

## Eco-tourism in the border region

*By Stephen Beamish & Jeanne Magnetti, IPA*

Local authorities on both sides of the Ireland/Northern Ireland border are enacting a number of initiatives to develop eco-tourism, both independently and with cross-border cooperation. These initiatives have the potential to make the tourism industry in border counties both economically and environmentally sustainable. Such initiatives have increasing significance due to the potential impacts of Brexit and climate change.

### *Brexit & climate change impacts*

The UK's exit from the EU is expected to result in economic shocks which will disproportionately affect border counties whose economies are comparatively less developed than other counties due to their history of civil conflict (O'Connor, 2008; Hayward, 2017). The decline in the value of Sterling against the Euro has already resulted in a decline in tourism from Northern Ireland and Britain, which accounts for a significant amount of income for border counties (Derry City & Strabane District Council, 2017; Irish Tourism Industry Confederation, 2017). A hard border would further decrease prospects of cross-border tourism. Moreover, Brexit reports prepared by county councils, academics and other interested stakeholders have highlighted the uncertainty in the negotiations process as an obstacle in implementing policies that moderate Brexit impacts. As authorities do not yet know the extent of trade barriers that may be erected when the UK leaves the EU, acceleration of community development is indicated as the current best option (Hayward, 2017). Development of infrastructure and sustainable economic practices is necessary in order to insulate border economies from further economic shocks (ibid). Development

and diversification of the tourism industry is one development area highlighted in local authority reports.

Another issue influencing the tourism industry and wider economy in the border region is climate change. Ireland attracts many tourists because of its cultural and natural heritage including coastline, wildlife, waterways and fragile traces of human activity dating back to pre-historic times (Heritage Council, 2009). Changes in climate, sea level and rainfall may damage coastline and cultural heritage sites, and change the character of Ireland's scenic landscape (ibid). Furthermore, Ireland has made legally binding commitments to the EU to reduce its carbon emissions by 20% in 2020 and 40% by 2030. Current projections suggest that Ireland will not meet the 2020 target. Tourism is a particular threat to the reduction of carbon emissions, as a recent study found that tourism is responsible for one twelfth of world greenhouse gas emissions, and is estimated to produce 6.5 billion tonnes of carbon emissions by 2025 (RTE, 2018).

### *Eco-tourism*

Eco-tourism has the potential to benefit local economies while fulfilling Ireland's EU

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environmental obligations. Much of the border region is rural, with fewer of the 'honey spot' tourist attractions which are more 'Brexit proof' (O'Brien, 2018). Traditional forms of tourism are not economically viable in these areas due to a lack of marketable products and visitor access (O'Connor, 2008).

Eco-tourism provides options to Irish rural communities because this type of tourism focuses on natural landscape experiences, such that rural economies may capitalise on the presence of forests, lakes, mountains or other natural landscapes required for walking, hiking, biking, boating, fishing and other forms of 'adventure tourism' (O'Connor, 2008; Farsani, 2011). In addition, eco-tourism is more sustainable because it emphasises the pristineness of the environment and education about the area. This will instil greater environmental respect in both consumers and tourism operators (Thompson, 2013). Further, eco-tourism emphasises locally sourced products, and often supports local tour guides, accommodations, and other businesses (Farsani, 2011; Thompson, 2013). Therefore, ecotourism represents a potential economic advantage that may also reduce the environmental impacts of traditional forms of tourism.

#### *Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark*

The Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark is one area where cross-border counties have cooperated to develop a successful eco-tourism strategy. The Geopark contains 18,000 hectares of public land and 300 km of walking trails stretching across the border between Fermanagh and Cavan (Thompson, 2017). It is the world's first cross-border geopark, and has set examples for cross-border parks in Slovakia, Hungary, Germany and Poland (Pollak, 2012). According to the

park's current manager, the Geopark attracts 400,000 people and €59 million annually (Thompson, 2017). Fermanagh and Cavan local authorities work jointly to produce development plans for the park, and its joint projects receive funding from EU programmes such as INTERREG and Peace IV.

The Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark is a UNESCO site; preservation of the integrity of the natural landscape is necessary for this classification. County Cavan's website for the Geopark [www.cavanburrenpark.ie] emphasises the natural landscape and highlights the opportunity for cultural, archaeological and wildlife education. Fermanagh's website [www.marblearchcavesgeopark.com] praises the 'spectacular and unique landscapes' of the park and advertises opportunities for canoeing and cruising, caving, angling, cycling, and hiking/walking trails.

The Fermanagh and Omagh District Council Tourism Development Strategy identifies the economic potential of the Geopark and outlines several strategic actions that capitalize on the Geopark's economic potential. The Council states in its action plan the intent to develop a brand strategy for Fermanagh, engage the community and stakeholders, develop an ongoing social media action plan, identify and develop access points, increase tourism staff training and review cross-border opportunities to develop action plans and projects. They also advocate for the creation of networking events for the tourism industry that promote best practices and the implementation of a visitor monitoring programme to collect baseline data that can be used to promote further tourism.

The Cavan County Council Tourism Strategy similarly identifies the significance of the Marble Arch Caves Geopark and Cavan Burren Park. Among its strategies and key actions, the report identifies a plan to better define visitor opportunities to the park and increase its visibility. It also plans to better define park entry and exit points, test new products within the park, develop a stronger marketing plan and further integrate events that occur within the park with other festivals and events in the county. These strategic actions are to take place with the input of interested stakeholders including Fáilte Ireland and Fermanagh and Omagh District Council.

Concerns over continuing cooperation following Brexit have been noted. For instance, several joint projects within the park have been funded by EU INTERREG and Peace IV programmes, whose continued support is not guaranteed past 2020 (Thompson, 2017; O'Connor, 2009). Further, the current manager of the Geopark expressed concerns about the continuation of plans to reconstruct smugglers' routes across the Cuilcagh Mountains as a cultural heritage attraction (Thompson, 2017).

#### *Greenways & blueways*

Greenways and blueways are another development area representative of cross-border eco-tourism. Greenways, for example, address not only tourism but also sport and health, which contributes to its general sustainability and its appeal (Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, 2017). Greenways promote cycling and walking and can be accredited with both recreational and environmental benefits. Blueways also promote physical activity in an

environmentally sustainable way, but do not have the same commuting benefits. The use of already present disused infrastructure, such as canal tow-paths and railways, provide a good basis for many greenways and reusing them does not add to the carbon footprint. It is, however, noted that the environmental benefits of greenways are not as convincing as it may be first believed, as the amount of commuting to offset every kilometre of newly paved cycle paths is relatively high (McClelland, 2014).

Greenways have proven to be a success for local economies. They bring tourists into local areas they may not usually go and consume local products, supporting artisan food and craft industries (Fitzpatrick Associates, 2011). A study of the Great Western Greenway between Westport and Achill, the first of its kind in Ireland, showed that it brought a benefit to the economy of around €405,000 from non-domestic tourists and €737,000 from domestic tourists annually, giving the facility a payback period of 6 years (Deenihan et al., 2013). The success of these greenways has led to local authorities, using government funds primarily from the Department of Tourism, Transport, and Sport, to attempt to create more greenway and blueway projects across the country.

It is notable that cyclist orientated holidays do not make up a huge proportion of visitors to Ireland (Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, 2017). There is still, however, a market for cycle tourism, particularly in areas where there is a long connected network. The Euro Velo networks provide a good example, particularly in the border region, as the planned Atlantic Route will go through Belfast

to Donegal and continue down the coast (Eurovelo.com). Having cycling options and routes, however, can often be seen as ancillary to many holidays and can encourage tourists to stay for longer than they otherwise would have, increasing tourism spending and creating a higher demand for cycle tourism itself (McClelland, 2014). This is particularly important for the more rural areas in Ireland along the periphery, where there may not be as many traditional tourist attractions. The fact that greenways connect rural towns and mostly go through the countryside promotes tourism and benefits the local economies of areas which are most susceptible to the volatility of Brexit.

There are multiple greenways under development on both sides of the border, creating an ever larger greenway network. Connecting these greenways is important for both the growth of tourism due to larger routes and for more draw to the border county regions on both sides. The aforementioned Atlantic Euro Velo route is a good example of how this would benefit tourism on both sides of the border. Most of the cross border greenways are completed through a mixture of local authority initiatives and departmental planning and funding. Existing and proposed routes include going along the old Ulster canal, as well as routes between Omeath and Newry and Donegal and Derry (McClelland, 2014).

The impact of Brexit on these initiatives is still in question. In addition to reduced cross-border commerce due to the weakening Sterling, there is also the problem of freedom of movement. It should be noted, however, that Euro Velo routes already go outside of the EU, evident in the Route 2 which is set

to begin in Galway and end in Russia (Eurovelo.com). Uncertainty around EU funding here is also putting question marks over some of the cross border greenways. The importance of this funding can be seen in the difference between the successful granting of the INTERREG V funding to the Donegal-Derry greenway and the Omeath-Newry greenways, which has resulted in their progression, while the failure of the Manorhamilton to Enniskillen project to secure EU funding has left it 'under review' (Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation 2017, p. 54).

#### *Food & cultural tourism*

There has been a clear push towards improving food tourism by border county councils. This is reflected in council tourism plans, as well as in the plans produced at other levels, such as in the regional action plans for jobs and local enterprise office initiatives. After all, food tourism contributes not only to the tourist industry but can contribute to other business sectors in the locality, particularly in the agri-food industry, making it well suited to rural areas which have fewer tourist attractions to build on, such as much of the border region. The fact that food tourism, which includes sourcing local produce, has a lower carbon footprint and is economically sustainable on a local level contributes to its classification as a form of eco-tourism (Thompson, 2013).

Food tourism accounts for a significant proportion of tourism revenue. Fáilte Ireland point out that it constitutes around 35% of international tourism revenue, equating to roughly €2 billion (Fáilte Ireland, 2018). The same paper presented by Fáilte Ireland, the Food and Drink Strategy 2018-2023, points to data which suggests that although only 10%

of tourists travel for culinary experiences alone, 90% of tourists consider food and drink an important aspect of their holiday. Good dining experiences can also lead to increased stay times of visitors as well as heightened regional and national culinary reputation on an international level. This is particularly important in the context of the border region which has a traditional reliance on the UK for both tourism and food exports, creating the need to not only work to re-secure the British market but also to expand the market to other countries in both sectors (Magennis et al., 2017).

The food tourism and cultural initiatives are particularly evident in the border area of Ireland. Cavan have released their own five-year food strategy in 2017 on top of their tourism strategy, which works on coordinating the food networks to better connect their artisan food producers with local restaurants and businesses as well as building on events such as the 'Taste of Cavan' annual festival. Likewise, a Boyne Valley food strategy was released where the Meath and Louth councils planned to coordinate and advertise the area as Ireland's food destination to a national and international audience.

The establishment of a 'food story' is also being pushed by Fáilte Ireland to link food with culture and make food tourism more desirable. The creation of food trails, which are promoted on the Fáilte Ireland website, can be seen across the country. Sligo, for example, is offering an option which combines the food trail with other tourist aspects such as visiting cultural sites and adventure activities (Sligofoodtrail.ie). Visiting of already established local artisan producers may also be used for food tourism, such as

the event held in Leitrim where visitors come to a goat farm for learn how cheese is smoked (Leitrimtourism.com). Here we can see that food tourism allows local authorities to build on already existing cultural and recreational attractions as well as supporting other sectors of its economy that are vulnerable to Brexit.

#### 'Greenwashing' issues

Eco-tourism represents both economic and environmental opportunities for the border counties, and local authorities have already made progress capitalising on the opportunities posed by their unique natural environments. However, the use of eco-tourism marketing poses some environmental and economic risks. Increased numbers of visitors cause pollution and wear on the environment, as does increased construction of access roads, accommodation and other infrastructure (Weir, 2015). Further, while tourism increases economic prospects in rural areas, it is not always economically sustainable. Tourism is often low paid and seasonal, and may lead to an exodus of the skilled workforce to seek opportunities outside the region (Weir, 2015). Moreover, many eco-tourism destinations are at risk of 'greenwashing', wherein mass tourism to natural areas is labelled 'eco-tourism' because the destination is outdoors, while practices are not environmentally friendly and do more harm than good (Marriot, 2001). As there is no international standard on the use of the term 'green' or 'eco-' tourism, holidays advertised as such may in fact have a disruptive effect on the local culture or natural environment (Marriott, 2001). Local authorities must be mindful of this when implementing eco-tourism initiatives.

#### Conclusion

There has evidently been a recent push towards eco-tourism as a way of addressing environmental and economic issues, which have been exacerbated by Brexit. Eco-tourism strategies such as the development of geoparks, greenways and blueways utilise the natural scenery of rural areas along the border region. In addition to this, the use of local food and culinary culture as a source of tourism promotes a more sustainable, lower carbon tourism while supporting local economies. This contributes to the mitigation of the impacts of Brexit on the export market of the agri-food industry. Despite the threat of greenwashing and environmental harm if not practiced properly, the development of eco-tourism in border counties allows local authorities, with the aid of national and EU level funding and initiatives, to develop their local economies in an environmentally sustainable and 'Brexit-proof' way.

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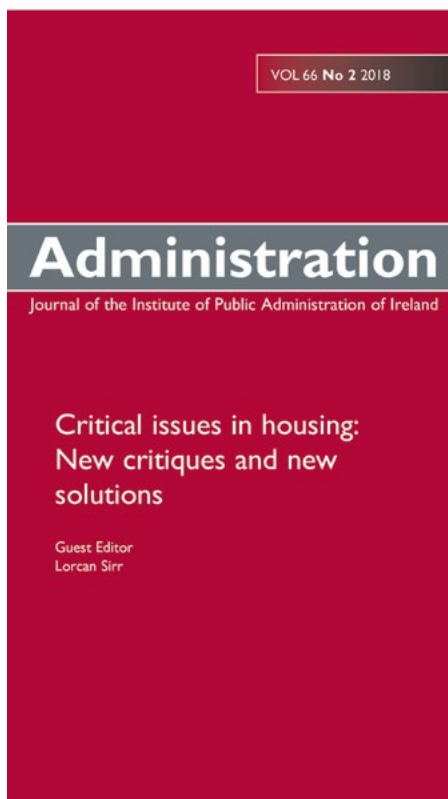
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# Critical Issues in Housing

By *Joanna O’Riordan*



Administration is the journal of the IPA. The spring edition this year focused on housing. Lorcan Sirr, DIT lecturer and respected housing policy analyst is the guest editor and brought together eight academic papers on aspects of the housing debate that he regards as having been under studied. The resulting special edition Critical issues in housing: New critiques and new solutions will be of considerable interest to those working in the local authority sector.

In a thoughtful introduction, Sirr comments that over many decades, it has been rare for a week to pass without housing-related issues being on news and political agendas. He adds that ‘as everybody has to live somewhere, housing – and its related elements of property, building,

planning and finance – is a topic in which everybody has a stake and an opinion. It is the most personal of subjects – in many respects our housing shapes our lives’.

This sets the scene for the opening research paper by Rory Hearne and Mary Murphy from Maynooth University. They report on their research in relation to homeless families experiences of procuring housing in the private rented sector and with new forms of housing such as ‘family hubs’. Hearne and Murphy’s paper finds that although the private rental sector does assist in accommodating families, there are considerable negative consequences. In the context of an increasing reliance on the private market to house families who would historically have been housed by the state. Their paper is an important evidence-based contribution to the debate.

Even those families who do not need direct state assistance in being housed find it challenging to purchase a permanent dwelling. In light of this, Tom Healy and Paul Goldrick-Kenny from the Nevin Institute propose the establishment of The Housing Company of Ireland to counteract the lack of affordable housing. The proposed entity would undertake or commission, on a commercial basis, a programme of planning, building, acquiring and renting new homes. This investment would supplement and further strengthen work by local authorities and the voluntary housing associations in the area of social housing.

Deirdre Ní Fhloinn addresses the question of regulation of housebuilding in Ireland. She critically reviews and compares the regulatory regime for building control with that applying in respect of food safety. She also provides evidence from original research that there is a very low level of formal enforcement of building control by local authorities. Ní Fhloinn’s findings show that building control enforcement in Ireland is almost exclusively conducted on an informal basis with minimal resort to formal powers, though they are available.

Other papers in the edition relate to the limited rights of residential licensees in Ireland, service charge collection in multi-unit developments, how demographic trends should be used more strategically in framing national planning strategies, and two international papers, one which brings the concept of blockchain technology to the supply of housing, and one looking at the UK model of housebuilding, which emerges as very similar to our own.

Administration is edited and produced by the Research and Publishing teams at the IPA. It is published four times a year and includes a mixture of research articles, sectoral reviews, information and opinion pieces by public servants and book reviews. It is published by Sciendo and is available free-to-access on the journal’s website:

<https://content.sciendo.com/view/journals/admin/admin-overview.xml>

# Height restrictions and housing – In the hands of local authorities?

*By Stephen Beamish, IPA*

Perhaps one of the most controversial topics among planning authorities in cities around the world is the topic of height restrictions. They exist in many major cities in Europe and America as well as other continents and are under constant attack by developers, economist, and politicians (Alter, 2014). We need to look no further than our own country where height restrictions, particularly those in effect in Dublin, have been under immense criticism in recent years. The criticism has grown increasingly loud as a housing crisis has developed. Despite this, there are still some convincing arguments as to why height restrictions should remain in place. Factors such as efficiency, demand, the environment, sustainability, as well as historical and cultural considerations must be taken into account when considering the appropriateness of the height restrictions.

## *Housing Crisis*

One of the most significant concerns for the Irish government on a local and national level at the moment is the housing crisis. Homelessness has risen to unacceptable levels in recent years, illustrating the need for social housing. On top of this, there is an apparent deficit in housing available on the private market as well, resulting in the significant and constant rise in housing prices in both the rental and owner markets. While the most recent house pricing indicator report by Daft, ie show that house prices are beginning to move toward more stability in relation to inflation, there has been no such indication yet in the rental market (Lyons, 2018a).

Lyons (2018b) states that it is not the sign of a bubble, as there is no inflated

speculation or reckless lending due to financial restrictions introduced since the recession, but a simple problem of supply and demand. The acknowledgement of supply being the root of the crisis is seen in government plans at all levels such as Rebuilding Ireland (Government of Ireland, 2016), the Dublin City Council Development Plan (Dublin City Council, 2016), and the National Planning Framework (Government of Ireland, 2018). It is an undeniable fact that regardless of who you think should be providing them, more housing is needed in Ireland. The form and location of these new housing, however, can lead to different conclusions concerning height restrictions.

While both the local and the central government plans both maintain they wish to keep the variety of options open when it comes to housing types available, Lyons (2018b) points out that there is a significant need for apartments. He credits this to a variety of reasons, such as the decreasing size of the average households and the high amount of young professionals who wish to live close to their place of employment. Apartments are also the vehicle through which many see the housing crisis being solved – by building up. The plans all also refer to making cities denser. Proponents of removing height restrictions frequently say that this will contribute to increasing population density and urban compactness.

## *Population Density*

Population density is something which urban planners have been aiming towards for the past half a century. In Ireland, our cities are going to be getting

bigger, with the National Planning Framework estimating that fifty per cent of the one million additional population of Ireland by 2040 will be within the five major cities. On top of this urban planning has seen a move, led initially by the likes of Jane Jacobs (1961), away from urban sprawl towards planning for rejuvenating cities as a place to live. This coincides with the growing preference for living close to one's place of work as commuting times have been getting longer and longer.

The benefits of denser cities are numerous. Denser cities mean that infrastructure can be more cost efficient. This applies to utilities (as can be seen with fibre broadband rollout) and importantly public transport. Higher density would make it more cost efficient to run public transportation to a broader variety of city locations more frequently (Dublin City Council, 2008). Having people close to their place of work would also promote walking and cycling as forms of commuting. Both of these would contribute to a more environmentally friendly city with considerably less motor congestion than one which is so heavily reliant on urban sprawl and greenfield development for housing. Denser cities also have higher competition regarding where to live, which in theory results in reduced prices (Dublin City Council, 2008). Greater efficiencies and housing supply are both cited in the National Planning Framework as reasons for their goal for a more compact urban environment to support sustainable growth in Ireland. National Policy Objective 3 calls for, among other things, 40% of the new houses to be built in the present footprint of urban areas (Government of Ireland, 2018, p. 29).

The argument put forward by proponents of height restrictions is that it would increase density and supply. Cities would be able to build upwards instead of outwards. Intuitively this makes sense. NAMA's Chief Executive, Brendan McDonagh, claims that apartment blocks in the city should be 15 stories tall and that restrictions were limiting the supply (Lynnot, 2017), while Lyons (2014) said that planning regulations were to blame for accommodation costs rising. There are, however, stated objections to policies of just building up.

First of all, as Dublin City Council argue, the character of low-rise cities can be drastically and irreversibly changed by the construction of medium to high-rise buildings (2016). Part of the appeal of Dublin from both a tourist and general placemaking perspective is the architectural style, particularly in the old Georgian areas and along the river. It is imperative from a historical and cultural perspective that many of these buildings remain intact and new developments in the area kept within its style. This is not that there can be no changes. The Council's development plan does allow for buildings higher than the low rise limit in designated areas, acknowledging that the character of a city must not only be preserved but added upon and taller buildings may have their role in this when done appropriately (Dublin City Council, 2016). Liveability is pointed out as key for any urban design by Lehmann (2016), and should not be sacrificed for density as it can lead to disastrous results, pointing to the extreme example of the Kowloon walled city in Hong Kong.

Alter (2014) adds to the idea that high-rises are damaging for placemaking by pointing to how they can lead to taking away the amenities in a local area – replacing shopfronts at the bottom floor with lobbies and car park entrances. Depending on how they are laid out, high-rise buildings can have environmental impacts as well (Lehmann, 2016). This affects the micro-climate of the city, making the city hotter (due to increase in surface

area) and if they are close together, tall buildings can create wind tunnels. There are also macro-environmental impacts, as they are more resource heavy to develop and operate.

Alter, among others, also points to how high-rising buildings don't necessarily solve the shortage of affordable housing or increase density. Building higher is costlier, and maintaining higher buildings is pricier as well. To compensate for this, or merely because they know they can get a more significant profit, developers tend to build bigger apartments and charge significantly more for them.

Many argue a 'Goldilocks density' can be reached without building high-rises. They argue that it can be achieved by buildings which are six to eight stories tall. A government report states that six storey apartments are the 'optimal height for affordability' (Kelly, F., 2018). Perimeter blocked low to medium rise apartments can be seen as ideal for housing in terms of its cost and placemaking potential while still maintaining a sustainably high density (Lehmann, 2016). The Karl Marx Hof of Vienna, a social housing project built ninety years ago as a solution to a housing crisis, is an example of high density, affordable, yet liveable urban housing (Hatherley, 2015). When one assesses the potential disadvantages of building high-rises as opposed to building at lower levels, it is somewhat understandable that the local authorities in question would decide to have height restrictions. In fact, Lyons (2018c), although against height restrictions, posits a solution to gentrification using height restrictions by allowing developers to build an extra set amount of floors to house the original owners of council houses should apartments be built on their former homes.

#### *Is it still in local authority hands?*

It is the local authorities of any area who grant planning permission and set building height restrictions. This is an integral part of their remit. At the central level, An Bord Pleanála functions as an appeal system. On top

of this, however, the board does have the power to overturn local authorities' development plan provisions if they feel it goes against the principles of proper planning and sustainability. This applies particularly in areas of pressing local or national importance (Citizens Information, 2015). This is a power which they are not hesitant to execute, with 28% of council decisions which had been appealed overturned in 2015 (Kelly, 2016). In the same year, four councils had none of their appealed decisions upheld as they were. The recent fast-track system further takes the process out of the hands of local governments, bypassing them and going straight to An Bord Pleanála. The fast-track system was created to help solve the housing crisis and is reserved for 'Strategic Housing Developments' for projects of 100 or more houses or 200 or more student bed spaces (Philip Lee, 2017). So far, thousands of applications for developments of houses and apartments have been received for fast-track planning. While the majority of these did not concern height restrictions in any form, there have been cases where An Bord Pleanála overruled height restrictions, citing the new Ireland 2040 National Framework Plan (Woods, 2018). The fast-track system has, however, run into difficulties of its own. Due to a backlog and lack of resources, An Bord Pleanála finds itself delaying its 'fast track' decisions on major developments (Kelly, O., 2018). In addition to this, the Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government (2018) have recently released a draft set of guidelines for planning authorities. In this they claim blanket height restrictions should be eliminated, that city centre areas should be at minimum six stories tall, and sub-urban heights should be doubled in size. Once finalised, these guidelines will require both local authorities and An Bord Pleanála to apply specific planning policy requirements which include a general increase in building height. The guidelines are still yet to go through their public consultation at the time of the writing of this article, so it is difficult to predict what changes could be made to the proposed guidelines. Nevertheless, these guidelines show



that planning in general, and height restrictions in specific, is being gradually taken out of the hands of local authorities and into those of the central authorities.

### Conclusion

Height restrictions remain a controversial subject. It is clear that many see lifting the height restrictions as the solution to the housing crisis which we face as a nation. After all, there is a clear and pressing demand for more housing units and it is clear that we cannot sustain continued urban sprawl. This is evidently how the central government see it, as they continue to advocate for the removal of the restrictions while their policy plans are used to justify increasing building heights by An Bord Pleanála. Building up, however, has many draw backs. The effect on the city's landscape does not only include the aesthetics and cultural considerations frequently cited, but also its environment and 'liveability'. The fact that there is evidence which points towards six story buildings, and not higher rising buildings, as being the most economically viable height for affordable housing would point to height restrictions, when used appropriately, helping to promote affordable housing by removing incentives to build taller, costlier but possibly more profitable, accommodation. While much depends on the specific area and what restrictions may apply to it, the local authority use of height restrictions could be seen as contributing to the building of sustainable housing and a more sustainable and liveable city, instead of impeding it. The encroachment on local authority jurisdiction by central authorities, however, may undermine the development plans and the possible benefits of height restrictions within them.

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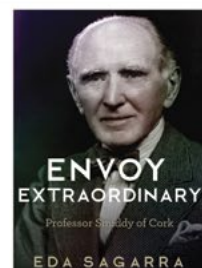
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Professor Timothy Aloysius Smiddy (1875–1962) – academic, economist, diplomat, public servant and businessman – had a remarkable career spanning six decades in both the public service and the private sphere. This is the story of an eminent son of Cork, whose career was closely interwoven with the early history of the Irish state. Despite his unique role as adviser to Michael Collins, W.T. Cosgrave and Éamon de Valera, and his many achievements, Smiddy has remained an elusive figure in documented Irish history.

This exhaustively researched biography sets that right. Having been educated in Ireland, France and Germany, Smiddy started and concluded his working life in the world of commerce. Fifteen years as an academic were followed by over twenty years as a public servant in various roles. He served on several high-profile committees and commissions between 1923 and 1956, some of which he chaired.

Smiddy provided financial expertise to the Irish delegation to the Anglo-Irish Treaty negotiations (1921) and to the Provisional Government of the Irish Free State. He was the first representative of a Dominion of the British Commonwealth of Nations to the United States and Canada, from 1924 to 1929. Unusually for an important figure in the nascent Free State, he had not been involved in the conflicts of 1916–23. As an accomplished linguist with an international outlook, Smiddy helped to steer the Free State away from a narrowly insular mindset. In shedding light on his life and times, this biography also illuminates twentieth-century Irish history.



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# City-Led Regional Development and Peripheral Regions

**Conference report by Chris van Egeraat (Regional Studies Association Irish Branch and Maynooth University) and Pauline White (Western Development Commission)**

The Annual Conference of the Regional Studies Association Irish Branch was held in the Institute of Technology Sligo on Friday 7 September. Appropriate for the location, it had the theme “City-led Regional Development and Peripheral Regions”. The conference covered a range of themes relating to regional development and how urban areas interact with their rural regions. It was opened by Dr Chris O’Malley from IT Sligo who discussed the role of IT Sligo in the development of industry and manufacturing in the region and the IT’s role as an integrator of national policy at regional level. Dr Deirdre Garvey, Chairperson of the Western Development Commission welcomed the fact that the conference was taking place in the North West, given the recognition in the National Planning Framework of the specific challenges for the region and rural areas.

## *Lessons from Scotland*

The Scottish perspective on “City-led Development and Peripheral Regions” was presented by Dr Andrew Copus, an economic geographer in the Social, Economic and Geographical Sciences (SEGS) Group at the James Hutton Institute. Scotland is often presented as a useful comparator for Ireland when discussing regional policy. Indeed the Scottish National Planning Framework (NPF) was often cited as a model during

the development of Ireland’s NPF. Andrew focussed his presentation on the rural development perspective of ‘City Region Deals’ and the Scottish experience.

From the mid-2000s, the UK Government adopted a City Regions approach. It was argued that in a globalised world, the only way for UK regions to compete was to specialise in knowledge-based growth industries. These, it was also argued, could best thrive in large cities. By 2014, 26 City Deals had been agreed across England and Wales. Each was characterised by:

- devolution of power to public/private partnerships;
- coherent investments in infrastructure, training and support for enterprise; and
- some form of “smart specialisation” strategy.

The proposal in Ireland’s NPF to develop Metropolitan Area Strategic Plans (MASPs) for the cities adopts a somewhat similar approach. While it was strongly argued in the UK that the benefits of these City Deals would spread out to benefit all parts of the surrounding city region, Andrew pointed out that there was (and continues to be) very meagre evidence that this is in fact the case. In response, by 2014 the UK began to introduce ‘Local Enterprise Partnerships’ to try to ‘fill the gaps’ between these City Deal areas.

UK City Deal policy spread to Scotland in 2014 and has since developed in

a slightly modified form – with more emphasis on inclusive growth rather than regional or national competitiveness. The Scottish Government’s inclusive growth ambition seeks to:

- support strong and productive inclusive economic growth across Scotland;
- maximise the opportunities of places that have been disadvantaged by adverse impacts of economic change;
- spread the benefits of growth more evenly within and across different parts of Scotland; and
- ensure economic and socially sustainable communities.

Four City Deals have so far been agreed in Scotland with a number of others under discussion. Unlike the rest of the UK however, the Scottish City Region Deals have lacked emphasis on boosting the powers of city administrations. The already complex power/funding relationship between the UK and Scottish Governments makes further devolution of power to city-level less likely.

Andrew noted that, as happened in England, it was soon realised that parallel interventions were required for more peripheral areas outside the influence of the cities. Since 2017 Scotland has begun developing ‘Regional Economic Partnerships’ even for the remotest rural areas. The rationale for these is very different from the original City Regions, primarily focusing on endogenous smart specialisation for the region rather than ‘spread effects’ of city growth.

The evidence from the UK is clear – an exclusively city-led approach will not lead to effective regional development without parallel initiatives for areas beyond the influence of the cities. There is little evidence of the spread effects of the City Region Deals and a focus on smart specialisation is required for more remote regions. A key lesson for Ireland is that the development of the three Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) must complement the NPF’s focus on compact growth of cities, with tailored approaches for areas beyond the cities. This is particularly critical for the Northern & Western region with only one city, located at its southern edge.

*The US Perspective*

Professor Mark Partridge, Chair of Rural-Urban Policy at The Ohio State University, provided a US perspective. Mark presented a paper entitled “Is there a future for rural in an urbanising world and should we care?” He pointed out that in the context of the USA, urban areas do not necessarily dominate rural areas in terms of population growth. Not all rural areas are in decline and since the 1980s urban spread effects are actually dominating. Distinguishing between rural areas adjacent to metropolitan areas and rural areas non-adjacent to metropolitan areas, Mark showed how the first category outperforms nearly all categories of urban areas. It is the remote rural areas that are facing the biggest challenges.

Mark was partially supportive of an urban-led regional growth strategy, a core element of the Irish NPF. Urban areas with a population of over 100,000 possess significant agglomeration advantages and we should use these. Rural areas adjacent to urban areas have a great deal of potential because

they can rely on urban-led growth and access to agglomeration economies. Commuters are a key component to rural community sustainability through providing critical mass for public services and local businesses. But an urban-led regional growth strategy is unlikely to benefit the more remote rural areas. Mark asked the provocative question whether we should continue to try and influence the economic and urban structure of such remote areas. He did not see a way to help these regions, and argues that maybe people-based policies should be used here.

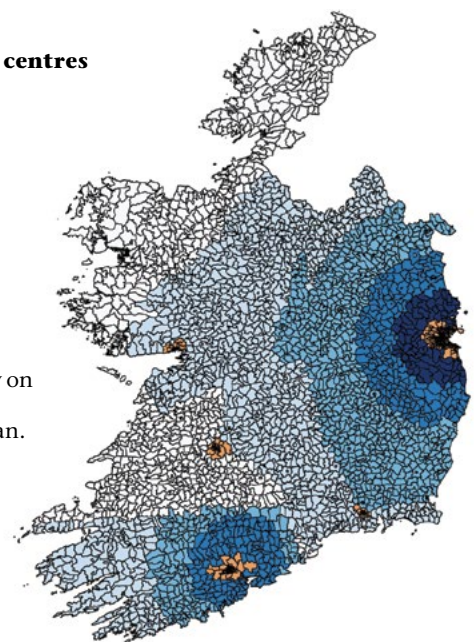
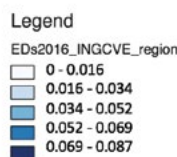
Even in rural areas adjacent to urban centres growth is not automatic and good policy is needed to ensure this will happen. Mark had some clear suggestions in this regard. Notably, remote rural areas should collaborate with partners, including the nearby cities. Rural areas lack the critical mass and resources to actually have an impact on their own. This requires governance reform – a shift from separate farm/rural/urban policies to a regional policy. Such a regional policy should include

tax sharing, planning and management of the rural-urban fringe, environmental protection, infrastructure and economic development. It is important to leverage local social capital and networks to promote good governance.

Policy should move away from supporting rent-seeking by specific sectors. In this regard, Mark specifically opposes farm support programmes as a tool for rural development. Rural people are increasingly moving out of agriculture so such programmes are not going to have a substantial impact. Enterprise policy should also avoid “picking winners” and not employ tax incentives to attract businesses. Building local entrepreneurship and small and medium scale enterprises provides a greater economic multiplier. Policy should move away from trying to attract young adults and focus instead on attracting return migrants in their 30s. A high quality of life, a pleasant environment and good public services such as schools are important in this regard.

**Trickle down effects of Irish urban centres**

Note: the different shades denote the intensity of the impact of the nearest city on population growth in rural areas.  
Source: Chris VanEgeraat and Justin Doran.



### *The Irish experience*

Dr Chris Van Egeraat (Maynooth University) and Dr Justin Doran (University College Cork) provided a very complementary paper, estimating the spread effect of Irish urban centres. The aim of the paper was to analyse the population growth of rural regions based on their proximity to Ireland's five cities. The analysis shows that positive spread effects of urban centres on rural areas appear to outweigh the negative backwash effects. However, areas around Dublin and Cork experience by far the greatest spillover benefits from their location. This may support the idea expressed by Professor Partridge that cities with a population of less than 100,000 may be too small to benefit from agglomeration economies that can cause spread effects. Regions in the periphery such as areas in Mayo and Donegal observe no positive spillovers from growth in Ireland's cities, a stark conclusion in the context of the city-led regional development strategy incorporated in the NPF.

The conference also included a very interesting session on Irish planning over the last 50 years. Dr Proinnsias Breathnach (Maynooth University) presented on regional development policy following the 1968 Buchanan report and its impact on industry locations and spatial development. Professor Jim Walsh (Maynooth University) examined the influence of both the Buchanan report and the 2002 National Spatial Strategy. He considered the learnings from these for the NPF process. Finally, in this session, Professor Des McCafferty (University of Limerick) presented on the structural and spatial evolution of the Irish urban hierarchy in the 50 years since Buchanan. He examined urban population data over time and the distribution of population across the settlement hierarchy. He noted that it was important to understand

the growth targets for urban centres projected by the NPF in the context of historic trends. His conclusion was that the NPF targets for the second tier cities and the Northern & Western region in particular were extremely ambitious in light of their performance over the past 50 years.

Another session on 'Regional Strategy and Planning' covered a broad range of topics. Mr Louis Nwachi (DIT) presented on the importance of social and cultural objectives in town planning using a case study of planning in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria. Mr David Minton, Director of the Northern & Western Regional Assembly (NWRA), discussed issues for the development of the Northern & Western RSES, some of the historic development of the region and a number of the challenges in developing a region-wide approach. Finally, in that session, Mr John Nugent (IDA) discussed the role of IDA Ireland in attracting Foreign Direct Investment to the region. He outlined some of the important factors that influence the location of FDI, including the presence of an existing strong indigenous sector. He

also explained how the indigenous and foreign sectors are mutually beneficial. In the final session 'Understanding Regional and Urban Dynamics', Dr Helen McHenry (WDC) gave a presentation on what regional accounts can tell us about our regional economies and discussed some of the issues associated with the regional data and the widening of disparities among regions. Finally, Professor Edgar Morgenroth (DCU) presented on the impacts of improvements in transport accessibility across Ireland, highlighting some of the changes in accessibility over time. He noted that, despite these changes, human capital remains the most important factor influencing an area's development.

All conference papers are available on the WDC website ([www.wdc.ie](http://www.wdc.ie)). A selection of papers will be included in a special issue of Administration, the journal of the Institute of Public Administration.

Right: Dr Chris Van Egeraat (Maynooth University)



Below: Dr Proinnsias Breathnach (Maynooth University), Prof. Des McCafferty (University of Limerick) and Deirdre Frost (WDC)



# Local authorities and wind energy

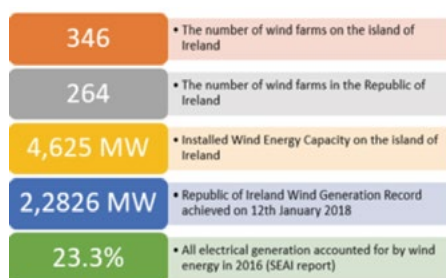
By Jeanne Magnetti, IPA

## Why wind energy?

Ireland, in conjunction with the rest of the EU, has made a legally binding agreement to reduce its carbon emissions by 40% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels. In pursuit of this goal, Ireland's 2020 target is to reduce its carbon emissions by 20% from its 2005 levels, or be subject to EU fines. Current projections suggest that Ireland's emissions will only be reduced by 6-11% by 2020. Similarly, 90% of energy consumption in Ireland is based on non-renewables (DCCAE, 2015). Moreover, renewable energy has become a significant field following the Brexit vote, because Ireland is heavily dependent on Great Britain for its gas supply, and significant stores of its current supply are located in the UK (Lynch, 2017). Since the UK will no longer be bound by EU trade or energy legislation upon its official exit, Ireland's continued dependence on gas from the UK has serious implications for Ireland's energy security.

A shift towards renewable energy in Ireland contributes to both its energy security and its need to meet emissions reductions targets, and wind energy has great potential in this regard. Ireland's wind industry has grown significantly, as it supplied 15% of Ireland's electricity in 2012 and currently supplies up to 30%. The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE) has set the target for Ireland to produce 40% of its electricity needs from renewable sources by 2020, most of which is proposed to come from wind energy (IFA, 2013). Furthermore, the increase in use of wind farms is also projected to support 10,760 jobs and the investment of €14.75 billion, €5.1 billion of which is to be retained by local economies (ibid). Moreover, in times of

high wind, Ireland has exported surplus electricity to Great Britain (Lynch, 2017). The current actions being taken by local authorities in support of wind energy contribute to Ireland's environmental targets, energy security and jobs growth sector.



Source: Irish Wind Energy Association ([www.iwea.com](http://www.iwea.com))

## Energy guidelines

In 2010, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), the country's national energy authority, prepared the Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategy (LARES) as a template for local authorities to create more comprehensive strategies for their localities. These LARES allow local authorities to implement strategies in conjunction with national and EU strategies while simultaneously allowing them to consider the context of their own jurisdictions.

As of 2015, Mayo, Kerry, Roscommon, Clare, Tipperary and Kilkenny County Councils had published LARES using the SEAI methodology. While Louth, Tipperary and South Dublin were preparing to publish LARES (McCann, 2015). Other counties have since published LARES or included SEAI wind energy guidelines in their County Development Plans.

## Local authority planning

Local authorities consider the suitability of wind farm locations based on several criteria. First, local authorities consider the amount of wind energy in an area using the SEAI's Wind Atlas of Ireland. Next, they consider the suitability of landscape in regards to its topography, bedrock, soil and proximity to the electrical grid when installing wind turbines. Local authorities also consider the impact of wind turbines on the community regarding visual impact, noise disturbance and roadway access. Furthermore, local authorities must comply with existing environmental legislation including Natura 2000 sites, Cultural and Natural Heritage sites, biodiversity protected areas and areas protected for water sanitation considerations. The Ireland Wind Energy Agency (IWEA) reviews council development plans and energy planning drafts to ensure they are clear and comprehensive in their development of a wind energy strategy.

Some counties, such as Kerry, Cork, Donegal and Tipperary have had great success in their implementation of wind farms, while others, such as Limerick and Carlow have indicated a lack of sites that fulfil the aforementioned planning criteria.

## Objections by local communities

Increased volumes of building materials, construction and transport of large machinery have a negative impact on communities, as does the long term visual nuisance of wind turbines. Wind turbines are of particular concern to biodiversity stakeholders such as Bird Watch Ireland, as wind turbines can be dangerous to migrating bird populations (Hickey, 2017). There is also a lack of

transparency in electricity pricing, such that consumers have erroneously associated the Public Service Obligation levy (PSO) with wind energy, when, in fact, less than one third of the PSO is paid to wind farm operators, with the remainder supporting fossil fuels (IFA, 2013). Moreover, there is currently no national legislation limiting siting distances of wind turbines from houses, an issue of particular concern for rural communities who worry about the impact of noise and light flicker on their livestock (Hickey, 2017). As such, there has been powerful community resistance to the construction of wind farms in some counties.

For instance, in March 2018, refusal of planning permission for a Monaghan windfarm was appealed with Monaghan County Council (Daly, 2018). The plan had been refused in January 2018 on the grounds that construction threatened Natura 2000 sites and did not adhere to the EU Habitats Directive (ibid). Refusal of the initial application involved submissions from multiple stakeholders, including An Taisce and Bird Watch Ireland (ibid). Also in March 2018, the High Court upheld a refusal for construction of a 25 turbine windfarm in northern Meath (Irish Times, 2018). In Westmeath, a proposed decision for a wind farm in Coole was pushed back for two months in May 2018, with the issue of proximity of wind turbines to residences still under review. Finally, construction on the Ballycumber Wind Farm in Wicklow has been met with strong community opposition, headed by the South Wicklow Wind Action Group (SWWAG) (Clifford, 2017). Ballycumber Wind Farm was granted permission for construction on appeal in summer of 2017, but continues in a protracted legal conflict with the Wicklow community. Despite strong pushback in some communities, the below case studies suggest that local authorities in several counties have had great success in implementing a Wind Energy Strategy.

## Case Studies

### Kerry

Kerry County Council Published a Wind Energy Action Plan according to SEAI Guidelines for 2012-2015. In this action plan, Kerry identified 150 km<sup>2</sup> of land as 'strategic for wind,' with an additional 544 km<sup>2</sup> as 'open for consideration' for wind energy. The theoretical potential for electricity generation was estimated at 1206 GWh/ yr in strategic areas. Building on this potential, 266 MW of wind farm projects had signed onto a connection agreement with network operators and were expected to be connected in 2013, with Kerry becoming a net exporter of energy in the same year (Kerry County Council, 2013).

In June 2017, to review the above action plan, Kerry County Council held a meeting on renewable energy. The Council indicated that Kerry was generating 14% of the Republic of Ireland's wind energy and that half of 411 wind turbines given planning clearance by the county were either constructed or under construction (Independent online, 2017). According to the Irish Wind Energy Association, Kerry is operating at a wind energy capacity of 441.31 MW with 25 wind farms.

Although Kerry has experienced great success in capitalizing on wind energy, a Landscape Character Assessment discussed by the County Council in 2017 concluded that most of North Kerry was of 'no value' from a scenic, tourist or recreation perspective, which is perceived by the community to be a result of wind farm expansion.

### Cork

In 2011, Cork County Council published a variation on its County Development Plan 2009-2015, identifying a number of locations as suitable for large scale wind energy, including Carrigtwohill, Kilbarry, Little Island, Whitegate and Ringaskiddy. This variation was published in conjunction with an Environmental Report as part of the

SEAI process on wind energy policy. The variation also concluded, that while Ringaskiddy was originally classified as a 'Strategically Unsuitable Area' for wind farm construction, this classification should be removed in order to 'help Ireland comply with the UN Kyoto protocol and other Climate Change policies' (Cork County Council, 2011). As of 2014, four wind turbines were being constructed in the vicinity of Ringaskiddy, which were intended to serve Cork Harbour industry (Barker, 2014). Currently, Cork produces 578.85 MW of wind energy from 35 wind farms, accounting for 17% of wind energy produced by the Republic and 13% of wind energy inclusive of Northern Ireland.

### Donegal

Donegal currently has a 414.04MW capacity from its 39 windfarms, representing 12% of the Republic of Ireland's wind energy supply. Donegal is home to one of Ireland's largest windfarms at Meenadreen, which contains 38 turbines and has the capacity to power 50,000 homes (O'Brien, 2017). An IWEA submission to the draft of Donegal's County Development Plan 2018-2024 emphasises that Donegal's current wind capacity will generate €2.7 million in local authority rates income in 2018 (Walsh, 2017). It also states that Donegal's current wind capacity is enough to power 250,000 homes.

Despite Donegal's great success in wind energy, there is currently strong pushback against wind farm construction from the community. There has been strong advocacy to implement a ten times tip-height set back distance of turbines from homes, citing concerns over safety, noise level and light flicker (Walsh, 2017). In March 2017, Donegal County Council successfully appealed a decision in the High Court that overruled a June 2014 variation on Donegal's 2014-2018 County Development Plan (Donegal Now, 2017). The variations to the Development Plan supported the ten times tip-height regulation and

classified wind farm construction in six river basin areas as ‘not favoured.’

### Tipperary

County Tipperary currently produces 371.89MW of wind energy from 24 farms, representing 11% of wind energy capacity for the Republic of Ireland [see figure 1]. In 2013, Ireland’s first community owned wind farm officially opened in Templeberry (Doyle, 2013). The farm produces enough energy to power 3,500 homes and its planning and construction were partly funded by Tipperary LEADER initiatives. Tipperary is considering a planning policy to export wind energy, contributing to the local economy (ibid).

However, Tipperary has also experienced notable wind farm pushback from the community. In 2017, the Irish Supreme Court referred ruling on planning approval for a wind farm in Silvermines to the Court of Justice of the EU (Carolan, 2017). A Tipperary local challenged An Bord Pleanála’s approval of the wind farm, citing threats to environmental impacts on a bird species protected by EU Law (ibid). Challenges to approval of the wind farm state that approval breaches EU Habitats and Environment Impact Assessment Directives because construction will destroy 400 acres of hen harrier foraging area (ibid). Ruling on this case will likely set precedent for future community challenges to wind farm construction.

### Additional wind energy actions

In areas where large scale wind farms are not indicated, some local authorities have advocated for the use of wind energy on a smaller scale. For instance, Meath’s County Energy Plan suggests a domestic exemption for household renewables, including domestic wind turbines. Mayo’s Energy Plan notes the expected contribution of micro or household renewables. Fingal and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown’s energy plans consider the opportunity for small-scale community wind turbines in urban areas. Longford

has several micro-turbines operating at less than 20 kilowatts.

Additionally, in areas where wind energy is not indicated as a viable form of renewable energy, local authorities focus on planning in other renewable areas, such as ocean, biomass or geothermal energy. Mayo, for instance, has recognized great energy potential in floating wind and wave energy in coastal waters, as well as bio-energy. Carlow’s energy strategy refers to Bord na Mona’s plans to increase its bio-energy portfolio. While Limerick has noted its lack of suitability for wind farms due to environmental concerns, planning permission was granted in April 2018 for two solar farms, and GKinetic Energy, a Limerick based company, is developing technology prototypes to capitalize on tidal energy in the region.

### Conclusion

Ireland has already demonstrated notable success with its wind energy programmes. In 2017, Ireland’s largest wind farm entered commercial operation in Galway, with the energy to power over 140,000 homes and offset over 220,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions (Taylor, 2017). Currently, wind energy companies are attempting to expand by exporting energy produced in areas more amenable to wind energy, notably the Midlands (IFA, 2013). While better implementation of environmental policy is needed for Ireland to meet its 2020 emissions goals, and communities are pushing back against renewable energy strategies such as wind farm construction, Irish local authorities are making progress in implementing renewable energy strategies using wind energy.

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# Local Authority Satisfaction Survey

*By Laura Shannon, IPA Research Division*

In July 2018, the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) published its first local authority satisfaction survey. NOAC commissioned Ispos MRBI to conduct the survey of the general public to establish their level of satisfaction with their experience of engaging with their local authority. Individual local authorities often conduct their own such surveys, however this is the first to be completed on a comparative basis. Interviewing took place in ten local authorities in March 2018, namely Dublin City, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown, Fingal, South Dublin, Cork County, Limerick, Galway County, Kildare, Meath, and Tipperary. The NOAC did not provide any commentary on the survey findings

The key findings highlighted in the survey report are:

- Just over half of respondents (53%) are satisfied with their local council.
- Perceptions of councils are generally positive, the majority (59%) believe that their council is making a positive contribution and that services have improved over the years (59%).
- However, perceptions of transparency (29% agree that council is transparent) and efficiency (37% agree that council are efficient) are less positive.
- The most important services provided by the council fell into three main categories; roads and road safety, housing and amenities, parks and playgrounds.
- Although affordable housing was considered the most important service, satisfaction levels were lowest with this service at 25%.
- Knowledge of the council and awareness of the services provided

is generally low. Just 4% 'know a great deal' about their council. Spontaneous awareness of council services is low for all services except road maintenance, which 58% of respondents mentioned.

- The majority know 'just a little' (51%) about their council and satisfaction levels increase in line with knowledge levels; from 40% amongst those with no knowledge to 55% amongst those with some knowledge.
- In line with this lack of knowledge, the majority do not feel informed by their local council however, those who feel informed were more likely to be satisfied at 72% compared to 40% amongst those who were uninformed.
- In light of the lack of knowledge about their council and it's services, less than half of respondents believe that their council is doing a good job at providing services (47%) and just over a quarter (27%) believe that they are getting good value for money.
- About 1 in 3 contacted their council in the last 5 years, with housing topping the list of reasons for this contact. Overall, over half were satisfied with how their query was handled (52%). Those who contacted their council in the last five years tended to be less satisfied with their council than those who didn't (31% vs 13% dissatisfied).
- This is likely to be a result of the overall outcome of the how their query was handled, with 90% of those who had a positive experience indicating that they are satisfied with their council overall, compared to 11% of those who were unhappy with how their query was handled.

Not surprisingly, housing topped the list of reasons why respondents contacted their local authority in the last 5 years. 19% contacted in relation to local authority housing, while a further 11% were in contact regarding affordable housing. Affordable housing was noted as one of the most important services provided, however, satisfaction levels for this service (and for local authority housing provision) were the lowest at 25%.

## *Transparency*

Findings in relation to openness and transparency are also of note, with only 29% agreeing that their local council is transparent. A report published in May of this year by Transparency International Ireland (TII) examined the systems and practices local authorities have in place which may help to prevent corruption and promote transparency, accountability and ethics (McCarthy, 2018). Local authorities were ranked based on the methodology developed by TII. Shortcomings were found in a number of areas, even for the top-ranked local authorities. Recommendations for local authorities included:

- Develop and maintain up-to-date, comprehensive corruption and fraud prevention and contingency plans;
- Ensure adequate handover between ethics registrars;
- Use one continuous email address for ethics registrar-related work that can be passed on to subsequent ethics registrars;
- Ensure that all consultations that qualify as pre-planning consultations under Section 247 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (not just formally requested consultations) are adequately



- documented;
- Develop and maintain up-to-date, comprehensive webpages with ethics and governance information;
- Publish as much information as possible in machine-readable format, rather than in PDF form;
- Ensure meaningful public engagement in the preparation of city and/or county development plans;
- Publish information on strategic policy committees and local community development committees.

Recommendations were also put forward for the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, the Local Government Management Association (LGMA), the County and

City Management Association (CCMA), and the Standards in Public Office (SIPO). The report emphasised that the index does not measure the integrity of public servants, rather the systems in which they operate. Addressing identified shortcomings in terms of publishing information online in a timely and accessible format, and ensuring meaningful public engagement may help to increase the public's views on transparency.

#### *Influence of local authorities?*

Knowledge of their local council and awareness of services provided was generally found to be low among those surveyed. 92% of those surveyed agreed that their local area is a good place to live. However, only 26% agreed that their local authority can influence decisions

affecting their area. This outlines an apparent disconnect between very high satisfaction with their area and how local authorities are contributing to this. This is an issue local authorities are all too aware of and have been trying to address in various ways in recent years. This survey, the first conducted on a comparative basis, should provide a baseline for local authorities from which to measure their performance.

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# Joint Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government

This new feature monitors the work of this committee, which shadows the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and is of huge relevance to the work of local authorities.

## Rebuilding Ireland

The committee met on Wednesday 26th and Thursday 27th September to discuss the future of public housing under Rebuilding Ireland. They heard from a number of representatives from local authorities namely Fingal County Council, Wicklow County Council, Tipperary County Council and Dublin City Council. The debate covered a range of topics from local authority targets under Rebuilding Ireland, specific issues with developments, social housing waiting lists and the challenges facing local authorities, among many other issues.

The Committee also heard from the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, Eoghan Murphy and officials from his Department.

## Future of Council Housing

The committee also heard from Professor Michelle Norris and Dr Aideen Hayden from UCD regarding findings from their recent report on *The Future of Council Housing: an analysis of the financial sustainability of local authority provided social housing*.

In brief, the report concludes that more council housing is required, particularly in urban areas. It also flags concerns about the financial sustainability of the current funding model – that is central government grants provided to local authorities ‘up front’. Issues are also raised around cost recovery from sales of council houses and rental income not being sufficient to meet the actual

costs of replacing and maintaining the dwellings. Finally, the authors also noted a strong consensus among those interviewed for the study that policy does not take regional differences into account.

The recommendations of the report are as follows:

Minor management and administrative changes:

- Require local authorities to ring fence income from rents to spend on council housing.
- Remove maximum rents from council housing rent determination schemes.
- Allow for the compulsory deduction of council housing rents from social welfare payments.
- Regularly conduct comprehensive condition surveys of the council housing stock.
- Review the Local Government Accounting Code of Practice to bring it into line with international standards of transparency and disclosure for councils’ housing operations.
- Value the council housing stock and record valuations in local authorities’ accounts.
- Condense and streamline the Department of Housing’s approval process for new council housing developments.

Medium scale reforms:

- Suspend the tenant purchase scheme for council housing.
- Remove the availability of successor tenancies (i.e. the ability to inherit a council housing tenancy).
- Build smaller council housing units to enable tenants to downsize.
- Enable urban local authorities to

keep more property tax revenue to spend on council housing.

- Use income from property taxes on council housing to establish sinking funds.
- Extend the shared services model to organise some council housing services on a regional basis.

Radical restructuring of arrangements for funding council housing:

- Link rents to the cost of council housing provision not to tenants incomes. Make HAP [Housing Assistance Payment] available to council tenants who can’t afford to pay these ‘cost rents’.
- Enable local authorities to borrow some or all of the costs of council housing provision. These loans would be remunerated using cost rents and the proceeds of property taxes.

## *Review of the role and remuneration of elected members of local authorities*

In June Minister of State, John Paul Phelan, announced the appointment of Ms. Sara Moorhead SC to conduct a review of the role and remuneration of elected members of local authorities. It is intended for the review to involve an in-depth examination of the role performed by councillors, including their statutory reserved functions, the political and community leadership role they perform, their governance responsibilities as Council members and their representational role within communities. An interim report is expected within five months.

## *Committee Reports*

The Committee published a number of reports of relevance to local authorities in the past few months.

In July, a Report on Scrutiny of the Electoral (Amendment) (no.3) Bill, 2014 was produced. The purpose of the Bill is to provide same-day voting for the residents of the offshore islands of Ireland for Dáil and Presidential elections and referendums. The Committee supported the Bill and recommended it proceed to third stage consideration, with the following observations:

- the Committee recommends that criteria be included for the use of Section 86 to ensure that shorter polling days on the islands does not become commonplace;
- the need to provide for the Returning Officer to avail of State or contracted services so ballot boxes reach the count centers on the mainland on time, or allow for a later start time in affected count centers to make use of public transport the next morning;
- the sponsor of the Bill considers expanding the scope of the Bill to include European Parliament and Local Government elections.

The Committee also reported on their pre-legislative scrutiny of the General Scheme of the Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Bill 2018, which aims to enhance the investigation and enforcement powers of the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB), provide for clarification of requirements under the Residential Tenancies Act 2004, change procedures and process regarding provision of information to the RTB, extend the minimum notice periods of termination of tenancies by landlords and to provide for related offences.

The Committee identified ten key issues and made the following recommendations:

- consideration be given to the possible introduction of tax and subsidy incentives to encourage small scale landlords to remain or participate in the rental market
- regular post-enactment reviews be undertaken to assess whether the

proposed legislative measures are working as intended, and have not had a substantial negative impact on supply

- an assessment of the constitutionality of the proposed sanctions regime be undertaken
- consideration be given as to whether the information required is excessive or proportionate, and whether its use is compatible with issues of data privacy and GDPR.
- fast tracking of a revision or consolidation of the 2004 Act with the intention of making the Act easier to navigate and more understandable be undertaken.
- consideration be given to a public information campaign as a way to promote understanding of tenant and landlord rights and obligations
- an analysis be undertaken as to whether a requirement for landlords to register their tenancies each year is a more effective approach to regulation and outweighs any potential additional burden that would be placed on landlords
- consideration be given as to whether it is appropriate or not to introduce a mechanism for realignment of rents below market rent in RPZs to market rent levels
- the workforce plan currently under consideration should be fast tracked, and that any resources identified and agreed upon as being required should be implemented as soon as possible
- clarity be provided on the wording of the amendment to ensure there is no misunderstanding of its intention
- clarity be provided on the definition of student accommodation and licences and how the 2004 Act applies to them
- consideration be given to introducing a section in this legislation to alleviate the confusion in this area
- an analysis be undertaken on the most appropriate model for

a deposit retention scheme and whether amendments to existing legislation should be introduced.

#### *Housing options for older people*

The Committee also published a report on housing options for older people in July. The report makes eight practical recommendations, taking into consideration the health, social and economic needs of older people:

1. housing typologies in housing developments be required to match the age demographic of the area in which the development is being proposed;
2. mechanisms be developed to incentivise and promote the construction of housing options and residential care facilities located in town centres or central locations within easy access of local services;
3. the Housing Adaption Grant eligibility be lowered from 66 years of age to 60 years of age;
4. the Housing Adaption Grant form be revised and introduced as a matter of priority and training for front line staff be introduced to assist applicants;
5. funding be standardised across local authorities for the Housing Adaption Grant;
6. the Housing Adaption Grant be provided in two separate funding strands, emergency and proactive;
7. a cost benefit analysis be conducted into the exact costs per unit and the corresponding long term savings of implementing universal design into all housing and
8. choice based downsizing schemes being operated in some local authorities be introduced nationwide.

The full report can be accessed here: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/press-centre/press-releases/20180710-housing-committee-calls-for-more-alternative-housing-options-for-older-people/>

# Local Government in the Republic of Ireland

***Dr Mark Callanan (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration; 2018; ISBN: 978-1-910393-23-9) Book review by Laura Shannon, IPA.***

In the last decade Ireland has entered and exited recession and huge change has taken place at the local government level including territorial reform, changed functional responsibilities, new financing arrangements and other ongoing reform initiatives. This book is intended as an introduction to the system of local government in the Republic of Ireland, focused on contemporary local governance. It provides a much needed update on a previous publication (Callanan and Keogan, eds, 2003; *Local Government in Ireland: Inside and Out*). The author has made a clear effort to ensure this book can be used as an ongoing resource to students and practitioners alike; chapters can be read in isolation and both the table of contents and index both provide easy reference points.

Local government plays a multitude of roles in society and has a profound impact on our daily lives. Chapter one sets out the many different ways the role of local government in Ireland can be characterised – as an instrument of local democracy, a provider of services, an agent of central government, a local regulator, and as a local leader and coordinator. These roles overlap and clash at times. This chapter sets the scene regarding the role of local government in certain functions, the relationship between local government and central departments and agencies, and the local area/citizens. The issues introduced here are expanded on throughout the various chapters.

Before discussing the contemporary structures, roles and functions of local government the author provides a brief

account of the evolution and reform of local government. There have been various reforms over the years – in fact reform has almost been a constant feature – however, as chapter three details, the county remains the core of local government. Reforms are more likely to have taken place at the sub-county or regional level. The public resistance around proposed changes to county boundaries are a prime example of the strong affinity of most Irish citizens with their counties (p. 50).

The role of elected members is diverse and often misrepresented. Chapter four collates the various different roles to provide a comprehensive picture of the duties and responsibilities of local councillors. This is broadly discussed under three headings: representational, policy, and scrutiny and oversight. A debate has reoccurred over the years around the balance of power between the elected members and the executive, as well as between central and local levels; these issues are dealt with in detail throughout the book. Chapter four also provides a profile of local councillors highlighting the under representation of women and lack of diversity among elected members.

A particularly topical debate concerns the introduction of directly elected mayors, particularly in urban areas. Previous proposals and reforms efforts on this issue are outlined, none of which have proceeded to date (pp. 91-94). International systems of executive models and the interplay between the political and executive sides are also compared later in the book (pp. 319-322). It is suggested that any future

proposals for directly elected mayors should provide clarity with regards the powers they would receive in order to have some chance of success.

The functions of local authorities and how they are financed are covered in chapters six and seven respectively. These chapters provide a thorough account of the system of the local service delivery in Ireland. In chapter six, a brief account of the evolution of each of the main functions is provided, followed by a section on ‘future challenges’. This is essential reading for anyone concerned about the future of our local public services, and the challenges faced by local government in providing these services.

The second half of the book moves away from the nuts and bolts of local government and discusses topics such as democratic accountability and reform, managerial and administrative reforms, multilevel governance, regionalisation, Europeanisation, localism, and centralism. Chapter 13 compares Irish local government to its international counterparts. The author notes that our system is often (somewhat lazily) compared to our closest neighbour and argues that instead, comparisons should be drawn with local government systems in a range of other jurisdictions, including similarly sized small countries. The chapter identifies key reform trends that have manifested across local government systems in the developed world. It can be concluded, in general, that comparatively Ireland is a highly centralised state with weak local autonomy.

While the relative centralisation of government services in Ireland is often the enduring message, this book also highlights the diverse range of organisations and stakeholders with

which local government interacts. This vast web of interactions is summarised by the author in a table reproduced here. As the table shows, local authorities are engaged with a huge range of

departments, statutory agencies and bodies and local, voluntary and community organisations on a daily basis.

| Service Area                        | Principal Policy Department                                | Other Departments Involved   | Statutory Agencies and Bodies   | Other Organisations  |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|--|
| Housing                             | Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government         | Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection (including arrangements for transfer of social housing supports to local authorities)<br>Department of Justice & Equality (on Traveller-related issues) | HSE (on transfer of social housing supports, as well as ongoing liaison on housing issues, including specific supports for the homeless and Travellers)<br>Housing Agency (also known as the Housing & Sustainable Communities Agency)<br>Housing Finance Agency<br>RTB<br>An Garda Síochána (antisocial behaviour) | Voluntary housing associations<br>Homeless accommodation providers |
| Roads and Transport                 | Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport                   |  | TII (formerly the NRA)<br>NTA<br>RSA<br>An Garda Síochána (traffic)   | Transport Coordination Units (Local Link)                          |
| Spatial and Land Use Planning       | Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government         |  | An Bord Pleanála<br>Heritage Council<br>Regional Assemblies<br>NTA (with particular planning responsibilities for the Greater Dublin region)<br>Various 'prescribed bodies'   |  |
| Environment and Waste Management    | Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment | Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine   | EPA<br>Irish Water<br>Inland Fisheries Ireland<br>SEAI  | Local energy agencies<br>Tidy Towns committees<br>An Taisce        |
| Fire Service and Emergency Planning | Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government         | Department of Defence (civil defence)  | An Garda Síochána (emergency planning)<br>HSE (emergency planning)<br>Other service providers as required, such as the Defence Forces, the Coast Guard, Irish Red Cross, utility companies (emergency planning)   |  |

| Service Area                                | Principal Policy Department  | Other Departments Involved  | Statutory Agencies and Bodies   | Other Organisations   |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| Recreational and Cultural Services          | Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government (libraries)<br>Department of Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht (arts and culture)<br>Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport (sport) |   | LGMA (libraries)<br>Arts Council (arts)<br>Creative Ireland (culture)<br>Sport Ireland (sport)  | Local sports partnerships   |
| Education, Health and Agriculture           |  | Department of Education & Skills<br>Department of Health<br>Department of Justice & Equality (Coroner Service)  | ETBs<br>HSE<br>FSAI   | Regional health fora  |
| Economic Development and Enterprise Support | Department of Business, Enterprise & Innovation  | Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government  | Enterprise Ireland<br>IDA Ireland<br>Regional Assemblies<br>Solas<br>Skillnets<br>Fáilte Ireland<br>Údarás na Gaeltachta<br>Western Development Commission      | Local Enterprise Offices (while these have a distinctive public profile they form part of the local government system)  |
| Local Development                           | Department of Rural & Community Development  | Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection (social inclusion and employment supports)   | Pobal<br>Various other bodies that provide funding for local community development organisations, such as the HSE, Tusla, ETBs, Solas, and Údarás na Gaeltachta | Local Development Companies (using various titles, including partnerships, LEADER partnerships, integrated development companies and others)<br>Intreo centres and Local Employment Services<br>Family Resource Centres<br>Citizen Information Centres<br>Volunteer Centres<br>Community Training Centres<br>Local Traveller<br>Interagency Groups<br>Local Drugs Task Forces |
| Other Services and Activities               |  | Department of Justice & Equality (local policing)<br>Department of Children & Youth Affairs (childcare and children services)<br>Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment (broadband) | An Garda Síochána (local policing)<br>Tusla - Child and Family Agency (children services)   | JPCs<br>CCCs<br>CYPSC   |



Top: Pictured at the Launch of Local Government in the Republic of Ireland, (1 to r), Dr Richard Boyle, Head of Publishing, Research & Corporate Relations, IPA, Dr Mark Callanan, Author & Lecturer, IPA, Guest of Honour, John Paul Phelan, TD Minister of State, Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Dr. Marian O'Sullivan, Director General, IPA

Bottom: Pictured at the launch of Local Government in the Republic of Ireland (1 to r) Sean McGowan, Cathaoirleach of Leitrim County Council, Dr Mark Callanan, Author & Lecturer, IPA, Guest of Honour, John Paul Phelan, TD Minister of State, Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government



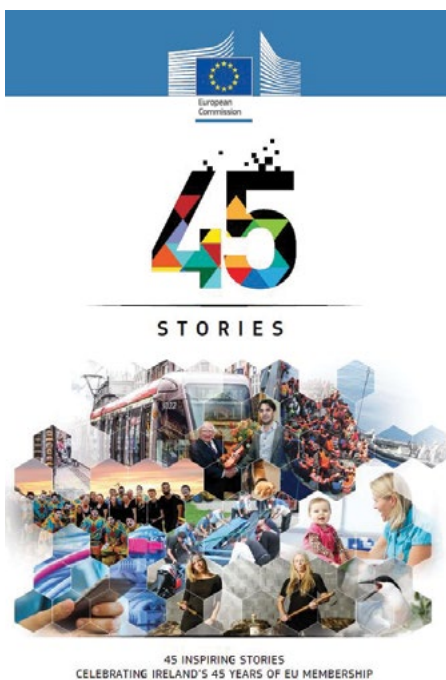
This book provides a comprehensive overview of local government in Ireland, concluding by identifying the challenges that lie ahead and how these might influence local government going forward. Among the key debates are the role of the state and balance between public and private provision of services, and the increased expectations of

citizens and demands for better services. In order to address the challenges it faces local government must be efficient, participative, it must lead and it must be empowered. This is not a menu of items that can be cherry-picked, all four aspects are interrelated and should be delivered upon in tandem to provide the kind of local government system to meet

the demands and needs of our citizens.

Local Government in the Republic of Ireland is published by the IPA and can be purchased on the website at <https://www.ipa.ie/publications-categories/local-government-in-the-republic-of-ireland.4200.html> or by calling 01 240 3600.

# 45 stories celebrating 45 years of EU membership



To celebrate Ireland's 45 years of EU membership, the EU Commission Representation in Ireland has put together 45 stories that illustrate just some of the ways Ireland has benefited over the past four and a half decades.

An exhibition featuring pop-up displays of the stories was held in Leinster House for the month of October. The exhibition will travel to Clones in November, Cork in December, Ballinasloe in January 2019, Blanchardstown in February, Sligo in March, Letterkenny in April, Nenagh in May and Waterford in June.

Ireland has benefited greatly from our EU membership over the years, and the 45 stories captured just some of

this impact. The 45 stories cover the length and breadth of Ireland under the themes of culture, education & research, community, health, agriculture & fisheries, transport, business, environment, consumer, and global Ireland.

In the introduction to the publication, the Head of European Commission Representation in Ireland, Gerry Kiely, notes the many ways Ireland has benefited from EU membership: "It's easier for Irish businesses to trade on both European and international markets thanks to the Single Market and having the euro as our currency helps with exports and travelling abroad. But our great tradition in farming hasn't been forgotten and Irish agriculture has benefited greatly from EU payments.

Between 2007 and 2013 the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) pumped €11.7 billion into Ireland's farming sector and rural areas and a further €11 billion will

be invested for the period up to 2020. Over the 2014-2020 programming period, EU Structural and Investment funds will be used, together with Irish Government and Local Authority funding, to invest €6.2 billion in Ireland. This will help pay for initiatives in education, research and job creation to help build a sustainable, healthy economy across the whole of the country.

EU laws protect our environment from climate change. EU initiatives support our rural and coastal communities. EU funding has helped improve education standards in Ireland too, and created lots of opportunities for studying abroad, and being EU citizens means Irish people can choose to live and work freely in any EU country."

For the brochure full and more information, visit: [https://ec.europa.eu/ireland/about-us/45-stories-celebrating-45-years-of-ireland-s-eu-membership\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/ireland/about-us/45-stories-celebrating-45-years-of-ireland-s-eu-membership_en)





## News items

### Plebiscites may be held on directly elected executive mayors for cities

The Government has agreed in principle to the holding of plebiscites on directly elected mayors with executive functions in Cork City Council, Limerick City and County Council, Waterford City and County Council and Galway City Council and Galway County Council (in anticipation of a full merger of those two local authorities in 2021). The plebiscites are to be held at the same time as the Local Government Elections in May 2019. The issue of directly elected mayors for Dublin is to be referred for more detailed consideration and citizen engagement to a Dublin Citizens' Assembly to be specially convened in 2019.

These decisions arise on foot of a policy discussion paper entitled 'Local Authority Leadership, Governance and Administration', prepared by Mr John Paul Phelan TD, Minister of State for Local Government and Electoral Reform, which is part of the response to the Programme for Partnership Government (PPG) requirement for a report to Government and the Oireachtas on potential measures to boost local government leadership and accountability.

The paper is also a specific response to the PPG commitment to consider directly elected mayors for cities. In that regard, the paper outlines two main options for the enhancement of the role of local authority mayors, namely:

- Directly elected mayors, without additional functions but based on the current role performed by Cathaoirligh/Mayors/Lord Mayors of local authorities, and
- Executive Mayors, whose functions would include both existing Cathaoirleach/Mayor functions and executive functions currently residing with the chief executives of local

authorities, and who could be either elected directly by the electorate or indirectly from among the elected members of the Council.

The holding of plebiscites to coincide with the May 2019 local elections is subject to the necessary legislative provisions being included in the Local Government Bill 2018. Further detailed proposals on the plebiscites and the questions to be put to the electorate, as well as the specific powers to be given to executive mayors are to be brought to Government in the coming months.

### Revised local electoral areas for 2019

Both local electoral area boundary committees established in 2017 have now reported to Minister John Paul Phelan. The revised arrangements will be applied for the next local government elections, due to take place in May 2019. Committee 1 originally looked at every county other than Cork and the four Dublin local authorities. They were also subsequently asked to consider Cork County in light of the proposed boundary changes between the city and county. Committee 2 considered the four Dublin local authorities, and subsequently Cork City. There was no change to the total number of elected members, which remains at 949. Both committees' recommendations are included in the table on the next page.



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The late 1950s and 1960s were a pivotal period in Ireland's economic development. Visionary civil servants and modernising politicians led significant changes in Irish society; nowhere was this more obvious than in education. Free secondary education, free school transport and the development of a non-university, technically oriented higher-education system – the regional technical colleges and the national institutes for higher education – combined to create a new dynamic that furnished a missing rung in Irish education and democratised access to education.

The regional technical colleges, and their successors the institutes of technology (excepting Dublin Institute of Technology), conceived primarily as sub-degree institutions, now stand on the threshold of redesignation as technological universities; they are thus internationally unique.

This book paints the landscape of political chicanery, conflict and control, policy weakness, institutional ambition and autonomy, and the belief in self-efficacy within which the regional technical colleges developed. The book does not draw a map of dates, numbers, statistics, lists and places. In offering a painting rather than a map, it is hoped the book will appeal to those who have come from, or have been associated with, the regional technical colleges and who are interested in the richness of the story of their colleges. It is hoped also that the book will appeal to those interested in education and policy development.



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| Local Authority        | Number of members | 3        | 4         | 5         | 6         | 7         | Total no. of local electoral areas | Total no. of Municipal Districts |
|------------------------|-------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Carlow                 | 18                |          |           | 1         | 1         | 1         | 3                                  | 3                                |
| Cavan                  | 18                |          |           |           | 3         |           | 3                                  | 3                                |
| Clare                  | 28                |          | 1         | 2         |           | 2         | 5                                  | 4                                |
| Cork City              | 31                |          |           |           | 4         | 1         | 5                                  | n/a                              |
| Cork County            | 55                |          | 2         | 2         | 5         | 1         | 10                                 | 8                                |
| Donegal                | 37                | 1        | 1         | 1         | 3         | 1         | 7                                  | 5                                |
| Dublin City            | 63                |          |           | 5         | 4         | 2         | 11                                 | n/a                              |
| Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown | 40                |          |           |           | 2         | 4         | 6                                  | n/a                              |
| Fingal                 | 40                |          |           | 4         | 1         | 2         | 7                                  | n/a                              |
| Galway City            | 18                |          |           |           | 3         |           | 3                                  | n/a                              |
| Galway County          | 39                |          | 1         | 3         | 1         | 2         | 7                                  | 5                                |
| Kerry                  | 33                | 1        | 1         |           | 2         | 2         | 6                                  | 4                                |
| Kildare                | 40                | 1        | 1         | 4         | 1         | 1         | 8                                  | 5                                |
| Kilkenny               | 24                |          |           | 1         | 2         | 1         | 4                                  | 4                                |
| Laois                  | 19                |          |           |           | 2         | 1         | 3                                  | 3                                |
| Leitrim                | 18                |          |           |           | 3         |           | 3                                  | 3                                |
| Limerick               | 40                |          |           |           | 2         | 4         | 6                                  | 3**                              |
| Longford               | 18                |          |           | 1         | 1         | 1         | 3                                  | 3                                |
| Louth                  | 29                |          | 1         |           | 3         | 1         | 5                                  | 3                                |
| Mayo                   | 30                | 1        | 2         |           | 2         | 1         | 6                                  | 4                                |
| Meath                  | 40                |          |           |           | 2         | 4         | 6                                  | 6                                |
| Monaghan               | 18                |          |           | 1         | 1         | 1         | 3                                  | 3                                |
| Offaly                 | 19                |          |           |           | 2         | 1         | 3                                  | 3                                |
| Roscommon              | 18                |          |           |           | 3         |           | 3                                  | 3                                |
| South Dublin           | 40                |          |           | 4         | 1         | 2         | 7                                  | n/a                              |
| Sligo                  | 18                |          |           | 1         | 1         | 1         | 3                                  | 2                                |
| Tipperary              | 40                |          | 3         | 3         | 1         | 1         | 8                                  | 5                                |
| Waterford              | 32                | 1        |           | 1         | 4         |           | 6                                  | 2**                              |
| Westmeath              | 20                |          | 1         | 2         | 1         |           | 4                                  | 2                                |
| Wexford                | 34                |          | 1         | 1         | 3         | 1         | 6                                  | 4                                |
| Wicklow                | 32                |          | 2         |           | 4         |           | 6                                  | 5                                |
| <b>Totals</b>          | <b>949</b>        | <b>5</b> | <b>17</b> | <b>37</b> | <b>68</b> | <b>39</b> | <b>166</b>                         | <b>95</b>                        |

\*Limerick also contains a 21-seat Metropolitan District

\*\*Waterford also contains an 18-seat Metropolitan District

## Presidential Nominations

Local authorities were in the spotlight in recent months due to their involvement in the nomination of Presidential candidates. Four candidates were nominated by local authorities for the election which will take place on October

26. While some local authorities chose not to nominate any candidates, the following individuals were nominated by the required four local authorities:

- Sean Gallagher (nominated by Roscommon, Leitrim, Mayo and Wexford)
- Joan Freeman (nominated by Galway County, Galway City, Fingal

and Cork City)

- Gavin Duffy (nominated by Carlow, Meath, Wicklow and Waterford)
- Peter Casey (nominated by Kerry, Clare, Limerick and Tipperary)

The race also includes the Sinn Féin candidate, Liadh Ní Riada, and the incumbent, President Michael D. Higgins.

## Government launches €1.25bn Land Development Agency.

In September, the Government launched the Land Development Agency (LDA) with the aim of building 150,000 new homes over the next 20 years.

The new Agency has an immediate focus on managing the State's own lands to develop new homes, and regenerate under-utilised sites. In the longer-term it will assemble strategic landbanks from a mix of public and private lands, making these available for housing in a controlled manner which brings essential long-term stability to the Irish housing market.

The Agency has an initial pipeline of State land which is capable of delivering 10,000 homes, with 3,000 of those homes on lands which have already been secured. The Agency is already in the process of expanding its portfolio. The LDA will have two main functions:

- Coordinating appropriate State lands for regeneration and development, opening up key sites which are not being used effectively for housing delivery; and
- Driving strategic land assembly, working with both public and private sector land owners to smooth out peaks and troughs of land supply, stabilising land values and delivering increased affordability.

The LDA is modelled on best European practice as already demonstrated in Germany and the Netherlands. By assembling land packages ahead of the planning and infrastructure stages, the Agency can lower development land costs and tackle upward pressure on house prices.

The Agency will be a commercial State-sponsored body, acting within a clear Government policy framework: that all public land disposals must deliver at least 40% of any housing potential on such lands in the form of social (10%) and affordable (30%) housing.

It intends to establish a national centre of expertise for State bodies and local authorities, using experienced staff with expertise in project management finance, planning, development and procurement. It will be further underpinned by dedicated legislation, overseen by an independent board and provided with both the initial and long-term capital to function on a commercial basis.

CUMULATIVE SOCIAL HOUSING DELIVERY



Source: Rebuilding Ireland Social Housing Construction Projects, Status Report Q2 2018.

## Rebuilding Ireland – quarterly updates

The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government publishes quarterly updates on social housing delivery under Rebuilding Ireland, the national action plan for housing and homelessness. The latest available figures relate to quarter 2 of this year, detailed in the tables below.

The cumulative total of social housing delivered through Rebuilding Ireland is now 57,304. The vast majority of these houses (39,074) are through the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP). The pie chart below displays the breakdown between the various delivery streams. New builds now stand at 4,005, some way of the 2021 target of 33,500.

| Approval Status  | Q1 2018    |               | Q2 2018      |               |
|--|------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
|  | Schemes    | Homes         | Schemes      | Homes         |
| Stage 1 - Capital Appraisal                            | 157        | 2,602         | 145          | 2,476         |
| Stage 2 - Pre-planning                                 | 124        | 1,958         | 140          | 2,336         |
| Stage 3 - Pre-tender design                            | 63         | 1,368         | 79           | 1,842         |
| Stage 4 - Tender Report or Final Turnkey/CALF approval | 96         | 1,989         | 78           | 1,577         |
| Site Start   | 222        | 3,932         | 298          | 4,602         |
| Site Finish  | 268        | 2,964         | 327          | 3,518         |
| <b>Totals</b>  | <b>930</b> | <b>14,813</b> | <b>1,067</b> | <b>16,351</b> |

| Funding Programme          | Q1 2018    |               | Q2 2018      |               |
|----------------------------|------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
|                            | Schemes    | Homes         | Schemes      | Homes         |
| CALF construction          | 58         | 1,358         | 50           | 1,352         |
| CALF construction turnkey  | 173        | 3,045         | 265          | 3,643         |
| CAS construction           | 136        | 1,282         | 139          | 1,310         |
| Regeneration               | 49         | 1,085         | 50           | 1,085         |
| SHCIP Construction         | 380        | 5,304         | 395          | 5,433         |
| SHCIP Construction Rapid   | 33         | 894           | 38           | 1,008         |
| SHCIP Construction Turnkey | 95         | 1,311         | 116          | 1,521         |
| PPP                        | 6          | 534           | 14           | 999           |
| <b>Totals</b>              | <b>930</b> | <b>14,813</b> | <b>1,067</b> | <b>16,351</b> |

Notes:

- Some schemes are being delivered in phases.
- SHCIP: Social housing Capital Investment Programme - provides funding to local authorities for the provision of social housing by means of construction and acquisition.
- CAS: Capital Assistance Scheme - provides essential funding to approved housing bodies (AHBs) for the provision of accommodation for persons with specific categories of housing need such as Homeless and older persons, people with disabilities, returning emigrants and victims of domestic violence
- CALF: Capital Advance Leasing Facility - The Department offers financial support to AHBs in the form of a long term loan under the CALF to assist with the financing of the construction or acquisition of units that will be provided for social housing use.
- PPP: Public Private Partnership

Source: Rebuilding Ireland Social Housing Construction Projects, Status Report Q2 2018

## Homelessness Report August 2018

The latest figures published by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government follow an exercise undertaken around the categorisation of emergency accommodation. The Department is currently being advised by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) on the development of a revised methodology for collection and publication of homeless data.

The national figures now stand at 5,834 adults and 3,693 dependents. A snapshot of households accessing local authority managed emergency accommodation during the week 20-26 August is provided in table to the right.

### #HousingFocus

In the first week of October, local authorities across Ireland participated in the #HousingFocus campaign which explained how social housing is delivered within the local area and the work of the local authority to support private building. A brief overview is provided below:

- Local authorities build, acquire, lease and manage all public housing stock within their areas. Local authorities also work in partnership with, and allocate funding to, Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) to provide social housing units.
- Each local authority has a number of targets for building, acquiring and leasing set out as part of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government's Rebuilding Ireland strategy, which aims to provide over 137,500 additional social housing solutions by 2021, including 50,000 additional social housing units – 33,500 of which will be new builds.
- In 2017, an additional 7,095 additional units were added to social housing stock nationally – 4,054 new builds, 2,214 acquisitions and 827 leased properties.

**Details of households accessing local authority managed emergency accommodation during the week of 20 – 26 August 2018**

| Region            | Homeless Adults | Gender      |             | Age groups |             |             |            |
|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
|                   |                 | Male        | Female      | 18-24      | 25-44       | 45-64       | 65+        |
| <b>Dublin</b>     | 3944            | 2147        | 1797        | 571        | 2398        | 899         | 76         |
| <b>Mid-East</b>   | 212             | 130         | 82          | 30         | 111         | 62          | 9          |
| <b>Midlands</b>   | 104             | 51          | 53          | 23         | 69          | 11          | 1          |
| <b>Mid-West</b>   | 370             | 229         | 141         | 49         | 213         | 95          | 13         |
| <b>North-East</b> | 132             | 79          | 53          | 13         | 77          | 34          | 8          |
| <b>North-West</b> | 67              | 48          | 19          | 14         | 36          | 16          | 1          |
| <b>South-East</b> | 317             | 212         | 105         | 65         | 165         | 79          | 8          |
| <b>South-West</b> | 430             | 242         | 188         | 72         | 249         | 100         | 9          |
| <b>West</b>       | 258             | 149         | 109         | 38         | 145         | 71          | 4          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>      | <b>5834</b>     | <b>3287</b> | <b>2547</b> | <b>875</b> | <b>3463</b> | <b>1367</b> | <b>129</b> |

Source: Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government – Homeless Report August 2018.

- Under the Rebuilding Ireland targets, 7,869 additional housing social housing units will be added to stock in 2018, including 4,969 new builds, 900 acquisitions and 2,000 leased properties.

### Excellence in Local Government Awards takes place November 22nd

The annual Excellence in Local Government Awards, taking place November 22nd, showcase best practice in local government and recognise the skills, hard work, innovation and enthusiasm within local government that can often go unrecognised. The Awards are held by Chambers Ireland in conjunction with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

A new category has been introduced for 2018: Outstanding initiative through the Municipal districts. Municipal districts were introduced under the Local Government Reform Act 2014 as an innovative, county-wide, system of governance and local decision-making. This award seeks to recognise the impact of initiatives that maximise the contribution of the municipal district members to local authority effectiveness, particularly in terms of governance, local representation, conduct of council business, community engagement, and economic, social and local development generally. The shortlist for this new award is:

- Clare County Council - Friars Walk

Coach Park Ennis -Coach Friendly Destination

- Wexford County Council - Love Gorey.ie
- Limerick City & County Council - Traffic Calming Measures for the Town of Rathkeale
- Monaghan County Council - Redevelopment of Ballybay Town Park
- Wicklow County Council - Arklow Town Team

The other categories are:

- Supporting active communities
- Best practice in citizen engagement
- Health & wellbeing
- Supporting tourism
- Promoting economic development
- Local authority innovation
- Sustainable environment
- Best library service
- Sustaining the arts
- Joint local authority initiative
- Festival of the year
- Enhancing the urban environment
- Heritage and built environment
- Disability service provision
- Commemorations & centenaries

The full shortlist for all categories can be found at [www.chambers.ie/events/excellence-in-local-government-awards/](http://www.chambers.ie/events/excellence-in-local-government-awards/)

### Launch of Our Public Libraries 2022 – Inspiring, Connecting and Empowering Communities

A new national strategy for public libraries, alongside funding of €8

million, was launched in September. The strategy has three strategic programmes that reflect the core functions of the public library service: Reading and Literacy; Information and Learning, and; Community and Culture.

It focuses on removing barriers to access and improving accessibility for all. The library service will draw on capacity across the library network to support and facilitate services provided by other sectors, developing existing relationships and building new ones to support delivery of integrated public services. Libraries will also work with local partners to reach disadvantaged, marginalised and new communities, increasing these communities' awareness of services available and firmly establishing the library as a resource for all.

The strategy will be delivered using enablers such as:

- Infrastructure and services with a focus on fit-for-purpose buildings and ICT capacity.
- Library team development with skilled staff taking a more proactive and confident customer-focused approach.
- Promotion and marketing, at national and local level, to raise visibility and awareness generally, but also to reach out to those communities that may not consider the library a place for them.
- High-quality collections based on the latest technology and innovative solutions.
- Continued investment to support infrastructure, ICT, staffing and collections development.
- The proposed allocation for each local authority is:

| Local Authority | Allocation |
|-----------------|------------|
| Carlow          | €109,604   |
| Cavan           | €122,960   |
| Clare           | €90,000    |
| Cork City       | €351,078   |

| Local Authority        | Allocation |
|------------------------|------------|
| Cork County            | €142,048   |
| Donegal                | €209,481   |
| Dublin City            | €915,843   |
| Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown | €267,185   |
| Fingal                 | €711,285   |
| Galway                 | €374,259   |
| Kerry                  | €136,722   |
| Kildare                | €547,262   |
| Kilkenny               | €149,520   |
| Laois                  | €88,290    |
| Leitrim                | €39,000    |
| Limerick               | €366,000   |
| Longford               | €87,724    |
| Louth                  | €274,991   |
| Mayo                   | €280,500   |
| Meath                  | €295,263   |
| Monaghan               | €188,147   |
| Offaly                 | €116,930   |
| Roscommon              | €173,100   |
| Sligo                  | €80,471    |
| South Dublin           | €328,902   |
| Tipperary              | €390,667   |
| Waterford              | €383,277   |
| Westmeath              | €194,430   |
| Wexford                | €295,247   |
| Wicklow                | €245,683   |
| Total Amount           | €7.96m     |

### Ibec Local Economic Indicators – Doing Business Locally

This annual report from Ibec, the group that represents Irish business, measures data across all local authorities and across eight regions. It provides a 'state of play' of local and regional competitiveness. Key areas of interest are detailed and ranked, including indicators that fall outside the remit of local government, such as labour force skills.

Some of the key findings include:

1. Companies are locating where

talented workers want to live, not the other way around: Quality of life factors such as the availability and affordability in housing is a growing determinant of our ability to compete internationally.

2. Ireland's talent pool remains our key global competitive advantage: 43% of the labour force is educated to at least degree level. This varies substantially across regions and local areas. In Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, over seven in every ten people in the labour force have completed at least a level 7 degree, but only three of every ten in Cavan hold a degree.
3. Skilled workforce, production of STEM graduates and innovation essential to regional productivity: It is not surprising that the highest concentration of STEM-graduates is in Galway City, Cork City and across Dublin, but Monaghan has the lowest.
4. Northern and Western region are most dependent on the National Broadband Plan (NBP): Over 50% of premises in Leitrim are dependent on the NBP, with Monaghan (48%) and Roscommon (47%) second and third highest in terms of NBP dependency.
5. Accessibility to ports and airports for high quality international connectivity: The North West ranks the lowest in the country in terms of travel time to a State airport or major Tier 1 or 2 designated port. This plays a significant role in making the region appear inaccessible.
6. Work must continue on improving road connectivity and road quality locally: Poorly maintained local authority roads can have a significant impact on local competitiveness. Galway City is the best local authority and the Mid West the best region in terms of road quality with the worst local authority area being Fingal and the Midlands region.
7. Invest in public transport to tackle

excessive commuting times: Almost one in three people have a daily commute of 30 minutes to an hour each way. However, the most extreme cases exist in the counties immediately bordering Dublin (Kildare, Meath and Wicklow) where one out of every five people spends a minimum of two hours every day commuting.

8. Coastal cities and regions generate highest overseas revenue from tourism: Approximately 45% of overseas tourist spend occurs in the nine counties of the Wild Atlantic Way, which shows the benefit collaborative initiatives can have on the local economy. Dublin and Cork alone generated more revenue than every other county combined.
9. Local job creation should focus on a mix of FDI, indigenous companies and entrepreneurship: With approximately 2,700 jobs per 10,000 of the labour force, Cork performs strongest in terms of IDA and Enterprise Ireland-supported jobs.
10. Commercial rates impact on local business conditions and cost competitiveness: In 2018 business contributions will directly account for €1.51 billion or 35% of the total local government budget. Dublin's four local authorities have the highest average rates bill for local businesses.

The full report is available at [www.ibec.ie](http://www.ibec.ie)

### Funding announced for Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2018

The 2018 Town and Village Renewal Scheme, which was launched in April this year, focuses on projects which can help to enhance rural towns and villages, with a particular emphasis on stimulating economic development. Funding awarded to individual towns and villages this year generally ranges from €20,000 to €100,000, with 30 projects receiving between €100,000 and €200,000 for more ambitious

proposals. Total funding amounts to €21,210,121.

Examples of projects being supported in today's announcement are:

- €160,000 for the renovation and extension of the Aviation Museum in Shannon, Co Clare
- €100,000 for the refurbishment of Tourism Office in Buncrana, Co. Donegal
- €200,000 to restore the village Square in Inistioge, Co Kilkenny
- €200,000 to develop an Enterprise Hub in Cootehill, Co Cavan

The scheme was initiated in 2016 and has supported more than 670 projects to date. A wide variety of projects have been approved under the 2018 scheme. These projects have been identified by local community groups and businesses, in conjunction with their Local Authorities. Projects approved range from employment initiatives to tourism amenities, and other measures aimed to help make small towns and villages more attractive and more sustainable places in which to live and work. Most of the funding benefits rural towns and villages will less than 5,000 people.

The complete list of recipients can be found at [www.drcd.gov.ie](http://www.drcd.gov.ie)

### SEAI support research and sustainable communities

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Denis Naughten TD announced €8 million in Government funding to support 45 innovative energy projects in companies and research institutions across Ireland. The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) is responsible for awarding the funding to the 45 projects which aim to develop solutions that will help homes, businesses and communities deliver a cleaner energy future. The projects range in duration from one to four years.

Research and innovation are central pillars of the Government's National

Energy and Climate Plan. The Minister expressed his commitment to energy research and funding over the coming years.

Discussing the funding programme, Jim Gannon, CEO of SEAI said that new solutions and new technologies are central to achieving a sustainable energy future for Ireland. He believes that with direct involvement from industry, academia and local enterprises, the 45 projects we are funding will deliver real solutions to problems that the energy sector is facing today.

A project led by Dr Miriam Byrne in NUI Galway is among those to receive funding. Working in collaboration with researchers in University College Dublin (UCD), the NUI team, are investigating the effectiveness of ventilation systems in A-rated energy efficient homes. Good ventilation is critical for a healthy home. The study will monitor air quality in 100 A-rated homes and assess the comfort and satisfaction of homeowners.

The largest developer and operator of renewable generation in Ireland; SSE Airtricity working with CeADAR (Centre for Advanced Data Analytics Research) at UCD, will employ state of the art Artificial Intelligence (AI) to optimise renewable energy producers forecasting ability. The aim of the project is to reduce volatility in the wholesale energy market making it more cost effective for renewable energy producers to participate and ultimately lower energy prices for consumers.

A collaborative project involving; Gas Networks Ireland, IFA, ICMAS, Teagasc, and a number of other community groups, local authorities and academics, plans to develop a model for regional anaerobic digester (AD) clusters. If successful the model will facilitate access to the gas network and diversify income streams for farmers.

2018 Awarded Projects

| <b>Project Title</b>  | <b>Lead Organisation</b>             |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Agri Bio Circular Economy (ABC Economy)   | UCD                                  |
| CAO IRL Coupled Atmosphere Ocean Wave Forecasts for Ireland   | NUIG                                 |
| Mitigation of Air Pollution Impacts of Irish Heavy Duty Vehicles (MAP-HDV)  | TCD                                  |
| DiSTRaCT: moDal Shift Reduce Carbon in Transport  | TCD                                  |
| Low Cost Monitoring and Control of Small Scale Renewables   | Electricity Exchange DAC.            |
| Urban Building Energy Model   | UCD                                  |
| Dublin Region Energy Masterplan   | CODEMA                               |
| Brightwind I-SEM Forecast   | Brightwind Limited                   |
| BIO-RPISM: biofuel production, digestate purification and CO2 sequestration with highly productive auto-floating microalgae technology                            | NUIG                                 |
| Reducing Energy Consumption in Air Filtration Systems (RECAFS)  | TCD                                  |
| AgriGasGrid   | Renewable Gas Forum Ireland          |
| Agricultural Energy Optimisation Platform (AEOP)  | CIT                                  |
| Assessment of VentilAtion effectiveness via a Longitudinal indoor environmental study in 'A' rated Irish Dwellings: VALIDate                                      | NUIG                                 |
| GEBTechTM (Green Energy Boosting Technology): A novel treatment for farm slurries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to generate energy                       | Westway Health                       |
| Slurres Pilot   | UL                                   |
| Building Upon Ireland's National Renovation Strategy  | Irish Green Building Council         |
| Robust Real-Time Wind Power Prediction and Early, Accurate Estimation of Downtime for Irish Wind Farms in an Integrated Single Electricity Market (Wind-PEarlAED) | UCD                                  |
| Retrokit 2.0 - A Cloud-Based Project Planning and Implementation Toolkit to Foster the Uptake of Deep Energy Retrofit in Housing.                                 | XD Sustainable Energy Consulting Ltd |
| Exploration of Air Source Heat Pumps for Ireland's Residential Heating Needs  | UCD                                  |
| Fundamental Information for Technology Commercialisation of Lignocellulosic Waste to Liquid Transportation Fuels by Acid Hydrolysis                               | TCD                                  |
| Quantifying Light Loss across Ireland and Identifying Patterns of Energy Use  | TCD                                  |
| The Aeration In-Use Factor: The in-use aeration energy efficiency of two technologies in the wastewater treatment industry  | NUIG                                 |
| Enhanced Controllers to Improve Wind Farm Efficiency  | TCD                                  |
| Using Surplus Energy to generate Hydrogen; (USE H2)   | DCU                                  |
| EnergyPOLITIES: Politico-institutional framing of collective engagements with the energy system   | UCC                                  |
| Digi Blocks   | CIT                                  |
| Next generation modular energy generating greenhouse (NGMEGG)   | NUIG                                 |
| Using blockchains to facilitate renewable power generation: forecasting, hedging and tokenisation applications  | UCD                                  |
| Biomass Practitioners Register  | IrBEA                                |
| Indoor air quality, ventilation and occupant comfort in Irish domestic dwelling's pre and post Deep Energy renovations  | NUIG                                 |
| Exergyn Heat Pump   | Exergyn                              |
| Enhancement of Inertial Stabilisation of the Electricity Grid using Local Electrochemical Processes for Load Levelling  | UL                                   |
| Co-invest   | Tipperary Energy Agency              |
| The True Cost of the Energy – Water Nexus in Manufacturing.   | Irish Manufacturing Research (IMR)   |
| Assessment Methodology Building Energy Ratings (AMBER)  | IES R&D                              |

| Project Title   | Lead Organisation      |
|---|------------------------|
| FactHP - In Use Factors for Heat Pumps and other energy technologies in Residential Buildings   | LIT                    |
| Role of Heterogenous Energy Storage in Paris Aligned Scenarios for the Irish Energy System  | DCU                    |
| Energy Renovation of Traditional Buildings – CPD roll-out   | The Heritage Council   |
| Trinity Smart Grid  | TCD                    |
| Dundalk Virtual Energy Microgrid (DVEM)   | Dundalk IT             |
| nZEB_101  | UCD                    |
| FREMI (Forecasting Renewable Energy with Machine Intelligence)  | SSE Airtricity         |
| Continuous Commissioning to Create High Performance Buildings   | Inferrit Limited       |
| Identifying the relative and combined impact and importance of a range of curtailment mitigation options on high RES-E systems in 2030 & 2040 | Mullan Grid Consulting |
| Support tools for community renewable energy  | MaREI, UCC             |

### SEAI Sustainable Energy Communities

The SEAI hosted its third annual National Sustainable Energy Community Event on Saturday 8th September 2018 in Athlone Institute of Technology. The event brought together leaders and sustainable energy advocates from communities across Ireland who committed to changing how their community thinks about and uses energy.

A Sustainable Energy Community (SEC) is a community in which everyone works together to develop a sustainable energy system for the benefit of the community. They do this by, aiming to be as energy efficient as possible, to use renewable energy where feasible and to develop decentralized energy supplies. The sustainable energy community can include all the different energy users including homes, community centres, sports clubs, businesses and churches. There are a wide range of benefits in becoming an SEC:

- Achieve financial and energy savings
- Promote community building through partnership approach
- Improve public wellbeing through enhanced comfort from energy efficient buildings
- Boost local employment
- Contribute to national energy reduction targets
- Build capacity and leverage funding

Over 200 communities are members of SEAI’s community network. These communities are working towards a common goal to become more energy efficient, use renewables where possible and explore smart energy technologies. The network has almost doubled in size in a year, as citizens and communities take the lead in reducing energy use in their towns and villages. In 2018, thanks to €22 million Government funding from the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, SEAI is supporting communities in the upgrade of over 1100 homes and 420 community buildings and business premises across Ireland.

One such community is the North Leitrim Sustainable Energy Community. Seamus Dunbar, an artist living in Manorhamilton, is a founding member of the group. Discussing the reasons why he initiated local action he says: “With climate change, there is a pressing need to look at our energy use in communities across Ireland. We must become more aware of the consequences of our actions and take steps to hold onto to the things we hold precious, like the natural environment, on which we depend. In North Leitrim, we have begun a dialogue to find ways of reducing our footprint and take responsibility for our own energy needs. This is something any community can practice. I would encourage others to see what they can do to bring people in

their locality together to tackle these important issues.”

Community leaders in the North Leitrim Sustainable Energy Community are working with SEAI to develop a long-term energy plan for the area and training workshops for homeowners interested in small scale hydro, wind and solar energy generation. The SEAI has created a short video about the North Leitrim community which can be seen here.

Kildare recently held their first SEC workshop, organised by Kildare County Council in conjunction with SEAI and Futurefit who both provide mentorship and expertise to SECs all over Kildare. The event was attended by SECs from Kilcullen, Kildare, Naas, Newbridge, Johnstown and Clane, Co. Kildare. Speakers on the day included Barry Griffith (Kildare County Council Energy Manager) Gillian Gannon (Programme Executive, Sustainable Energy Communities, SEAI) plus John Harrington and Gavin Harte (Futurefit). The workshop was a great success with information on how to groups can access up to €15,000 to develop their own energy masterplan to explore energy efficiency, renewable energy and energy upgrades, in their communities. To find out more about the community energy initiatives and how to join the SEAI communities’ network visit [www.seai.ie](http://www.seai.ie).





L-R) Liam Murtagh, Castleblayney Sustainable Energy Group, Co Monaghan; Jim Gannon, Chief Executive of the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI); and Carol Loftus, Mulranny Sustainable Energy Community, Co Mayo; attending the SEAI Sustainable Energy Communities National Event in Athlone Institute of Technology on Saturday, 08 September.

### Local Authorities launch 31 Culture and Creativity Strategies set to foster vibrant creative communities nationwide.

Investing in and supporting the creative ethos of individual communities across Ireland, these ambitious, bespoke Culture and Creativity Strategies 2018-2022 have been developed by a network of passionate, expert culture teams within the country's 31 local authorities. These dedicated teams worked in consultation with artists, creatives, cultural and heritage organisations, community groups, creative industries, centres of education and schools, to tailor-make each locality's plan.

The inspiring five-year strategies were launched today by An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar TD., Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht Josepha Madigan TD., and Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government Eoghan Murphy TD. Praising the pivotal role of local authorities in the Creative Ireland Programme, An Taoiseach said: "Your work since the inception of the Programme goes way beyond the many great projects and initiatives you have created. Your work has, in fact, highlighted the critical role of our local authorities as providers and enablers of cultural and creative experiences, with all of the vitally important social, and indeed economic, consequences that follow."

With the arts and creative endeavours

now recognised more than ever before as crucial to society and community growth, strategies like these will see creative efforts in every locality thrive. With collaboration and shared purpose at the heart of the Creative Ireland Programme, each strategy provides meaningful opportunities for people and their communities, together with each local authority, to build and nurture a creative society.

Just some of the wealth of initiatives

prioritised under these Creativity and Culture Strategies include, Kildare's Citizen Scientist which sees members of the John Sullivan Centre/Irish Wheelchair Association Clane explore, record and sketch the flora and fauna in the centre's biodiversity garden; while South Dublin's If I Fall challenges negative representation of Tallaght, dance and masculinity through a collaboration between Rua Red South Dublin Arts Centre, The Civic Theatre and former UFC Fighter Paddy Holohan.



Top: Local authority culture teams and local coordinators  
Bottom: Local authorities launch five-year Culture and Creativity Strategies.



In Kerry, a Creative Sector Development Programme will assist creative practitioners in bringing their work to market and help secure local, national and international opportunities; Westmeath's SkillsXChange initiative will encourage the sharing of expertise and innovation in craft and artisan skills between Syrian refugees and the Mullingar community; and in Monaghan there's Campa Spraoi.

## Make Way Day 2018 – 26 September

Make Way Day 2018 marks the first time 17 local authorities came together with the disability community to campaign for the rights of people with disabilities. The campaign was first hosted by the Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI). The 2017 campaign was awarded the Public Relations Institute of Ireland (PRII) Public Awareness Campaign 2018. The local authorities and leading disability organisations have come together to call for greater public awareness of the needs of people with disabilities in the public spaces we all share.

The participating charities are Enable Ireland, Irish Wheelchair Association, Rehab Group and the National Council for the Blind. The 17 local authorities involved this year are Cork City, Cork County, Dublin City, Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown, Fingal, Galway City, Kerry, Kildare, Kilkenny, Limerick, Louth, Meath, Monaghan, Offlay, South Dublin, Wexford, and Wicklow.

The Disability Federation of Ireland believes that most of the obstacles are due to thoughtlessness and a lack of awareness on behalf of the wider public: "People just don't think and our experience with this campaign is that once they're reminded, with the sticker or by our online photos and videos, they're willing to change. Last year's reaction was very heartening,

people supported the campaign on social media and throughout the year local authorities over the country have passed a motion establishing a Make Way Day in their area and calling on the Taoiseach and the Government to establish a national Make Way Day".

In Fingal, residents are also reminded that Route 4U, a free footpath navigation app and information system for wheelchair and pram users, can be downloaded for both iOS and Android devices. The disability initiative has been developed by Fingal County Council, in partnership with Dublin City Council and Enterprise Ireland.

The database is kept constantly up-to-date by volunteers who can either be able-bodied people who simply download the app and report obstacles they bump into or wheelchair users who switch on the "auto-survey" function as they roll along the footpaths, activating their phone sensors to collect data automatically.

Fingal County Council's Access Officer Brian Buckley said: "Make Way Day gives every single one of us an opportunity to be more mindful of the 13% of the Irish population who have a disability. Bringing in your bin early in the day, or clipping your hedge might not seem that important, but it's a small action with a big impact for a neighbour, who otherwise might not be able to get down the street."

Mayor of Fingal Cllr Anthony Lavin added that accessibility also effects parents trying to get buggies and prams about our communities. He hopes this initiative will help to make our

community spaces more accessible to all our pedestrians whether they are disabled or not.

## Digital Readiness Assessment

The Department of Rural and Community Development contracted Indecon Economic Consultants to undertake a Digital Readiness Assessment (DRA) of each local authority. The DRAs provide an overview of each county's digital maturity, highlighting strengths and weaknesses and can be used as a guide to measure progress. They examine local authority public services and infrastructure, citizens, businesses, as well as the activities of the Council itself.

The assessments are structured around seven pillars of digital maturity:

- Transitioning to Digital
- Infrastructure
- Digital Economy & Employment
- Digital Services
- Digital Skills
- Innovation & Entrepreneurship
- Community & Culture

Local authorities can now use this information to draft their digital strategies, with the hope of leading to more efficient and more effective deployment of resources and improving the quality of life of their citizens. The assessments will be published individually by local authorities, however the Department have published the national averages which can be accessed on their website at <https://drdc.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/Indecon-Digital-Readiness-Assessment-National-vf.pptx>



## Local Government in England facing cuts of £1.3 billion

Main government grant funding for local services in England are to be cut by a further £1.3 billion (36 per cent of budgets) in 2019/20 despite many councils already struggling to balance their books, facing overspends and having to make in-year budget cuts, the Local Government Association (LGA) has reported.

Local services delivered by local government in the UK include adult social care, children's services, homelessness, and public health. Local authorities are already facing huge pressures on resources due to the demand on these services. Cllr Richard Watts, Chair of the LGA's Resources Board, commented that any further cuts to funding at this time "is going to tip many councils over the edge".

As part of its Autumn Budget submission, the LGA has mapped the likely impact of a further year of central government funding cuts and growing demand on the local services provided by an average upper-tier council (aka "AnyCouncil"). The "AnyCouncil" modelling shows residents living in a council area which sits in the mid-range in relation to current funding, levels of deprivation and outlook for economic growth, should expect to see key local services further dramatically reduced in 2019/20.

Based on cash and inflation figures alone, "AnyCouncil" will have had to deal with funding reductions and inflationary pressures that combined are over £50 million per year, which is equivalent to about a quarter of its current spending. This £50.7 million is equivalent to £215 for each resident. Based on national averages, the services that "AnyCouncil" could fund each year with the £50.7 million it has lost would be all of the following:

- Over 1 million hours of Home care provision
- Over 12,500 weeks of care for the elderly

- At least 3 average sized libraries kept open
- Over 130,000 pot holes filled

In addition it could also have employed the following additional staff to directly provide services to its residents:

- 460 care workers
- 350 Nursery assistants
- 180 social workers and
- 30 school crossing patrol assistants

Source: Local Government Association ([www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk))

## LEO Impact Report 2017

Oifig Fiontair Áitiúil  
Local Enterprise Office

The recently published Impact Report details the key results and initiatives of the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) in 2017, which included the creation of 3,760 jobs (net) across 7,182 LEO-supported companies. These new jobs brought the total number of people employed by LEO-supported clients in 2017 to 37,485. The report also shows that the LEOs approved €16.6 million in direct financial assistance for 1,131 business projects nationwide, while the

31 offices trained over 30,000 people to help them start or grow their businesses last year.

The supports that have been put in place to help small businesses prepare for Brexit also feature, with a high level of uptake for Technical Assistance for Micro Exporters' grants (TAME) and LEAN for Micro programme in 2017. 289 LEO clients were approved for the TAME grant and 179 LEO client companies participated in LEAN for Micro last year. These supports, along with a range of Brexit-focused events, are helping small businesses prepare for the economic challenges ahead.

Speaking about the report, Pat Breen, T.D., Minister for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection, said "I am a strong believer in doing everything we can at local and regional level to help us create strong companies and good quality jobs all around the country. A home-grown enterprise culture is a perfect complement to attracting and growing larger business. The LEOs have a key role to play in both supporting jobs and in strengthening the potential for local businesses and entrepreneurs to create new jobs."



Fiona Deegan (LEO Kilkenny), Pauline Hctor, Kathleen Holohan (Chief Executive, Carlow County Council), Kieran Comerford, Colette Byrne (Chief Executive, Kilkenny County Council).

## Local Enterprise Village at the Ploughing Championships

The Local Enterprise Village, which is designed and hosted by the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), contains 30 small businesses showcasing their products and services from a range of sectors that have been supported on their enterprise journey by LEOs nationwide.

The business, which include artisan food and drink producers, agri-tech and tourism companies, design engineers, master saddlers, fire safety tech businesses and natural skincare producers had the opportunity to meet up to 280,000 visitors. At the launch, Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Heather Humphreys T.D., said that the village is “highlighting the thriving small business ecosystem around Ireland and the great work that the LEOs are doing in fostering entrepreneurship in a range of sectors”.

## Local Enterprise national event goes from local to global

LEOs nationwide have organised a programme of events under the theme “From Local to Global”, aimed at inspiring the next generation of female business leaders to take their local ideas and make them a global success. In 2017, the LEOs played a key role in supporting female entrepreneurs across the country to start, and grow, their business. Over 18,500 female entrepreneurs took part in training, mentoring and networking programmes with their Local Enterprise Office in 2017. The LEOs also supported over 280 female-run businesses with funding last year to help them start and grow their business.

National Women’s Enterprise Day (NWED) will take place on Thursday 18 October. The 16 NWED are taking place in: Limerick, Cavan, Cork, Donegal, Dublin, Kildare, Kilkenny, Leitrim, Longford, Meath, Monaghan, Roscommon, Sligo, Waterford, Wexford and Wicklow and are expected to

attract over 1,000 women in business and female entrepreneurs nationwide. At the launch, Julie Sinnamon, Chief Executive of Enterprise Ireland, noted that more than one in three start-ups supported by Enterprise Ireland last year were led by women – that compares to just one in ten start-ups in 2012.

LEO Limerick, Clare and Tipperary are hosting an event for female entrepreneurs in Adare Manor, Limerick. Eamon Ryan, Head of Enterprise with LEO Limerick wants to encourage more female entrepreneurs to diversify and to let them know that their Local Enterprise Office can give them the support they need to explore new markets.

Carlow & Kilkenny LEOs will hold their event in Mount Juliet. The event which features inspirational innovator and athlete Sinead Kane and comedian Deirdre O’Kane is designed to help female entrepreneurs build connections to make business happen and to go from Local to Global which is the theme for this year’s event. Speaking at the launch, Colette Byrne, Chief Executive with Kilkenny County Council said “we are delighted to be able to host this year’s National Women’s Enterprise Day in Kilkenny and provide a forum with our colleagues in Carlow for female entrepreneurs to build their business connections”.

Entrepreneurial Champion for the event this year is Catherine Roycroft, Chief Operations Officer with the award winning Cartoon Saloon, who said “events like National Women’s Enterprise Day allow people to invest wisely in the development of their network by attending a tailored event designed with their business needs in mind”. Ms. Roycroft said her business success has been very much down to effective business networking which has helped to build a base of connections and in turn innovate by enterprise.

## 106 new Local Enterprise Office-backed jobs for Mid-West

106 new jobs have been created in the Mid-West region. The jobs are spread across nine small businesses supported by Local Enterprise Offices in Clare, Limerick and Tipperary.

42 full-time and part-time jobs are being created by three companies in Tipperary (Mack Engineering, Horizon Offsite Ltd and Phil Purcell Engineering Ltd); 38 full-time jobs are being created by three Limerick-based companies (Black Bear Software, Celignis Ltd and ABS Engineering Control) and 26 full-time and part-time new jobs are being created by three Clare companies (AiP Thermoform Packaging Ltd, Core Optimisation and Vanderlust Campervans).

LEOs provide financial assistance, mentoring and training supports to hundreds of start-ups and small companies every year. Eamon Ryan, Head of Enterprise with LEO Limerick said that last year in the Mid-West alone, over 3,000 people were trained around starting and growing a business, 530 mentoring assignments were organised and 4,800 people were employed in 820 LEO-backed companies.

Congratulating the companies on their performance, Mark Christal, Manager of Enterprise Ireland’s Regions and Entrepreneurship Division, said that “achieving strong regional growth is a key focus for Enterprise Ireland under the Regional Action Plans for Jobs and these 106 Local Enterprise Office-supported jobs demonstrate the benefits of this approach. The supports that are in place to boost job creation, including these new jobs being announced today, underpin the successful collaboration between the Local Enterprise Offices, Local Authorities and Enterprise Ireland that help more Irish companies realise their global ambition”.

## Record number of students participate in Clare’s Student Enterprise Programme

A record number of over 1,000



students from across County Clare will participate in this year's Student Enterprise Programme, a national initiative organised locally by Local Enterprise Office Clare. Second level students joined local business leaders and previous Enterprise Programme winners for Induction Days at Armada Hotel, Spanish Point, and at Treacy's West County Hotel, Ennis, where they were encouraged to take their learning experiences outside the classroom by creating ideas, transforming them into opportunities and converting them into real businesses.

Student Enterprise Programme judge Siobhan Mulcahy, Clare County Council Arts Officer, Charlie Glynn from Kilrush-based Glynn Technical Diamonds Ltd. and Declan Murphy from Sixmilebridge-based Clubify spoke about the steps required to establish and nurture a successful business: "The purpose of this enterprise programme is to give secondary school students a flavour of what it is like to run their own business. I would hope that in the future, it will encourage some of them to develop a business in Clare and create local employment," explained Cllr. Michael Begley, Mayor of Clare.

Padraic McElwee, Head of Enterprise at the Local Enterprise Office Clare, said the primary objective of the Programme is to foster an enterprise culture among Irish second level students and get them to consider entrepreneurship as a career path for the future: "The Student Enterprise Programme offers

participants the opportunity to take a business from the idea stage, through market research to production, selling, management and -finally, to writing a comprehensive business plan." he added.

Mr. McElwee continued, "The induction days held in Ennis and Spanish Point marked the first and probably the most important phase of the Programme. Students were introduced to the competition and made the first decisions on the path to setting up their student enterprise - whether that be on their own or as part of a team."

Students will compete in three categories, namely Senior Category (Transition Year, 4th Year, 5th Year, 6th Year & Youthreach Students), Intermediate Category (2nd Year & 3rd Year Students) and Junior Category (1st Year Students).

The winning enterprises will represent County Clare at the National Student Enterprise Final for 2019 on Friday 3 May 2019 in Croke Park in Dublin.

### Brexit Loan Scheme

To address the challenges posed by Brexit, the Government has made available a range of supports and programmes to small Irish companies. One of these supports is the Brexit Loan Scheme, administered by the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI), which offers companies a Brexit related

loan up to the value of €1.5million. Starting at €25,000, the loan scheme is open to any Brexit-affected business with up to 499 employees, which meets eligibility criteria.

Businesses are urged to contact their LEO if they are unaware of the impacts that Brexit might have or what supports are available to them. LEOs also offer 'Brexit Mentoring' where an industry expert will advise you on the best steps you can take for your business ahead of Brexit.

### Local News Items

#### Limerick to become Ireland's first 'Digital City'

In the latest initiative under the Limerick 2030 economic and spatial plan, a new strategy has been launched which sets out the framework for the digital transformation of Limerick into a 'smart city region'.

The Limerick Digital Strategy joins up the digital and smart cities agendas for Limerick, setting out the vision for the Smart Limerick City Region in 2030. To achieve this vision, it will create equal opportunities through digital channels for all citizens to be involved in the development of their communities and accelerate the development of the Smart Limerick City Region.

Among the key targets for the strategy are to double the number of online services, digital start-ups and SMEs trading online, double the use of data for more effective city and county management and the development of 1,000 smart homes, 100 smart buildings and a smart energy district.

A new service, 'Insight Limerick' will allow the public to understand more about their city and county services. The data for this service will be provided by hundreds of sensors deployed across city and county for air, soil and water quality and water levels, pedestrian counting and noise monitoring. The entire strategy involves the local people and communities taking an active

role in the co-development of new, innovative services.

### Dún Laoghaire Harbour transfers to Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council

On the 3rd October the Council assumed full responsibility for the management and operation of the harbour. The decision was made in accordance with the Harbours Act 2015. There will be no interruption in service delivery from the harbour as staff and contracts all transfer directly. The harbour was previously operated by Dún Laoghaire Harbour Company (DLHC), a statutory commercial body established in 1996.

Concerns had previously been raised by local councillors regarding the sum of €34.5 million necessary to cover liabilities involved in taking control of the harbour. Chief Executive of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council Philomena Poole commented that the transfer of management of the Harbour is a significant moment for this Local Authority. She added that “while it is very disappointing and will present challenges to the council that no funding has been made available to resolve the infrastructure issues we will work with stakeholders to safeguard a positive, vibrant future for the Harbour and maximise on its heritage and economic potential”.

### Energy Efficiency Upgrades for Clare County Council housing stock

Clare County Council is nearing completion of an Energy Efficiency Scheme involving the delivery of energy efficiency upgrade works to 2,500 social housing properties. To date, 2,450 properties across Clare have benefited from the installation of external / cavity wall insulation, roof and attic insulation, replacement windows/doors and associated works. An additional 50 homes will benefit from upgrade works in 2019.

Meanwhile, the scheme has been

expanded in 2018 to include PV Solar panels and a requirement for a community benefit where 5 additional electric vehicle charging points have been installed across the county while



energy efficiency upgrade works have been completed at Active Ennis Leisure Complex and Kilrush Library where new fabric walls, windows and roof; solar panels, and heating and ventilation systems have been installed. The Energy Efficiency Scheme is being funded by Clare County Council, the Department of Housing and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI).

### South Dublin County Council's landmark '300K – Have Your Say' initiative has been shortlisted for an Innovation in Politics Award

The Innovation in Politics Awards, which are administered by the European Innovation in Politics Institute, are judged against four criteria; Innovation, Participation, Building Trust and Sustainability. '300k – Have Your Say' is one of eighty projects shortlisted from an entry list of 600 across 8 categories and voted on by a European jury of 1053 citizens.

The final adjudication will take place at an awards ceremony in Vienna City Hall on November 17th.

In 2017, South Dublin County Council's participatory budgeting initiative, the first of its kind in Ireland, allowed citizens to vote for projects designed and submitted by citizens. An additional €300,000 was provided in the annual budget specifically for this purpose. The then Mayor, Councillor Guss O'Connell and former Mayor,

Dermot Looney, with the support of the entire council membership proposed that participative budgeting be piloted in a South Dublin electoral ward in 2017.



The initiative rolled out in the Lucan electoral area under the brand name '300K - Have Your Say' and attracted 160 project submissions. 17 of which were shortlisted for public voting with eight projects, ranging in costs from €5,000 to €120,000 winning out. There were 2598 valid votes cast, which exceed expectations for the initiative.

The real objective, increased citizen participation in local government was achieved. The Participatory Budgeting process was independently evaluated by the Institute of Public Administration which positively endorsed the initiative. It has since been repeated in 2018 in the Clondalkin electoral area and attracted 230 project suggestions.

The initiative was also awarded Best

Practice in Citizen Engagement at the 2017 Chambers Ireland Excellence in Local Government Awards.

### 'We are Cork' branding launches with landmark Cork buildings turning red

The 'We are Cork' initiative brings together the region's stakeholders under one brand. It will also be available for use by all businesses, organisations and interested parties in Cork.

The initiative aims to support Cork as it's poised to become the fastest growing region in Ireland in the next 20 years. With €510 million in commercial development underway or recently completed in Cork, the region is home to the world's largest technology company, Apple and also 7 out of 10 of the world's top 10 pharma companies. With increased global movement of companies, and Brexit uncertainty, stakeholders in Cork have been working to promoting its economic and lifestyle merits with all the benefits of a metropolitan area as well as vast open spaces, scenery and extensive coastline. An Tánaiste Simon Coveney TD, was on hand to launch the 'We are Cork' brand. The new branding is a vital component of Cork City Council's strategy to help realize the ambitious growth targets for our region set by Government in Ireland 2040, according to chief executive Ann Doherty. Cork County Council Chief Executive, Tim Lucey added that 'We Are Cork' showcases the attractiveness of the Cork region, with a highly talented workforce and low cost of doing business.

The key stakeholders include Cork City Council, Cork County Council, Cork Airport, Port of Cork, University College Cork, Cork Institute of Technology, Cork Chamber, Cork Business Association, Ibec, Enterprise Ireland, IDA, Fáilte Ireland and Visit Cork.

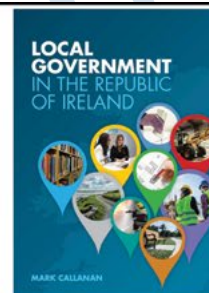


More information can be found at [www.wearecork.ie](http://www.wearecork.ie)

### Mayor turns sod on 63 Rapid Build Social Housing Units in St. Cuthbert's Park, Clondalkin.

The Mayor of South Dublin County Council, Councillor Mark Ward, turned the sod on the 63 social housing units on undeveloped lands located at St Cuthbert's Park, Clondalkin, this week. The development will consist of 45 three bedroom / four-person units and 18 three bedroom / five-person houses. All units are designed to hold a minimum Building Energy Rating (BER) energy performance of A3.

At the launch, Mayor Ward said there is an established housing need in this area of Clondalkin, and that this development starts to address these needs. This provision forms part of the Council's commitment to driving the building of social housing units in the County over the next few years and comes as local authorities across the country are highlighting the development and provision of housing through the #HousingFocus campaign. The development of these 63 units at St Cuthbert's Park is in line with Part 8 of the Local Government Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as Amended), where local authorities propose the construction of houses, and follows the completion of 17 social housing units in Mayfield, Clondalkin, and 69 units in Sheehy Skeffington Meadows, Tallaght. The Council expects to deliver 11 new social housing units in St. Mark's Clondalkin, 24 units in Killinenny, Oldbawn, 28 housing units in MacUilliam, Fortunestown and another 16 units in Sheehy Skeffington Meadows, Tallaght over the next few months. Another 185 social housing units are expected to be handed over to the Council by July 2019.



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The importance and potential of local government in Ireland is often understated. Local government plays a vital, even if undervalued, role in Ireland's system of government. Members of the public – the citizens served by local government – often remain unaware of its impact on their daily lives until vital services such as roads are negatively affected by severe weather conditions or a controversial planning decision is made.

*Local Government in the Republic of Ireland* is a valuable resource for those with an interest in knowing more about how our system of local government works, including students, practitioners, and those who regularly interact with local councils. It explains the geographic basis for county council and city council areas; how local councils are elected; and the role of local councillors and the executive/staff in local government. The book provides an overview of the services provided, financing, participation, and accountability in local government. How local government interacts with central government, a range of different public bodies, regional structures, and the European Union is also examined.

Ireland's system is assessed in the context of local government systems internationally. The book also explores more recent developments, such as the introduction of the local property tax, debates over directly elected mayors, metropolitan governance and the role of 'city regions', and local government's new role in economic development and enterprise support.



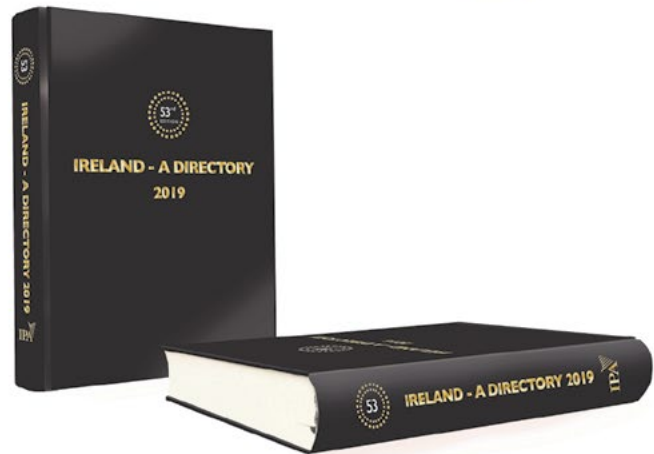
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