development at Co-operative Housing Ireland, one of the community groups who are benefitting under this year's scheme, stressed that "Co-operative Housing Ireland is working hard to respond to the current housing crisis with plans to deliver over 1,500 new homes across Ireland over the years to 2020. At the same time, we remain committed to continued investment in our existing housing stock. The vital support of SEAI through the Better Energy Communities scheme has helped us to upgrade nearly 300 homes so far, with 80 more to be delivered this year. For us, the most valuable contribution of the scheme has been the difference that it makes to the lives of co-operative members, reducing the cost of heating their homes, raising their level of comfort, and supporting them to think about more energy efficient ways of living."

This year's Better Energy Communities scheme also makes funding available for the first time for the creation of a national

support network for communities who want to get involved with change their energy usage. This Sustainable Energy Community network will offer community groups the expert advice and support that they need to get up and running and will assist those community groups already active to develop larger and more ambitious energy saving projects. "Already 33 community groups have signed up to become a member of the Sustainable Energy Community network and this number grows by the week. A real revolution in the energy sector is coming. With new forms of renewable energy, with new technologies that can put people in control of their own energy usage and by supporting people's efforts to become more energy efficient, I think that we deliver a transition to a sustainable economy that will be good for the economy, good for the environment and most importantly of all good for the people of Ireland," concluded Minister Naughten.

Full list of awards are available at:

<http://www.dcenr.gov.ie/energy/SiteCollectionDocuments/Energy-Efficiency/2016%20BEC%20Projects.pdf>

Source:

<http://www.dcenr.gov.ie/news-and-media/en-ie/Pages/PressRelease/Minister-Naughten-Awards-%E2%82%AC20m-in-Community-Energy-Grants.aspx#>

### Establishment of an Expert Commission on Domestic Public Water Services

On Friday, 10th June, 2016, the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Mr Simon Coveney T.D. announced he is to establish an Expert Commission to make recommendations on a sustainable long-term funding model for the delivery of domestic public water and waste water services by Irish Water. The proposed terms of reference for the Commission are shown below, and it is intended that the Commission will endeavour to complete its work within five months of its establishment. The recommendations

of the Commission will be considered by a special Oireachtas Committee.

The Minister intends that the Commission will include both national and international experts and invites interested parties to put forward potential nominees. Given the complexity of the issues involved, it is intended that the Commission will require professional expertise in funding and financing of large scale infrastructure investment and maintenance programmes; economic regulation; utility approaches particularly in the water sector; water resources management and water environmental law.

Names of nominees and their respective areas of expertise were to be submitted to the Department on 17th June 2016. Final selection shall be a matter for the Minister, taking account of need for the Commission to have the best range of expertise to deliver on the terms of reference within the timeframe proposed.

#### Proposed Terms of Reference

An Expert Commission will be set up to assess and make recommendation upon the funding of domestic public water services in Ireland and improvements in water quality, taking into account:

- The maintenance and investment needs of the public water and waste water system on a short, medium and long-term basis;
- Proposals on how the national utility in State ownership would be able to borrow to invest in water infrastructure;
- The need to encourage water conservation, including through reviewing information campaigns on water conservation in other countries;
- Ireland's domestic and international environmental standards and obligations;
- The role of the Regulator; and

- Submissions from all interested parties.

The Commission will be empowered to commission relevant research and hear evidence to assist this work. The Commission shall endeavour to complete its work within five months of its establishment.

Source:

<http://www.environ.ie/water/water-services/establishment-expert-commission-domestic-public-water-services>

### Over 3,500 local jobs created by Local Enterprise Offices in 2015

A net total of 3,533 new full and part-time jobs were delivered in 2015 by the 6,500 small businesses from across the country that have been supported by the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), according to the results of the latest LEO annual jobs survey published by Minister Mary Mitchell O'Connor, T.D. on Tuesday, 31st May, 2016.

The results, compiled by Enterprise Ireland, show that overall in 2015 a total of 7,122 new full and part time jobs were created in gross terms. The numbers employed in LEO supported small businesses currently stand at 32,592 overall. The 31 LEOs provide a 'first stop shop' for supports and signposting to start-ups, micro enterprises and small businesses nationwide in one easily accessible place.

Announcing the 2015 results, Mary Mitchell O'Connor, T.D., Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation underlined that "the creation of 3,533 net new jobs in 2015 by clients of the Local Enterprise Offices is a remarkable achievement and testament to the hard work and personal sacrifices being made by entrepreneurs in local communities all around the country. I am very much focussed on ensuring jobs are created in every region in Ireland and the LEOs are playing an important role in this. Ensuring that we have the right



environment for job growth is at the heart of the Regional Action Plan for Jobs and I will be ensuring that these Regional Action Plans are implemented right across the country. These figures show a high level of performance which is very encouraging and demonstrates that the local enterprise support structures that we put in place two years ago are producing real results. Great credit is due to the staff in all 31 LEOs for their achievements in this regard and to Enterprise Ireland and the Local Authorities for their role.”

Julie Sinnamon, CEO Enterprise Ireland, commented that “under the ‘first stop shop’ business support model, Local Enterprise Offices are delivering services and supports to an increasing number of start-ups, micro-enterprises and small businesses throughout the local authority network, under the guidance of the Centre of Excellence at Enterprise Ireland. As the results from 2015 demonstrate, this partnership approach is working, resulting in over 3,500 new jobs last year. A priority for Enterprise Ireland and Local Enterprise Offices is to help more Irish entrepreneurs and companies start-up and grow, creating more jobs locally. Together with LEOs and local authorities, we are working hard to achieve this, helping more local businesses reach their growth potential.”

Speaking on behalf of Local Authorities, Fingal Chief Executive and Chair of the CCMA Committee on Economic Development & Enterprise Paul Reid outlined that “the LEO jobs performance underlines the potential for creating jobs at local level. It is critical that the infrastructure and supports are in place to stimulate local business development and encourage local entrepreneurs. Working as part of the wider economic remit of the Local Authorities, the LEOs are the launch pad for new enterprises, business growth and job creation in every county”.

#### Key facts

- The annual jobs survey monitors the employment performance amongst micro enterprises employing 10

people or less that have received direct financial assistance through the LEOs.

- In 2015, 984 business projects around the country were directly supported by the LEOs to the value of €10 million.
- A total of 23 eligible high performing LEO client companies transferred to Enterprise Ireland during the year under an agreed progression protocol with the LEOs representing a further positive outcome of LEO investment and support.
- LEOs also supported budding entrepreneurs and small businesses with training and mentoring aimed at developing business ideas and building company capacity. Local entrepreneurship and job creation potential are further boosted by other LEO driven initiatives.
- Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE) competition generated 1,400 applicants in 2015.
- There were 200 successful loan applications to Micro Finance Ireland (MFI) that were referred through the LEOs nationally.
- Almost 1,700 small businesses availed of the Trading Online Voucher Scheme through the LEOs last year, which helps to support internet based sales.

#### Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs)

As part of a range of reforms carried out by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI) in recent years, the 31 Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) were established to provide a ‘first-stop shop’ system of enterprise supports to start-ups and small businesses across the country. Located in the Local Authorities, the LEOs are operated on a partnership basis by Enterprise Ireland and the Local Authorities and their parent Departments, DJEI and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

The LEOs provide funding for projects primarily in the manufacturing and internationally traded services sector which over time have the potential to develop into strong export entities. There are three main categories of grant under which direct financial assistance is provided – Priming, Feasibility and Business Expansion. The LEOs also provide training and mentoring support to entrepreneurs and businesses to assist business development and performance. The LEOs through appropriate referral also ensure that people thinking of starting or expanding a business in every part of the country are able to access the full range of State supports provided by different Government bodies – for example Revenue, the Department of Social Protection, the Credit Review Office, Education and Training Boards etc, – in one easily accessible location within the Local Authority.

Details on all the supports available for small businesses and microenterprises through the 31 LEOs are available at [www.localenterprise.ie](http://www.localenterprise.ie).

#### LEO employment results 2015

The LEO employment results for 2015, which were compiled by the Enterprise Ireland Centre of Excellence, using the same systems as applied to the Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland annual surveys, show that overall in 2015:

- a total of 7,122 new jobs (full- and part-time) were created in gross terms.
- taking into account losses, there was a net increase of 3,533 all jobs (full- and part-time)
- overall at the end of 2015, total direct employment among 6,573 LEO client companies stood at 32,592 (of which 23,641 were full-time and 8,951 were part-time).

The detailed results at LEO level are set out in the attached Table 1.

The LEOs provided a range of development supports aimed at building company capacity and performance

- provision of one-to-one mentoring support to 8,175 participants;
- 399 referrals to Micro Finance Ireland of which 200 were approved; and
- promoting the Trading Online Voucher Scheme with almost 1,700 businesses participating (<https://www.localenterprise.ie/Discover-Business-Supports/Trading-Online-Voucher-Scheme/>).

Strengthening the pipeline of new business start-ups nationwide, the LEOs ran Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE) competition for the second year in 2015 which generated just under 1,400 applicants from young people around the country.

All of these initiatives are expected to make a contribution to the creation and maintenance of jobs in local communities all over the country in addition to those reported in the survey results.

\* FT & PT = Full time and Part time

Details on all the supports available for small businesses and microenterprises through the 31 LEOs are available at [www.localenterprise.ie](http://www.localenterprise.ie).

#### Source:

Press Office, D/Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, [press.office@djei.ie](mailto:press.office@djei.ie)

**Table 1: Local Enterprise Office Annual Employment Survey Results 2015**

LEO NAME	2015 No of LEO Clients	2015 Client All Jobs Total (FT & PT)*	2015 Gross All Job Gains (FT & PT)	2015 Net All Job Gains (FT & PT)
Carlow	217	1,029	267	78
Cavan	205	1,110	223	121
Clare	194	1,433	170	111
Cork City	119	696	138	45
Cork North & West	229	1,274	263	45
Cork South	179	847	215	131
Donegal	171	1,132	370	226
Dublin City	298	1,572	426	250
Dublin DLR	229	1,271	164	14
Dublin Fingal	174	723	197	164
Dublin South	250	1,105	223	102
Galway	245	900	183	87
Kerry	462	1,881	396	130
Kildare	127	770	222	136
Kilkenny	257	1,278	234	139
Laois	90	451	156	114
Leitrim	144	378	89	37
Limerick	245	1,475	360	210
Longford	238	985	208	86
Louth	218	729	182	79
Mayo	208	1,141	168	141
Meath	205	876	247	156
Monaghan	156	806	153	51
Offaly	202	887	144	80
Roscommon	146	666	145	46
Sligo	213	1,083	127	39
Tipperary	282	1,319	201	122
Waterford	322	1,721	416	209
Westmeath	255	1,299	309	178
Wexford	185	1,167	326	132
Wicklow	108	588	200	74
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>6,573</b>	<b>32,592</b>	<b>7,122</b>	<b>3,533</b>



## Ireland 7th place in the IMD Global Competitiveness Yearbook Report

The Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation Mary Mitchell O'Connor T.D., on Tuesday, 31st May, 2016 welcomed the findings of the IMD's 2016 Global Competitiveness yearbook which shows that Ireland's competitiveness ranking has moved up nine places to 7th this year. This is a significant improvement on 2011 when Ireland was ranked 24th and is Ireland's best ranking since 2000. Ireland is now ranked by the IMD as the most competitive economy in the euro area. Minister Mitchell O'Connor outlined that "since 2011, improving competitiveness performance has been a core focus of Government policy and integral to jobs growth. The significant improvement in Ireland's overall ranking in this year's IMD publication is very welcome news and an important signal to international investors. The improvement in Ireland's ranking is the result of the efforts of ambitious enterprises, hardworking employees and effective enterprise focused policies".

The IMD's World Competitiveness Yearbook is an internationally renowned publication which assesses countries across the globe using over 300 competitiveness indicators, and ranks and analyses the ability of nations to create and maintain an environment in which enterprises can compete. Competitiveness is assessed using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data. In terms of quantitative data; improved economic growth, government finances and credit are areas where significant improvement has been seen. The qualitative piece is an IMD survey of 4,300 international executives. In terms of the survey results, Ireland is regarded as particularly strong in terms of the competitiveness of our tax regime, education and skill level of the labour force, business friendly environment, policy stability, strong R&D culture and cost competitiveness. Ireland's performance has improved across all four key dimensions assessed by IMD and can be summarised as follows:

1. Economic Performance-6th position, improvement up 6 places on 2015

2. Government Efficiency-13th position, improvement up 2 places on 2015

3. Business Efficiency-2nd position, improvement up 11 places on 2015

4. Infrastructure-23rd position, improvement up 1 place on 2015

- Ireland ranks first in terms of GDP growth, GDP per capita, export growth investment incentives and direct investment flows abroad.
- Ireland is regarded as the second most competitive country in the world for business efficiency. Particular strengths include the flexibility and adaptability of our people (1st), the productivity level of our workforce (3rd) and the availability of talent.

As recognised by the IMD, many of Ireland's traditional assets such as our competitive taxation system, highly skilled workforce, and pro-enterprise business environment have been strengthened. Our public finances have been significantly repaired and economic growth is robust. The IMD Report follows recent CSO releases in relation to the labour market and job announcements which show economic and employment growth remains strong.

The Minister concluded that "the IMD Report underlines the importance of maintaining international competitiveness in the context of a resurgent Irish economy. It is also a timely reminder about the need to continuously implement policies to further improve our performance to ensure job creation across all regions...As Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, improving Ireland's competitiveness performance is a key priority. My objective now is to deliver a business environment which enhances our national competitiveness and supports sustainable enterprise and employment growth".

### Source:

For further information contact Press Office, D/Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, [press.office@djei.ie](mailto:press.office@djei.ie)

<https://www.djei.ie/en/News-And-Events/Department-News/2016/May/31052016a.html>

## EPA publishes guidance for local authorities to plan for inevitable consequences of climate change

On Wednesday, May 25, 2016, the EPA published Guidelines to make it easier for local authorities to plan for the inevitable consequences of climate change, were officially launched by Denis Naughten, TD, Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources in Athlone. The Local Authority Climate Change Adaptation Strategy Guidelines which were prepared on behalf of the Environment Protection Agency by UCC, are designed to assist local authorities to develop local climate change adaptation strategies, which will assess local vulnerability to climate risks and identify, cost and prioritise adaptation actions. The Local Authority Adaptation Strategy Development Guideline - Research Report 164 is available to download on the EPA website at: <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/research/climate/researchreport164.html>

As noted, the purpose of this guideline is to support local authorities in the development of a local climate change adaptation strategy. In its structure and content, the guideline draws heavily on the 2013 Guidelines on Developing Adaptation Strategies provided to European Union Member States by the European Commission (SWD(2013) 134 final), with the aim of fostering coherence between strategies developed at local and national scale.

Speaking at the launch today in the Hodson Bay Hotel in Athlone, the Minister outlined that "Climate change is rightly gaining increasing recognition as THE global challenge of our generation and this recognition is reflected in the Programme for a Partnership Government which has identified Climate Change as a policy area requiring radical and ambitious evaluation and action. While climate policy has and must continue to be primarily focussed on the issue of reducing emissions in accordance with EU and international obligations, adaptation is also an urgent policy priority. Notwithstanding any success in

limiting and then reducing greenhouse gas emissions, our planet will take time to recover from the greenhouse gases already in the atmosphere and we will be faced with the impacts of climate change for decades to come."

The Minister also pointed out that potential impacts for Ireland are serious: ".....storm surge events may increase in frequency; there is likely to be increased flows to river catchments; sea level may rise; and rainfall amounts may increase in winter and decrease in summer. These changes, in turn, will impact on a number of sectors including agriculture, energy, infrastructure and water resources. The challenge for policy-makers is to understand these climate change impacts and to develop and implement policies to ensure an optimal level of response by way of adaptation."

Reflecting the need for a whole of Government approach, the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 provides that relevant Ministers will be required to develop sectoral adaptation plans which will be undertaken under the terms of a statutory national adaptation framework to be approved by Government. Local authorities will be mandated under the national framework to prepare local adaptation strategies, the subject matter of the guidelines launched today. In relation to the involvement of the local government sector, the Minister stated that "devolution of decision-making to the local level is appropriate - the impacts of climate change, and the capacity to respond to them, are very different in different areas of Ireland. Rainfall shortages in one region may not affect another; local knowledge of how to rapidly implement temporary flood defences in one area may be lacking in another, which has no living memory of flooding. There is no uniform impact regime or adaptation response that can be managed centrally; local understanding of and sensitivity to change is crucial to getting adaptation right. The purpose of the guidelines is to support local authorities in the development of adaptation strategies which will allow for a long term and planned view to be taken of the challenges that climate change poses and of the adaptation and other measures that need to be taken." The Minister concluded that "greenhouse gases emitted by human activities are

warming the Earth and causing changes in the global climate. These changes are having increasingly severe human, economic and environmental impacts and will continue to do so over the coming decades. The cause of climate change and the case for mitigation and adaptation action in response to it are no longer in any doubt. As the first Minister with specific responsibility for climate change, I intend to address this subject with the utmost seriousness and determination at national, EU and international levels. We have no choice now but to take adaptation measures to deal with unavoidable climate impacts and their economic, social and environmental costs. By prioritising a coherent, flexible and participatory approach at national, sectoral and local levels, we can aim to plan, in a considered way, how to adapt our towns and cities to the future impacts that climate change will bring."

Laura Burke, Director General of the EPA also stated at the launch, that "climate change is now with us and is having a direct effect on people's lives, our society and our economy. The flooding in the Shannon region and other parts of Ireland during this past winter shows just how vulnerable we are to extreme rainfall events which are projected to increase in the coming years and decades. We have to act now to reduce such vulnerabilities and to protect ourselves from the impacts of climate change. Our local authorities have a key role to play through the preparation and implementation of local climate adaptation strategies. Simply cleaning up after flood and storm events is no longer enough. We must now plan to adapt our economy, society and environment to deal with the reality of climate change and to manage the risks it poses to our way of life, livelihoods and wellbeing." According to Dr Frank McGovern, EPA Chief Climate Scientist, "the development of local authority-level climate change adaptation strategies needs to start with addressing current vulnerabilities, and also take a longer-term perspective of specific challenges that exists at local levels for communities and infrastructure. This research work, in combination with other EPA-managed Climate Change research, has produced very practical guidance for local authorities to help them plan for a

better future."

The Guidelines were prepared by scientists at University College Cork's Environmental Research Institute. Their research, funded by the EPA, will assist Local Authorities in devising their Adaptation plans which in turn will support the implementation of the National Adaptation Framework, and associated international commitments. The guidance in this published research, which is based on international best practice, EU Adaptation Guidelines and extensive stakeholder engagement, can be used by a local authority to assess the adaptation fitness and coherence of its spatial plans and the other plans and policies under its remit. The guidelines follow a step wise process to adaptation planning and subscribe to an adaptive risk management approach. They can be used in conjunction with the EPA funded climate information portal "Climate Ireland".

### Background

Policy response to climate change:

There are two key responses to Climate Change.

- The first - and critically urgent - is **Mitigation**. This involves tackling the causes of Climate Change and reducing the release of greenhouse gases (renewable energy, insulation, sustainable transport, emissions trading, etc.). **Mitigation** also deals with land-use issues in so far as they can contribute to storing or sinking carbon and offsetting releases (e.g. forestry, peatland preservation).
- The second main response is **Adaptation**. Adaptation seeks to identify vulnerabilities to current climate conditions and to actions to reduce these thereby increasing resilience to current extremes and future changes in these as a result of climate change, including, for example, flood defence, infrastructural integrity, droughts or modified agricultural systems. Mitigation and adaptation also provide opportunities that can be capitalised on, for example, 'green growth'.



To address the mitigation challenge, Ireland will pursue and aim to meet its national, EU and international greenhouse gas mitigation commitments through the adoption of a series of 5 yearly statutory National Mitigation Plans (NMP). The NMPs will track the implementation of measures already underway and identify additional measures in the longer term to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Work on developing Ireland's first NMP is well advanced. A similar long term process, operating in parallel with and informed by the mitigation effort, will develop the process of adapting Ireland to the impacts of climate change.

### Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015

In December 2015 in Paris, 195 nations agreed the text of a global UN Climate Change agreement. One of the crucial aspects of this agreement was a call to strengthen the ability of countries to deal with climate impacts through Adaptation measures, and the requirement that nations submit adaptation communications to the UN, in which they detail their adaptation priorities, support needs and plans. The National Adaptation Framework as required in the Climate Action & Low Carbon Development Act 2015 will, by December 2017, specify measures required by Sectors and Local Authorities in order to reduce the vulnerability of the State to the negative effects of climate change and to avail of positive effects of climate change as may occur.

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 establishes the national objective of transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy in the period to 2050. It also provides a statutory basis for the institutional arrangements necessary to pursue and achieve the objective; these arrangements focus on mitigation and adaptation. While climate policy has been primarily focussed on the former, adaptation is also becoming an urgent policy priority, with climate change now acknowledged as a certainty throughout the coming century. The Climate Action

& Low Carbon Development Act which was signed into law in December 2015 requires the government to prepare a national Climate Change adaptation plan called the National Adaptation Framework. This framework will specify adaptation measures required in key government departments (sectors) such as transport, energy, agriculture, but also measures required by Local Government.

Under section 5 of the 2015 Act, the Minister must submit to Government for approval (not later than December 2017), a national adaptation framework (NAF). The NAF will specify the national strategy for the application of adaptation measures in different sectors and by local authorities in their administrative areas in order to reduce the vulnerability of the State to the negative effects of climate change and to avail of any positive effects that may occur. The 2015 Act also provides that relevant Ministers will be required to develop sectoral adaptation plans which will specify the adaptation policy measures the Minister in question proposes to adopt.

### Role of local authorities

Local authorities will be mandated under the NAF to prepare local adaptation strategies, the subject matter of the guidelines launched by the Minister. The guidelines, which were commissioned by the EPA and prepared by UCC, are designed to assist local authorities to develop their own adaptation strategies which will be distinct and separate to the NAF and will complement adaptation plans to be prepared by Government Departments on a sectoral basis.

The guidelines describe, in six steps, the tasks that a local authority needs to complete in order to develop, adopt and implement an adaptation strategy. The six stages are as follows: -

1. Forming an adaptation team and preparing the ground.
2. Assessing the current adaptation baseline.
3. Assessing future climate risk.
4. Identifying, assessing and prioritising adaptation options.

5. Developing an adaptation pathway map and drafting the adaptation strategy.
6. Mainstreaming, monitoring and reviewing the adaptation strategy.

### EPA Research

The national environmental research programme, managed by the EPA and funded by government, seeks to develop and use knowledge, evidence and solutions to protect and improve our natural environment and human health. EPA Research has increased national understanding of our environment, the challenges it faces and responses to these. It has also developed high quality research capacity and supported innovation that is internationally respected. EPA Research is targeted to address the needs of key governmental and non-governmental stakeholders and also encourages the researcher community to engage with these stakeholders. EPA Research has provided integrated solutions for many of the complex environmental challenges facing Ireland. See the EPA research strategy and EPA Climate Change research activity on the EPA website ([www.epa.ie](http://www.epa.ie)).

### Potential impacts of Climate Change for Ireland:

Ireland's climate is changing. The scale and rate of change is consistent with global and regional trends. These changes are projected to continue and increase over the coming decades. Winters are projected to become wetter and summers drier, while extreme events are expected to become more intense. In addition, rising sea levels will stress coastal communities and critical infrastructure. To date, climate change has played a role in the occurrence of heatwaves across Europe; more moisture in the atmosphere has contributed to intense downpours and unprecedented flooding; and rising sea levels have contributed to waves breaking over the streets and homes of coastal dwellers during Atlantic storms. Such events present a risk of key infrastructure and services failing irrevocably.

### Climate change adaptation

Effective actions are needed to reduce vulnerabilities to the negative impacts of climate change, take advantages of opportunities and to increase social, economic and environmental resilience. Adaptation can be defined as 'adjustment to natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities'. In other words, adaptation seeks to protect people, buildings, infrastructure, businesses and ecosystems against the negative impacts of climate change but also to build resilience to climate change, allowing society to take advantage of any opportunities that it might bring. These actions are taken in parallel with, and in addition ongoing and planned changes in the relevant sectors.

#### Sources:

<http://www.epa.ie/newsandevents/news/name,59413,en.html>

<http://www.dcenr.gov.ie/news-and-media/en-ie/Pages/PressRelease/Local-Authority-Climate-Change-Adaptation.aspx>

### New Public Procurement Regulations

On May 6th, 2016, Mr. Paul Quinn, Government Chief Procurement Officer announced that the new EU Procurement Directives have been transposed into Irish law. Mr Quinn stated at the announcement that "the reforms will help to streamline public procurement processes and embed more simplified and flexible rules for the conduct of public procurement."

The new Regulations cover public procurement both in the public service and in the utilities sector. They will allow authorities to conduct procurement more efficiently. They also provide a platform to advance economy-wide strategic goals in the area of environmental protection and social policy objectives. In addition, the Regulations reinforce the policy initiative taken in 2014 to improve SME access to procurement opportunities, including the division of contracts into lots and supporting consortia bids for larger contracts.

Greater use of electronic means of communication is a key feature of the new regime. Electronic notification of procurement opportunities and access to tender documents will now become mandatory and from October 2018, electronic submission of tenders will be mandatory. Mr. Quinn also noted: "Ireland has already embraced electronic communication in the procurement process with the eTenders portal ([www.etenders.ie](http://www.etenders.ie)) that provides a central facility for public sector bodies to advertise procurement opportunities. For suppliers registered on the site it ensures maximum exposure to tendering opportunities within their business sector".

With an annual procurement spend of approximately €12 billion it is essential that the State continues to seek better value for money from this expenditure. In this context, the new Regulations can support an enhanced role for the Office of Government Procurement and other central purchasing bodies in driving strategic procurement. Mr. Quinn underlined that "public procurement must continue to be used as an instrument to drive better value for money outcomes for the taxpayer from the significant annual spend on goods supplies, services and works."

### Key features

Much of the new Public Authorities Contracts Directive (2014/24/EU: the "Classical") and the Utilities Directive (2014/25/EU: Utilities) reflect the existing framework of procurement law. The reforms across both Directives are designed to improve the effectiveness of the regime and to codify recent procurement case law.

The incremental changes in these Regulations are intended to help streamline public procurement processes and embed more simplified and flexible rules for the selection of suppliers. This should allow public bodies to carry out procurement faster and with less 'red tape'.

In broader economic terms, the new features can facilitate better value

for money outcomes for the taxpayer from public procurement and facilitate greater SME participation and access to public procurement opportunities.

These Regulation provides for the following:

- There is scope to take account of economy-wide strategic policy goals in the areas of environmental, social and labour law compliance. These obligations can be included in clauses in public contracts with the proviso that the clauses be linked to the subject-matter of the contract in question.
- A new Light Touch regime is provided for covering mainly social, health and educational services ("services to the person") for contracts above €750,000. The rules and procedures in the regime are intended to maximise flexibility in the conduct of procurement in these areas (designed CPV codes in the Directive) while adhering to the key procurement principles of transparency, equality of treatment etc.
- Public bodies can be required to use OGP's (or another designated central purchasing bodies in the State) procurement arrangements including, frameworks or under dynamic purchasing system.
- Changes intended to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the procurement process include the following:
  - o electronic methods of communication is now mandated in parts of the award process;
  - o use of a self-declaration (European Single Procurement Document) of compliance with selection and exclusion criteria by suppliers to reduce red tape;
  - o reduction in the time limits for receipt of tenders by 30%;
  - o explicitly allowing prior discussion with suppliers and independent experts, with safeguards against



distorting competition or violating transparency and non-discrimination principles;

- o simplifying the use of dynamic purchasing systems: the main features of DPS include: no time limit on duration; no need to advertise call-off contracts; suppliers can be added at any time; entirely electronic system.

- The Regulations include provisions to encourage greater access to SME as well as to persons with disabilities including:

- o the discretion to divide public contracts into lots, with the proviso that opting not to lot contracts must be explained in the procurement documents;

- o provision for “consortia bidding” to encourage SME involvement

- o financial capacity criterion is now less demanding; it is generally limited to twice contract value;

- o reform of the rules for Sheltered Workshops to encourage greater take-up; reduction in the percentage of employees with a disability from 50% to 30% and the inclusion of “disadvantage” in addition to “disability”

- o particular contracts can be ring fenced (reserved) for social enterprises under certain conditions.

- The current grounds for excluding suppliers (organised crime; corruption; fraud; money laundering) have been expanded to include terrorism; child labour; human trafficking.

**Sources:**

<http://www.per.gov.ie/en/new-public-procurement-regulations/>

Directive 2014/24/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on public procurement,

[http://www.procurement.ie/sites/default/files/oj-jo\\_2014\\_dir24-2014.pdf](http://www.procurement.ie/sites/default/files/oj-jo_2014_dir24-2014.pdf)

## Naughten signs political declaration on offshore renewable energy

On Monday, 6th June 2016, Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Denis Naughten TD, signed an energy co-operation declaration with nine other EU countries focussing on the development of cost effective offshore wind & wave renewable energy. Commenting on the co-operation declaration, Mr. Naughten stated that “Ireland has the best off shore energy potential in Europe, but, we need to work with our colleagues across the EU to turn this potential into electricity. While we are at the leading edge ocean energy research, we can always benefit from closer cooperation with our EU neighbours, not just in ensuring that we use the most cost effective solutions to produce off shore energy but also to get this green electricity onto the European electricity grid”. Speaking from Luxembourg at the official signing ceremony he said “As the new Minister with responsibility for both for energy and climate action, I want to ensure that we do all in our power to achieve our climate change targets in a sustainable cost effective manner in the shortest timeframe possible. It is also important that we have access to a balanced suite of renewable energy options and I believe that this declaration with EU countries adjoining the North Sea and Irish Sea will help us as a country develop a range of cost effective renewable energy solutions.”

**Background:**

Minister Naughten was one of 10 signatories to the “Political Declaration on Energy Co-operation between the North Seas Countries.” This voluntary declaration, supported by the European Commission, has a particular focus on renewables and smart grid development. The initiative builds on the North Seas Countries’ Offshore Grid Initiative (NSCOGI) that Ireland has been successfully involved in the past. The key objective of this North Seas energy co-operation is to enhance coordination and integration of national

efforts of renewables deployment in addition to grid planning. This aims to reduce the costs of renewable energy and grid development and remove barriers to investment, which contributes to achieving our climate goals and the EU-wide target of 27% renewable energy by 2030. Moreover, it strengthens our security of supply and supports the EU’s long term competitiveness and energy market integration. The long term goal of the co-operation is to attract private investments in the development of the North Seas as a sustainable and regionally optimised energy system. The signatories to the Declaration are: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom and the European Commission.

**Sources:**

<http://www.dcentr.gov.ie/news-and-media/en-ie/Pages/PressRelease/Naughten%20signs%20political%20declaration%20on%20offshore%20renewable%20energy.aspx>

## Minister of State English welcomes two excellent Public Library initiatives

On Tuesday, 21st June 2016, Mr. Damien English, T.D., Minister of State for Housing and Urban Renewal, announced two library initiatives – ‘My Open Library’: Unlimited Access 8am - 10pm and the Summer Stars Reading Programme in Tullamore Central Library, Co. Offaly. Minister English announced the launch of a call for proposals from Local Authorities to implement the ‘My Open Library’ initiative which extends public library opening hours during unstaffed hours, while continuing to provide regular staffed times for ongoing delivery of service, supporting customers, developing community engagement and hosting events. The ‘My Open Library’ initiative is operated through self-service from 08:00-22:00, 365 days a year, outside of staffed hours. Meeting rooms and community space is also made available for use. The Department of Environment, Community and Local Government will be providing over

€2.3 million for the initiative over the coming years.

The Minister praised the new initiative saying “it means that the public and communities will have access to this invaluable local resource when they need and want to use it most. This will strengthen the prominence of the library in the local community and position it as a focal point for community engagement.”

**Sources:**

<http://www.environ.ie/local-government/community-services/public-libraries/minister-state-english-welcomes-two-excellent>

## 85 Blue Flags and 58 Green Coasts Awards for 2016

On Thursday, May 26th, 2016, Mr Simon Coveney T.D., Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, presented the 2016 Blue Flag and Green Coast Awards at a ceremony at Velvet Strand, Portmarnock, Co. Dublin. A total of 141 awards were presented for beaches and marinas in 14 local authorities around the country.

**Blue Flags**

The Blue Flag is an international award for beach excellence, which is operated in Ireland by An Taisce with support from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. The award is presented to beaches and marinas which have excellent water quality and which achieve high standards across a wide range of other criteria including environmental education, management of the environment, safety and other services.

The Blue Flag Programme has been operating in Ireland since 1988, and this year 85 Blue Flags are being awarded, 79 to beaches and 6 to marinas. The Minister noted that “while the quality of Ireland’s bathing water remains very high, we must not become complacent. We must continue to invest in improving water services infrastructure so as to improve the quality of our waters. This

will support the great effort being put into the Blue Flag Programme by the local authorities and coastal communities.”

**Green Coasts**

58 Green Coast Awards are being presented for 2016. The Green Coast Award is given to beaches which have excellent water quality but which may be less developed and less populated than Blue Flag beaches. An important aspect of the Green Coast Awards is the involvement of Coastcare Volunteer Groups. There are now over 400 Coast care groups established throughout the island. The Minister paid tribute to the work of these groups stating that they “provide a strong indication of the dedication that individuals have to the improvement of their communities and surroundings”.

**SUMMARY OF AWARDS**

144 awards presented, an increase of 10 on last year’s number.

86 Blue Flags are being awarded today in the Republic of Ireland, 81 to beaches and 5 to marinas.

This is an increase of 6 Blue Flags since 2014, representing an increase of 5 Blue Flag beaches and 1 Blue Flag marina.

58 Green Coast Awards are being presented representing an increase of 4 Green Coast Awards since 2014.

6 beaches will be presented with both the Blue Flag & Green Coast Award achieving dual award status. These are Portmarnock, Portrane and Donabate in Fingal County Council; Salthill and Silver Strand in Galway and Rosses Point in Sligo.

**BLUE FLAGS GAINED**

Beaches (+8)  
Wexford: A Blue Flag is being awarded to Ballinesker for the first time.

Cork: 2 Blue Flags were regained in Redbarn and Garretstown.

Kerry: A Blue Flag was regained in Rossbeigh.

Clare: 2 Blue Flags were regained in Miltown Malbay and Spanish Point.

Mayo: 2 Blue Flags were regained in Mulranny and Bertra. Marinas (+1)

Kinsale Yacht Club has been awarded the Blue Flag for the first time.

**BLUE FLAGS NOT AWARDED**

Beaches (-3)  
Blue Flag applications were received for the following beaches but we were unable to award the Blue Flag.

Wicklow: Brittas Bay North did not comply with water quality requirements for the Blue Flag.  
Sligo: Enniscrone did not comply with water quality requirements for the Blue Flag.

Blue Flag applications were not received for the following beaches which did have the Blue Flag in 2014.

Fingal: Skerries South Beach did not meet the excellent standard required for Blue Flag status.

**GREEN COAST AWARDS GAINED (+9)**

Clare: Bishops Quarter and Seafield are being awarded the Green Coast Award for the first time.

Wexford: Ballyhealy, Ballymoney, Booley Bay, Grange and St Helen’s Bay are being awarded the Green Coast Award.

Fingal: The Burrow is being awarded the Green Coast Award for the first time.  
Cork: Inchydoney East is being awarded the Green Coast Award for the first time.

**GREEN COAST AWARDS NOT AWARDED (-5)**

Donegal: Rathmullan failed to comply with the water quality standards required for the Green Coast Award.  
Sligo: Enniscrone failed to comply with the water quality standards required for the Green Coast Award.

Green Coast Award applications were



not received for the following beaches which did have the Green Coast Award in 2014.

Mayo: Ballycastle in Mayo did not comply with water quality standards for the Green Coast Award. Fingal: Skerries did not comply with water quality standards for the Green Coast Award.

Wexford: Ballinesker did not apply for the Green Coast Award but is in receipt of the Blue Flag in 2015.

- The Blue Flag is administered in Ireland by An Taisce on behalf of the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE). The Foundation for Environmental Education is an international organisation that has been promoting environmental education for sustainable development since 1981. FEE is an umbrella organisation with members in around 60 countries world-wide. Blue Flag beaches must be identified bathing waters and are judged against a total of 33 criteria [www.blueflagireland.org](http://www.blueflagireland.org)
- The Green Coast Award can be awarded to non-identified bathing waters and so expands water quality assessment beyond the legislative requirements set out by the new Bathing Water Directive. These awards go to beaches that have excellent water quality, a five year beach management

plan and where the local communities are encouraged to engage in the management of the beach. These beaches may not have the suite of facilities required for Blue Flag status but they are exceptional places to visit. The Green Coast Awards were originally operated as a partnership between some of the east counties and the authorities in Wales. In 2008 the programme was extended to embrace the whole coastline of Ireland.

#### Water Quality

For the evaluation of an applicant beach for Blue Flag/Green Coast Award purposes, the beach must comply with the 95th percentile compliance of the above limit values over a 4 year period. This is in accordance with the EU Bathing Water Directive 2006 as well as the recommendation of the World Health Organisation. The percentile has to be calculated for each parameter and also met for each parameter. For example, if the 95th percentile is below the limit values for Escherichia coli but not for Intestinal Enterococci then the beach cannot be awarded with the Blue Flag.

The Blue Flag programme in Ireland has been the driving force behind improvements in water quality for many years and as an award of excellence the Blue Flag implemented the stricter

standards in Ireland in 2012. The microbiological standards of the 2006 EU Directive are almost twice as strict as the 1976 EU Directive band representing a lowering of the risk threshold for bathers to ca. 3% with the more stringent category of "Excellent" water quality being applied.

The Blue Flag programme is funded in Ireland by the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government. The Green Coast Award is funded by the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government and is supported by Fáilte Ireland and Coca-Cola.

#### Beach Information

Bathing water information is available on linked websites run by both An Taisce and the Environmental Protection Agency:

<http://www.blueflagireland.org/> and <http://www.splash.epa.ie/>

#### Sources:

<http://www.environ.ie/water/water-quality/blue-flag-awards/minister-coveney-announces-blue-flag-and-green-coasts-awards#sthash.mREToMbZ.dpuf>

<http://www.blueflagireland.org/news-events/blue-flag-and-green-coast-awards-2015-announced.1690.html>

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](http://www.ipa.ie)



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