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Supporting the
Four Pathways:
Enabling a
Sustainable
Housing
System

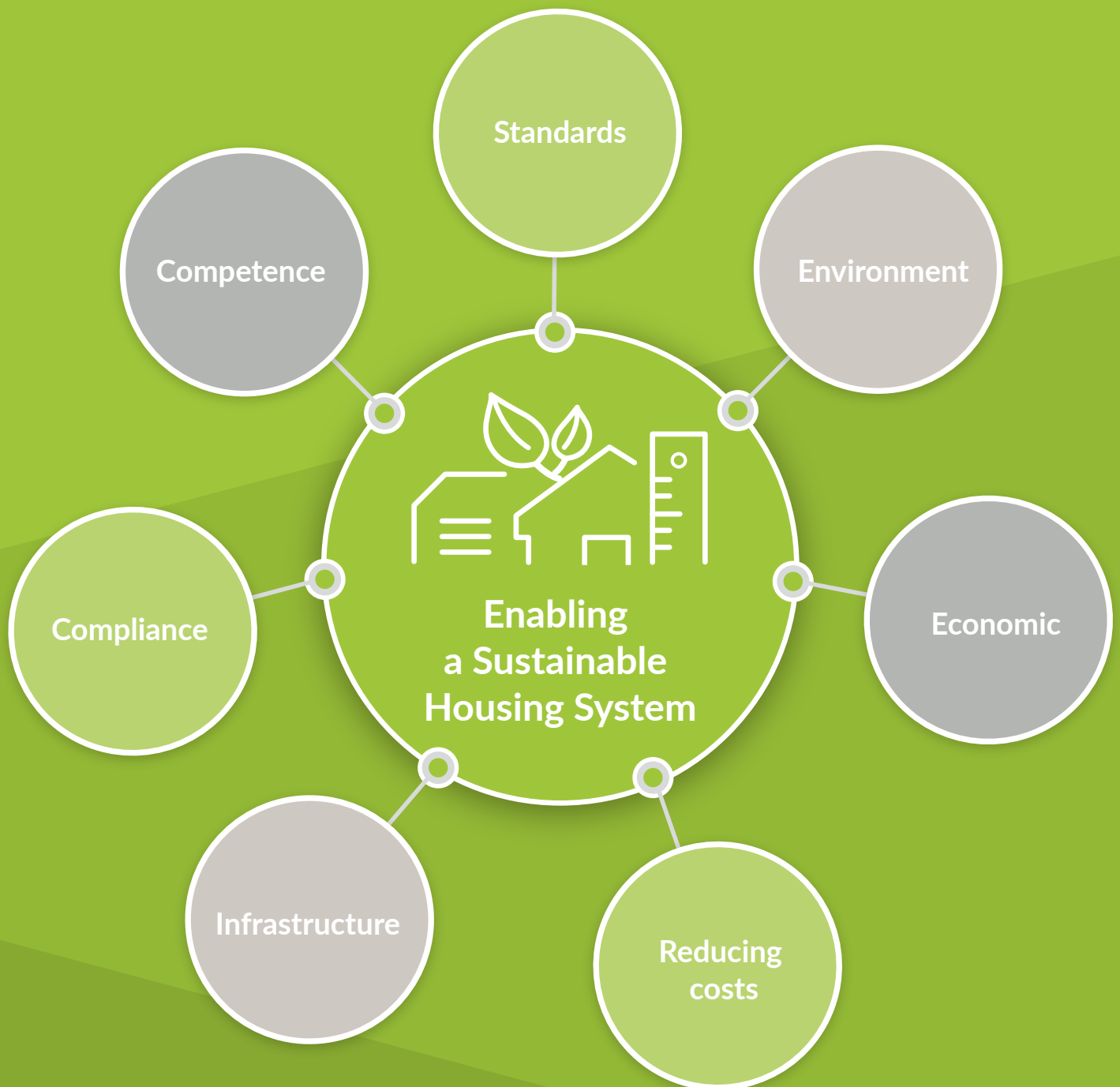


Figure 17:
Supporting the Four Pathways:
Enabling a Sustainable Housing System

5 Supporting the Four Pathways: Enabling a Sustainable Housing System

- New measures supporting Environmental, Social and Economic Sustainability.
- Improved operational capacity across Local Authorities and agencies.
- Coordinated Government review of residential construction costs.
- A residential focus and whole-of-Government co-ordination for the Construction Sector Group and the Construction Technology Centre to drive innovation and productivity and to reduce residential construction costs.
- Improved building compliance.
- Attract large-scale firms and support small and medium-sized builders.
- Invest €4.5bn in water infrastructure to 2025, including projects to support new housing development



Sustainability is an underlying and enabling seam across the four pathways in **Housing for All**. Our vision for Ireland's housing system over the longer term is to have a pipeline of housing supply, built in the right locations, with economic, social and environmental sustainability built into the system. Regulatory reforms will be introduced to ensure that our planning system is plan-led and fit for purpose, delivering on the objectives of the NPF and supporting the pathways to **Housing for All**. We will drive compliance across the construction and housing sectors to ensure confidence in these sectors. The cost of residential construction will be a specific focus, with a view to identifying and implementing cost reducing innovations and productivity measures. We will build capacity across all of the State delivery bodies connected with housing delivery, including Local Authorities and State agencies. Housing cannot be delivered without sufficient investment in water infrastructure. In addition, other critical supporting infrastructure, including transport, utility supplies and communication networks, must be in place. Development and expansion of these go hand-in-hand with housing delivery. All of these areas must function together effectively to provide a sustainable system that meets the housing needs of all.

5.1 Ensure Environmental Sustainability

The actions in **Housing for All** have been developed in support of the objectives and targets of the NPF and the Climate Action Plan. In line with established sustainability and compact urban growth policies, a greater proportion of residential and mixed-use development needs to be delivered within the existing

built-up areas of our cities and towns.

Compact growth contributes to a low-carbon climate resilient society. It also means targeting a greater proportion of development to take place in settlements of all sizes, through urban infill and the re-use of brownfield lands. Higher densities and shorter travel distances will minimise transport demand, and therefore lower energy demand.

A plan-led approach to housing delivery will ensure greater public participation at the earliest possible stage and this is a key principle of environmental sustainability and in the assessment of the environmental implications of development. This approach will result in increasing the long-term visibility and certainty for housing development proposals that deliver compact urban growth firmly grounded in established planning policy, legislation and guidance.

Ireland's homes are responsible for one quarter of our overall energy use and 10% of our overall greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Reducing the amount of energy and fossil fuels we use in our homes is an important part of the government's Climate Action Plan.

All of the new homes built during the lifetime of this Plan will be built to Nearly Zero Energy Building (nZEB) standards. In addition, **Housing for All** will also assist the DECC to deliver the retrofit of 500,000 homes by 2030 to a B2 BER or Cost Optimal equivalent, through the direct retrofit of 36,500 Local Authority-owned homes by 2030 (including 2,400 in 2021, of which 750 form part of the Midlands Retrofit Programme). The DECC will introduce a targeted retrofit scheme for AHBs and will enable Local

Authorities to provide low-cost retrofit loans to individual homeowners. A roadmap to implement minimum BER standards for private rented dwellings will also be introduced for rental properties commencing in 2025, subject to feasibility assessments.

The LDA has a specific commitment to sustainable communities and best environmental practice and is leading the

implementation of several pilot projects related to the re-use of existing buildings, sustainable use of construction materials and district heating, which will feature in the Climate Action Plan 2021.

The Heritage Division of the DHLGH is also developing a guide for the Energy Efficiency Retrofit of Traditional Buildings, which will support the re-use of existing buildings.

Housing Policy Objective 21:

Drive environmental sustainability in our housing stock

No.		Timeline	Lead
21.1	Continue a joint approach in respect of the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS), to ensure more widespread and consistent implementation	Ongoing	DHLGH, DTransport
21.2	Retrofit 2,400 social homes in 2021, 750 of which relate to the Midlands Retrofit Pilot	Q4 2021	DHLGH, LAs
21.3	Increase funding to Local Authorities in order to retrofit 36,500 Local Authority-owned homes to B2 BER / Cost Optimal equivalent by 2030 per NDP	Q4 2021	DHLGH
21.4	Implement Built Environment Actions in Climate Action Plan 2021	Q4 2022	DHLGH
21.5	Construct an average of 33,000 nZEB homes each year to 2030	Ongoing	DHLGH
21.6	Retrofit 500,000 homes by 2030 to a B2 or Cost Optimal BER standard	Ongoing to 2030	DECC
21.7	Introduce a targeted energy efficiency retrofit scheme for AHBs	Q1 2022	DECC, SEAI
21.8	Develop a new Local Authority Energy Efficiency Retrofit Loan proposal for homeowners, supported by the Housing Finance Agency	Q4 2021	DECC, LAs, Housing Finance Agency

5.2 Support Sustainable Communities

The creation of sustainable communities has been an enduring goal of housing policy in recent decades. Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work. They meet the diverse needs of existing and future residents, are sensitive to their environment and contribute to high quality of life. They are safe and inclusive, well planned, and offer equality of opportunity and good services for all. Various guidelines issued by the DHLGH support this policy (*Quality Housing for Sustainable Communities (2007): Best Practice Guidelines for Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities; and Planning Section 28 Guidelines on Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas*).

The NPF sets out a high-level policy priority of building resilience in terms of re-use, adaptability and accessibility in our housing stock, ensuring integration to deliver vibrant sustainable communities. National Policy Objective 28 of the NPF mandates planning for a more diverse and socially inclusive society that targets equality of opportunity and a better quality of life for all citizens through improved integration and greater accessibility in the delivery of sustainable communities and the provision of associated services.

In this context, the Government commits to continuing the policy of having mixed-tenure communities, including through the mechanism of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, to ensure that social and affordable housing are part of the mix across housing developments.

Reforms to Part V, referred to in Pathway 1, will effectively double the current obligations and will provide for social, affordable and cost rental homes alongside private housing.

To improve residential quality and support the objectives of the NPF, namely promoting compact, sustainable and liveable settlements, the DHLGH will develop Section 28 Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Sustainable and Compact Settlement Guidance, which will consolidate existing guidance in this area.

To support the delivery of sustainable communities, the DHLGH and the DRCD will develop new guidance on achieving the most appropriate tenure mix within communities, including guidance on engagement with communities. In addition, guidelines for Local and Economic Community Plans (LECPs) will require Local Authorities to consider housing needs when formulating both the economic and community elements of their LECP.

The housing needs of island communities will be fully considered in the development of the forthcoming National Policy for the Islands.

Housing Policy Objective 21:

Drive social sustainability and foster sustainable communities

No.		Timeline	Lead
22.1	Reform Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 to ensure that the tenure mix is a minimum of 10% for social housing and provide for a further 10% for affordable housing and Cost Rental	Q3 2021	DHLGH
22.2	Develop new guidance on achieving the most appropriate tenure mix within communities, including guidance on engagement with communities	Q2 2022	DHLGH, DRCD
22.3	Develop new guidelines for Local and Economic Community Plans that will require Local Authorities to consider housing needs when formulating both the economic and community elements of their LECP	Q2 2022	DRCD, DHLGH
22.4	The housing needs of island communities will be fully considered in the development of the forthcoming National Policy for the Islands	2022	DRCD, DHLGH



5.3 Achieve Economic Sustainability

The housing system needs to be placed on a long-term economically sustainable footing. The identification of a national housing need for an average of 33,000 homes per annum to 2030 through the NPF and the HNDA Framework will help in this regard, as will the introduction of Land Value Sharing and Urban Development Zones. However, costs associated with residential construction remain high and need to be tackled to enable a functioning housing market, particularly for apartment construction.

5.3.1 Reduce Residential Construction Costs

The Government and relevant State agencies will advance methods to reduce residential construction costs, particularly the cost of apartment construction, by increasing the focus of existing and planned construction-related initiatives on the residential construction sector, and by ensuring a coordinated, whole-of-government, approach to residential construction.

In this regard, the Government will enhance the intended role of the new Construction Technology Centre (CTC)¹⁸, which is under development, beyond the standard remit of Technology Centres in general for its first three years of operation in order to prioritise

residential construction, in particular by incorporating:

- structures and funding to enable innovation in residential construction prior to the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) compliance processes, including demonstration, certification, standardisation and commercialisation as well as research and development;
- a proactive role in strengthening the residential construction value chain;
- promotion, development and support for innovation / modern methods of construction (MMCs) using digital and manufacturing technology;
- support for SMEs to develop scale and to adopt MMCs and Building Information Modelling (BIM) techniques for residential construction; and
- support for digitisation in the manufacturing sector for residential construction e.g. digitally controlled manufacturing equipment.

This will be complemented by an increased focus for the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform-led Construction Sector Group (CSG)¹⁹ on the residential construction sector. This will include the introduction and full implementation of a pipeline of cost reducing innovations and productivity measures, in line with its established remit to improve productivity and efficiency, and to control price inflation. The CSG is made up of representatives

¹⁸ *The Technology Centre programme is a joint EI / IDA initiative, funded by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment through Enterprise Ireland. Enterprise Ireland is in the process of establishing a Construction Technology Centre, in consultation with stakeholders.*

¹⁹ www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/cae030-construction-sector-group/

of key industry bodies, as well as senior representatives of relevant Government departments and agencies with responsibility for policy and for the delivery of infrastructure and is chaired by the Secretary General of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The group reports to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

The work by the CSG will incorporate an analysis and value engineering exercise for each component of cost of construction (including cost of compliance) of house and apartment development, with a view to reducing cost (including cost of compliance) and increasing standardisation. It will be informed by conducting construction cost comparisons with comparable EU economies such as Denmark, Austria and the Netherlands. It will also identify opportunities for cost reduction for consideration by relevant Government departments and industry. The study will be a shared Construction Sector Group and Government initiative with agreed terms of reference, which the DHLGH will then facilitate.

The work of both the CTC and the CSG will be led and funded centrally by the State. Industry partners will also contribute funding and be involved at all stages of the process, but it is clear that the leadership of the State is needed to address the shortfall in construction sector productivity and innovation that has been manifest for several years.

5.3.2 Support Construction Innovation through Enterprise Agencies

The role of enterprise agencies will be expanded to include the provision of funding and supports for innovation and productivity-related projects in the domestic residential construction sector, in compliance with State Aid rules. Funding for research and innovation will be increased to a level commensurate with the scale of construction in the domestic economy by 2024. Existing construction product assessment processes will be enhanced to deliver a holistic construction product assessment for the residential sector, expanding the successful NSAI Agrément approach, and construction research programmes across third-level institutes will be coordinated to ensure synergies are leveraged and overlaps avoided.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE) will engage with international construction firms. This will be done through IDA Ireland or otherwise via trade shows / events and through leveraging diplomatic networks, with the support of the Department of Foreign Affairs, to encourage participation in the Irish market. The DETE will also work in conjunction with the DHLGH to strengthen the supply chain by securing EU-level Strategic Value Chain priority status for nZEB construction.

The DETE, supported by the DHLGH, will promote a culture of innovation in residential construction. This will be achieved through, *inter alia*:

- development of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC);
- establishment of a Centre of Excellence Demonstration Park for MMC;
- publication of exemplar case studies of MMC developments;
- development of design for manufacture guidance for industry so that dwellings are suitable for MMC; and
- creation of a Government construction website to promote initiatives in construction.

This work will be underpinned by the development of Key Performance Indicators for MMC and Cost of Construction, which will be reported on quarterly. The public sector will continue to provide exemplar projects to help with the capacity building process through public tenders for innovations such as rapid delivery housing and design and development of low-carbon buildings and will support enterprises to reduce cost of materials in construction. Initiatives such as standardised design to better facilitate MMC at scale and lean construction management education will be rolled out.

5.3.3 Improve Governance of Construction Initiatives

The response to challenges in the construction sector is currently spread across multiple Government departments, State agencies and industry bodies. The need for a unifying structure that has oversight and

governance of the full breadth of issues and desired outcomes, as well as the executive and institutional supports to influence their achievement, has become critical to addressing the housing crisis.

The interdependencies within and between the various groupings addressing construction challenges is not always clear. As a result, opportunities to advance the productivity and innovation agenda in residential construction are being jeopardised. In addition, further issues, such as the weakness in the construction sector supply chain, are not being specifically addressed by any one body. It is clear that an end-to-end oversight of the full residential construction sector supply chain is needed, from initial concept-level innovation to implemented compliance and further use, and that any conflicting objectives must be addressed.

A new **Housing for All** Delivery Group, comprised of relevant Secretaries General, will include a dedicated sub-group focussed on enhancing capabilities and capacities within the residential construction sector, with the aim of raising productivity and lowering costs. This sub-group will ensure that initiatives associated with innovation and productivity, skills and capacity, enterprise support, standards and compliance and sectoral engagement, are fully aligned with the objective of reducing the cost of construction of apartments and houses, leading to demonstrable change in these costs. This sub-group will be comprised of Secretary Generals from relevant departments and will be overseen by the Department of the Taoiseach [see further Chapter 7].

Housing Policy Objective 23:

Drive economic sustainability and reduce Construction Costs

No.		Timeline	Lead
23.1	Enhance the remit of the Construction Technology Centre and the Construction Sector Group for the next three years to include a focus on residential construction	Q4 2021	DETE, DPER, DHLGH, D/Taoiseach
23.2	Conduct an analysis and value engineering exercise for each component of cost of construction (including cost of compliance) of house and apartment development, informed by cost comparisons with comparable EU countries	Q2 2022	DHLGH, CSG
23.3	Establish a sub-group of the Housing for All Delivery Group to ensure that initiatives associated with innovation and productivity, skills and capacity, enterprise support, standards and compliance and sectoral engagement, including the CTC and CSG, are fully aligned with the objective of reducing the cost of construction of apartments, leading to demonstrable change in these costs	Q4 2021	D/Taoiseach
23.4	Expand the role of enterprise agencies to include funding and supports for innovation and productivity related projects in the domestic residential construction sector, with funding for research, innovation and productivity to be provided, commensurate with the scale of construction in the domestic economy and in compliance with State Aid rules	Q4 2021	DETE
23.5	Enhance holistic construction product assessment processes for the residential sector to facilitate certification of modern methods of construction and the introduction of sustainable construction products and oversight of onsite installation, including through expanding the successful National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) Agrément approach	Q4 2021	DETE, DHLGH
23.6	Engage with international construction firms through IDA Ireland or otherwise via trade shows / events and through leveraging diplomatic networks, with the support of the Department of Foreign Affairs, to encourage participation in the Irish market	Ongoing	DETE, DHLGH
23.7	Build residential construction pipeline to attract international builders	Ongoing	LDA, DHLGH
23.8	Strengthen the construction products supply chain by securing priority status for apartment construction within the EU-level Strategic Value Chain for nearly zero energy building construction and renovation (identified for the next group of value chains to be prioritised)	Ongoing	DETE, DHLGH
23.9	Promote a culture of compliant, good quality sustainable innovation in residential construction through development of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC), including establishment of a demonstration park for MMCs	Q2 2022	DETE, DHLGH

5.3.4 Reduce Construction and Demolition Waste Costs

Construction and demolition (C&D) waste is waste from any building works, demolition and development (including transport infrastructure). Excavated soil and stone is the largest element of construction and demolition waste at approximately 80%²⁰. The remainder includes concrete, brick, tiles, metal, glass, wood, plastic and metal. This represents a huge cost and loss of value to the construction sector as well as resulting in significant volumes of avoidable waste. C&D waste is the largest waste stream in the EU, representing approximately one-third of all waste produced.

Management of C&D waste therefore poses a major challenge to both the construction and waste industries. However, improvements in C&D waste management practices can also offer

many opportunities in terms of reduced environmental and financial costs to the industry and to society.

The Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy (DECC, 2020) commits to the introduction of a recovery levy (applicable on a €5 per tonne basis to recovery activity such as incineration, whether that activity takes place at facilities in Ireland or elsewhere in the EU). At present, the bulk of construction waste is exempt from the landfill levy because, although it goes to landfill facilities, it is used for landfill engineering, which is classed as a recovery activity. However, in parallel with this work, the DECC will ensure that C&D material currently going to facilities as recovery/ landfill engineering is also exempt from the recovery levy when introduced from 1 January 2022 so that there will be no cost impact on the construction sector arising from the introduction of / increase in levies.

Housing Policy Objective 23:

Drive economic sustainability and reduce Construction Costs

No.	Timeline	Lead	
23.10	Provide exemption for Construction and Demolition (C&D) waste from proposed waste recovery levy	Q1 2022	DECC, EPA
23.11	Reduce C&D waste and associated costs by working with the construction industry on demonstration projects to show how best practice (specifically in relation to urban high-rise apartment developments) waste segregation and other waste management measures, can reduce overall C&D disposal costs	Q1 2022 onwards	DECC, EPA, CIF, PII
23.12	Reduce demand for virgin raw materials and support re-use and cost reduction by keeping material out of waste streams through streamlined End-of-Waste and By-Product decision-making processes and national end-of-waste decisions for specific C&D waste streams	Q4 2021	DECC, EPA

²⁰ DECC, (2020) - A Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy | Ireland's National Waste Policy 2020-2025, page 38

5.4 Build Institutional Capacity

The State will build Local Authority and State Agency capacity to cater for increased output levels and complexities of development and delivery process. In parallel, the resourcing of the DHLGH, An Bord Pleanála, the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB), the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) and The Housing Agency needs to reflect the ambition required, both in terms of the scale of delivery and the timeliness of public service actions.

Local Authorities are key enablers of housing within the State, through their planning and economic functions, and their direct responsibility for the delivery of social and affordable housing. They also play a key role in urban and rural regeneration and leading the Town Centre First approach, so that the focus is not only on new supply, but also on tackling vacancy and ensuring the sustainability of communities and the vibrancy of all our cities, towns and villages. Local elected members also have a key role to play in ensuring that the ambition within *Housing for All* is translated into visions for their local areas that are viable and deliverable and meet the needs of both the current and future populations.

The role of AHBs in the delivery of social housing has been enhanced over the past decade. This will continue under *Housing for All*, and has been expanded to include the delivery of Cost Rental homes. As the sector meets the challenges of statutory regulation, it is an opportune time to consider the opportunities that may present. As AHBs continue to provide

a range of housing and broader care and supports for a wide range of our citizens, the DHLGH will support the sector as it innovates to implement new models of organisation, collaboration and management.

The LDA is a step change in the Government's involvement in the housing market. The LDA will work with Local Authorities, State agencies and the private sector and will provide a Centre of Excellence for the delivery of major developments on public land. The DHLGH will ensure that the LDA has access to appropriate levels of funding and resourcing to enable the LDA to act as an active agent of Government.

As part of the extensive range of planning reforms outlined in this plan and reflecting the demands of increased housing output, the resources of An Bord Pleanála will be increased significantly which, allied with its digital agenda, will ensure that the planning system is responsive to growing housing needs.

In order to support the commitments to protect tenants in Pathway 1, additional resources need to be committed to the RTB to ensure that it can continue to play its part, including to facilitate early engagement to prevent disputes escalating to formal RTB dispute resolution, particularly in cases of rent arrears and where a legal tenancy termination/illegal eviction is in prospect. Data-sharing arrangements between the Revenue Commissioners and the Residential Tenancies Board will also be expanded to assist in enforcement of the Residential Tenancies Acts.

The development of capacity and capability relates not only to staff resourcing but also to the appropriate planning of delivery and the digital agenda. Every opportunity will be explored for the use of centres of excellence and shared services to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of delivery.

5.4.1 Support Local Authority Delivery

We will strengthen the capacity of Local Authorities to initiate, design, plan, develop and manage housing projects and to engage in the range of activities to promote living cities and towns, by tackling vacancy and dereliction and supporting regeneration. This requires the resourcing of both the housing and planning services of Local Authorities.

Key supports are being provided through the Housing Delivery Co-Ordination Office (HDCO), which has been established within the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA), to provide co-ordination of Local Authority housing activities. The Housing Agency provides technical support and shared services to the sector.

The HDCO, in partnership with The Housing Agency and the DHLGH, is working with Local Authorities to ensure that they are resourced and supported to deliver both social and affordable homes at scale, both at Local Authority and sectoral level. Additional resources are being made available to Local Authorities to further build focussed housing delivery teams equipped to deliver on the scale of ambition in this Plan for both social and affordable

housing on foot of the HDCO analysis of the additional skillsets and resources required across Local Authorities, including project management skillsets.

In addition, increased funding will be available for a dedicated project management resource for complex large-scale projects (often mixed-tenure) above 250 units. There may be scope for the smaller Local Authorities to share specialist resources where the scale of activity warrants such an approach. Before the end of 2021, we will complete a further structured review of the resources, skillsets and training required to ensure that all necessary resources are in place to design, deliver and implement social and affordable housing projects, in line with the needs outlined in this Plan.

Local Authorities will also need to be sufficiently resourced to meet the increasing demands of the planning system to deliver both the forward planning requirements and consider the applications to deliver some 33,000 homes per annum.

Through the Town Centre First initiative, the necessary supports and enablers required for Local Authorities to lead the development of appropriate visions for towns and to ensure that actions are being taken, are being developed. Supports are being provided to deal with regeneration and vacancy, and these will be integrated into the holistic view of Local Authority capacity and capability requirements to deliver on ***Housing for All***.

To deliver on the new affordable housing targets, The Housing Agency has put in place a dedicated Affordable Housing Unit. Additional resources have also been put in place in the HDCO. The Housing Agency will play a key role supporting the DHLGH in the roll out and progressive development of the Affordable Purchase and Cost Rental schemes, which will be delivered under the Affordable Housing Act 2021.

A new high-level Affordable Housing Delivery Group has been established with representatives from the DHLGH, Local Authorities, the LDA, AHBs, The Housing Agency and the Housing Finance Agency. The role of this group is to agree ambitious and achievable delivery targets and to coordinate and oversee the strategic implementation of the affordable housing programme.

In parallel, the resourcing of the DHLGH, An Bord Pleanála, the OPR and The Housing Agency needs to also reflect the ambition required both in terms of the scale of delivery and the timelines of public service actions.

Finally, there is a clear need to ensure that the appropriate skills are in place and attuned to the evolving agenda. The DHLGH will work with the City and County Management Association (CCMA) and partner agencies to ensure that a tailored programme of capability development is in place to meet the needs of a digitally transformed service delivery.

5.4.2 Support Effective Procurement and Streamline Approval Processes

A renewed focus will be placed on ensuring that the public procurement process supports the efficient delivery of social housing. Additional resources will be provided. The Housing Agency's Procurement and Delivery Unit will provide technical services and supports to Local Authorities. In addition, the HDCO will be further resourced to coordinate Procurement Frameworks.

The DHLGH will review and streamline all approval and other pre-contract processes to accelerate the delivery of Local Authority, AHB and LDA social housing proposals and projects and issue revised sectoral guidance where required, on foot of agreement with the DPER.

The DHLGH will work collaboratively with all delivery partners to ensure that the standard layouts²¹, Employer's Requirements specification²² and standard cost guidelines for social²³ housing are implemented and applied consistently in developing social housing proposals to drive efficient, cost effective design and to assist in further shortening the pre-construction process.

²¹ See *Design Manual for Quality Housing, issued to Local Authorities for consultation in advance of formal publication Q4 2021*

²² <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/49a4c-employers-requirements-for-detail-design-of-quality-housing/>

²³ DHLGH periodically issues Unit Cost Ceilings (UCCs) for each local authority area, for use as a key benchmark for the development and costing of social housing construction scheme designs.

The DHLGH will liaise with the DPER with on the process underpinning the approval of mixed-tenure housing programmes, in recognition of the established need for housing and Government approval of social and affordable housing targets.

The Housing Agency Procurement and Delivery Unit will be expanded and will provide technical services and supports to Local Authorities. The HDCO will support project and programme management by Local Authorities, co-ordinate Procurement Frameworks, support retrofit initiatives and provide support for affordable housing.

5.4.3 Implement the Digital Agenda

The digital transformation agenda for housing and planning forms part of the over-arching commitment of Government to harness technology and innovation so that the Civil Service is more agile in terms of its use of digital technologies and process reengineering and delivers more customer-driven innovative services. This applies equally across the local government sector and other public bodies impacting on housing delivery.

A key element of this will involve the implementation of an integrated solution for the management of the DHLGH housing programmes (Project Díon) within the Department, linking Local Authorities and other key stakeholders. Project Díon will facilitate more streamlined application, approval, funding and

reporting mechanisms through process improvement. It will do this by taking full advantage of digital technologies, standardised data and processes. The implementation phase of project Díon is due to commence in mid-2022.

The DHLGH will also work with the local government sector to examine options for further process improvement, standardisation and digitisation of housing services at local level. This will include housing applications, assessment, allocation, maintenance and refurbishment.

A new e-Planning platform is in development (see also section 3.2.4). In Phase one, the e-Planning platform will provide a single place for online submission of planning applications, which is envisaged to be implemented for all Local Authorities by end of 2022, while the ICT infrastructure and systems for An Bord Pleanála will be upgraded in tandem. Work will continue to standardise the Geographical Information Systems used for planning and zoning across all Local Authorities. Phase 2 will involve automation and standardisation of back-end planning services following on from the updating of planning legislation.

5.4.4 Resource the Approved Housing Bodies Regulatory Authority

The successful role of voluntary regulation of the AHB sector is now transitioning towards statutory regulation, as legislated for in the Housing (Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies) Act 2019, which will provide assurances to tenants, the Government, investors and to the AHB sector itself, that these bodies operate in a well-regulated and stable environment. The Government will ensure that the newly established Approved Housing Bodies Regulatory Authority (AHBRA) is adequately resourced to carry out its functions.

Housing Policy Objective 24:

Build Institutional Capacity across the DHLGH, Local Authority, State Agency and AHB Sectors in order to support *Housing for All*

No.		Timeline	Lead
24.1	Ensure resourcing is available to meet the scale of ambition, while every opportunity will be explored for the use of centres of excellence and shared services to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of delivery	Ongoing	DHLGH
24.2	Promote the digitalisation of housing and planning services, to improve the efficiency of delivery and customer services	Ongoing	DHLGH, LAs, LGMA
24.3	Review and streamline all approval and other pre-contract processes to accelerate the delivery of Local Authority, AHB and LDA social housing proposals and projects and to agree with DPER, a revised sectoral guidance where required	Ongoing	DHLGH
24.4	DHLGH to liaise with the DPER on the process underpinning the approval of mixed-tenure housing programmes, in recognition of the established need for housing and Government approval of social and affordable housing targets	Q4 2021	DPER, DHLGH

Housing Policy Objective 24:

Build Institutional Capacity across the DHLGH, Local Authority, State Agency and AHB Sectors in order to support *Housing for All*

No.		Timeline	Lead
24.5	Work collaboratively with all delivery partners to ensure that guidelines relating to standard layouts, standard specifications and standard cost guidelines for social housing are applied consistently in developing social housing proposals to drive efficient and cost effective public housing design and to assist in further shortening the approvals process	Q4 2021	DHLGH, Local Authorities
24.6	Work with relevant stakeholders to ensure that the AHB sector is positioned to best contribute to the Government's objectives for public housing supply and management	Ongoing	DHLGH, AHBs
24.7	The Housing Agency Procurement and Delivery Unit will be expanded and will provide technical services and supports to Local Authorities, including in procurement, design and modern construction methods	Q4 2021	Housing Agency
24.8	DHLGH will research application of EU procurement rules across Members States in relation to procuring the development of public housing, including any relevant case law and will engage with the OGP to consider options for more flexible approaches to procurement to help expedite social housing delivery	Ongoing	DHLGH, OGP
24.9	The Housing Delivery Coordination Office will be further resourced to support programme and project management by Local Authorities, co-ordinate Procurement Frameworks, support retrofit initiatives and provide support for affordable housing	Ongoing	DHLGH, HDCO
24.10	Implement an integrated housing delivery tracking solution (Project Díon)	2022-2024	DHLGH
24.11	Introduce the new e-Planning Platform (see also Action 13.8)	Q4 2022	DHLGH
24.12	Ensure that the newly-established Approved Housing Bodies Regulatory Authority is adequately resourced to carry out its functions	Ongoing	DHLGH

5.5 Drive High Standards and Quality in Construction

Standards and quality are critically important to people in terms of the building of homes. Everyone should be able to trust that homes are built to the highest standards and that there is an effective oversight process in place to ensure that the mistakes of the past are not repeated.

Our housing system can be improved over the longer term through regulatory reform, particularly in the areas of construction compliance, competence and standards.

5.5.1 Drive Compliance, Competence and Standards

Ireland needs a competitive, innovative, dynamic, safe and sustainable construction sector - one that is based on best practice, capable of delivering the required economic and social infrastructure and contributes fully to the economy and to job creation.

It is particularly important that we ensure that the construction sector operates to the highest standard and that we have confidence in construction practices and materials, the necessary skilled workforce and the housing they build. Strong standards are already in place.

While steps have already been taken to ensure enhanced accountability, the Government will continue to build on these through appropriate regulation, with consistent application and

enforcement by relevant Government departments, their agencies and Local Authorities.

The Government is dealing with the issue of defects in housing as a result of poor construction design, workmanship and materials, at a substantial cost; by driving regulation in the construction sector and more sustainable methods of construction, the State will ensure the mistakes of the past are not repeated.

Statutory registration has the potential to contribute significantly to the quality of the built environment, while providing public contracting authorities with an objective means of assessing compliance with legal obligations. Professionals, such as architects, building surveyors and chartered engineers, must be registered to provide services for building work. The Construction Industry Register Ireland (CIRI) has been operational since early March 2014 on a voluntary basis, and will be placed on a statutory footing.

Prior to the establishment of the Construction Industry Register there was no way for consumers to distinguish construction companies, sole traders and builders who met the required obligations from those who did not. The addition of registers of competent builders and construction professionals will provide consumers with an assurance that all listed builders, contractors and tradespersons have met all registration requirements. Consumers have every right to expect that the buildings they buy - or the professional services they pay for - will comply with statutory requirements.

Potential forms of redress for consumers, including the potential for latent defects insurance, also need to be considered.

Under the Building Control Acts 1990 to 2020, Building Control Authorities have strong powers of inspection, enforcement and prosecution. The National Building Control Office (NBCO) within Dublin City Council provides oversight, direction and support for the development, standardisation and implementation of Building Control as an effective shared service in the 31 Building Control Authorities. To further support and strengthen the system of building control, the benefits of an independent regulatory body need to be examined.

A Building Regulations Advisory Body (BRAB), consisting of key construction industry stakeholders across private and the public sectors, will be re-established²⁴ to advise the Minister on matters relating to the Building Regulations.

5.5.2 Review the Defective Concrete Blocks Scheme

The cracking of external walls of dwellings in Donegal and Mayo came to light in 2013. An Expert Panel established in 2016 concluded that the disintegration of the concrete blocks was primarily due to excessive amounts of deleterious materials in the aggregate used to manufacture the concrete blocks (primarily muscovite mica in Donegal and reactive pyrite in Mayo).

On 31 January 2020, regulations to provide for a grant scheme to support

affected homeowners in Donegal and Mayo were signed into law. The grant scheme targets a restricted group of homeowners who have no other practicable options to remediate their homes.

In response to concerns expressed by homeowners regarding the adequacy of the scheme, the Government approved the establishment of a representative and time-bound working group to quickly review and address any outstanding issues in relation to the Defective Concrete Blocks Grant Scheme. The working group will report to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage by the end of September 2021. Following receipt of the report of the working group and following consultation with the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform and the Attorney General, proposals in regard to changes to the scheme will be considered by the Government.

5.5.3 Continue the Pyrite Remediation Scheme

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 provisions of the Act apply to dwellings affected by significant damage attributable to pyritic heave consequent on the presence of reactive pyrite in the subfloor hard-core material. The

²⁴ The previous BRAB was abolished in 2012

provisions do not apply to damage arising in any other circumstance, e.g. such as pyrite in concrete blocks.

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, www.pyriteboard.ie.

Currently, the owners of dwellings located within the counties of Kildare, Meath or Offaly, the administrative areas of Fingal County Council, Dublin City Council, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, South Dublin County Council and Limerick City and County Council, are eligible to apply for remediation works under the scheme.

The latest figures available indicate that this scheme has received 2,949 applications. So far, 2,460 dwellings have been included. Of these, the works in respect of 2,193 are complete with the rest at various stages of progress. The Board will ensure that the remediation fund is fully drawn down and property owners are appropriately supported.

5.5.4 Progress Examination of Defects in Housing

The Programme for Government sets out a range of commitments in respect of the policy area of building defects. Among these are two related commitments to:

- examine the issue of defective housing in the first twelve months, having regard to the recommendations of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing report, 'Safe as Houses?'; and
- assist owners of latent defect properties by identifying options for those impacted by defects to access low-cost, long-term finance.

A working group has been established with the appropriate expertise to examine the issue of defects in housing and address these two commitments. The plenary working group has been meeting monthly since March 2021, in addition to subgroup meetings. The terms of reference were adopted by the group in May 2021. The working group's focus is on significant, widespread fire safety, structural safety and water ingress defects in purpose-built apartment buildings, including duplexes, constructed between 1991 and 2013. Following its deliberations, the working group will report to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Housing Policy Objective 25:

Drive compliance and standards through regulatory reform

No.		Timeline	Lead
25.1	Embed compliance in the construction sector through Building Regulations and Building Control Regulations, including establishing registers of competent builders by placing the Construction Industry Register Ireland (CIRI) on a statutory footing	Q1 2022	DHLGH, DETE
25.2	Examine the creation of an independent Building Standards Regulator to oversee building control nationwide and to act as custodian of the Building Control Management System (BCMS)	Q4 2022	DHLGH
25.3	Re-establish the Building Regulatory Advisory Body	2022	DHLGH
25.4	Ensure adequate and appropriate market surveillance of construction products in the context of Brexit and EU Regulations	Ongoing	DHLGH, NBCO, LAs
25.5	Examine the regulatory framework for construction products outside the Construction Products Regulation	Q4 2021	DETE, DHLGH, NBCO, LAs
25.6	Review of Building Regulations	Ongoing	DHLGH
25.7	Address issues in relation to the Defective Concrete Blocks Grant Scheme	Ongoing	DHLGH
25.8	Ensure that the remediation fund for pyrite is fully drawn down	Ongoing	Pyrite Resolution Board
25.9	Examine the issue of defects in housing through the independent working group, to identify the nature and scale of the problem, having regard to the recommendations of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing report, 'Safe as Houses?' (2017)	2022	DHLGH

5.5.5 Reform Owners' Management Companies

Well-functioning Owners' Management Companies (OMCs) are key to maintaining and sustaining higher-density residential developments, such as apartments.

Housing for All will support effective management and oversight of multi-unit developments by legislating for necessary changes. This work will be led by the Department of Justice, supported by the DHLGH.

To ensure that OMCs are financially sustainable, the Department of Justice, in collaboration with the DHLGH, will make regulations under subsection 17 of section 18 of the Multi-Unit Developments Act 2011 (MUD Act), prescribing the class or classes of items of expenditure which may be the subject of annual service charges; the

procedures to be followed in setting such charges; matters to be taken into account in the setting of such charges; and arrangements for the levying and payment of such charges.

Regulations will also be made under subsection 9 of section 19 of the MUD Act to ensure that OMCs provide for expenditure of a non-recurring nature (i.e. sinking fund expenditure) and it will also examine the introduction of a non-statutory dispute resolution process. This process would determine disputes in relation to provisions of the MUD Act and in relation to covenants of head/main leases to which OMCs are party.

The Department of Justice will also examine measures to accelerate conveyancing as part of the sale and land transfer process.

Housing Policy Objective 25:

Drive compliance and standards through regulatory reform

No.		Timeline	Lead
25.10	Regulate under subsection 17 of section 18 of the Multi-Unit Developments Act 2011 ('MUD Act') to ensure that OMCs are financially sustainable	Q4 2022	DoJ
25.11	Regulate under subsection 9 of section 19 of the MUD Act to ensure that OMCs provide for expenditure of a non-recurring nature (i.e. sinking fund expenditure)	Q4 2022	DoJ
25.12	Examine the introduction of a non-statutory dispute resolution process	Q4 2022	DoJ
25.13	Examine measures to accelerate conveyancing as part of the sale and land transfer process	Q4 2022	DoJ

5.6 Support Critical Infrastructure Development

Housing cannot be delivered unless we have the supporting critical infrastructure, including transport, communication services and utility connections. A sustainable housing system requires strong integration between housing developments and the surrounding infrastructure and the move to plan-led development in this Plan will support this integrated system.

5.6.1 Ensure strong Transport infrastructure

Transport infrastructure and access to public transport services are a critical enabler of new housing supply. Future strategic development areas that may comprise unzoned, unserviced and/

or underutilised areas should generally be transport accessible in order to not only facilitate new housing supply but to also ensure that our citizens can participate in the workforce or education, access healthcare and take part in social activities. A well-functioning housing system should be supported by transport routes.

Road space in our urban areas is restricted, and if the long-term trend of growth in demand for housing and transport is to be met, we must improve land-use and transport planning to meet the NPF objective of ‘compact growth’. Together, the DHLGH and the Department of Transport (D/Transport), along with the National Transport Authority (NTA) and the LDA, aim to bring public transport to as many people as possible through better land-use and transport planning.

Housing Policy Objective 26: Support Critical Infrastructure Development

No.		Timeline	Lead
26.1	Establish a working group of the DHLGH, the D/Transport, NTA and LDA to consider opportunities for transport-led development in major urban centres	Q4 2021	DHLGH, D/Transport, NTA, LDA

5.6.2 Improve Communications Infrastructure

The National Broadband Plan (NBP) is the Government’s initiative to deliver high-speed broadband services to all premises in Ireland. This service is a critical element of improving the viability of rural areas as places to live and work. In order to

support balanced housing delivery and underpin the viability and desirability of rural areas as places to live and work, the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) will work with National Broadband Ireland (NBI) to accelerate the rollout time of the NBP.

Housing Policy Objective 26: Support Critical Infrastructure Development

No.		Timeline	Lead
26.2	Accelerate the delivery of the National Broadband Plan	Ongoing	DECC

5.6.3 Roll Out Timely Electricity Network Connections

The infrastructure of wires and cables around the country is divided into the transmission network and the distribution network. EirGrid is responsible for operating and planning the development of the transmission system and ESB

Networks is responsible for the operation, maintenance and development of the electricity distribution network in Ireland. It is also responsible for maintaining and developing the transmission network. ESB Networks will support the delivery of housing schemes through cost-effective, expedited connections.

Housing Policy Objective 26: Support Critical Infrastructure Development

No.		Timeline	Lead
26.3	Ensure electricity connections to housing schemes are delivered in a timely and cost-effective manner	Ongoing	ESB Networks, LAs

5.6.4 Expand our Water Network

Housing cannot be delivered without the supporting services infrastructure. Government investment in water services, primarily through Irish Water, will support the delivery of **Housing for All**. In turn, the objectives of **Housing for All** will inform future water investment planning.

Irish Water's investment planning is informed by key policy documents including the Water Services Policy Statement 2018-2025, the Water Services Strategic Plan 2015-2040, the NPF and the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021.

We know significant investment is required in public water and waste water infrastructure over many investment cycles to meet demands and we will invest €4.5bn between 2021 and 2025 in domestic water services, including projects focused on supporting growth and future development, with particular emphasis on those supporting future housing delivery.

Under the agreed funding model for Irish Water, the Exchequer provides almost 80% of Irish Water's funding, with the remainder coming from non-domestic customers and new connections. Irish Water expenditure, including its investment plans, are agreed by the Commission for Regulation of Utilities. Irish Water will continue its dynamic approach to aligning the investment - as approved by the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) - with the NPF, by reviewing and amending its growth projections as the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies, County Development Plans and Local Area Plans progress, ensuring alignment with growth projections.

Aligning Irish Water structures in support of housing development

At an operational level, Irish Water has established a Networks portfolio delivery stream specifically to manage growth and development projects. This restructured approach aims to support the delivery of housing. The Networks portfolio delivery stream sits along complementary delivery portfolios streams that manage the delivery of Irish Water capital works. The Network portfolio delivery stream is also responsible for delivery of Strategic Network Reinforcement/Connection and Developer Services and other works with investment supporting these specific growth initiatives.

Providing efficient connections for housing to the national water services network

Irish Water's Connections and Developer Services team is responsible for the end-to-end customer management of all connections to the Irish Water network. The team partners with industry and supports Government housing and planning policies to provide an efficient national connection service to all those developing property. Early engagement with the Irish Water Pre-Connection Enquiry service by those seeking connection to the Irish Water network is critical to ascertaining the capacity of the public water services to facilitate the proposed network connection.

Improving standards of water services infrastructure in housing developments

Irish Water has worked with the CRU to improve national standards in providing water services network infrastructure. This is to ensure that water infrastructure is installed to the required standards in public roads, avoiding legacy issues and impacts on customers, while facilitating the timely delivery of development, including housing. This has seen significant improvements in this area, to the benefit of citizens, by guaranteeing a high standard of workmanship.

Providing greater flexibility while not compromising standards

Having successfully established these standards, Irish Water, in consultation with industry and the CRU, is advancing an accreditation scheme and pilot project for self-lay of water services infrastructure in public roads by developers to connect to Irish Water's networks. This will provide greater flexibility in infrastructure provision, while not compromising on consumer protection or exposing the taxpayer to future liabilities.

This forms part of Irish Water's commitment to enable development, partner with industry and support the Government's housing policy. Irish Water has already supported self-lay on several housing projects, which are now progressing across the country.

Equitable cost sharing for providing infrastructure

Irish Water is also engaging with the CRU regarding areas of new development, where the first developer may often trigger new investment and incur the costs associated with connecting the new area to existing networks, while providing assets that have wider network benefits in the future. In this scenario, subsequent developments that later seek connection in the new area may benefit by connecting into these new water mains or sewer networks and obtain the benefit of these assets without incurring the additional costs that the first developer incurred. Irish Water is working with the CRU to develop proposals that

will seek to address the issues faced by developers in relation to this first-mover disadvantage.

Irish Water's Small Towns and Villages Growth Programme

Irish Water has an approved allocation of almost €100m for a Small Towns and Villages Growth Programme, as part of its Capital Investment Plan to 2024, as approved by the CRU. Projects under the Programme are now commencing design, with investment due to begin to deliver in the coming years. Irish Water is working with Local Authorities across the country in ensuring the investment supports the growth of identified settlements where these are prioritised in line with the Local Authority Development Plans²⁵.

Policy Initiative to Support Town and Villages and Similar Settlements without Public Waste Water Services Infrastructure

Complementary to Irish Water's Programme, the DHLGH is currently examining waste water requirements in the context of villages and similar settlements that do not have access to public waste water infrastructure. The DHLGH is preparing a report on this topic at national level. This report will include the analysis of a baseline survey of all rural Local Authorities to quantify and qualify the number of villages and settlements concerned. The outcomes, as identified in the final report, will feed into relevant future policy considerations.

²⁵ Further details are available on the Irish Water website at <https://www.water.ie/news/small-towns-and-villages/index.xml>.

Providing greater certainty to Local Authorities and developers in facilitating housing development

Local Authorities and developers need to be aware of where water services infrastructure can best support housing development or where constraints exist. To bring this clarity, Irish Water prepared waste water treatment capacity registers on a national basis for the first time in 2020. These were issued to each Local Authority to support their preparation of city and county Development Plans.

The waste water treatment capacity registers provide information on available capacity for growth, treatment capability and upgrade projects to be delivered in the current investment plan for all Irish Water treatment plants. Irish Water has recently finalised a water supply capacity register for the top 48 settlements nationally, as identified in the NPF and Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies. This will be followed later in 2021 by water supply capacity registers on a county-by-county basis. This will help all those involved in the provision of housing to ensure that housing can be developed as quickly as possible, in line with established planning policy, legislation and guidance, where the water services capacity exists to facilitate that development.

Growth Synergies of wider Investment by Irish Water

Where Irish Water is investing in drivers other than growth, it still provides additional capacity for housing development. In the case of investment in treatment plants driven by compliance, these are designed so that when complete, as well as ensuring the plant meets necessary environmental obligations, typically 10% to 15% headroom is also provided.

Every mega litre of treated water saved under the leakage reduction programme is also made available for new development. For example, in the case of Cork City, daily production at both water treatment plants serving the city has reduced down from 61 mega litres per day to 49 mega litres per day, a reduction of 13 mega litres. That spare capacity is now available for future housing and other development.

Housing Policy Objective 27:**Expand the water network to support housing delivery**

No.		Timeline	Lead
27.1	The Government will continue to deliver a high level investment in water infrastructure to support housing delivery nationwide	Ongoing	DHLGH, Irish Water
27.2	Irish Water will ensure that its network delivery stream supports timely delivery of housing connections	Ongoing	DHLGH, Irish Water
27.3	An accreditation scheme will be advanced to facilitate developers in providing water services infrastructure, provided agreed standards are met.	Q4 2023	DHLGH, Irish Water
27.4	Irish Water and the Commission for the Regulation of Utilities will review the water connection policy to address any issues with first mover disadvantage	2022	DHLGH, Irish Water
27.5	Irish Water will roll out a national water supply capacity register, to complement the waste water capacity register, to bring greater clarity to planning for housing by identifying where capacity facilitates early housing provision or where constraints may exist	Q1 2022	DHLGH, Irish Water
27.6	Irish Water will report to the Minister on policy initiatives to support villages and similar settlements without public waste water infrastructure	End 2021	Irish Water



5.7 Measure and Monitor Performance of Housing Development and Construction

The DHLGH is committed to evidenced-based policy development and will continue to improve data availability and analysis. This includes working with the Local Government sector to ensure that planning and housing data is captured in a nationally consistent structure, to enable monitoring of national housing development and construction.

The DHLGH, working with the Ordinance Survey of Ireland (OSI), will develop national housing development monitoring digital infrastructure, to include annual housing delivery benchmarked against national, regional, and development plan and settlement targets. It will also include a significant housing developments tracker for city/urban/town areas produced in conjunction with Local Authorities.

The supply of housing is inextricably linked to the supply of land and its capacity for development. Again, working with the OSI, the DHLGH will develop a national zoned housing land register based on Local Authority Development Plans, including the potential housing yield/capacity, which can also form the basis for the associated calculation of land use values required for Land Value Sharing measures.

As supply accelerates toward an average of 33,000 homes per year, it is important that the effects of these measures are monitored to demonstrate what is being delivered on the ground and to inform future policy development. The DHLGH will continue to work to better understand the supply capacity of the residential development and construction sector, the factors that may constrain supply and the role of the sector in the wider economy.

Housing Policy Objective 28:

Measure and monitor the performance of national housing development and construction

No.		Timeline	Lead
28.1	Develop a national housing development monitoring digital infrastructure, to include annual housing delivery, benchmarked against national, regional and development plan and settlement targets, and also a significant housing developments tracker for city/urban/town areas in conjunction with Local Authorities	2022	DHLGH, OSI, LAs
28.2	Develop a national zoned housing land register based on Local Authority Development Plans, including the potential housing yield/capacity, which can also form the basis for the associated calculation of land use values required for Land Value Sharing measures	2022	DHLGH, OSI, LAS
28.3	Continue to work to better understand the supply capacity of the residential development and construction sector, the factors which may constrain supply and the role of the sector in the wider economy	Ongoing	DHLGH, DETE, DFHERIS