



An Roinn Tithíochta,
Pleanála agus Rialtais Áitiúil
Department of Housing,
Planning and Local Government

Annual Report of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government 2019



Prepared by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government

housing.gov.ie

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An Irish version and an English version of the Annual Report (2019) are available on www.tithiocht.gov.ie and on www.housing.gov.ie

Secretary General's Statement

I am pleased to present the Annual Report of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government for 2019.

An eventful year on the elections front, 2019 saw the Department managing local authority and European Parliament elections in May, alongside the holding of historic plebiscites on directly elected Mayors in Cork, Limerick and Waterford. Only Limerick voted in favour of a directly elected Mayor and a process is now underway to prepare for this. The European Parliament elections had a Brexit element to them, with the number of MEPs for Ireland increasing to 13 from 11, reflecting Ireland's share of the additional seats coming available following the withdrawal of the UK from the EU.

The Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) was established during the year, the culmination of many years work to give effect to a key recommendation of the Mahon Tribunal. The OPR provides independent oversight of the planning process to ensure compliance with national policies and legislative requirements. This includes the power to examine the systems and procedures used by any planning authority, including An Bord Pleanála.

The Department oversaw the completion of the three Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, part of the hierarchy of plans cascading from the National Planning Framework that was published in 2018. Ireland's marine territory covers an area more than 10 times the size of our land mass area. In November, our draft National Marine Planning Framework was published for consultation. This is a national plan that sets out planning objectives and policies for 16 different sectors including energy, fisheries, tourism and safety at sea, over the next 20 years.

Housing continued to be the main priority during the year. In what was the fourth year of the Rebuilding Ireland action plan, social housing delivery saw an increase in the number of households supported from 27,103 to 28,075. It was notable that the share of builds went up from 15.7% to 20.5% of the total. Homelessness remains the biggest challenge and even though 5,971 adults and their dependents were housed during the year (an increase of 16% on 2018), the numbers in emergency accommodation remained high. The publication of a National Quality Standards Framework for Homeless Services was an important development during the year. The Framework is structured around eight themes including: person-centred services; safe services; and health, well-being and personal development. It will ensure that services provided are effective and consistent.

The Government's Climate Action Plan was published during the year. Part of the Department's contribution to implementation of the Action Plan was the introduction of performance standards for Nearly Zero Energy Buildings.

All new homes will have a typical Building Energy Rating (BER) of A2 and will be 70% more energy efficient and emit 70% less carbon dioxide than 2005 performance levels.

The Department also responded to the challenge posed by climate change with the publication of Ireland's Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan for Water Quality and Water Services Infrastructure.

Thankfully, extreme weather events in the form of snowstorms or ex-hurricanes did not feature in 2019. Away from the spotlight, Met Éireann deployed an ensemble prediction system that supports an assessment of the most likely forecast across a range of potential outcomes, enhancing the accuracy of weather forecasting.

We could not deliver on our strategic goals without the active collaboration of our partners across Government, in the local authorities, our agencies and the many other bodies both inside and outside of the public sector. To each of these I want to express my thanks. Closer to home, a special thanks to our Ministers and our staff for their commitment and professionalism throughout the year, and of course, to John McCarthy who led the Department in his final full year as Secretary General.

Feargal Ó Coigligh

Who We Are

Our Mission

The Department's mission is to support sustainable development, with a particular focus on strategic planning, the efficient delivery of well-planned homes in vibrant communities and the sustainable management of our water resources, and to ensure effective local government.



Our Strategic Goals

- A. To ensure that planning and building in our regions and communities contributes to sustainable and balanced development;
- B. To provide for a stable, sustainable supply of good quality housing;
- C. To provide a framework for the sustainable management of water resources from source to sea;
- D. To support and enable democratic, responsive and effective local government, effective electoral management and high quality fire services and emergency management; and
- E. To serve society through the production and communication of reliable weather and climate information to protect life and property and to further enhance Met Éireann's role as the authoritative voice on meteorology in Ireland.

Our Values

Our values sit within the wider values and standards frameworks set out in the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour, the Code of Ethics, the Dignity at Work Policy and the Civil Service Renewal Plan. They inform everything that we do in the Department in delivering for the public:

- Integrity and professionalism;
- Consistent high quality performance;
- Openness and transparency;
- Flexibility, responsiveness, innovation and learning;
- Consultation and partnership;
- Commitment to society and citizens; and
- Pursuit of effectiveness, efficiency and value for money.

The work of the Department in 2019 was carried out through eight Divisions – Planning; Housing Delivery; Housing Policy, Legislation and Governance; Water; Local Government; Corporate and Business Support; Met Éireann and the Local Government Audit Service.

Locations

The Department is based in four main locations:

- Custom House, Dublin D01 W6X0
- Newtown Road, Wexford Y35 AP90
- Government Offices, Ballina Co. Mayo F26 E8N6
- Met Éireann Headquarters, Glasnevin Hill, Dublin 9 D09 Y921



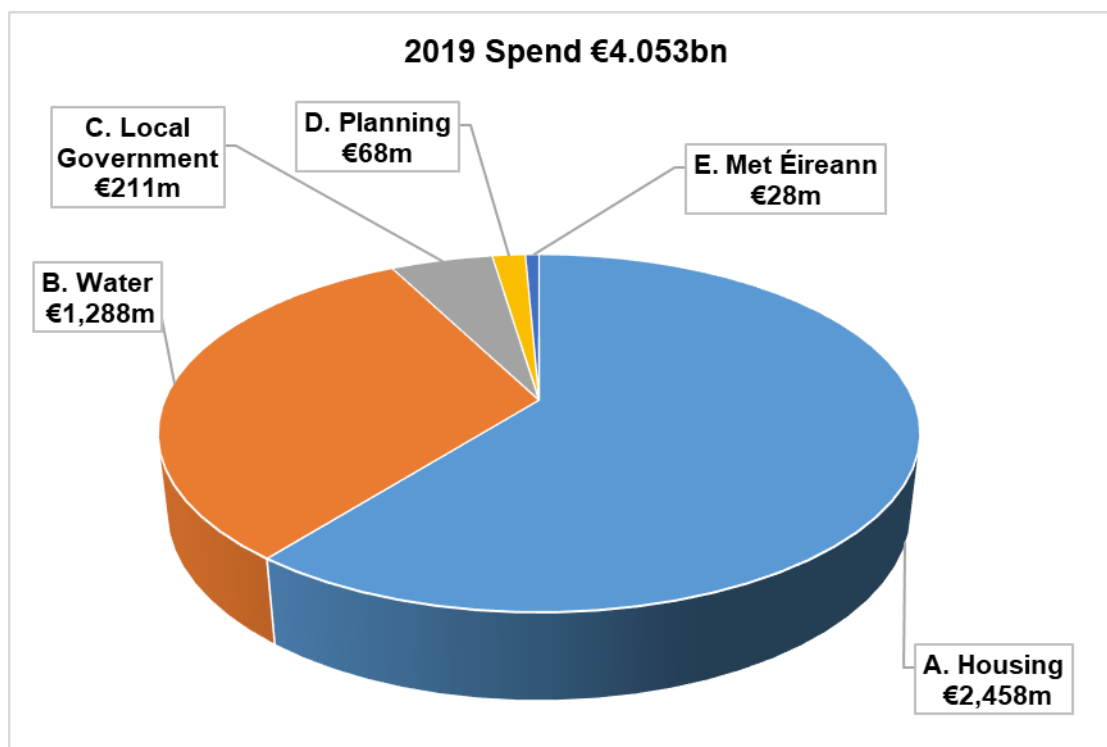
Us and Our Agencies

Much of our work is carried out in close co-operation with the 31 local authorities and a number of specific agencies that are charged with regulatory, policy support and implementation functions relating to our areas of activity. Details in relation to our main agencies are summarised in the table overleaf.

Body	Accountable Person (Head of Office)	Governing Legislation ^[1]
An Bord Pleanála	David Walsh	Planning and Development Act 2000
Housing Finance Agency	Barry O'Leary	Housing Finance Agency Act 1981
The Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency	John O'Connor	Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency (Establishment) Order 2012
Ervia	Cathal Marley	Gas Act 1976
- Irish Water	Niall Gleeson	Water Services Act 2013
- Gas Networks Ireland	Denis O'Sullivan	Gas Regulation Act 2013
Local Government Management Agency	Paul C. Dunne	Local Government Management Agency (Establishment) Orders 2012 & 2013
Ordnance Survey Ireland	Colin Bray	Ordnance Survey Ireland Act 2001
Property Registration Authority	Liz Pope	Registration of Deeds and Title Act 2006
Residential Tenancies Board	Padraig McGoldrick (Acting Director)	Residential Tenancies Act 2004
Valuation Office	John O'Sullivan	Valuation Acts 2001 and 2015
Land Development Agency	John Coleman	Land Development Agency (Establishment) Order 2018
Office of the Planning Regulator	Niall Cussen	Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018
Pyrite Resolution Board	Jack Keyes	Pyrite Resolution Act 2013
National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC)	John McCarthy	Local Government Reform Act 2014
Water Advisory Body(WAB)	John McCarthy	Water Services Act 2017

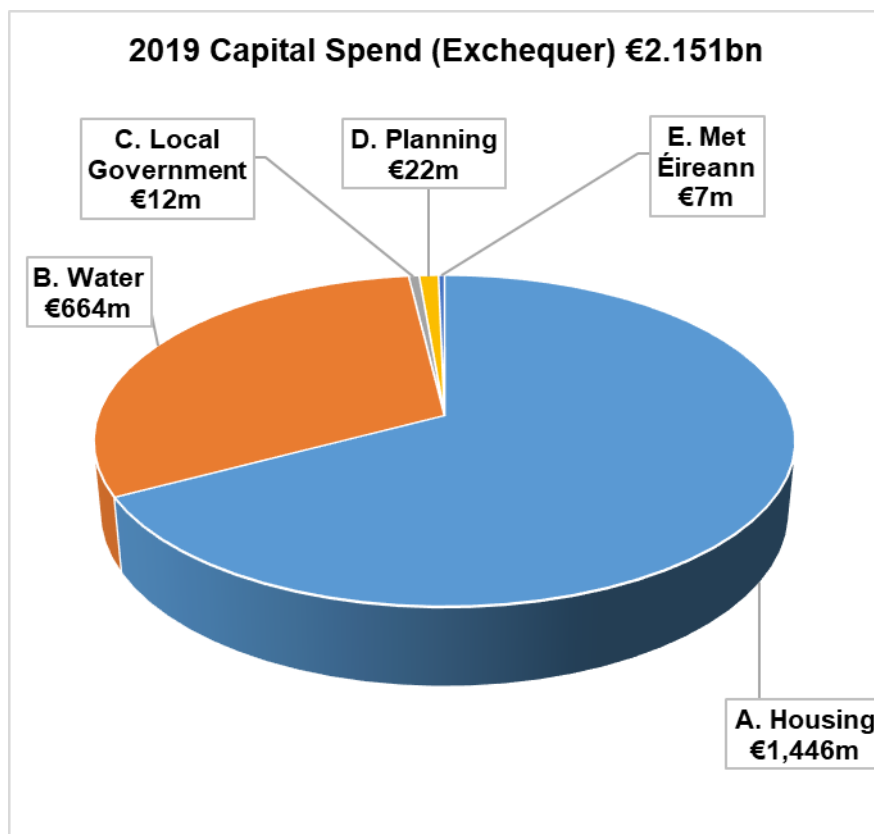
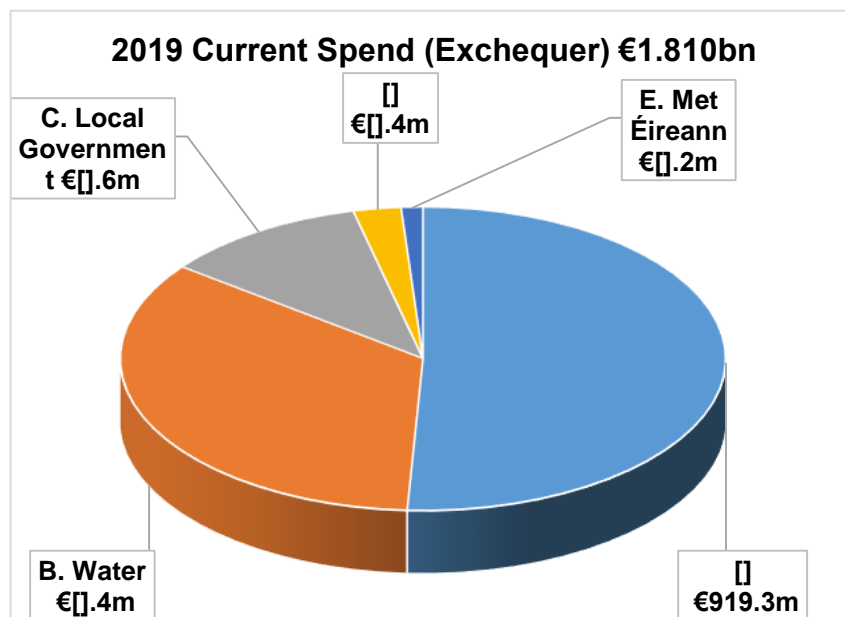
^[1] As amended.

2019 Spending

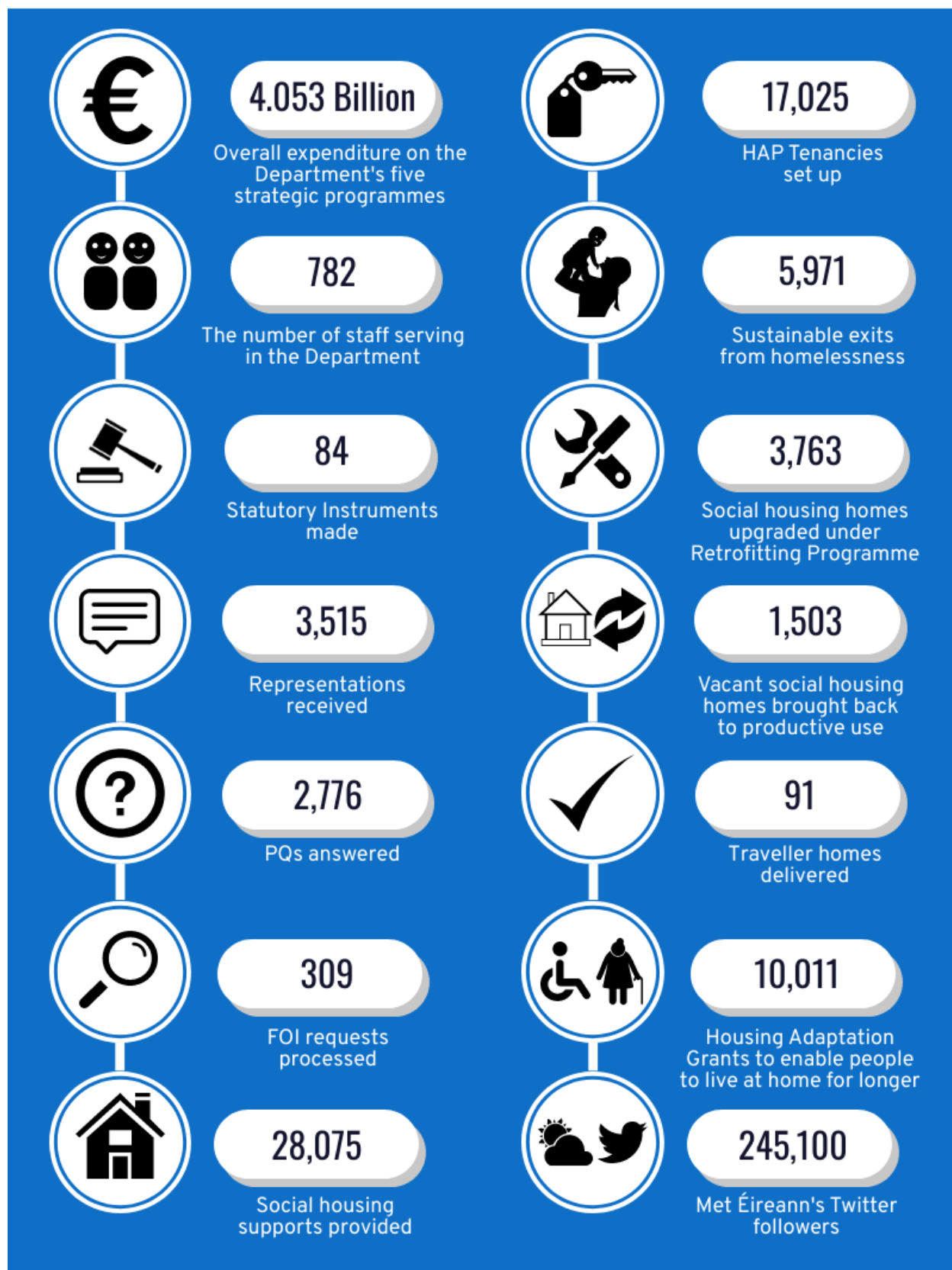


Gross expenditure in respect of the Department's five strategic programmes reached €4.053 billion in 2019, representing an increase of 17% on the outturn for 2018. Departmental (Exchequer) funding of €3.961 billion was supplemented by €92.66 million from Local Property Tax (LPT) receipts, which was used by certain local authorities to fund a range of housing programmes. In addition, expenditure of €646 million was managed through the Local Government Fund in 2019, primarily for the purposes of channelling LPT receipts to local authorities.

The Exchequer funding element (€3.961 billion) comprised €1.810 billion in current expenditure and €2.151 billion in capital expenditure.



THE DEPARTMENT BY NUMBERS IN 2019



Summary of Key Areas of Progress in 2019

Rebuilding Ireland

2019 saw further significant progress in delivering on the commitments in the Government's Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness. Rebuilding Ireland has passed the halfway mark in its implementation and to date, outputs have exceeded target in each year of the plan, significantly contributing to the increased supply of housing, in particular social homes, nationwide. While further progress



remains to be made, much has been achieved in increasing housing supply, one of the central tenets of the Action Plan and the current pipeline is on track to achieve targets over the six years of the programme to the end of 2021.

Housing delivery indicators for 2019 continue to be very positive:

- 24,394 new homes available for use in 2019 - up 14%;
- 40,252 homes granted planning permissions in 2019 - up 38%;
- and Commencement Notices submitted for 26,237 homes in 2019 - up 17%.

Not only is overall supply increasing, the social housing needs of many more of our citizens are being met:

- 28,075 new households had their social housing needs met under Rebuilding Ireland in 2019, 2.5% ahead of target;
- 6,074 new social housing homes were provided in 2019 through build activity 5,771 were new build and 303 were void units put back into active use. This was an increase of almost 26% on 2018 and more than double the output in 2016, the first year of the Rebuilding Ireland action plan;

Over €2.4 billion was invested in housing in 2019, up 18% on 2018. To support local authority capacity to deliver in areas where a demonstrated affordability issue arises, the Government increased the Serviced Sites Fund (SSF) to €310 million over the period 2019 to 2021, as part of Budget 2019. The SSF grant funding is made available to local authorities to carry out on-site servicing works to make their land available for affordable housing.

During 2019, funding approval of a further €84m from the €310 million Serviced Sites Fund (SSF) was granted to local authorities to deliver infrastructure to provide for the delivery of c.1,800 affordable homes for across 25 projects. It is anticipated that a further SSF call will be made in 2020.

Supported by SSF grant funding, construction began on both the first Cost Rental development in Ireland, a pilot project at Enniskerry Road, Stepside and on the first homes to be made available for purchase under the new Affordable Purchase Scheme in Boherboy, County Cork.

The Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019 was enacted in May, with the key aim of empowering the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) to better enforce the rent increase restriction in Rent Pressure Zones (RPZs).

Social Housing Delivery in 2019

Over 500 new households per week (28,075 total for the year) were supported to meet their housing needs as a result of Rebuilding Ireland. Details of social housing delivery across individual programmes are set out in the table below.

Delivery Method	2019 Output
Build ¹	5,771
Voids	303
Acquisitions	2,772
Leasing	1,161
Rental Accommodation Scheme	1,043
Housing Assistance Payment	17,025
Total	28,075

In addition to the social housing supports set out above, a range of other housing supports were also provided in 2019, as set out in the table below.

¹ Build refers to Local Authority and Approved Housing Body construction, including traditional construction, turnkeys, rapid build delivery, regeneration and homes delivered through the Part V mechanism.

Additional Housing Supports delivered in 2019	
91	Traveller Units of Accommodation Delivered
3,763	Homes Upgraded under Retrofitting Programme
5,971	Exits from Homelessness
10,011	Grants Awarded to Assist Older People and People with Disabilities to Live at Home

The significant expansion of the social housing build programme was evident in the Q4 2019 Construction Status report. At the end of 2019, 11,498 homes were completed, 6,704 were under construction and 2,603 further homes were about to go on site, with the remainder progressing through the various stages of planning, design and procurement. Overall, at the end of 2019, the programme included 1,916 schemes (or phases), encompassing over 26,000 homes – a very substantial increase on the 19,134 homes a year earlier.

Overall, the Government has committed in excess of €6 billion to support the accelerated delivery of 50,000 additional social housing homes by end 2021, through build (33,500), acquisition (6,500) and leasing (10,000) programmes.

Homelessness

In 2019, 5,971 adults and their associated dependants exited homelessness into homes, an increase of 16% on 2018. However, the number of people in emergency accommodation remained high, and the delivery of housing solutions for all households experiencing homelessness will continue to be a key priority for the Department. A National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) for homeless services was introduced during 2019.

The Framework ensures a more consistent response to the needs of those experiencing homelessness, and seeks to improve the quality of services provided to individuals, families and their children accessing emergency accommodation.

The Framework has been fully implemented in the Dublin region and is being implemented on a phased basis nationally to be completed during 2020.

Housing First was further extended nationally in 2019, with 172 individuals who had previously been rough sleeping or long-term users of emergency accommodation housed over the course of the year.

Acquisitions Fund

The Housing Agency is actively engaged with banks and investment companies in acquiring mainly vacant homes in their portfolios. The revolving Acquisitions Fund of €70m, coupled with Approved Housing Body borrowings, aims to support the acquisition of some 1,600 homes for social housing use over the period to 2021. As of 31 December, 2019, the Agency had bids accepted on 815 homes.

Housing Assistance Payment

At the end of Quarter 4 2019, there were over 52,500 active tenancies across the country being supported under the HAP scheme, including 17,025 additional tenancies set up in 2019.

The Homeless HAP Place Finder Service was made available to all local authorities in January 2018, providing additional supports for households exiting homelessness into independent tenancies.



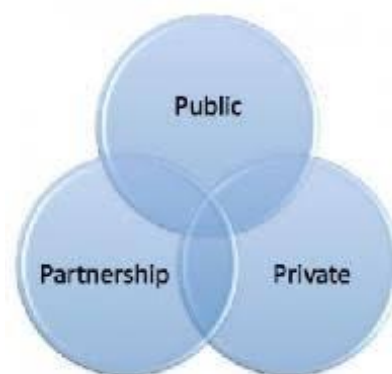
Public Private Partnership

The Social Housing Public Private Partnership Programme, which aims to deliver up to 1,500 homes in three bundles, met important milestones in 2019. In March, construction began on the first bundle, which comprises six sites located in Dublin City, South Dublin, Kildare, Wicklow and Louth. The first homes to be completed are scheduled for delivery in Q2 2020.

In November 2019, construction commenced on the second bundle, which comprises 465 units across eight sites in Cork County, Clare, Galway City, Kildare, Roscommon, and Waterford. These homes are scheduled for delivery in Q2 2021 and one in Q3 2021.

Following an assessment process conducted with the NDFA, the sites for the third bundle were approved in principle in October 2019.

The third bundle is projected to deliver c.441 homes across six sites in Dublin City, Kildare, Wicklow, and Sligo, with the design phase commencing in 2020.



Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan

The Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan (RIHL) was launched on 1 February 2018. It allows low-income first time buyers aged between 18 and 70 who cannot secure a mortgage from a commercial lender to access sustainable mortgage finance to enable them to purchase a new or second-hand property, or undertake a self-build, within a suitable price range. By the end of 2019, provisional figures show that 1,553 loans with a value of just over €268.7 million had been drawn down under the scheme.

National Planning Framework

Implementation of the National Planning Framework (NPF), launched in 2018 as part of Project Ireland 2040 (PI2040), is at the core of the Department's work and was the key driver of policy measures and related legislative proposals, in 2019. The first PI2040 Annual Report (2018) was published on 2 May 2019 and is available on the Department's website. In 2019 the Department:

Project Ireland 2040
National Planning Framework

- supported the ongoing work of the PI2040 Delivery Board;
- oversaw completion of three Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs);
- continued to implement the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF); and
- progressed the establishment and work of the Land Development Agency (LDA) and the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR).

Land Development Agency

The Land Development Agency (LDA) was established on an interim basis in September 2018, by statutory instrument under the Local Government Services (Corporate Bodies) Act 1971, pending the enactment of primary legislation to establish the Agency on a statutory basis. A General Scheme of the Land Development Agency Bill, which will establish the LDA as a commercial state body, was approved by Government for publication, consideration for pre-legislative scrutiny, and priority drafting in July 2019. The pre-legislative scrutiny process took place in Autumn 2019 and the Committee's report was received by the Department in December 2019.

By year end, the LDA had access to an initial tranche of 9 sites across the country that have a near-term delivery potential for 3,600 new homes.

Following an open recruitment process, John Coleman was appointed as permanent CEO of the LDA.

The agency continued to develop its organisational capability through the ongoing recruitment of staff with the necessary skills to implement its key objectives over the coming years.

The Office of the Planning Regulator

The Final Report of the Mahon Tribunal recommended the establishment of an independent Planning Regulator to support the modernisation of the planning system and to enhance confidence and transparency. The Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) was established in April 2019 on foot of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018.

The Act gave the OPR a statutory basis to carry out three main functions:

1. Independent assessment of all local authority and regional assembly forward planning, including development plans, local area plans, regional spatial and economic strategies;
2. Examination of the systems and procedures used by any planning authority, including An Bord Pleanála, in the performance of any of their planning functions, including assessing risks of maladministration or corruption; and
3. Driving national research, training, education and public information programmes.

The Affordable Purchase Scheme and Serviced Sites Fund

Part 5 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 was brought into force during 2018, to provide the legal framework for the delivery of a new Affordable Purchase Scheme. During 2019, local authorities developed Schemes of Priority in respect of the sale of affordable purchase homes. The purpose of a Scheme of Priority is to set out the affordable purchase arrangements at local authority level. This includes the methodology that will be applied by local authorities to determine the order of priority to be accorded to eligible households applying to purchase a home under the scheme.

To support local authority capacity to deliver more affordable homes in areas where a demonstrated affordability issue arises, the Government increased the Serviced Sites Fund (SSF) to €310 million, as part of Budget 2019.

The SSF grant funding is made available to local authorities to carry out on-site servicing works to make their land available for affordable housing.

To end 2019, two calls for proposals have been made under the SSF, resulting in funding approval of €127 million, in support of 35 projects in 14 local authority areas, being allocated for infrastructural works on sites to support the delivery of almost 3,200 homes under the Affordable Purchase Scheme.

Cost Rental

Cost Rental would be a new form of rental tenure in Ireland and is housing where the rents charged cover the cost of delivering, managing, and maintaining the homes. Generally, cost rents would be lower than profit rents. Minimising land and other costs and securing the most competitive financing means that more affordable rental housing can be delivered on publicly owned lands.

In June 2019, the Minister convened an inter-departmental Cost Rental Working Group, bringing together representatives of Government Departments and State Agencies to assist in the development of a national policy approach for introducing Cost Rental in Ireland.

Supported by a Serviced Site Fund grant, construction began in July 2019 on a pilot development at Enniskerry Road, Stepaside. The Department also supported the progress of a number of other Cost Rental projects including a development by Dublin City Council at Emmet Road, Inchicore and at Shanganagh Castle, Shankill, which is being progressed as a joint venture between the LDA and Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown County Council.

Met Éireann

As well as ongoing projects to develop the meteorological observation and forecasting systems the new ensemble Prediction System became operational in 2019 and a project was launched to upgrade the National Radar Network. The meteorological and environmental monitoring programme at Valentia Observatory was expanded with the addition of further instrumentation.

Throughout 2019, a number of significant IT projects were completed including the migration to a new virtualised environment, upgrading the backup system for mission critical systems and the implementation of dual fibre connectivity at Met Éireann's Glasnevin location to improve diversity and resilience.

A Communication Strategy for the National Flood Forecast Warning Service was developed by Flood Forecast Division staff in conjunction with the OPW and many other stakeholders of the service. This Strategy lays out the planned methods for disseminating flood forecast advice and alerts to all stakeholders of the service.

Key Developments in Local Government

May 2019 saw the holding of plebiscites on Government proposals for directly elected mayors with executive functions in the Cork City, Limerick City and County and Waterford City and County Council areas. The plebiscite passed in Limerick City & County but was rejected in Cork City and Waterford City & County.

Climate Action

The Climate Action Plan 2019 was published by Government on 3 June 2019. It sets out actions across every sector of society, which will ensure the 2030 climate commitments are met, putting us on a trajectory to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

The Department has a key role in creating the regulatory framework and support for Climate Action. In 2019, it completed a number of actions including the introduction of Nearly Zero Energy Buildings performance standards for new dwellings.

At area level planning the Department provides guidance for compact urban development facilitating public transport, district heating and higher housing densities through the implementation of the National Planning Framework. At a national level the Department is enabling the provision of offshore and onshore renewable energy.

Climate Change Sectoral Adaption Plan for Water Quality and Water Services Infrastructure

In October 2019, following Government approval, the Minister published the Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan for the Water Quality and Water Services Infrastructure sectors. This plan presents an assessment of key future climate risks to the sectors and outlines the adaptive measures available to build resilience to the effects of climate change and weather-related events.

Licensing and Regulation of Water Abstractions

The General Scheme of the Water Environment (Abstractions) Bill was submitted to the Oireachtas for pre-legislative scrutiny in December 2019. The Bill is expected to be published in 2020. This Bill will provide for the regulation and licensing of abstractions from surface water and ground water.

Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme 2019-2021

The second cycle of the Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme, which provides capital funding supports for water services in rural areas, runs from 2019 to 2021.

Proposals for capital funding for individual projects were invited in early 2019. Following an assessment process, 621 projects were approved for funding under seven different investment measures, totalling €54,346,715. This funding, which is provided through local authorities, will largely support infrastructure improvements for Group Water Schemes in rural areas. The capital investment is being provided under the National Development Plan 2018-2027.

Multi-Annual Developer-Provided Water Services Infrastructure Resolution Programme 2019-2021

The new Multi-Annual Developer-Provided Water Services Infrastructure Resolution Programme was launched in July 2019 when the Department invited local authorities to submit their bids for the funding of projects in their administrative areas. The National Development Plan includes provision of €31 million for the period 2018-2021 to address inadequate developer provided waste water service systems. Allocations for the first projects to be approved under the new programme will be announced in 2020.

Marine Planning Policy and Foreshore Development Management

In November 2019, the Government published Ireland's first Marine Planning Policy Statement (MPPS) and a draft National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF).

The Marine Planning Policy Statement serves as a parallel to the 2015 Planning Policy Statement which underpins the operation of the entire land-planning system in Ireland. It will apply to all facets of marine planning.

The draft National Marine Planning Framework is a national plan for Ireland's maritime area, setting out, over a 20-year horizon, how to use, protect and enjoy our seas. On adoption, the NMPF will sit at the top of a hierarchy of plans and sectoral policies for the marine area.

The Department operates the consenting regime in respect of developments and activities on the State's Foreshore. Some thirty-two new consent applications were received in 2019 for a range of projects and activities.

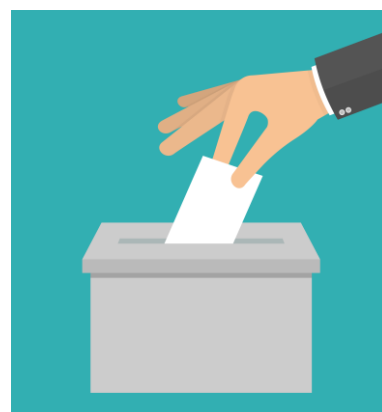
Marine Legislation

On foot of legal advice received on the Maritime Area and Foreshore (Amendment) Bill, Government approved a fundamentally reshaped approach to the reform of marine consenting in March 2019. The Marine Planning and Development Management Bill intends to put in place a comprehensive and holistic state consent and development management regimes for the entire maritime area in the context of the National Marine Planning Framework.

The legislation is being developed under the auspices of the Marine Legislation Steering Group, chaired by Department of the Taoiseach, and in close collaboration with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment in relation to a number of sectors, most notably, offshore renewable energy. The finalised General Scheme of the Bill was approved by Government on 17 December 2019 and the drafting of the legal text has been initiated.

Electoral Management

The elections for the European Parliament and local authorities were held on 24 May 2019, together with a referendum on the dissolution of marriage and plebiscites on the direct election of a mayor (in Cork, Limerick and Waterford). Four Dáil bye-elections were held on 29 November 2019. Ballot Paper Templates, which enable blind and visually impaired voters to vote independently, were made available for the first time at the European Parliament and local elections, the plebiscites and at the bye-elections.



The European Parliament Elections (Amendment) Act 2019 was enacted to provide for a new constituency configuration based on electing thirteen members (formerly eleven) to the European Parliament at the elections held on 24 May 2019, with contingency provisions to allow for a delay in the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union.

The establishment of an Electoral Commission for Ireland was a key commitment in the Programme for Government. Such a Commission will bring a more cohesive approach to the management of a wide range of electoral processes in Ireland.

The Government approved the establishment of a statutory Electoral Commission in July 2019, and the General Scheme of an Electoral Commission Bill in December 2019.

Brexit Preparedness

In 2019 the Department continued to prepare for the departure of the UK from the European Union, in both a deal and no deal scenarios. The focus was on the Construction Products Regulation, with sector outreach and communications to raise awareness of the implications of Brexit for business. A number of seminars were held at the Custom House to help prepare the sector for Brexit. Significant progress was made in the approval of Notified Bodies based in Ireland to replace UK-based notified bodies for CE marking under the Construction Products Regulation. The National Building Control Office took steps to establish a new unit to centralise market surveillance, post-Brexit, and allow for overarching national oversight.

Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards

In line with Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards 2019 Quotas the Department submitted four entries for consideration at the annual Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards in November 2019. This continued the Department's record of participation each year since the awards were launched.

ICT Developments

The ICT Unit and Met Éireann launched a new ICT Strategy 2019-2022. This joint ICT strategy supports the Department's Statement of Strategy 2017-2020 and Met Éireann's Strategic Plan 2017-2027. The Department also published a Cyber Security Strategy 2019-2021 to safeguard our systems and build cyber resilience.

The Department also continued its roll-out of the Build to Share initiative. The implementation of a new document management system, eDocs, was substantially completed in 2019.

The Department's GIS unit created 'Story Maps' for projects under the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF) and Major Urban Housing Development Sites (MUHDS). Story Maps brings text, photos, and videos together with custom maps to create an interactive user experience and can be viewed [<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/87cc342bff20462bb896087b0ce16215>].

Goal A - To ensure that planning and building in our regions and communities contributes to sustainable and balanced development

National Planning Framework

Implementation of the National Planning Framework (NPF), launched in 2018 as part of Project Ireland 2040 (PI2040), is at the core of the Department's work and will be the key driver of policy measures and related legislative proposals, as necessary, in the years ahead. Project Ireland 2040 signalled the Government's intention, and reflected a public mood, to shift away from "business as usual" sprawl-based development patterns and adopt more compact, sustainable and community centred development approaches. Compact growth is listed as the first of the Strategic Outcomes and Priorities within the National Planning Framework and various enabling initiatives have been put in place to support the further sustainable and compact development of our Cities, Towns and villages. This will add value and create more attractive places in which people can live and work while achieving a transition to a competitive, low carbon, climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable economy.

The first PI2040 Annual Report was published on 2 May 2019 and is available on the Department's website. Priorities for the Department to progress implementation of the NPF in 2019, included supporting the ongoing work of the PI2040 Delivery Board, overseeing completion of the three Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSESs), continued implementation of the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) and progressing the establishment and work of the Land Development Agency (LDA) and the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR). All of these measures, which underpin the NPF strategic outcomes, were delivered in 2019 and a comprehensive framework is now in place to progress implementation in the years ahead.

The PI2040 Delivery Board, comprising Secretaries General from the main capital spending Departments, is co-chaired by the Secretaries General of the Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The Department continued to support the PI2040 Delivery Board in 2019 and engage with key stakeholders. The Board met regularly during the year to monitor and ensure effective progress on implementation, including the preparation of Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES) by the three Regional Assemblies. The Department supported the Regional Assemblies in the preparation process and the RSES were finalised during 2019.

The Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly Strategy was published on 28 June 2019 and the Northern and Western Regional Assembly and the Southern Regional Assembly adopted their Strategies in December 2019, for publication the following month. The Strategies give a more detailed expression of the National Planning Framework at a regional level.

The finalisation of the Strategies enables initiation of the process of review and update of individual county and city development plans, to ensure strategic co-ordination and consistency between national, regional and local levels of planning. This process commenced in 2019.

Work began in 2019 on updating the statutory Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Development Plans, to underpin the review and update of county and city development plans. Good progress was made during 2019 on Draft Development Plan Guidelines and work is well advanced with the aim of publishing Draft Guidelines for public consultation in 2020. Also, in collaboration with the Housing Division, work was advanced during 2019 on the development and publication of a methodology for Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA), to be finalised in 2020.

The RSEs and the development of these new guidelines will further assist with the application of compact growth principles as set out in the NPF to regional and local levels of plan making. This plan-led approach will ultimately influence the location and form of development which takes place across the country. In addition, the ESRI on behalf of the Department, commenced specific planning research in 2019 with a view to establishing an ongoing review and update of demographic and econometric modelling developed to underpin PI2040. This work will input to the preparation of local authority development plans and housing strategies in order to facilitate a consistent national approach.

In support of the 'Compact Growth' outcome, a continued priority was the enabling of physical regeneration and re-use of brown-field land and sites in the larger urban areas. This included promotion of higher capital intensive "Integrated Urban Development" (IUD) proposals and a focus on the five Cities and NPF 'Regional Driver' Towns (identifying strategic urban development/brown-field areas, core to prospective funding investments).

The Department continued engagement at an EU level via the National Territorial Cohesion Contact Points (NTCCP) for both Territorial Cohesion and implementation of the Urban Agenda programme. The Minister of State with responsibility for Housing and Urban Development attended an Informal Meeting of EU Ministers Responsible for Urban Matters, hosted by the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the EU, in June 2019 in Bucharest.

This meeting discussed the main achievements of the Urban Agenda for the EU and adopted the Bucharest Declaration for the purpose of establishing a common framework for urban development in the European Union.

Urban Regeneration and Development Fund

The National Planning Framework is being underpinned by significant targeted Exchequer capital investment through the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF).

The URDF was launched in 2018 to support more compact and sustainable development. The Fund is supporting projects that will enable a greater proportion of residential and mixed-use development to be delivered within the existing built-up footprints of our cities and large towns, while also ensuring that more parts of our urban areas can become attractive and vibrant places in which people choose to live and work, as well as to invest and to visit.

Already, the URDF is providing assistance for major projects that will contribute to the regeneration and rejuvenation of Ireland's five cities and other large towns, in line with the objectives of the National Planning Framework and National Development Plan.

In 2019, approval in principle and provisional funding allocations were issued in respect of 87 major projects across the country. This significant pipeline of projects is set to have a transformational impact on our large towns and cities. The diversity of this first tranche of projects demonstrates the broad scope and responsive nature of the URDF. Through the URDF, successful applicants are receiving targeted integrated support for innovative, holistic solutions to the issues that have prevented the regeneration and rejuvenation of our large towns and cities.

In its first year of expenditure, 2019, €18.6m in funding was drawn down by applicants in respect of URDF supported projects, and €130m is available to support these and other similar projects in 2020. €550 million is available to support projects up to 2022 and a total of €2 billion is available up to 2027 under the NDP.

Planning Process

The planning process continued to play a proactive and facilitative role in 2019 in supporting and guiding economic recovery and sustainable national and regional development.

The fast-track Strategic Housing Development (SHD) provisions, which came into effect in 2017 for developments of 100 or more housing units and student accommodation developments or shared accommodation developments with 200 or more bed spaces, continued for 2019.



The Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016 provided that the SHD arrangements applied until the end of 2019, but that the Minister may, by order, extend that period by a further limited period of 2 years, up to the end of 2021, coinciding with the timeframe of Rebuilding Ireland.

A Strategic Housing Development Review Group was established in June 2019 to review the operation and effectiveness of the SHD arrangements. The Report of the Review Group was received on 24 September 2019. The Report acknowledges that the SHD arrangements have generally been a success in meeting their objectives to contribute to addressing housing undersupply issues by providing a fast-track development consent process aimed at incentivising developers to bring forward applications for large-scale housing developments.

Notwithstanding the positive contribution that the SHD arrangements have made, the Review Group noted that there continues to exist a deficit in housing supply and affirms that the original rationale for the introduction of the SHD arrangements remains. The Minister concurred with the finding of the Review Group and signed an Order on 2 December 2019 to extend the arrangements until end 2021. A report on the Ministers conclusions of the review, as well as the Review Group's Report, have been laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas, as required by the Act, and copies of both reports are available on the Department's website.

Between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2019, An Bord Pleanála received 151 valid requests for pre-application consultation relating to proposed developments across the country. It issued opinions in relation to 150 of these (with the final one issuing in 2020). In the same period, the Board received 118 actual applications for SHD permission. Of the 82 decisions made in 2019 (covering both 2018 and 2019 applications), the Board issued 67 grants of planning permission in respect of a total of 16,771 homes (4,327 houses and 12,444 apartments), 200 shared accommodation bed spaces and 4,331 student bed spaces.

Planning Policy

Planning permissions were granted for over 40,000 new homes in 2019, an increase of 38% on 2018.

The Department continues to develop and support initiatives to promote participation in the planning process, urban renewal and regeneration, including in relation to the conversion of vacant commercial premises into residential use, derelict sites and operation of the vacant site levy by local authorities.



As part of the continuous review of planning legislation the Department launched a public consultation in December 2019 on the General Scheme of the Housing and Planning and Development Bill which is looking at the judicial review provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

Marine Planning Policy and Foreshore Development Management

In November 2019, the Government published Ireland's first Marine Planning Policy Statement (MPPS) and a draft National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF).

The Marine Planning Policy Statement:

- Draws together and describes the existing components of Ireland's marine planning system;
- Outlines a vision for the future development of the marine planning system;
- Sets out the overarching policies and principles the Government expects marine planning bodies and other public bodies that engage with the marine planning system to observe (in terms, for example, of public engagement, transparency, governance, environmental assessment, climate action, social and economic benefit);
- Sets out high-level priorities for the enhancement of the marine planning system in Ireland.

The Marine Planning Policy Statement serves as a parallel to the 2015 Planning Policy Statement which underpins the operation of the entire land-planning system in Ireland. It will apply to all facets of marine planning. It is being introduced initially on a non-statutory basis, pending the introduction of legislation in 2020 that will provide for the preparation, adoption and review of statutory marine planning policy statements on six-yearly cycles.

It reflects the comprehensive updating and renewal now underway of Ireland's marine planning system, setting out core principles to inform evolving marine planning and development management processes.

The draft National Marine Planning Framework is a national plan for Ireland's maritime area, setting out, over a 20-year horizon, how to use, protect and enjoy our seas. On adoption, the NMPF will sit at the top of a hierarchy of plans and sectoral policies for the marine area. The Plan has been informed by existing sectoral policies and will in turn, be used to inform future cycles of those plans in an ongoing feedback loop. It will become the key decision-making tool for regulatory authorities and policymakers into the future. The Marine Plan covers Ireland's maritime area, including internal waters (sea area), exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and continental shelf. This maritime area comprises approximately 490,000 km², or seven times our land mass.

The Department operates the consenting regime in respect of developments and activities on the State's Foreshore, an area which covers approximately 39,000km². Some thirty-two new consent applications were received in 2019 for a range of projects and activities on the Foreshore including applications for wastewater outfalls, various one-day events and coastal protection works. Revised proposals for a more comprehensive, holistic and robust approach to State consenting and development management in the Maritime Area are currently being developed jointly with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

EU and International Planning Regulation

229 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Portal Notifications were registered and uploaded to the Department's National EIA Portal between 1 January and 31 December 2019.



The Department also oversaw 9 international transboundary consultation requests through the Planning System (including a nationwide consultation on the UK's Wylfa Newydd Nuclear Power Plant project) between 1 January and 31 December 2019.

The Department continues to progress further integration with EU and UN legislation in the Planning system's legislative framework, such as compliance with the EIA Directive, Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive, Water Framework Directive, Services Directive and the UN's Espoo Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context and Kiev Protocol on SEA.

The Department also engages in significant legal responses to issues raised in both the High Court and in the Court of Justice of the European Union. In particular:

- In 2019 the Department managed 30 active High Court cases related to planning and EU legislation, attended a CJEU Article 260 TFEU hearing (Case C261/18) and intervened in a CJEU Reference case (Joined Cases C-724/18 and C-727/18) relating to the Services Directive.
- The Department progressed the State's first formal planning application under the Habitats Directive's IROPI (imperative reasons of overriding public importance) process, for an upgrade to a water treatment plant in County Sligo, which was granted permission.
- The Department introduced the European Union (Environmental Impact Assessment and Habitats) (Section 181 of the Planning and Development Act 2000) Regulations 2019 which provide a streamlined process for State Authorities to progress certain emergency developments outside the Planning Acts but in accordance with the EIA Directive. This legislation may, among other things, facilitate Brexit-related port development.

The Department continues to develop legislative drafting for the transposition of amendments to the UN Espoo Convention and the Kiev Protocol on transboundary consultations into planning law, as well as the introduction of new assessment processes in the Planning Acts and Regulations and related Guidance for Planning Authorities with respect to the EU Water Framework Directive, while representing Ireland both in Espoo Convention and EU EIA/SEA member state meetings. The Department also continues to progress updated Guidelines for Planning Authorities on the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive as well as providing internal guidance for prospective plans and programmes produced by the Department's Planning Division.

Vacant Site Levy

From January 2017, all planning authorities began establishing vacant site registers. The necessary preparatory work was undertaken (i.e. identifying vacant sites, notifying registered owners etc.) prior to the application of the Vacant Site Levy with effect from January 2019, as required by the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015. The levy aims to incentivise the development of vacant under-utilised sites in urban areas for residential or regeneration purposes. The rate of the levy was 3% when it was first introduced, and this rate was charged in 2019 in respect of sites on the register in 2018. The rate was revised to 7% for sites entered on the registers in 2019 with payments at the 7% rate first falling due in 2020.

The Department issued Circular PL 09/2019 on 13 November 2019 requesting a progress report on implementation of the Vacant Site Levy to be completed by the Director of Planning in each Local Authority. The returns indicated that as of 31 October 2019 there were 359 sites listed on local authority registers. Sites valued at €144.5m were liable to the levy at a rate of 3% in 2019. Furthermore, the sites on the registers have the potential to generate circa 20,000 housing units (at densities of 35-50 units per hectare).

Vacant Homes

The primary aim of the Vacant Homes Unit is to drive and coordinate actions at central and local government levels and to support local authorities in identifying the level of vacant homes that are recoverable for use in the habitable housing stock.

The Vacant Homes Unit published the National Vacant Housing Reuse Strategy in July 2018, under Pillar 5 of Rebuilding Ireland, which contains a range of objectives and key actions that will be pursued in partnership with stakeholders and agencies across the housing sector to address vacancy in our housing stock.

In pursuit of those objectives, in 2019 the Department once again secured funding for each local authority to support the work of a Vacant Homes Office in each local authority for 2020 (funding was previously secured in 2018 & 2019). The provision of central funding enables focus to be given to the role of the Office, allowing the Department to liaise with and seek information/statistics from a dedicated contact point within each local authority. The Vacant Homes Unit has also supported the work of local authorities in tackling residential vacancy by providing advice, knowledge and through facilitating engagement across Vacant Homes Offices. The Department also implemented a national and international advertising campaign which sought to engage with the owners of vacant residential properties in Ireland and connect them to the relevant local authority vacant homes office.

In 2019, the Vacant Homes Unit completed a pilot Vacant Field Survey in six local authorities. The field survey provided an opportunity to ascertain, in a rigorous and verifiable way, the extent and nature of residential vacancy in selected areas. The study provided a valuable dataset and in that context, consideration is being given to a national rollout.

Short-Term Letting

On 1 July 2019, new planning legislative reforms to regulate the short-term letting (STL) sector came into effect. The aim of the legislation is to return much-needed accommodation presently being used for short-term letting purposes in the designated Rent Pressure Zones (RPZs) to the long-term rental market, thereby increasing supply in the long-term rental market.

Under the legislation, ‘home-sharing’ (the letting of a room or rooms in a person’s principal place of residence) will continue to be allowed on an unrestricted basis. However, where a person owns a property in a RPZ which is not their principal place of residence and intends to let it for short-term letting purposes, s/he is required to apply for change of use planning permission unless the property has a pre-existing permission to be used for tourism or short-term letting purposes. Based on guidance issued by the Department on the considerations and factors to be taken into account in respect of such planning applications, the likelihood is that planning permission for such change of use will not be granted in RPZs where there is shortage of private rental accommodation/housing need in the area concerned.

In the discussions on the legislation in the Oireachtas, the Minister gave a commitment that dedicated staffing resources required for the effective implementation of the provisions would be funded by the Department.

To this end, the Department wrote to planning authorities in whose functional areas RPZs are located, requesting their estimated STL enforcement funding requirements.

Derelict Sites

The Derelict Sites Act 1990 imposes a general duty on every owner and occupier of land to take all reasonable steps to ensure that the land does not become, or continue to be, a derelict site. The Act also imposes a duty on local authorities to take all reasonable steps, including the exercise of appropriate statutory powers, to ensure that any land within their functional area does not become, or continue to be, a derelict site.

Local authority powers include requiring owners or occupiers to take appropriate measures on derelict sites, acquiring derelict sites by agreement, or compulsorily, and to apply a derelict site levy on derelict sites. It is a matter for local authorities to determine the most appropriate use of the legislation within their respective functional areas.

Under the Act, local authorities are required to maintain a derelict sites register, which includes the name and address of each owner and occupier, where these can be ascertained by reasonable enquiry, of any land which, in the opinion of the local authority, is a derelict site. Under section 8(5) of the Act, a copy of the derelict sites register for any local authority can be inspected at the offices of that authority during office hours. Members of the public can engage with their local authority in relation to addressing individual derelict sites in their local areas. The 1990 Act does not differentiate between one-off houses and any other type of derelict site.

Under the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018, both the Derelict Sites Levy and the Vacant Sites Levy increased from 3% to 7% of the market valuation of relevant sites with effect from January 2020. This change in the rate of the levies is intended to ensure that the levies have more meaningful impact and that the powers of local authorities in tackling dereliction and vacancy are strengthened for the purpose of bringing relevant sites into productive use, thereby facilitating urban regeneration and development while also combatting land hoarding.

The latest full year statistics show that, as of 31 December 2018, there were 1,311 derelict sites on the register, with €1,776,067 in levies collected during 2018. Levies of €567,920 were collected in 2018.

Solar Panel Exemptions

The Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, set out the criteria whereby the installation of solar panels on residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural developments are exempted from the requirement to obtain planning permission.

A review of the current exemptions in this regard was progressed in 2019 involving engagement with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCAE) and other key stakeholders. The final proposals for draft amending Regulations should reflect technical developments in the sector. It is expected that the revised exempted development regulations in respect of solar panels will be adopted in 2020.

As required under planning legislation, any such proposed exempted development regulations must be laid in draft form before the Houses of the Oireachtas and receive a positive resolution from both Houses before they can be signed into law by the Minister.



Wind Energy Development Guidelines

The Department is currently undertaking a focused review of the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines in line with the “preferred draft approach” which was announced in June 2017 by the then Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, in conjunction with the then Minister for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment. The review is addressing a number of key aspects including sound or noise, visual amenity setback distances, shadow flicker, community obligation, community dividend and grid connections.

As part of the overall review process, a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) is being undertaken on the revised Guidelines before they come into effect.

SEA is a process by which environmental considerations are required to be fully integrated into the preparation of plans and programmes which act as frameworks for development consent, prior to their final adoption, with public consultation as part of that process.

As part of the SEA process, a ten-week public consultation on the draft revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines was launched on 12 December 2019. Finalised Guidelines will be prepared following detailed analysis and consideration of the submissions received during the consultation phase, and the conclusion of the SEA process.

Mapping of State Lands for Housing Supply

The active management of the publicly-owned housing land bank is part of a range of complementary actions being progressed under the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, designed to accelerate and increase housing output. To this end, the Rebuilding Ireland Housing Land Map published details of some 1,700 hectares of land in local authority and Housing Agency ownership with the potential to deliver some 42,500 homes nationally. A detailed database and GIS map of these sites showing their location, size, boundaries and other information can be accessed on the Rebuilding Ireland website. This data is part of the wider exercise by Government to create a database of all state owned property.



Spatial Data Development

The Department has developed a number of planning spatial data systems including myplan.ie (land use zonings and other spatial planning data) and the NPAD (National Planning Application Database) services. These digital services have a wide variety of users including infrastructure providers, commercial enterprises, financial institutions, local authorities, educational institutions and others. Services continue to be updated including recent national flood risk data in conjunction with the OPW. Spatial data is key to the implementation and monitoring of policies in our hierarchy of statutory plans from the National Planning Framework to Regional Spatial & Economic Strategies, City/County development plans and local area plans.

The aggregation of the spatial data of individual local authorities into a national level database is a desired improvement in data availability and the Department, in conjunction with the OSI and the local authorities, is now developing a Centralised Spatial Data Storage facility that will provide a national repository of spatial data from the local authorities.

As a pilot project, the Department is developing a system for the consistent digitisation of planning application sites nationally which has been identified as a key local authority process appropriate for a consistent and standardised approach. Improved quality and publication of this data will deliver tangible benefits for the planning system and its many users. In conjunction with Ordnance Survey Ireland and local authority pilots, the Department is currently developing a web-based spatial data capture application to assist in this task. The application, titled Planning Application Capture Environment (PACE), is being developed for a phased release in 2020.

Student Accommodation Strategy

In July 2017, the Department of Education and Skills, with support from the Department, published the National Student Accommodation Strategy. It includes eight key targets and 27 actions to support the increased supply of Purpose Built Student Accommodation and an increase in take-up of 'digs' accommodation.

At the end of 2019, a total of 8,346 new student bed spaces have been completed since the adoption of Rebuilding Ireland. There were a further 5,137 bed spaces under construction and planning permissions granted for an additional 9,696 bed spaces, representing a total of 23,179 bed spaces either complete, under construction or with plans granted at the end of 2019.

These figures confirm that the objective of delivering an additional 7,000 new bed spaces nationally by end of 2019 has been achieved and surpassed, with the objective of 21,000 additional Purpose Built Student Accommodation bed spaces by 2024 on track to be achieved if planned projects proceed through construction.

Statutory Plans

The Department's primary statutory responsibility for the review of certain Statutory Plans was transferred to the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) which was established on 3 April 2019 (See below).



Under the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018, the OPR now has responsibility, inter alia, to evaluate and carry out examinations and assessments relating to the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs), development plans and local area plans, and provide observations and recommendations in relation to such strategies or plans, taking account of planning policy and legislation including the National Planning Framework, the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies and other statutory and non-statutory guidance. In the period 1 January 2019 to 3 April 2019 the Department reviewed 1 Development Plan, 4 Local Area Plans and 11 Variations.

It was necessary to introduce one-off transitional arrangements in 2019 in relation to the OPR and the RSEs, arising from the fact that the process in respect of each of the three RSEs had commenced prior to the establishment of the OPR on 3 April 2019. This was done by way of technical amendments to the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, to make provision for the Regulator to be requested by the Minister to enter a RSE process in an advisory capacity, where the process was already underway at the date of establishment of the OPR. The Local Government Rates and Other Matters Act 2019 (Commencement) Order 2019 (S.I. No. 355 of 2019) brought the provisions into effect from 15 July 2019.

The Department reviewed the three Regional Strategies in 2019, which had been prepared by each Regional Assembly.

In accordance with the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, Ministerial powers under Section 31/31A of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) are retained. However, the Minister must now have regard to recommendations made by the OPR, whereas previously the Minister would have had regard to recommendations from Department planning officials. Ministerial powers under Section 31 was used once in 2019.

Office of the Planning Regulator

The Office of the Planning Regulator was established in April 2019 on foot of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018.



The OPR is responsible for assessment of all local authority and regional assembly forward planning, including zoning decisions.

The Regulator has the power to advise the Minister on whether a plan made by a local authority conflicts with national planning policy and to recommend that the Minister make directions where any plan is not in compliance with national policy.

The Regulator will also ensure that planning authorities are operating to the highest standards of integrity and best practice ensuring that planning policy decisions in their development plan-making roles are in line with national and regional policies as set out in the National Planning Framework and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies.

In the period between the establishment of the OPR in April 2019 and December 2019, the OPR evaluated and inputted into twenty-five local authority statutory forward planning processes, this included making recommendations on draft local area plans, amendments to local area plans, variations to City / County development plans and contributions to development plan issues papers.

The Regulator has the power to review the organisation, systems and procedures used by any planning authority or An Bord Pleanála. Following on from consultation with key stakeholders in 2019, the OPR will finalise its Methodology for Conducting Reviews of Planning Functions in 2020. Once this methodology has been adopted, the OPR will then be able to commence its programme of reviews.

The OPR can initiate such reviews at its own behest, at the request of the Minister, or on foot of complaints from members of the public. In 2019, the OPR oversaw over 250 individual lines of correspondence from members of the public and is committed to continuing its effective and timely management of complaints in 2020.

Additionally, the OPR will continue to drive national research, education and public information programmes to highlight the role and benefit of planning, which will include monitoring the implementation of the NPF.

The OPR commenced a training programme for Elected Members in 2019, the purpose which is to provide elected members with enhanced knowledge of the planning process, reaffirming their roles and responsibilities within the planning system and their functions in relation to ensuring proper planning and sustainable development.

In addition, the OPR together with the Department, has joined a commissioning consortium comprising the Governments of Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England to conduct research aimed at identifying the most important outcomes in spatial planning and feasible ways to measure them.

Land Development Agency

In the National Planning Framework, the Government committed to establishing a National Regeneration and Development Agency to work with local authorities, other public bodies and capital spending Departments and agencies to –

- co-ordinate and secure the best use of public lands and investment within the capital envelopes provided in the National Development Plan, and
- drive the renewal of strategic areas not being utilised to their full potential.

On foot of this, the Land Development Agency (LDA) was established in September 2018 by way of Establishment Order under the Local Government Services (Corporate Bodies) Act 1971.

The LDA 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 land banks from a mix of public and private lands, making these available for housing in a controlled manner, which will bring essential long-term stability to the Irish housing market.

On establishment, the Agency had access to an initial tranche of nine sites that have near-term delivery potential for 3,600 new homes. The LDA is currently working with Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council on the development of a site in Shanganagh with potential for approximately 600 homes.

The LDA is also working in partnership with other local authorities around the country. Work is advancing on the other 8 sites and the LDA is also examining a pipeline of additional sites. A minimum of 30% of housing on LDA sites must be affordable with the balance as additional new supply to meet the high levels of demand in the wider housing sector.

This is consistent with a Government Decision in September 2018 that any State lands, in Ministerial ownership and deemed suitable for housing, being sold on the open market must deliver affordable housing on at least 30% of the site. In addition, the LDA and private developers must deliver 10% social housing on sites in accordance with Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

A General Scheme of the Land Development Agency Bill to establish the LDA as a commercial state body on a primary legislative basis was approved by Government for publication, consideration for pre-legislative scrutiny and priority drafting in July 2019. The pre legislative scrutiny process is now complete and the Committee's report was received by the Department in December 2019. This report will be considered in finalising the Bill.

Reuse of Existing Buildings

In response to action 5.21 of the review of Rebuilding Ireland, which committed to supporting and facilitating the reuse of older vacant buildings for residential use, a guidance document titled 'Bringing Back Homes – A Manual for the Reuse of Existing Buildings' was developed by a multi-disciplinary working group with industry stakeholders, chaired by the Department.

The Bringing Back Homes manual provides clear and comprehensive guidance on current policy and regulatory requirements that apply when developing existing buildings. The manual is aimed at property owners, members of the public, local authorities and stakeholders in the construction industry and creates a single source of information for those interested in redeveloping vacant buildings.

The manual outlines the process and issues to be considered when developing existing buildings for residential purposes and applies these procedures to four common building types, which typically reflect the buildings (or parts of buildings) that are lying vacant in towns and cities all over Ireland today. It provides further guidance on the more complex redevelopments where multiple apartments are being created.

A number of examples of completed projects are also showcased in the manual. The manual will support the work of the vacant homes offices in local authorities to assist in clarifying the regulatory requirements that exist and how they apply to development, thus reducing uncertainty and complexity but maintaining safe, sustainable and quality standards for homes.

The Bringing Back Homes manual was published in December 2018 and officially launched by the Minister of State with responsibility for Housing and Urban Development in April 2019.

A copy of the manual is available on the Department's website at:

<https://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/home-ownership/vacant-homes/bringing-back-homes-manual-reuse-existing-buildings>

Goal B - To provide for a stable, sustainable supply of good quality housing.

Social Housing Delivery

The Government has committed in excess of €6 billion under Rebuilding Ireland to support the accelerated delivery of 50,000 additional social housing homes by end 2021, through build (33,500), acquisition (6,500) and leasing (10,000) programmes, and to meet the needs of some 87,000 further households through schemes such as the Housing Assistance Payment.



Over €2.4 billion was invested in housing in 2019, up 18% on 2018. At end 2019, overall delivery was ahead of target, with over 28,000 (28,075) households having their housing needs met through the range of social housing programmes in 2019 alone. Within this figure, over 6,074 new social housing homes were provided in 2019 through build activity, an increase of almost 26% on 2018 and more than double the output in 2016, the first year of the Rebuilding Ireland action plan.

Housing delivery indicators for 2019 continued to be very positive:

- 24,394 new homes available for use in 2019 - up 14%;
- 40,252 homes granted planning permissions in 2019 - up 38%;
- and Commencement Notices submitted for 26,237 homes in 2019 - up 17%.

Summary of Social Housing Assessments 2019

The Summary of Social Housing Assessments is now carried out on an annual basis and is used to set targets for social housing delivery under Rebuilding Ireland. The objective of the assessment is to identify the number of households in need of social housing support across the country on a specific date each year in order to inform policy and plan for the right types of housing support. The 2019 assessment showed that 68,693 households were in need of social housing support, as at 24 June 2019. This represented a decrease of 3,165 households or -4.4% on the previous assessment in June 2018. Since the publication of Rebuilding Ireland, the numbers have decreased from 91,600 to 68,693, a reduction of 25%.

Housing Assistance Payment Scheme

The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme is a flexible and immediate housing support that is available to all eligible households throughout the State. It plays a vital role in housing eligible families and individuals. At the end of 2019, there were over 52,500 active tenancies being supported under the HAP scheme in 31 local authority areas, including 17,025 additional tenancies set up in 2019.

Also at the end of 2019, 16,020 households had transferred from Rent Supplement to HAP since the commencement of the scheme. Through this, these households are now in receipt of a much more secure form of State support, under which they can work full-time without losing their support, with their change of circumstances reflected in an adjustment in their differential rent.

The Homeless HAP Place Finder Service was made available to all local authorities in January 2018. All local authorities have been provided with the option to pay deposits and advance rental payments for any households in emergency homeless accommodation, or who are at immediate risk of entering emergency accommodation, in order to secure accommodation via the HAP Scheme.

More than 7,500 households have been supported by the Homeless HAP scheme in the Dublin region up to the end of Q4, 2019. Nationally, the corresponding figure was over 10,500 households.

The Place Finder positions are being funded by the Department and, at the end 2019, the Department had issued approval for 20 Place Finder positions. Several local authorities indicated that they did not wish to seek additional resources to establish a Place Finder service as they were satisfied with their existing homeless service.

Homelessness

Homelessness continued to present a major challenge during 2019 with significant numbers of households continuing to present to homeless services. There were 9,731 individuals accessing emergency accommodation in December 2019. This was the first year since 2014 when reporting commenced in its current format that the overall homeless numbers were lower than the previous December.

The Department worked closely with the local authorities on the delivery of additional emergency accommodation facilities for both single people and families, and in supporting the exits of households from emergency accommodation into homes.

During 2019, 5,971 adults and their associated dependants exited homelessness into homes, a 16% increase on 2018.

In line with Rebuilding Ireland's objective to provide more suitable emergency accommodation for families experiencing homelessness, 33 family hubs had been brought into operation by the end of 2019. These family-focused facilities offer a greater level of stability than is possible in hotels, while suitable homes are identified and secured. The setting also allows for more intensive supports to be provided where they are needed in areas such as welfare, health and housing services.

The Homelessness Inter-Agency Group continued to oversee the coordinated response to homelessness by the various Government Departments and Agencies involved in providing homeless services.

The Group includes representatives from the Department, the local authorities, the Department of Health, the Department of Justice and Equality, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the Health Service Executive, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Department of Education and Skills and Tusla.

A National Homelessness Consultative Forum was established during 2019. The Forum includes representatives of service provider organisations in addition to the members of the Homelessness Inter-Agency Group. Its first meeting took place in April 2019. This Forum will meet every six months to provide a forum for engagement between the Government Departments and State Agencies involved in the delivery of homeless services and the NGOs operating in this area.

A National Quality Standards Framework (NQSF) for homeless services was introduced nationally during 2019. The Framework ensures a more consistent response to the needs of those experiencing homelessness and seeks to improve the quality of services provided to individuals, families and their children accessing emergency accommodation. The Framework has been fully implemented in the Dublin region and is being implemented on a phased basis nationally with a view to being fully implemented nationally during 2020.

The Framework is designed to ensure that the services provided to individuals and families experiencing homelessness are well organised, coordinated, integrated and focused on moving people out of homelessness into homes as quickly as possible. The implementation of the Framework will ensure the consistent delivery of high-quality services nationally, with the ultimate objective of minimizing the amount of time spent in emergency accommodation.

Significant progress was made in the delivery of Housing First nationally, with service delivery arrangements put in place in each of the homeless administrative regions. Housing First enables people who may have been homeless and who have high levels of complex needs to obtain permanent secure accommodation with the provision of intensive supports to help them maintain their tenancies. A Housing First National Implementation Plan was published in September 2018.

By the end of 2019, 412 individuals had been housed under Housing First, including 172 individuals over the course of 2019.

Funding of €165m was provided to local authorities in Exchequer funding towards the provision of homeless services in 2019.

Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund

The Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF) is a measure designed to activate housing supply by putting in place enabling off-site public infrastructure. This can relieve critical infrastructural blockages to enable the delivery of housing on key development sites and improve the economic viability and purchaser affordability of new housing projects.



Summary details of the projects, which will provide for the delivery of approximately 20,000 homes across the lifetime of the programme, are published on the Rebuilding Ireland website at the following link: <http://rebuildingireland.ie/lihaf/>.

To the end of 2019, a total of 2,162 homes were completed across eight sites, of which 145 were Part V/Social and 925 were Cost Reduced/Affordable units.

Two LIHAF projects are now fully complete with one substantially complete. A further ten projects are in construction and with two having approval to go to construction. It is anticipated that further projects will reach construction stage in 2020.

Standardising Social Housing

In the interest of standardising the approach to social housing design across the country and achieving good quality housing and value for money, two projects have been identified, as set out below.

Employer's Requirements

A working group was established in 2018 by the Department and the local authority sector to develop a high-level national specification for social and affordable housing. The group issued an 'Employer's Requirements' document in September 2019.

The purpose of the document is to set out the general quality of materials, finishes and fittings to be provided in social or affordable housing, both houses and apartments, funded in whole or in part by the Department.

It is aimed at local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies and will facilitate greater consistency across the country when it comes to social housing.

The document also sets out guidance on the preparation of tender documents for best cost and programme control.

Standard Layouts

The Department is also preparing standard internal design layouts for social housing. It is intended to assist in controlling costs by providing general guidance on economic design and sample internal layouts that demonstrate how a variety of house types and apartments can be designed to meet the Department's target floor areas (set out in 'Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities').

Also included are sample site layouts, which demonstrate how efficient design and density in modest 2 – 4 storey developments (as well as apartments) can reduce both land and services costs per dwelling. The draft document is nearing completion and is expected to issue for pre-consultation with local authorities in 2020.

Long Term Social Housing Leasing

The Enhanced Long Term Social Housing Scheme is aimed at long-term institutional investors that can deliver at scale. The first contracts under the scheme were signed in 2019 and the year also saw the first completed units delivered, a significant step forward in the leasing programme.

Over 2019, the Department, assisted by the Housing Agency, rolled out the Leasing Practitioners' Forum, aimed at providing local authorities with training and support in the leasing programmes. This interaction is a two-way process and, as a result, the Department was able to further refine the standard template leasing documents across all leasing schemes to further reflect the needs and challenges of local authorities. The role of the Housing Agency was also expanded to provide a central support for local authorities in operating the scheme and the introduction of an end-to-end leasing service, providing legal and technical advice to local authorities. The increased interest in leasing, both from the local authority sector and the supply side, will result in the delivery of much-needed homes on long-term 25-year contracts.

Payment and Availability (P&A) and Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF)

Following on from the formal review of the Payment and Availability (P&A) and Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF) funding arrangements undertaken in 2018, the implementation of the recommendations was commenced.

The central role of the AHB sector is acknowledged under Rebuilding Ireland and the P&A-CALF funding remains a key delivery mechanism in achieving targets set out within the plan.

The review was necessary to ensure that the funding arrangements are fit for purpose and can support the delivery of projects, in particular build projects, to maximise value for money for the Exchequer and for the AHB sector, and to enhance co-operation between AHBs and local authorities.

The recommendations and updated processes came into operation in Q3 2019. They focused on financial budgeting metrics, P&A Payment Indexation, recommendations around inclusion of communal facilities, revisions to processing of start-up costs, as well as procedural and administrative changes. The successful roll-out of these recommendations was done with continued engagement with the various stakeholders including the Housing Agency, Local Authorities, and AHBs along with their representative bodies.

Housing for People with a Disability and Older People

National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability (NHSPWD)

‘The National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability (NHSPWD) 2011-2016’ is a joint strategy with the Department of Health which sets out the Government’s broad framework for the delivery of housing for people with disabilities through mainstream housing options. Building on the commitment given in the 2016 Programme for Government to meet the housing needs of people with disabilities, the NHSPWD was re-affirmed in Rebuilding Ireland and extended to 2020 to continue to deliver on its aims. The Strategy will be reviewed in 2020.

The Implementation Monitoring Group (IMG) for the Strategy, which is representative of all stakeholders, monitors progress bi-annually and publishes an annual report.

The fifth Progress Report on the implementation of the Strategy is available on the Department’s website at <https://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/policy/people-disability/housing-people-disability>

Housing for Older People - Housing Options for Our Ageing Population Policy Statement

The policy statement '[Housing Options for Our Ageing Population](#)' is a joint statement published by the Department and the Department of Health in February 2019. The policy statement builds on actions for the housing of older people as outlined in **Rebuilding Ireland** and the **National Planning Framework**.

It puts in place 40 tangible, time bound actions to achieve a more evidence based, integrated system of mapping and delivering housing for older people, with health supports, where required, that will meet the differing needs identified in the research.



Housing Options for Our Ageing Population Policy Statement



Housing Adaptation Grants

The Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability are aimed at facilitating changes needed to make homes suitable for a person with a physical, sensory, intellectual disability or mental health difficulty and to enable these people to remain living independently in their own homes for longer.

Demand for the grants has been consistently high since their launch in 2007. Some 100,000 older people and people with a disability have benefitted from the scheme and in many cases premature entry to residential care has been avoided. This benefits the State significantly through avoided costs in the health sector.

- In 2019, some 10,011 households benefitted from the grants at a total cost of over €69.5 million.
- An increased budget of €73.75 million has been announced for the grants in 2020.
- The 'Housing Options for our Ageing Population' policy statement emphasises the Department's commitment to streamlining the application process and ensuring that grants are more accessible to applicants.

The Department met with all 31 local authorities and stakeholder groups during 2019 to review the detailed administration of the grants. This comprehensive review informed the development of a streamlined application process for the grants from January 2020, using a single application form to cover all three grants. This update will make them more user friendly and accessible, as well as also improving the consistency of approach to their implementation nationwide.

Regulation of the AHB Sector

The Housing (Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies) Bill was published in July 2019 and signed into law on 23 December 2019. The Act will establish a Regulator to oversee the effective governance, financial management and performance of voluntary and cooperative housing bodies. Until such time as statutory regulation is introduced, regulation of the sector will continue in the form of the Voluntary Regulation Code administered by the interim Regulation Office.

As of 31 Dec 2019, a total of 282 AHBs have signed up to the Code including all the larger Tier 3 AHBs.

Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan

The Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan (RIHL) was launched on 1 February 2018. It allows low-income first time buyers aged between 18 and 70 who cannot secure a mortgage from a commercial lender, to access sustainable mortgage finance to enable them to purchase a new or second-hand property, or undertake a self-build, within a suitable price range.

Applicants must be in continuous employment for a minimum of two years (primary earner) or one year (secondary earner). For single applicants, the income limit is €50,000, rising to €75,000 for joint applicants.

Applicants may obtain up to 90%, depending on their capacity to repay, of the cost of purchasing or building a house to the maximum value of €320,000 in the Greater Dublin area, Cork and Galway and €250,000 in all other areas. In 2019, local authorities could offer a first tranche of fixed-rate annuity finance to eligible borrowers at rates of 2.0% and 2.25% per annum, for twenty-five and thirty years, respectively.

The scheme is set up in accordance with regulations approved by the Minister with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, under which a credit policy has been issued setting out the criteria applicants must comply with to be eligible for a loan.

The Housing Agency provides a central support service which assesses loan applications that are made to the local authorities and makes recommendations to the authorities as to whether loans should be offered to applicants. Local authorities make the final decision regarding approval at a local level and each local authority has established a credit committee for this purpose. By the end of 2019, provisional figures show that 1,553 loans with a value of €268.7m had been drawn down under the scheme.

Lending by the Housing Finance Agency

The Housing Finance Agency (HFA) provides long-term fixed-rate finance to local authorities and approved



HFA

An Ghníomhaireacht
Airgeadais Tithíochta
Housing Finance Agency

**Building
Social Housing**

housing bodies (AHBs) for the provision of social housing, and to higher education institutions (HEIs) for the provision of student accommodation. HFA loan advances to AHBs more than doubled from €283m in 2018 to €634m in 2019. These loans supported the delivery of 2,561 new homes. AHB loan approvals also rose from €615m in 2018 to €694m in 2019.

The HFA continues to avail of long term, competitive fixed and variable rate finance from the NTMA, European Investment Bank (EIB), Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB), local authorities and others. The HFA arranged a new long-term Finance Contract with the EIB for €200 million in December 2019.

The pace of lending to local authorities was not at the level of AHB growth, however this loan portfolio has returned to positive net lending as local authorities again begin to draw down significant funding for housing with gross advances of €343m in 2019.

In 2019, the HFA's first university loan of €60 million for the development of new student accommodation was drawn down by UCD. Further growth in this portfolio is anticipated in 2020 and beyond, as projects reach building phase.

The Report of the Expert Panel on Concrete Blocks

The Report of the Expert Panel on Concrete Blocks was published in June 2017 and included eight recommendations, which the Department is actively progressing with the relevant stakeholders, prioritising the implementation of Recommendations 1 and 2.

With regard to Recommendation 1, a standardised protocol was published by the NSAI on 13 November 2018 and 'I.S. 465:2018 - Assessment, testing and categorisation of damaged buildings incorporating concrete blocks containing certain deleterious materials', is available at www.nsai.ie.

The standard can be used to assess and categorise the damage in properties where the concrete blocks are suspected to contain the minerals mica or pyrite. Previously, there was no common way for engineers or homeowners to assess the damage caused by defective concrete blocks, in order to decide what, if any, remedial work could be carried out.

With regard to Recommendation 2, the Department has been in contact with Engineers Ireland in relation to the establishment of a register of competent engineers for homeowners/affected parties' reference. In June 2019, Engineers Ireland established such a register, which is available at <https://www.engineersireland.ie/Professionals/Communities-Groups/Find-a-member/Specialist-Registers-and-Panels/IS-465-register-Concrete-Blocks-and-Mica>

The register lists Chartered Engineers, who have the necessary direct professional experience, competence and specialist training in accordance with the requirements set out in I.S. 465:2018.

In October 2018, the Government approved in principle the development of a grant scheme (including the necessary regulations) of financial assistance to support affected homeowners in the counties of Donegal and Mayo to carry out the necessary remediation works to dwellings that have been damaged due to defective concrete blocks.

The full terms and conditions of the scheme were finalised over the course of 2019 in consultation with the Attorney General's Office and the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. Donegal and Mayo County Councils, will operate and administer the scheme which will come into effect early in 2020.

Pyrite Resolution Act 2013

The Pyrite Resolution Act 2013 provides the statutory framework for the establishment of the Pyrite Resolution Board and for the making of a pyrite remediation scheme to be implemented by the Board with support from the Housing Agency. The pyrite remediation scheme is a scheme of "last resort" for affected homeowners who have no other practical option to obtain redress and is limited in its application and scope. The full conditions for eligibility under the scheme are set out in the scheme, which is available on the Board's website at www.pyriteboard.ie

A sum of €32 million was announced under Budget 2019 to fund the operation of the pyrite remediation scheme in 2019. This allocation facilitated the remediation of some 512 additional dwellings in 2019 giving an aggregate total of 1,890 dwellings completed since the scheme was first introduced and is a clear signal of the continuing importance attached by Government to addressing the issue of significant pyritic damage in private dwellings.

The figures available in December 2019 indicate that 2,592 applications had been received under the pyrite remediation scheme. Of the 2,592 applications received, 2,110 dwellings had been included in the pyrite remediation scheme and the applicants notified accordingly.

A further 110 applications had been validated and referred to the Housing Agency for the Assessment and Verification Process, while another 191 applications were at the initial Application and Validation Process. 181 applications under the scheme were not successful.

Rental Sector

The Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019 was enacted in May to enhance security of tenure for tenants and empower the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) to better enforce the rent increase restriction in Rent Pressure Zones (RPZs). The RTB was given new investigation and sanctioning powers to deal with improper conduct by landlords, such as unlawfully increasing rents or terminating tenancies. The Act also restricts the existing exemptions from the RPZ rent increase restriction and introduces criminal offences where a landlord unlawfully increases rents. Annual registration of tenancies will also be required.

Other Rental Sector Reforms

The Strategy for the Rental Sector, published in December 2016, set out a series of measures to be introduced to ensure the quality of private rental accommodation by strengthening the applicable standards and improving the inspection and enforcement systems. The Strategy acknowledged the overall low rates of inspection of the private rental stock and low rates of compliance, as well as the need for greater consistency in approach to implementation of the regulations across local authorities.

The Strategy recognises the need for additional resources to be provided to local authorities to aid increased inspections of properties and ensure greater compliance with the Regulations. Provision was made for €2.5 million of Exchequer funding to be made available to local authorities in 2018 for this purpose, increasing to €4.5 million in 2019 and €6 million in 2020, with the intention of ultimately achieving a targeted inspection rate of 25% of rental properties annually by 2021. The number of inspections undertaken in 2019 was more than double those in 2017. In 2017, 19,645 inspections were carried out, rising to 28,806 in 2018 and 41,018 in 2019. The number of non-compliant dwellings that became compliant in 2017, 2018 and 2019 was 3,329, 5,466 and 7,145 respectively.

Energy Performance of Buildings Directive

The EU Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD), sets requirements at an EU level for Member States to improve the energy performance of buildings and to make an important contribution to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

The European Union (Energy Performance of Buildings) 2019 regulations were signed on 29 April 2019.

These new regulations introduce Nearly Zero Energy Buildings (NZEB) standards for dwellings. In addition, Part F (Ventilation) of the Building Regulations was amended as there is a need for more effective ventilation systems with NZEB buildings. Further draft regulations to introduce infrastructure for electric vehicle charging were published for public consultation.

Goal C - To provide a framework for the sustainable management of water resources from source to sea

New Funding Model for Irish Water

The new funding model for Irish Water, which involves all State funding to Irish Water in respect of domestic water services being channelled through the Department's Vote, continued in operation.

Funding in respect of domestic water services is now being provided to Irish Water by the Exchequer as voted annually by the Oireachtas having regard to the allowed revenue determination by the Commission for the Regulation of Utilities (CRU). In setting the allowed revenue, the CRU distinguishes between the non-domestic and domestic sectors. The element relating to the domestic sector falls to be funded by the Department, save for any revenue arising from the excessive usage charge. In overall terms, some €1.2 billion was required to meet the cost of domestic water services in 2019 of which €646m related to capital investment and €562m in respect of operating costs. Payments are processed having regard to receipt and review of monthly financial reporting packs from Irish Water.

Replacement of Irish Water's Commercial Borrowings

In April 2017, the Report of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Future Funding of Domestic Water Services recommended that Irish Water's current commercial loan facility be reviewed and replaced, where possible, with State lending facilities by arrangement with the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA). This followed on from a Government decision in October 2016 that Irish Water's external debt facilities should be replaced, where possible, with more competitively priced State funded debt facilities. In 2019, Government decided to replace Irish Water's existing commercial debt and provision for future borrowings.

Implementation of the Government Decision is underway on a phased basis as follows:

- Phase 1 (completed in December 2019) replaced Irish Water's existing debt for the domestic water sector with State equity funding of €758m, as determined by the Minister and the Minister for Finance, by way of a capital contribution from the Minister for Finance;

- Phase 2 is to replace Irish Water's existing debt for the non-domestic water sector with a State loan facility, through a Central Fund loan from the Minister for Finance, and to provide that the Central Fund loan facility will also be available to Irish Water for future non-domestic sector borrowing requirements, with the required amount and other terms of this loan facility to be determined by the Minister and the Minister for Finance; and
- Phase 3 is to meet Irish Water's short-term working capital funding requirements in the future through a loan facility under the NTMA's Central Treasury Service, subject to the necessary legislative amendments.

General Scheme of Water Environment (Abstractions) Bill

The General Scheme of the Water Environment (Abstractions) Bill was approved by Government and submitted for pre-legislative scrutiny in December 2019. The legislation is being brought forward to bring Ireland into compliance with the EU Water Framework Directive and modernise the regime for water abstractions which is outdated and limited in scope, being based on legislation enacted in 1942 and 1964. The General Scheme provides for a registration, licensing and control regime for water abstractions. The proposed provisions in the Bill are to be administered by the Environmental Protection Agency. The General Scheme proposes a risk-based, three-tier system. The requirements will be graduated and proportionate, based on the amount of water being abstracted, as follows:

- all abstractions will be obliged to abide by General Binding Rules and provide that an abstraction must be undertaken in an environmentally sustainable way;
- abstractions of 25 cubic metres or more per day will be required to register with the EPA (as is the case currently);
- licensing will be required for abstractions of 250 to 1,999 cubic metres per day deemed by the EPA to be in an area at risk from abstraction, and all abstractions of 2,000 cubic metres or more per day.

Regulations providing for a system for the registration of water abstractions were introduced in 2018, with those abstracting greater than 25 cubic metres per day required to register online.

By the end of 2019, a total of 1,542 abstractions had been registered, with the greatest number (1,028) being in respect of drinking water. The Bill will establish the register in primary legislation. The Bill will modernise provisions for abstractions by Irish Water and by others, and give necessary environmental protections to water sources.

Irish Water Transformation

A programme of transformation is underway with Irish Water, based on the need to evolve the service over time and to avail of opportunities for increased efficiency and effectiveness. Irish Water has proposed fully integrating its operations and ending the current operational arrangements for the delivery of water services through service level agreements with local authorities. The principle of one single publicly owned national water services authority is consistent with the



recommendations made by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Future Funding of Domestic Water Services, and the legislative reforms in the Water Services Acts.

The Minister asked the parties, comprising Irish Water, the Local Government sector and the relevant unions to engage in a process to work towards the development of a stable structural and operational framework for the future. This process, assisted by the Workplace Relations Commission, commenced a series of engagements in 2019 between the parties, and will continue through 2020.

The ultimate objective is to ensure that Ireland has modern and effective systems for the delivery of water and wastewater services.

Separation of Irish Water from the Ervia Group

In July 2018, the Government decided that Irish Water would become a standalone publicly owned, commercial, regulated utility separated from the Ervia Group during 2023.

An Inter-Departmental Steering Group was established in February 2019 to oversee and report to the relevant Ministers on the separation of Irish Water from the Ervia Group. The Steering Group is comprised of representatives from the Department, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, Department of Finance, Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, NewERA and Ervia including both Irish Water and Gas Networks Ireland. The Steering Group met on 5 occasions during 2019.

Since its establishment, the Steering Group has devised a Work Programme and identified actions across 6 distinct areas such as Legislation/Legal, Organisation, Governance and Structures, Human Resources, Finance, IT and Facilities, and Communications. The Inter-Departmental Steering Group will continue, in 2020, to oversee the implementation of separation.

Water Services Asset Transfer to Irish Water

The Water Services (No. 2) Act 2013 provides for the transfer, by Ministerial Order, of the property of a water services authority (a City, County or City and County Council) to Irish Water. The process requires that any land transferred to Irish Water must be clearly and unambiguously identified by reference to the Property Registration Authority (PRA) folio number.

During 2019, one order was made transferring 244 water services asset properties from local authorities to Irish Water. In total, 15 Ministerial Orders have been made, from the establishment of Irish Water in 2014 up to the end of 2019, with some 2,638 asset properties having now transferred to Irish Water. The focus has been on the transfer of larger assets, resulting in assets equivalent to 72% of water supply capacity and 80% of wastewater treatment capacity being transferred to Irish Water by end 2019.

Water Use Allowance and Excessive Usage

The Water Services Act 2017 mandated the introduction of charges for the excessive usage of water services in line with the recommendations of the Joint Oireachtas Committee Report on the Future Funding of Domestic Water Services. The Commission for Regulation of Utilities approved the new excessive usage charging policy in July 2019, which Irish Water will begin to implement in 2020. The purpose of charging for the excessive use of water services is to incentivise the fixing of leaks and the conservation of water.

Every household will have a water threshold allowance of 213,000 litres per year, with the cost met by the Exchequer. This allowance is generous and is 1.7 times the average household water use in Ireland. The excessive usage charge has been set at €3.70 for each 1,000 litres above the threshold, to cover combined water and wastewater services. Households in receipt of one of these services will pay half of this amount. A cap of €500 annually is being set on bills, so this is the maximum that could be charged. Households with five or more residents can apply for an additional allowance of 25,000 litres per person, and those with a medical need can apply for an exemption from the charges.

By monitoring annual consumption patterns against the threshold amount, Irish Water will identify households that appear to be using water excessively.

It is intended that the first notices, as required under legislation, will issue during 2020 based on consumption in the twelve months immediately preceding the notice.

Only customers who continue to consume water excessively during the six-month period following the issue of a notice will be deemed to be using water services excessively and become liable for charges for excessive use of water services thereafter. It is estimated that 93% of domestic water customers will not come within the scope of the excessive usage charge.

Reform of Irish Water charges for connections and non-domestic customers

A new Irish Water Connection Charging Policy came into effect on 1 April 2019 having been approved by the Commission for Regulation of Utilities. This relates to the cost charged by Irish Water to connect new developments to the public water and wastewater network. The new standardised charging arrangements replaced 57 different connection charging regimes and over 900 different charges that were set by local authorities before Irish Water was established in 2014. Greater transparency and fairness have been brought to these charging arrangements.

New tariffs for the supply of water and wastewater services to non-domestic customers of Irish Water were also approved in 2019 by the Commission for Regulation of Utilities. The new tariffs are set to become effective during 2020. These customers range from small retail outlets to large manufacturing industries. The new tariff structure will replace 500 charging rates billed in 44 separate areas with a new national 4-band charging system. In total, some 183,000 non-domestic water connections will be subject to the new arrangements.

Revision of Subsidies for Group Water Schemes

In 2019, just over €29.2 million was recouped by the Department to local authorities for subsidy payments made by them to group water schemes as a contribution to the domestic element of the group water schemes' operational and management costs and towards local authority costs in administering the annual subsidy scheme.

The annual subsidy is an integral part of maintaining and improving the quality and reliability of rural water supplies delivered through group water schemes. A further aim is to ensure the principles of equity of treatment and equivalent financial support equally between households on public water supplies (Irish Water) and those households that depend on group water schemes for their household water supply needs.

Revised subsidy rates took effect from 1 January 2018. In particular, the revised and improved rates include a new subsidy with a maximum subsidy of €331 per household, for small schemes of less than 100 houses that are willing, in the interests of providing in the long-term a more sustainable water supply to their members, to progress towards amalgamation and rationalisation with other schemes.

Reform of the Rural Water Sector

i. Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme

In 2019, the Department recouped just under €11.9 million to local authorities for capital expenditure across the eight measures of the Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme 2019-2021 and towards local authority costs in administering the programme.

This multi-annual funding approach, first introduced in 2016, provides greater funding certainty for priority investment needs and supports appropriate planning and sustainable development in rural areas. It also provides a more professional approach to the management of assets as well as for the amalgamation and rationalisation of schemes.

Ultimately, it will assist Ireland to fulfil its commitments under the Water Framework Directive and optimise fulfilment of the drinking water quality requirements of the Drinking Water Directives in group water schemes on a consistent long-term basis.

ii. Rural Water Working Group

In April 2018, the Minister established a Rural Water Working Group to conduct a review of investment needs of rural water services.

There is a two-strand approach to the considerations of the Working Group.

- In 2018, Strand 1 addressed the composition and distribution of funding for the Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme for 2019-2021. The recommendations from the Working Group on the new and improved multi-annual programme to run to 2021 were made to the Minister in late 2018. Implementation of these recommendations began in 2019 and will be completed in 2020 when required legislation related to private individual wells and domestic wastewater treatment systems is passed. €75 million has been provided under the National Development Plan for the new three-year Programme.
- In 2019, Strand 2 commenced, considering the long-term future governance, supervision and resourcing of the Rural Water Sector. This work will continue in 2020, with further recommendations expected to be made to the Minister.

iii. Geographic Information System (GIS)

A new GIS-based registration system for Group Water Systems was piloted in counties Mayo and Galway in 2018 and 2019. Further rollout across other local authority areas is set to take place in 2020.

The new system which contains useful standardised information will aid local authorities in meeting their obligations to maintain a register of water supplies under their jurisdiction. Longer-term it will also provide a national overview of group water scheme activity.

Multi-Annual Developer Provided Water Services Infrastructure Resolution Programme 2019-2021

Findings and recommendations from the National Taking in Charge Initiative were included in a report on the initiative that was published by the Department in December 2018.

The report included guidance on establishing a co-ordinated taking-in-charge programme to progressively address in a sustainable way the issue of taking in charge housing estates that include Developer Provided Water Services Infrastructure i.e. privately owned water or wastewater treatment plants which are operating in a substandard way. A key recommendation was the establishment of a multi-annual funding programme to progressively resolve these issues. The National Development Plan includes provision of €31 million for the period 2018-2021 for these purposes.

In July 2019, the Department launched the Multi-Annual Developer Provided Water Services Infrastructure Resolution Programme 2019-2021. Also in July, the Department invited local authorities to submit their bids for the funding of resolution projects in their functional areas. Funding and allocations for the first projects to be approved under the new programme will be announced in 2020.

River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021

Ireland's River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021 (RBMP) was published in April 2018. The Plan, which was prepared in fulfilment of our obligations under the Water Framework Directive, outlines the measures the State and other sectors will take to improve water quality in Ireland's groundwater, rivers, lakes, estuarine and coastal waters over the period to 2021. The Government aims to protect and improve water quality in 726 of Ireland's 4,829 water bodies over this period.

Outlining a comprehensive and ambitious range of measures for the protection of Ireland's natural water environment, some of the key activities overseen by the Department in 2019 included:

- The improvement in waste water treatment with the continued investment by Irish Water of approximately €1.7 billion in wastewater infrastructure and the progression of projects in 255 urban areas by the end of 2021.
- The work of the Local Authorities Water Programme (LAWPRO), on the identification of pressures on water quality in 190 Areas for Action and the implementation of mitigation measures and community engagement activities.
- The Agricultural Sustainability and Advisory Support Programme. A collaborative approach between the State and the dairy industry to facilitate improvements in water quality. This programme consists of 30 Sustainability Advisers promoting agricultural best practice across the dairy sector.
- A Steering Group of stakeholders and international experts responsible for providing a recommendation on how best to improve fish passage at Parteen and Ardnacrusha on the River Shannon. The Steering Group will report to the Minister in 2020.
- The development of water and planning guidance for local authorities. This guidance will help local authorities to consider the risks to water quality during planning and development decision-making.
- Extension of the Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems grant scheme to assist with the costs of septic tank remediation in High Status water areas.



- A new Blue Dot Catchments Programme to create a network of excellent river and lake areas.
- The establishment of the Waters of LIFE project. Scheduled to run for 7 years and co-funded by the European Commission, the overall purpose of the project is to support the implementation of measures to protect and enhance high-status waters and it will operate as a stand-alone project working in close co-operation with other RBMP work, i.e. the Blue Dot Catchment Programme.

River Basin Management Plan 2022-2027

The Department is currently preparing the third River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for Ireland, to cover the period 2022 – 2027. Now in the third planning cycle, the timely publication of this plan will advance Ireland's commitment to the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD). This plan will provide a coordinated framework for improving the quality of our waters by describing the main pressures and activities affecting water status, setting out the environmental objectives to be achieved up to 2027 and identifying the measures needed to achieve these objectives.

In accordance with the WFD the Department will engage in public consultation at three critical phases in the river basin management process. During 2019 the Department concluded the first consultation on the draft timetable and work programme for the third cycle.

The consultation on the Significant Water Management Issues in Ireland is the second consultation in the development of the plan and was published by the Department in December 2019. In developing the draft consultation document for publication, the Department gathered initial input from various stakeholders. This was achieved through bi-lateral engagements, such as meetings with the EPA, The National Water Forum (An Fóram Uisce) and LAWPRO, and a wider stakeholder event held in Dublin Castle on 19 November.

The publication of this document in December 2019 put Ireland's WFD timetable back on track, following a delay in publishing the second River Basin Management Plan.

Climate Change Sectoral Adaption Plan for Water Quality and Water Services Infrastructure

The Department finalised, with Government approval, the publication of the Climate Change Sectoral Climate Adaptation Plan for the Water Quality and Water Services Infrastructure sectors. This Plan is part of an all-of-Government approach to transitioning to a climate resilient economy. The Plan is an important first step in ensuring that climate change is fully mainstreamed into water policy in Ireland. Presenting an assessment of key future climate risks, the plan outlines the adaptive measures available to build a climate resilient water sector.

Many of the proposed adaptation actions are already underway. Examples of these measures include the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021, Irish Water's forthcoming National Water Resource Plan and the establishment of the Local Authority Waters Programme.

The adaptation plan will inform the design, resourcing and review of policies and measures, and provide strategic direction across the water quality and water services infrastructure sectors.

The Plan is to be viewed as a 'live' document and will be evaluated and reviewed to account for changing science and socio-economic conditions via existing monitoring mechanisms. This will allow tracking and revision of the sectoral priorities as adaptation and mitigation efforts are made across the sectors.



Water Quality and Water Services Infrastructure Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan

Prepared under the National Adaptation Framework



Outputs Monitoring Group

The Outputs Monitoring Group was established by the Department in 2018, in carrying out its role in policy development and financial governance of Irish Water. The Group monitors progress of the delivery of Irish Water's Capital Investment Plan 2017-2019.

The purpose of the Group is to ensure that there is a common understanding of the outputs expected from investment by Irish Water (e.g. in terms of new plants delivered, water supplies taken off the Remedial Action List, progress on leakage

etc.), while respecting the particular statutory roles of the participants in the Group (namely the Department, Irish Water, the CRU, the EPA and NewERA).

The Group met four times over the course of 2019. Its main focus was to review Irish Water's progress against the agreed outputs during the year. This is set out in its 2019 Annual Report, due for publication in mid-2020.

An Fóram Uisce

An Fóram Uisce was established on a statutory basis in June 2018 pursuant to the Water Services Act 2017. The Forum provides an opportunity for stakeholders to debate and analyse a range of issues with regard to water quality, rural water concerns, issues affecting customers of Irish Water and the implementation of the Water Framework Directive. During the course of 2019, its first full operational year, An Fóram Uisce provided inputs to a wide range of statutory and consultation process, including those relating to the Water Framework Directive, Irish Water, the water environment and regulatory processes under the Commission for Regulation of Utilities.

Water Advisory Body (WAB)

The Water Advisory Body (WAB) is an independent State Body set up under the 2017 Water Services Act. The functions of the WAB are to advise the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government on measures needed to improve the transparency and accountability of Irish Water as well as to report quarterly to an Oireachtas Committee focusing on the performance of Irish Water on the implementation of its Strategic Funding Plan.



The WAB published its first quarterly report in 2019.

This report included 11 metrics from which the WAB measured the performance of Irish Water. Subsequent reports will provide updated metrics and focus on various topics considered important by the WAB in relation to Irish Waters' performance.

Marine Environment

A Marine Environment Section was established in the Department in March 2019, merging specific functions of the Water and Marine Advisory Unit and the Foreshore and Marine Environment Unit.

In April work commenced on the second cycle of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive addressing a revised assessment of the condition of the marine environment, a determination of Good Environmental Status and setting new environmental targets. The MSFD Steering Group coordinated this work and it was issued for public consultation in December.

The Microbeads (Prohibition) Bill, 2019 was signed into law by the President on 26 December 2019. This Act makes it an offence to manufacture or place on the market of certain products containing plastic microbeads, including cosmetics, personal care products and household and industrial cleaning products. It also prohibits disposal to natural and artificial water systems and networks.

In 2019, the Minister established an independent group of experts to advise and make recommendations on the process required to extend Ireland's network of marine protected areas (MPAs) to report in mid-2020. The group is made up of experts under the themes (i) Life & ocean sciences, (ii) Economic, social and cultural perspectives, and (iii) Governance & legislation.

Ireland continued to play a leading role in the OSPAR Regional Sea Convention for the Northeast Atlantic. Ireland's chairmanship saw the Commission develop a draft 10-year strategy for adoption in 2020. Ireland also took a lead role in OSPAR work on the forthcoming quality status report (QSR2023) and on Ocean Acidification. In November, Ireland hosted the Autumn OSPAR Marine Litter meeting focusing on the Marine Litter Regional Action Plan.

Goal D - To support and enable democratic, responsive and effective local government, effective electoral management and high-quality fire services and emergency management.

Supporting and Developing Local Government

Following the Government decision in 2018 to approve the papers on **Municipal Governance – Districts, Towns and Electoral Areas, and Local Authority Structures and Governance**, work commenced on developing an alternative to a boundary alteration in the form of statutory cross-boundary urban area committees.



The proposed legislation will apply to any area defined as an 'urban area' lying within the administrative area of more than one local authority that, according to a Census of Population, has a population of between 1,500 and 100,000 and where the population applicable to each of the component local authorities' amounts to at least 15% of the total or 1,500 persons. Urban centres that would immediately meet these criteria are Athlone, Bray, Carlow, Drogheda, Limerick City, Portarlington and Waterford City.

Provisions establishing Urban Area Committees (UACs) were approved by Government and included at Committee Stage of the Local Government Bill 2018. However, the proposal was defeated in the Seanad. A number of issues of concern were raised in the Oireachtas debate and the provisions have since been reworked to address those issues. A revised legislative proposal was ready for Government consideration when the Dáil was dissolved in early 2020.

Work on the alteration between Cork City Council and Cork County Council continued in 2019. The Local Government Act 2019 was passed, and the legal transfer took place on 31 May 2019 which assigned part of the administrative area of Cork County Council to the administrative area of Cork City Council. The local authorities, along with the Implementation Oversight Group continued to plan for the transfer of financial responsibility in 2020.

The Local Government Act 2019 also allowed for the holding of plebiscites at the same time as the Local Government Elections on Friday 24 May 2019 on the question of directly elected mayors with executive functions for Cork City Council, Limerick City and County Council and Waterford City and County Council.

Limerick was the only local authority of the three to vote in favour of having a directly elected mayor for its city as the vote was narrowly defeated in Cork and Waterford.

Supporting Gender Balance and Diversity in Local Government

The Department administered a funding scheme to incentivise political parties to field more women candidates in the 2019 local elections. A separate but related scheme was introduced to support women running as independent candidates. The Department also provided financial support to a number of organisations for training and capacity building of women candidates or those women interested in being candidates for local elections. In the lead up to the 2019 local elections, the Department funded 'Women for Election' to run a hugely successful social media campaign promoting the role of councillor for women.

The Department also funded the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi) to mark the 120th anniversary of local government by hosting three events. A pilot project was launched to facilitate women in rural areas to engage the resources and training needed for a role in politics. Longford Women's Link / 5050 North West were funded to provide training courses and a promotional campaign for women specifically in rural areas, pre-election. Funding was also provided for the NWCi to conduct research to build a stronger evidence base in relation to the obstacles and barriers faced by women. The NWCi commissioned a research project that commenced immediately after the 2019 local elections, which explored the experiences of women seeking to enter local politics. The report was launched in November 2019 and will help inform future policy decisions. A copy of the report can be found at

https://www.nwci.ie/learn/publication/women_beyond_the_dail_more_women_in_local_government.

The Department also funded the Immigrant Council of Ireland to conduct research into the experiences of migrant candidates in the 2019 Local Elections. The report is due to be completed in 2020. A call for funding issued in late 2019 to all local authorities for initiatives that would work towards the goal of increasing the presence of women and individuals from diverse backgrounds in local government in 2024 and beyond. Fifteen proposals were selected from ten different Local Authorities in December 2019, with the projects to commence in 2020.

Local Authority Corporate Plans

Preparation of multi-annual Corporate Plans and implementation of associated monitoring and review arrangements are long-standing features of management practice in local authorities in Ireland. The Corporate Plan is a local authority's strategic framework for action for the duration of the plan (2019-2024). In August 2019, following a consultation process with local authorities and other Departments, the Department issued new guidelines to assist local authorities when drafting their Corporate Plans.

Independent Review of the Role and Remuneration of Local Authority Members

In June 2018, Ms Sara Moorhead S.C. was commissioned to undertake an independent review of the role and remuneration of Local Authority Elected Members. An interim report was submitted to the Department in November 2018 and has since been published.

In progressing the review during 2019, the Department surveyed all local authority elected members and sought financial information from all local authorities. There was also extensive consultation with individual councillors, councillor representative organisations, local authorities, political parties and other stakeholders. A desk-based examination of the remuneration regimes of local representatives in other jurisdictions was also carried out.

Code of Conduct for Councillors

Part 15 of the Local Government Act 2001 sets out the ethical framework for local government and imposes a statutory duty on all in the local government service to maintain proper standards of integrity, conduct and concern for the public interest. The Minister may issue codes of conduct under Part 15 for further guidance or to help to uphold public confidence in the integrity of the local government system. First issued in 2004, the Code of Conduct was updated during 2019 to take account of developments over the last 15 years, such as social media, GDPR, regulation of lobbying, etc. In reviewing the Code, the Department undertook a statutory consultation with both the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Standards in Public Office Commission, and with councillor representatives and local authorities.

The updated and revised Code of Conduct for Councillors was published in June 2019. Councillors are required to sign an annual declaration that they have read and understood the Code and will be guided by its principles.

Local Government Finance

The basis for the distribution of Local Property Tax (LPT) to local authorities remained unchanged in 2019. 80% of LPT was retained locally to fund services and the remaining 20% was re-distributed to provide equalisation funding to local authorities with lower property tax bases due to the variance in property values and density across the country. Local authorities received LPT allocations of €503 million in 2019

Local authorities also received €86m in funding from the Department to assist with the additional payroll costs associated with the unwinding of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest legislation and the cumulative effect of implementing National Pay Agreements up to and including the Public Sector Stability Agreement.

The Department continued its monitoring and oversight of the financial performance of local authorities throughout 2019. This included reviewing the key financial indicators in their financial reports (Budgets and Annuals Financial Statements) and working with local authorities to address issues impacting on their finances.

Commercial Rates

The Local Government Rates and Other Matters Act 2019 was passed by the Oireachtas and enacted on 11 July 2019. The purpose of the Act is to modernise the collection of rates, which are a vital source of funding for local authorities. It includes provisions updating collection procedures and facilitating the introduction of rates waiver schemes.

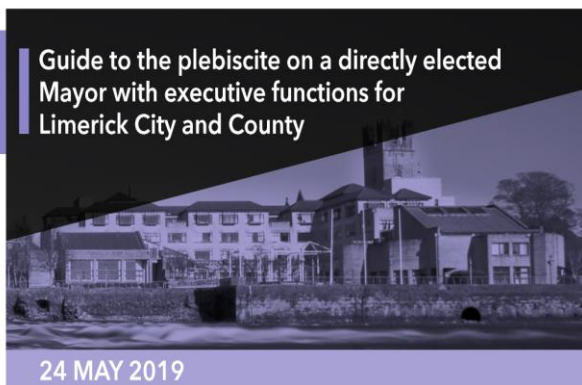
Directly Elected Mayor with Executive Functions

The Local Government Act 2019 provided for the holding of plebiscites in Cork City Council, Limerick City and County Council and Waterford City and County Council.

Plebiscites were held in the three local authority areas concerned on 24 May 2019, the same day as the local elections and the proposal was passed in Limerick City and County Council only.



Guide to the plebiscite on a directly elected Mayor with executive functions for Limerick City and County



Under Section 44 of the Local Government Act 2019, the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government is required to prepare and submit to the Houses of the Oireachtas a report with legislative proposals for a directly elected mayor with executive functions for Limerick, within two years of the plebiscite vote,

An implementation advisory group, comprising representatives of the key stakeholders in Limerick, particularly the elected Council and management of Limerick City and County Council, was formed towards the end of 2019. Their role is to advise on the implementation of the mandate given by the people of Limerick.

Local Government Boundary Alterations

The Local Government Act 2019 was enacted on 31 January 2019 and permitted the transfer of part of the administrative area of Cork County Council to the administrative area of Cork City Council. This facilitates further development within a new City Council boundary, while also incentivising higher density development and reducing the risk of urban sprawl.

The extended City area now includes Ballincollig, Carrigrohane, Blarney, Glanmire and Cork airport. The population of the city has increased from 125,657 to 205,000 and the extended area facilitates the Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework targeted rate of growth for Cork city of at least 105,000 more people by 2040.

Local Authority Governance of Ports

Pursuant to National Ports Policy 2013, which recommended that designated ports of regional significance should be transferred to more appropriate local authority led governance structures, the Department engaged with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and Wexford County Council to ensure the successful transfer of responsibility for New Ross Port to the Council in August 2019.

Local Authority Staffing

There were some 29,174 full-time equivalent posts in local authorities at end 2019.

National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management

The key role of the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management (NDFEM) centres on the development and oversight of local authority provided fire services. The Directorate has also played a key role in devising and developing all aspects of emergency management arrangements in Ireland since it was established in 2009.

The NDFEM has supported local authorities in achieving fire safety and consistent quality fire services for their communities in 2019. Capital funding amounting to €12.2 million was recouped to local authorities in the course of 2019 for Fire Stations, Fire Service Equipment and Fire Service Vehicles. Extensive Fire Safety training programmes were managed and co-ordinated by the NDFEM and delivered to the Fire Services throughout 2019.

Fire Safety Promotions activities were also managed and co-ordinated by the NDFEM in 2019, in line with the National Framework Policy document “Keeping Communities Safe”.

Furthermore, the recommendations of the 2017-18 High Level Fire Safety Task Force which reassessed fire certain aspects of fire safety in Ireland (arising out of the tragic Grenfell Tower Fire in London) were progressed during the year.

In relation to Emergency Management the NDFEM prepared a review report on the severe weather events of 2017/18, which was published in 2019. The report records the events and the response and identifies learning points to further enhance the response to major emergencies.

Electoral Management

The Department provided legislative and operational support for the European Parliament and local elections; a referendum on the dissolution of marriage; and plebiscites on the direct election of a mayor (in Cork, Limerick and Waterford) in May 2019; as well as for four Dáil bye-elections in November 2019. Ballot Paper Templates, which enable blind and visually impaired voters to vote independently, were made available for the first time at the European Parliament and local elections, the plebiscites and at the Dáil bye-elections.

The European Parliament Elections (Amendment) Act 2019 was enacted to provide for a new constituency configuration based on electing thirteen members to the European Parliament at the elections held on 24 May 2019. This was an increase of two MEPs, in preparation for the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union.

Over the course of the year, the Department worked closely with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on the development of the Thirty-ninth Amendment of the Constitution (Presidential Elections) Bill 2019. The Bill, which proposes to amend the Constitution to provide for an extension of the right to vote at Presidential elections to citizens resident outside the State, was published by the Tánaiste in mid-September 2019. A Referendum Commission was established by order of the Minister on 26 September 2019 to explain the subject matter, promote awareness of and encourage the electorate to vote at the proposed referendum.

The Department made significant progress towards the establishment of an Electoral Commission for Ireland in 2019. Electoral commissions are public bodies charged with carrying out several electoral functions. On 17 July 2019, the Government approved the establishment of an Electoral Commission on a statutory basis which would bring together these functions in an independent, dedicated public body. It also approved the drafting of a General Scheme of an Electoral Commission Bill.

This was developed by the Department in the following months and approved by Government on 17 December 2019. The General Scheme sets out organisational, governance and accountability structures which provide for an independent Electoral Commission, which is directly accountable to the Oireachtas.

It provides for the Electoral Commission's initial remit to comprise existing electoral functions, including the Register of Political Parties, the Referendum Commission, the Constituency Commission and Local Electoral Area Boundary Committees.

The General Scheme also provides for a new research and advisory function which will inform Government and the Oireachtas in their consideration of reform to electoral law. In addition, a new voter education function would see the Commission develop the means to enhance participation in our democratic processes.

Further to the approval of the incoming Government, the General Scheme will be referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government for pre-legislative scrutiny.

Work to modernise the electoral registration process progressed in 2019. This project will give effect to measures that will lead to a more efficient, user-friendly voter registration system that will be easier for people to engage with and for administrators to manage, while also being secure from internal or external interference.

In December 2019, following an extensive public consultation, details of which can be found at <https://www.housing.gov.ie/local-government/voting/register-electors/modernisation-electoral-register-ireland-summary-report>, the Government approved a set of policy proposals to modernise the voter registration process and the drafting of a General Scheme of a Bill to give effect to the modernisation project. Further to the approval of the incoming Government, the General Scheme will be referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government for pre-legislative scrutiny.

The policy proposals included the introduction of a rolling register to be continuously updated; the use of Personal Public Service Numbers (PPSNs) to verify identity; introduction of individual and online registration; provisions for data sharing and data matching; formation of a centralised database; simplification of forms and processes; pre-registration of 16/17 year olds; provisions for anonymous registration for persons at risk and for people with no fixed address; and the abolition of the edited register.

Goal E - To serve society through the production and communication of reliable weather and climate information to protect life and property and to further enhance Met Éireann's role as the authoritative voice on Meteorology in Ireland.



Met Éireann has continued to implement its 10-year strategy “Making Ireland Weather and Climate Prepared” by ensuring the ongoing maintenance and development of meteorological infrastructure to meet the evolving requirements of weather and climate services.

Weather and Climate Services

Met Éireann continued its collaboration with the national meteorological services of Iceland, Denmark and Holland working towards a joint implementation of numerical weather prediction systems on a jointly procured High Performance Computer (HPC). The HPC which will be procured by the collaboration known as United Weather Centres West will be operational in January 2023.

The capability and performance of forecasts was enhanced when the Ensemble Prediction System and the radar precipitation advection scheme both became operational during 2019.

Met Éireann provided meteorological advice and support to the National Emergency Co-ordination Group in the lead up to and during 2019's severe weather events.

The meteorological and environmental monitoring programme at Valentia Observatory was expanded with the addition of further instrumentation.

Aviation Services

A Met Éireann project to ensure compliance of meteorological services to aviation with the EU Common Requirements Regulation is ongoing and is scheduled to be completed in 2020. Designation as Ireland's Meteorological Service provider for ICAO Annex 3 services was retained by Met Éireann during 2019.

National Flood Forecasting

The Flood Forecast Division of Met Éireann has worked closely with the OPW on developing a new national flood forecasting system. Met Éireann and the OPW continued work during 2019 on a project to select the optimal operational fluvial (river) flood forecast model for the Flood Forecast Centre (FFC), the operational element of the Flood Forecast Division.

A Communication Strategy for the National Flood Forecast Warning Service has been developed. The aim of the strategy is to effectively disseminate flood information to the relevant stakeholders. This has been developed with input from the OPW and many other stakeholders of the service, including local authority representatives.

Infrastructure

A Radar Network modernisation project has commenced with a substantial scoping exercise underway. A number of significant IT projects were completed improving diversity and resilience of Met Éireann's infrastructure. These included the migration to a new virtualised environment, upgrading the backup system for mission critical systems and the implementation of dual fibre connectivity at Met Éireann's Glasnevin location to improve diversity and resilience.

Research

In collaboration with partners, Met Éireann continued to develop and expand its engagement on research projects to support development of climate services and aviation services. The Met Éireann Research Call Programme was established in 2019.

Corporate Information

Corporate Governance

The Department is committed to the following Governance Principles:

- Good governance supports a culture and ethos which ensures behaviour with integrity, a strong commitment to ethical values, and respect for the rule of law;
- Good governance ensures openness, effective public consultation processes and comprehensive engagement with domestic and international stakeholders;
- Good governance helps to define priorities and outcomes in terms of sustainable economic and societal benefits and to determine the policies and interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of these priorities and outcomes;
- Good governance means developing the Department's capacity, including the capability of the leadership team, management and staff;
- Good governance means managing risks and performance through robust internal control systems and effective performance management practices; and,
- Good governance means implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, communications, audit and scrutiny to deliver effective accountability.

The Department's Corporate Governance Framework, which was devised in accordance with the Civil Service Renewal Programme, sets out how these principles are applied and is available on the Department's website.

Internal Audit

The Department's Internal Audit Unit completed three internal audits and six audit reviews/ follow-ups during 2019. The Department's Audit Committee held four meetings during the year.

Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty

Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 requires all public bodies to promote equality, prevent discrimination and protect the human rights of its staff and customers alike. This responsibility is known as the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty and is a legal obligation. In 2019, the Department's internal working group, continued to address the implementation of our Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.

In this regard an assessment of the Department as an employer was conducted in November by the Human Resources division.

Irish Language Commitments

The Department remained committed in 2019 to providing services in Irish and/or bilingually to its customers as set out in our Irish Language Scheme 2017 - 2020, and to the statutory obligations arising on foot of the Official Languages Act, 2003.

In 2019, the Department translated 113 reports, press releases and policy documents to Irish. The Department sought submissions on a new Irish Language Scheme in November 2019.

Freedom of Information & Access to Information on the Environment

In 2019, the Department received 309 Freedom of Information requests. Of these 88 requests were granted; 98 were part-granted; 70 were refused; 13 lapsed due to the non-payment of fees; 39 were withdrawn and 1 was transferred. In addition, it received 14 requests under the Access to Information on the Environment regulations. Of these 2 requests were granted; 6 were part-granted; 5 were refused and 1 was transferred.

Quality Customer Service

This Department is committed to providing the highest quality service to all its customers. Our Customer Charter and our Customer Service Action Plan outline the standards of service you can expect to receive whether you contact us by phone, email, letter or in person. The Department aims to resolve all queries within 15 days, unless there are particular reasons why this cannot be done. In 2019, the Department received 556 queries to our quality customer service mailbox. An analysis of queries indicates that 90% of queries were resolved within the 15-day time-frame.

Details of our Charter and Plan are available on www.housing.gov.ie/corporate/customer-service/quality-customer-service.

Parliamentary Questions	2017	2018	2019
Questions Received	3,575	3,638	3,286
Questions Answered ¹	3,349	3,307	2,776
Type of Question Answered:			
Oral	432	401	411
Written	2,917	2,906	2,365
Topical Issues Debates			
	185	185	134
Commencement Matters			
	75	83	89
Representations and Invitations			
Representations ²	3,946	3,749	3,515
Invitations ³	633	1,077	896

¹ The remainder of questions were disallowed, withdrawn or transferred.

² Represents totals from Minister's and Ministers of State's Offices.

³ Represents totals from Minister's and Ministers of State's Offices.

Human Resources - WELL, Our People Strategy

The People Strategy for 2018-2020, 'WELL', was launched at the 100th meeting of the Department's Partnership Committee on 12 July 2018. The strategy contains over 50 separate actions across the four themes/pillars of Wellbeing, Engagement, Learning & Development and Leadership. Actions rolled out in 2019 included:



- 'Town Hall' meetings set up as cyclical events with meetings held in all locations twice a year
- Engagement Action Plan formulated in response to the 2017 Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey
- The establishment of an LGBT+ Staff Network
- RÉALTA staff recognition award ceremony held annually
- Staff led health and fitness initiatives
- Mentoring programme embedded in the organisation
- Draft 'career and capability framework' App, with links to organisational job clusters, in development by subgroup of the L&D implementation group
- Assistant Principal network launched
- Business Partnering embedded in the organisation

Staff Numbers

The number of staff serving in the Department at year-end 2019 equated to 782.21 Whole Time Equivalent posts. 168 staff were recruited and promoted through a variety of different routes in 2019, including internal promotion and open competitions.

Staff also continued to avail of a range of work/life balance schemes, as set out below:

	Number of staff
Parental Leave	77
Study Leave	33
Work-sharing	96
Shorter working year	79
Career break	11
Carer's leave	4

Training and Development

All staff are supported to avail of development opportunities identified through the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS), which is used as a key tool in support of improved organisational performance, with an 81% compliance rate achieved in 2019.

Our training and development practices assist staff in improving current and future performance by helping them to acquire the skills, knowledge, and qualifications required of a competitive workforce.

Under the L&D Priority of our People Strategy we are building capability and capacity through the provision of relevant and appropriate training across all grades and Departmental locations.

With our embedded Mentoring programme, we are supporting staff as they develop critical skills and attributes in the role of an effective mentor & mentee.

Support is provided to staff undertaking formal education in subjects relevant to their work through our Refund of Fees Scheme and dedicated learning structures, and our Refund of Professional Fees Scheme ensures staff have access to membership of accredited and professional bodies as required.

In 2019, staff members undertook studies in areas such as housing, law, finance, statistics, human resources management and economics, areas which have been identified as priorities for the business needs of the organisation.

Apprenticeships in the Public Sector

The Department is participating in the national pilot ICT Apprentices, ICT Associate Professional Software Developer Apprenticeship, and ICT Associate Professional Network Engineer Apprenticeship programmes.

The Department is also participating in the national Public Sector Accounting Technician Apprenticeship.



Civil Service Financial Management Shared Services

The Department's planned transition to the Civil Service Financial Management Shared Services (FMSS) in 2019 did not take place due to a decision by the National Shared Services Office (NSSO) to postpone the FMSS launch in 2018 to allow for a full system design review to be carried out.



The Department continued its support to the NSSO for the FMSS project by assisting with the system design review during 2019.

Prompt Payment

In 2019, the Department paid 89.15% of all invoices within 15 calendar days, and 99.16% of all invoices within 30 calendar days.

In respect of the year overall, the Department incurred late payment interest charges of €742. The value of all late payments as a percentage of all invoiced payments in 2019 was 0.52%. In addition to the late payment interest, compensation costs amounting to €2,630 were paid in 2019.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Legislative Activity in 2019

Relevant Acts of the Oireachtas in 2019

Local Government Act 2019 (Number 1 of 2019)

European Parliament Elections (Amendment) Act 2019 (Number 7 of 2019)

Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019 (Number 14 of 2019)

Local Government Rates and other Matters Act 2019 (Number 24 of 2019)

Microbeads (Prohibition) Act 2019 (Number 52 of 2019)

Housing (Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies) Act 2019 (Number 47 of 2019)

Citizens' Assemblies Act 2019 (Number 25 of 2019)

Statutory Instruments in 2019

S.I. No. 6/2019 - County of Louth Local Electoral Areas And Municipal Districts (Amendment) Order 2019

S.I. No. 7/2019 - County of Wicklow Local Electoral Areas And Municipal Districts (Amendment) Order 2019

S.I. No. 8/2019 - County of Meath Local Electoral Areas And Municipal Districts (Amendment) Order 2019

S.I. No. 12 of 2019 - Planning and Development Act 2000 (Exempted Development) Regulations 2019

S.I. No. 20/2019 - Local Government Act 2019 (Commencement) Order 2019

S.I. No. 23/2019 - Environment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2011 (Commencement) Order 2019

S.I. No. 24/2019 - Local Government Act 2001 (Commencement) Order 2019

S.I. No. 25/2019 - Local Government Act 2019 (Transfer Day) Order 2019

S.I. No. 27/2019 - City of Cork Local Electoral Areas Order 2019

S.I. No. 28/2019 - County of Cork Local Electoral Areas And Municipal Districts Order 2019

- S.I. No. 68/2019 - Referendum Commission (Establishment) Order 2019
- S.I. No. 75/2019 - European Parliament Elections Regulations 2019
- S.I. No. 76/2019 - Electoral (Amendment) Regulations 2019
- S.I. No. 77 of 2019 - European Union Environmental Objectives (Surface Waters) (Amendment) Regulations 2019
- S.I. No. 81/2019 - Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 (Part 5) Regulations 2019
- S.I. No. 104 of 2019 - Housing (Financial Assistance) Regulations 2019
- S.I. No. 117 of 2019 - European Parliament Elections (Amendment) Act 2019 (Commencement) Order 2019
- S.I. No. 118/2019 - Local Elections (Disclosure of Donations And Expenditure) Act 1999 (Period For Reckoning Election Expenses) Order 2019
- S.I. No. 121/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Limerick City East) Order 2019
- S.I. No. 122/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Navan) Order 2019
- S.I. No. 133/2019 - Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018 (Commencement) Order 2019
- S.I. No. 134/2019 - Planning and Development Act 2000 (Part IIB) (Establishment Day) Order 2019
- S.I. No. 137/2019 - Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2019
- S.I. No. 153/2019 - Electoral (Supplement to the Register of Electors) Regulations 2019
- S.I. No. 154/2019 - Appointment of Special Adviser (Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government) Order 2019
- S.I. No. 156/2019 - County of Tipperary Local Electoral Areas And Municipal Districts (Amendment) Order 2019
- S.I. No. 157/2019 - County of Kerry Local Electoral Areas And Municipal Districts (Amendment) Order 2019
- S.I. No. 162/2019 - Direct Election of Mayor Plebiscite Regulations 2019
- S.I. No. 183 of 2019 - European Union (Energy Performance of Buildings) Regulations 2019

- S.I. No. 196/2019 - Elections (Ballot Paper Template) Regulations 2019
- S.I. No. 214/2019 - Electoral Act, 1992 (Section 165) Regulations, 2019
- S.I. No. 220/2019 - European Parliament Elections (Amendment) Act 2019 (Commencement) (No. 2) Order 2019
- S.I. No. 235 of 2019 Planning and Development Act 2000 (Exempted Development) (No.2) Regulations 2019
- S.I. No. 236/2019 - Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019 (Commencement) Order 2019
- S.I. No. 263 of 2019 - Building Regulations (Part F Amendment) Regulations 2019
- S.I. No. 286/2019 - Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019 (Commencement) (No. 2) Order 2019
- S.I. No. 287/2019 - Residential Tenancies Act 2004 (Prescribed Form) Regulations 2019
- S.I. No. 292 of 2019 - European Union (Energy Performance of Buildings) (No.2) Regulations 2019
- S.I. No. 308/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Ardee) Order 2019
- S.I. No. 309/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Arklow) Order 2019
- S.I. No. 310/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Athenry - Oranmore) Order 2019
- S.I. No. 311/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Athlone) Order 2019
- S.I. No. 312/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Dundalk - Carlingford) Order 2019
- S.I. No. 313/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Dundalk South) Order 2019
- S.I. No. 314/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Fermoy) Order 2019
- S.I. No. 315/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Gorey) Order 2019
- S.I. No. 316/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Gort - Kinvara) Order 2019

S.I. No. 317/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Graiguecullen - Portarlinton) Order 2019

S.I. No. 318/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Kells) Order 2019

S.I. No. 319/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Kilkenny) Order 2019

S.I. No. 320/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Limerick City North) Order 2019

S.I. No. 321/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Limerick City West) Order 2019

S.I. No. 322/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Midleton) Order 2019

S.I. No. 323/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Portlaoise) Order 2019

S.I. No. 324/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Trim) Order 2019

S.I. No. 325/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Waterford City East) Order 2019

S.I. No. 326/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Waterford City South) Order 2019

S.I. No. 340/2019 - Housing, Planning and Local Government (Delegation of Ministerial Functions) Order 2019

S.I. No. 353/2019 - Residential Tenancies Act 2004 (Prescribed form) (No. 2) Regulations 2019

S.I. No. 354/2019 - Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2019 (Commencement) (No. 3) Order 2019

S.I. No 355 of 2019 - Local Government Rates and Other Matters Act 2019 (Commencement) Order 2019

S.I. No. 417/2019 - Citizens' Assemblies Act 2019 (Commencement) Order 2019

S.I. No. 418/2019 - European Union (Environmental Impact Assessment and Habitats) (Section 181 Of The Planning and Development Act 2000) Regulations 2019

S.I. No. 478/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Carlow) Order 2019

S.I. No. 479/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Macroom) Order 2019

S.I. No. 481/2019 - Electoral (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations 2019

S.I. No. 482/2019 - Seanad Electoral (Panel Members) (Prescribed Forms) (Amendment) Regulations 2019

S.I. No. 483/2019 - Seanad Electoral (University Members) (Prescribed Matters) (Amendment) Regulations 2019

S.I. No. 484/2019 - Referendum Commission (Establishment) (No.2) Order 2019

S.I. No. 510/2019 – Water Services Act 2017 (Commencement) Order 2019

S.I. No. 558/2019 - Valuation Act 2001 (Cavan County Council) (Rate Limitation) Order 2019

S.I. No. 559/2019 - Valuation Act 2001 (Fingal County Council) (Rate Limitation) Order 2019

S.I. No. 560/2019 - Valuation Act 2001 (Louth County Council) (Rate Limitation) Order 2019

S.I. No. 561/2019 - Valuation Act 2001 (Monaghan County Council) (Rate Limitation) Order 2019

S.I. No. 562/2019 - Valuation Act 2001 (Tipperary County Council) (Rate Limitation) Order 2019

S.I. No. 563/2019 - Valuation Act 2001 (Meath County Council) (Rate Limitation) Order 2019

S.I. No. 564/2019 - Valuation Act 2001 (Wexford County Council) (Rate Limitation) Order 2019

S.I. No. 565/2019 - Valuation Act 2001 (Wicklow County Council) (Rate Limitation) Order 2019

S.I. No. 598/2019 - Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016 (Section 4) Order 2019

S.I. No. 644/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Baltinglass) Order 2019

S.I. No. 645/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Cobh) Order 2019

S.I. No. 646/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Piltown) Order 2019

S.I. No. 647/2019 - Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Strandhill) Order 2019

S.I. No. 648/2019 - European Union (Citizens' Initiative) Regulations 2019

S.I. No. 680/2019 - Water Services (No. 2) Act 2013 (Property Vesting Day) Order 2019

APPENDIX 2: Publications in 2019

The main publications produced by the Department during 2019 are detailed below:

European Parliament Election Results 2019

Referendum Results - 1937 – 2019

Draft National Marine Planning Framework

Marine Planning Policy Statement

Housing Supply Coordination Task Force Returns Q3 2019

Housing (Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies) Act 2019 - Frequently Asked Questions

Housing (Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies) Act 2019 – Note

Cyber Security Strategy 2019 - 2021

Overview of Defective Concrete Blocks Grant Scheme

Homelessness Quarterly Performance Report- Q4 2019

Homeless Report- December 2019

Voting in the 2020 General Election – FAQs

Ministerial Direction - Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019 – 2031

"Building a Sustainable Community" – Report on Scoping Exercise for Inchicore / Kilmainham

Review Report on Severe Weather Events 2017 – 2018

Modernisation of the Electoral Register in Ireland – Summary of the Report of the Public Consultation

Modernisation of the Electoral Register in Ireland – Report of Public Consultation

Social Housing Construction Status Report Q3 2019

Summary of Social Housing Assessments 2019 (SSHA)

Guide to Fire Safety in Existing Traveller Accommodation

Homelessness Quarterly Progress Report Q3 2019

Homeless Report- Oct 2019

Housing Supply Coordination Task Force For Dublin – Report Q2 2019

Conclusions of the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government on the Review of the Strategic Housing Development Process - October 2019

Operation of the Strategic Housing Development Process 2017-2019 - Report of the Review Group September 2019

Homeless Report – September 2019

Water Quality and Water Services Infrastructure - Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan

National Lottery Funding – 2018

Construction Industry - Be Prepared for a "No Deal" Brexit – FAQs

Local Authority Accounting in Ireland – Code of Practice and Accounting Regulations - July 2019

Homelessness Quarterly Progress Report (April-June 2019)

Guidance Note for Local Authorities for Regulating Short Term Letting

Report of the Working Group on Short Term Lettings

Resource Efficiency Action Plan

Report of the Expert Review Group on Traveller Accommodation - July 2019

Housing Supply Coordination Task Force for Dublin – Report Q1 2019

Technical Guidance Document L- Conservation of Fuel and Energy – Dwellings

Installation and Commissioning of Ventilation Systems for Dwellings - Achieving Compliance with Part F 2019

Technical Guidance Document F - Ventilation (2019)

Report on the development of cost optimal calculations and gap analysis for buildings in Ireland under Directive 2010/31/EU on the Energy Performance of Buildings (recast)- Non-residential Buildings (2019)

Cork Boundary Alteration Implementation Oversight Committee Implementation Plan

Plebiscites for Directly Elected Mayors - Frequently Asked Questions

The guide to the plebiscite on a directly elected mayor with executive functions for Waterford City and County

The guide to the plebiscite on a directly elected mayor with executive functions for Limerick City and County

The guide to the plebiscite on a directly elected lord mayor with executive functions for Cork City

Directly Elected Mayors with Executive Functions

Notice of the Minister to Sligo County Council pursuant to section 177AB(3) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 Re: Registry Reference PL18/210 – Proposed Upgrading of Lough Talt Water Treatment Plant (IROPI)

Submission to the European Commission pursuant to Section 177AB(5) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 with respect to the Adoption of Compensatory Measures as required in Article 6(4) of Council Directive 92/43/EEC (the 'Habitats Directive') relating to Sligo County Council Registry Reference PL18/210 – Proposed Upgrading of Lough Talt Water Treatment Plant

Additional Publications from Met Éireann in 2019

Monthly Climate and Weather Statements

Conference proceedings, scientific reports, book chapters and other publications by Met Éireann staff members:

- Gleeson E, Whelan E [editors], Nicole Beisiegel, Frédéric Dias, Eadaoin Doddy, Lisette Edvinsson, Emily Gleeson, Edward Graham, Ludvig Isaksson, Frank McDermott, Kristian Pagh Nielsen, Semjon Schimanke, Conor Sweeney, Per Undén, Jonathan Webb, Eoin Whelan, Liam Woods, 'MÉRA Workshop Proceedings', Met Éireann, 2019-12-15
- Clancy C., Daly C., Darcy R., Gleeson E., Hally A., Whelan E. Met Éireann Updates. ALADIN-HIRLAM Newsletter 12: 67-75, 2019

Peer-reviewed academic journal articles by Met Éireann staff members:

- Falzoi, S., Gleeson, E., Lambkin, K., Zimmermann, J., Marwaha, R., O'Hara, R., Green, S. and Fratianni, S. (2019), Analysis of the severe drought in Ireland in 2018. *Weather*, 74: 368-373. doi:10.1002/wea.3587
- Blunden, J. and D. S. Arndt, Eds., 2019: "State of the Climate in 2018". *Bull. Amer. Meteor. Soc.*, 100 (9), Si–S305, doi:10.1175/2019BAMSStateoftheClimate.1. Contributions by S. Spillane

- Frogner, Inger-Lise, Ulf Andrae, Jelena Bojarova, Alfons Callado, Pau Escribà, Henrik Feddersen, Alan Hally et al. "HarmonEPS – the HARMONIE ensemble prediction system", Wea. Forecasting, doi:10.1175/WAF-D-19-0030.1
- Emily Gleeson, Colm Clancy, Laura Zubiate, Jelena Janjić, Sarah Gallagher, Frédéric Dias: "Teleconnections and Extreme Ocean States in the Northeast Atlantic Ocean" <http://hdl.handle.net/2262/86149>

Additional Publications from NOAC and WAB in 2019

National Oversight and Audit Commission

- Local Authority Satisfaction Survey 2019 - July 20
- Local Authority Performance Indicator Report 2018 – September 2019;
- Development of the Strategy and Framework Work Programme 2020 – 2022 - November 2019;
- Multi Annual Work Programme 2020-2022 - November 2019;
- Public Spending Code Local Authority Quality Assurance Report 2018 – December 2019.

Water Advisory Body

- Water Advisory Body Quarterly Report 1 2019

The Water Advisory Body publishes its reports on its website www.wateradvisorybody.ie.

APPENDIX 3: Public Consultations undertaken in 2019

Public Consultation on the Significant Water Management Issues for the third cycle River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2022-2027

Public Consultation on the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC) - Article 17

Public Consultation on the revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines

Public Consultation on the General Scheme of the Housing and Planning and Development Bill 2019

Public Consultation on the Review of Building Regulations Part L (Conservation of Fuel and Energy) and European Union (Energy Performance of Buildings) Regulations

Irish Language Scheme 2020-2022: Request for Submissions

Public Consultation on the Draft National Marine Planning Framework

Public Consultation on the 2019 amendment to Technical Guidance Document C, 1997

Public Consultation on the review of the planning provisions regarding Strategic Housing Developments

Public Consultation on the additional guidance to Technical Guidance Document B, 2006

Public Consultation on the Marine Planning Policy Statement

Public Consultation on the Draft Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan for Water Quality and Water Services Infrastructure

Public Consultation on proposals to modernise the Electoral Registration Process

Public Consultation on a Regulatory Impact Analysis on the Establishment of an Electoral Commission

Transboundary Environmental Public Consultation on the Wylfa Newydd Nuclear Power Plant, Anglesey, North Wales, UK

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