



An Roinn Tithíochta,  
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreachta  
Department of Housing,  
Local Government and Heritage

# Annual Report of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage 2020



Prepared by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

[gov.ie/housing](https://gov.ie/housing)

## Contents

<b>Secretary General's Statement .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Who We Are .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Our Strategic Goals.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2020 Spending.....</b>	<b>5</b>
Goal A .....	8
Goal B .....	16
Goal C .....	26
Goal D .....	32
Goal E .....	38
Goal F .....	40
<b>Cross-Cutting Activities .....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Corporate Information .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Legislative Activity In 2020 .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Appendix 2: Publications In 2020 .....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Appendix 3: Public Consultations Undertaken In 2020 .....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Appendix 4: Bodies under the Aegis of the Department at Year-End 2020 .....</b>	<b>66</b>

## Secretary General's Statement

This Annual Report is the final report on the Statement of Strategy 2017-2020 and covers progress made on achieving our goals throughout 2020. A general election was held on 8 February and a new Government was formed in June 2020. This brought about a change in the name and structure of the Department with the addition of the Heritage function in September 2020.



I must acknowledge that 2020 was an unprecedented year in terms of the challenges faced by all citizens in the midst of a global pandemic. We, as a Department, met such challenges by supporting the national COVID-19 response through:

- the delivery of community response forums in partnership with our local government colleagues and facilitating outdoor dining and other uses of public space;
- working with colleagues in local authorities, the HSE and service providers to put in place measures to protect those accessing emergency accommodation
- putting in place a waiver of commercial rates;
- providing an ongoing service in the National Parks and Nature Reserves;
- providing grants to assist zoos and aquaria;
- putting in place additional legislation and guidance to support local authorities under the National Planning Framework; and
- moving our workforce to remote working.

Although the number of social homes built in 2019 had doubled compared to the figures from 2016, output in 2020 was understandably affected by the restrictions put in place to control the spread of COVID-19. Despite these challenges, there was a continued delivery of housing solutions with 70% of the pre-COVID-19 target of social homes delivered in 2020 and in excess of 8,500 social homes under construction at the end of 2020. We also secured significant funding to support the refurbishment of empty homes to bring them back into use for social housing, under our Voids programmes in 2020.

In 2020, family homelessness decreased by 37% and was at the lowest level of families in emergency accommodation since March 2016. We continued to support the objective to provide more suitable emergency accommodation for families experiencing homelessness. Such facilities are now more family-focused facilities and provide a greater level of stability while allowing for more intensive supports to be provided where they are needed.

On the legislative front, the detailed drafting of the Affordable Housing Bill was approved by Government in December 2020. This will enable more affordable homes to be made available by local authorities, the establishment of a new Affordable Purchase Shared Equity scheme and the establishment of Cost Rental as a form of tenure. The legislation to establish the Land Development Agency on a statutory basis was progressed through 2020 and will result in another key commitment being reached under the National Planning Framework.

Other highlights throughout the year included the funding of over €1.3 billion for domestic water services, the receipt of 76 proposals in response to the second call under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund and the completion of the second consultation phase in the development of Ireland's next River Basin Management Plan. All of these will contribute to the development of the State's infrastructure to meet the increasing demand in the years ahead, whether for high quality water and waste-water services or for housing.

Given the broad reach of this Department, we rely on many partners to help us to achieve our mission. I wish to thank our partners across Government, in the local authorities, our agencies and the many other bodies both inside and outside of the public sector who play a vital role in assisting us in that regard. I also want to thank our Ministers and our staff for their commitment and professionalism in what has been a difficult year for the country. Finally, I thank John McCarthy, former Secretary General, who retired during the year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Graham Doyle'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'G'.

Graham Doyle

Secretary General

## 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, the sustainable management of our water resources, the nurturing of Ireland's heritage and the promotion of 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.
- 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.
- F.** To conserve, protect, manage and present our built, natural, archaeological heritage and our biodiversity, for its intrinsic value, including to the environment as well as a support to local communities, regional economic development and sustainable employment.

## 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 and agility
- Innovation and learning
- Consultation and partnership
- Commitment to society and citizens
- Pursuit of effectiveness, efficiency and value for money

The work of the Department in 2020 was carried out through nine Divisions – Planning; Housing Delivery; Housing Policy, Legislation and Governance; Water; Local Government; Corporate and Business Support; Met Éireann; Heritage and the Local Government Audit Service.

## Locations

The Department is based in five main locations listed below along with others throughout the country:

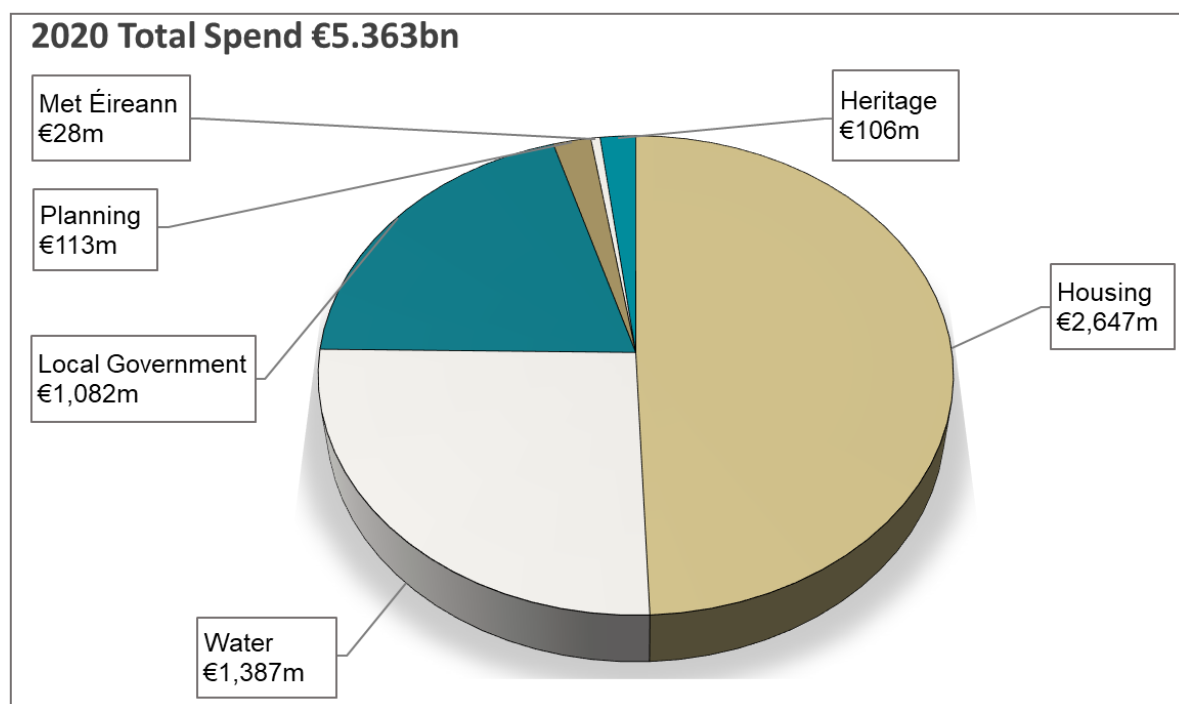
- Custom House, Dublin D01 W6X0
- Newtown Road, Wexford Y35 AP90
- Government Offices, Ballina, Co. Mayo F26 E8N6
- Met Éireann Headquarters, Glasnevin Hill, Dublin 9 D09 Y921
- National Parks and Wildlife Service, 90 King Street North, Dublin D07 N7C



## Us and Our Agencies

Much of our work is carried out in close cooperation 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 at Appendix 4.

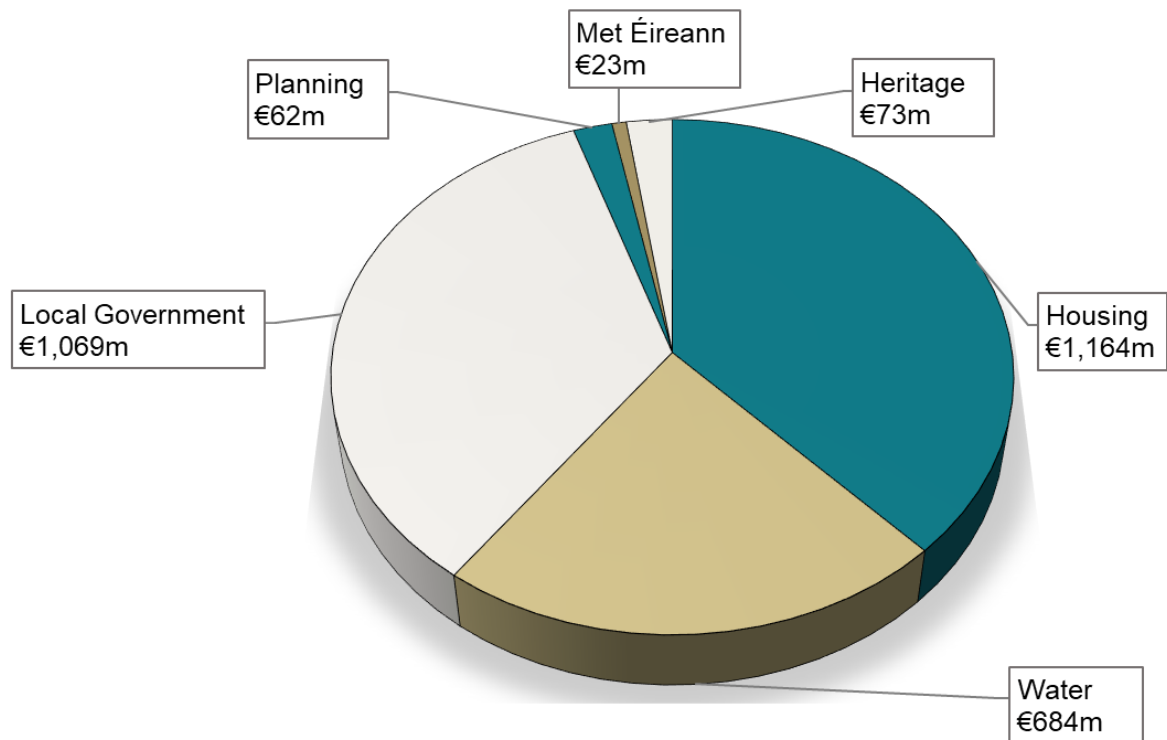
## 2020 Spending



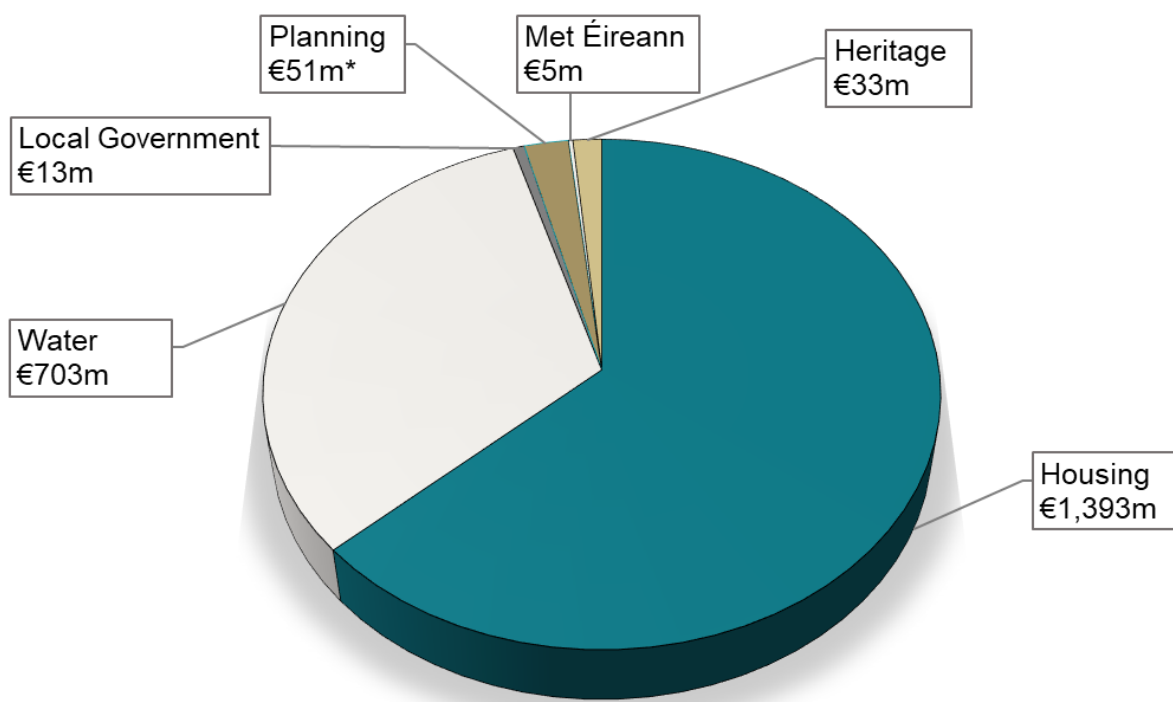
Gross expenditure in respect of the Department's six strategic programmes reached €5.363 billion in 2020, representing an increase of 32% on the outturn for 2019. Departmental (Exchequer) funding of €5.239 billion was supplemented by capital carryover from 2019 of €33.5m plus €90.49m from Local Property Tax (LPT) receipts, which was used by certain local authorities to fund a range of housing programmes. In addition, expenditure of €1.5 billion (comprising €1.056 billion from Department's Vote and €480m from LPT) was managed through the Local Government Fund in 2020, primarily for the purposes of recouping the costs of the COVID-19 related Commercial Rates Waiver and the payment of annual LPT allocations to local authorities.

The Exchequer funding element (€5.272 billion) comprised €3.075 billion in current expenditure and €2.197 billion in capital expenditure (including €33.5m capital carryover).

### 2020 Current Spend (Exchequer) €3.075bn



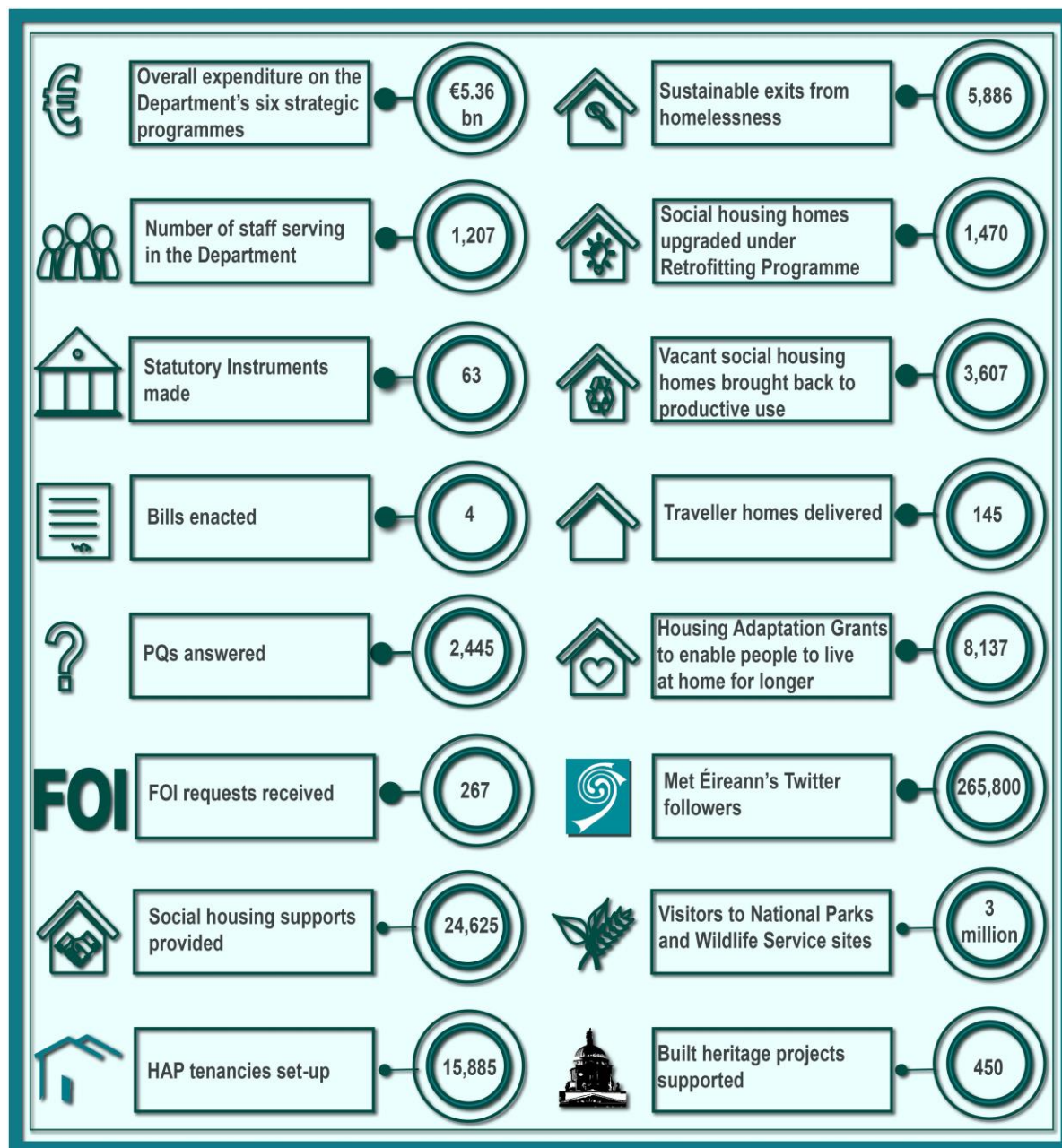
### 2020 Capital Spend (Exchequer) €2.197bn\*



\*includes €33.5m capital carryover from 2019



## The Department by Numbers in 2020



## 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 continues to be the key driver of policy measures and related legislative proposals.



Priorities for the Department in progressing implementation of the NPF in 2020 included supporting the work of the PI2040 Delivery Board and ongoing engagement with all stakeholders, particularly in relation to spatial alignment with the National Development Plan (NDP) as part of the NDP review process.

The second PI2040 Annual Report (2019) was published on 1 October 2020 and is available on the Government's website at the following link:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/71afc-project-ireland-2040-annual-report-2019/>

A key 2020 priority for the Department was to support the response to the impacts of COVID-19 to ensure the safe operation of the planning system in line with public health requirements; including additional legislation, regulations, providing guidance and FAQ material on the Department's website. This was critical to ensuring that local authority decision-making processes in respect of planning applications and development plans could continue to function in a transparent manner that also safeguarded public participation rights. Some of the legislation dealt with included:

- Part 3 of the Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (COVID-19) Act 2020, which inserted section 251A into the Planning and Development Act 2000 to enable the Government to make 'emergency period' orders to extend certain statutory periods applying under the Planning and Development Acts and Building Control Acts.
- Planning and Development Act 2000 (Section 181) Regulations 2020, which provides for the non-application of the Planning and Development Act 2000 to certain classes of emergency development and health facilities necessary for the Government's response to COVID-19.
- Planning and Development, and Residential Tenancies, Act 2020 – (sections 4 and 5 related to COVID-19 issues) – to respectively enable online public meetings in the planning process and to make 'emergency period' orders as required during the course of the pandemic to extend certain statutory periods applying under the Planning and Development Acts and Building Control Acts.

The Department also supported the work of the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR), the continued implementation of the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF) and the establishment and operations of the Land Development Agency (LDA) in 2020.

Compact growth was identified as the first of the Strategic Outcomes and Priorities within the NPF and a series of enabling initiatives have been put in place to support the further sustainable and compact development of our cities, towns and villages, including the physical regeneration and re-use of brown-field land and sites in larger urban areas. There was also ongoing work on 'Integrated Urban Development' projects and proposals as part of the URDF and a focus on enabling development in the five Cities and the five 'Regional Driver' Towns as set out in the NPF.

Two of the three statutory Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies were adopted by the Regional Assemblies in January 2020 and individual review of City and County Development Plans subsequently commenced in most local authorities.

The Department engaged the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) to undertake independent research into structural housing demand in Ireland to 2040. The findings of the ESRI work were published as a research paper 'Regional Demographics and Structural Housing Demand at County Level', in December 2020 and is available on the Government's website at the following link: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/6d48f-ministerial-letter-to-local-authorities-structural-housing-demand-in-ireland-and-housing-supply-targets/>. The ESRI research provides a robust, up-to-date and independently developed housing demand projection, to inform policy and investment with regard to housing at national and local levels.

Further to publication of the ESRI report, new statutory planning guidance on housing supply was developed and issued to planning authorities in December 2020, to ensure that a consistent and integrated national approach to housing demand projections is implemented at local authority level in the preparation of County and City development plans.

Following a review of co-living development, the Minister notified planning authorities in December 2020 of his decision to restrict commercial co-living development, and issued updated Design Standards for New Apartments, Guidelines for Planning Authorities 2020.

Work also commenced on new sustainable settlement guidance to provide for more sustainable communities. This consolidated and updated guidance will offer practical and targeted guidance towards improving planning for sustainable settlement and ensuring best practice urban design.

## 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 pending the enactment of primary legislation to establish the Agency on a statutory basis. That legislation was progressed as a matter of urgency through 2020. The Bill will focus on the establishment of the corporate form and financial structure of the Agency.

The LDA's role will increasingly expand beyond the initial focus on leading housing development on public lands, which they have been progressing, alone and in partnership with local authorities, to also encompass important work in master-planning critical urban sites and leading out in partnerships with local authorities on the development of quality urban areas.

## The Office of the Planning Regulator

The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018 established the legal basis for the OPR and outlines its role and functions, which include conducting organisational reviews of the systems and procedures used by any planning authority, including An Bord Pleanála, in the performance of any of their planning functions.

In 2020, the OPR commenced a systematic programme of reviews under Section 31AS of the Act, whereby each local authority, and the Board, will be subject to a general review of planning functions on a cyclical programmed basis.

The programme is intended as a resource for the planning sector, identifying best practice and achievements, and promoting such learning between planning authorities, in addition to highlighting areas that may be in need of improvement.

## **Town Centre First**

In the context of challenges faced by towns and villages in order to function as viable and vibrant locations for people to live and work, the 2020 Programme for Government committed to the development of a Town Centre First (TCF) policy.

With a view to giving effect to this commitment, a TCF Inter-Departmental Group was established together with our colleagues in the Department of Rural and Community Development, in November 2020 to consider the regeneration of towns and villages and met twice before the end of the year. A TCF Advisory Group, chaired by the Minister of State with responsibility for Local Government and Planning, was also established to enable the experiences of a broader group of stakeholders to be brought to bear in informing the process of policy development and its first meeting was held in December 2020.

## **Urban Regeneration and Development Fund**

The National Planning Framework (NPF) is being underpinned by significant targeted Exchequer capital investment through the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (URDF), which was launched in 2018.

As a key activator of the NPF, the €2 billion URDF is one of four funds established under the NDP 2018-2027 and is focused on supporting projects that will contribute to compact sustainable growth through the regeneration and rejuvenation of Ireland's five cities and other large towns.

Despite the challenges of 2020, good progress was made on the advancement of URDF supported projects approved under the first call for proposals, with €39.5m drawn down by successful applicants.

The second call for proposals under the URDF was launched in January 2020. Following a rigorous assessment process the proposals approved under this call will build on the existing pipeline of URDF supported projects and to the achievement of NPF and Project Ireland 2040 objectives.

In all 76 proposals were received with a total combined value exceeding €2 billion, and with every local authority submitting at least one application. At the end of 2020, provisional allocations totalling almost €300m have issued to successful applicants in respect of URDF supported projects.

## Planning Policy and Process

The planning process continued to play a proactive and facilitative role in 2020 in supporting and guiding economic recovery and sustainable national and regional development.

Planning permission was granted for over 44,000 new homes in 2020, an increase of 13.5% on 2019.



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.

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 2020 after being extended in 2019.

Between 1 January 2020 and 31 December 2020, An Bord Pleanála received 112 applications for SHD permission. Of the 128 decisions made in 2020 (covering both 2019 and 2020 applications), the Board issued 92 grants of planning permission in respect of a total of 24,010 homes (5,810 houses, 14,351 apartments and 3,849 Build to Rent), 574 shared accommodation bed spaces and 42,436 student bed spaces.

## 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 MPPS serves as a parallel to the 2015 Planning Policy Statement that underpins the operation of the entire land-planning system in Ireland. It will apply to all facets of marine planning. The draft NMPF 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 59 new consent applications were received in 2020 for a range of projects and activities.

In terms of future reform in this area, Government approved a fundamentally reshaped approach to the reform of marine consenting in March 2019.

The Marine Area Planning Bill intends to put in place revised State consent and development management regimes for the entire maritime area in the context of the NMPF.



The legislation is being developed under the auspices of the Marine Legislation Steering Group, chaired by Department of the Taoiseach. In late 2020, the General Scheme underwent pre-legislative scrutiny by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and drafting is well-advanced. The Bill now includes an enhanced role for a new consenting and enforcement agency to be called the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority.

## 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 2020.

The Department oversaw nine international transboundary EIA consultation requests through the Planning System during 2020, six at project level, and a further three at strategic/plan level, including a nationwide public consultation on the UK's proposed Sizewell C Nuclear Power Plant.



The UNECE held its high level Meeting of the Parties of the Espoo Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context, which takes place once every three years, in December 2020, in Vilnius, Lithuania. The Department attended virtually. Work is ongoing to develop legislative drafting for the transposition of amendments to the UNECE Espoo Convention and its Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Protocol (Kiev Protocol) into planning law.

The Department 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 2020, the Department received 39 new High Court judicial reviews concerning planning and EU legislation (33 were related to environmental planning matters and six to planning legislation generally).
- On 12 November 2019, the Court of Justice of the European Union issued its judgment in case C-261/18 Commission v Ireland (Derrybrien Wind Farm) ruling against Ireland and imposing a lump sum fine of €5m and a daily fine of €15,000 until compliance is achieved. This judgment will be complied with when the wind farm is subjected to retrospective EIA, known as "substitute consent". An application by the company has been submitted to An Bord Pleanála and is currently under consideration.

The State's response to the CJEU judgement in case C-261/18 required the Department to introduce amendments in 2020 to the substitute consent system under Part XA of the Planning and Development Act 2000 and Part 19 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001.

The Department has also been progressing a new environmental assessment process for introduction into the planning system that will ensure Ireland's implementation of the Water Framework Directive is robust. In this regard, an expert working group of key stakeholders has been working closely with the Department to produce guidelines for planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála on how the new assessment process will work in practice. In parallel to developing guidelines on this new assessment process, the Department has been drafting legislation in order to put the new process on a statutory footing.

## **Vacant Site Levy**

Under the vacant site levy provisions in the Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015, planning authorities were empowered to apply a vacant site levy on the market valuation of relevant properties which were listed on local authority vacant site registers. The rate of the levy increased to 7% for sites listed on local authority vacant sites register from 2019 onwards which site owners became liable to pay in January 2020.

The levy aims to incentivise the development of vacant under-utilised sites in urban areas for residential or regeneration purposes. As of 31 May 2020 there were 352 sites listed on local authority registers. In 2020, 211 sites valued at €237.3m were liable to the levy at a rate of 7%. It is estimated that the sites on the registers have the potential to generate circa 18,000 housing units.

## **Vacant Homes**

In 2020, the Department once again secured funding to support the work of a Vacant Homes Office in each local authority. The Department supports 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.

## **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. 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.



As part of the SEA process, a 10-week public consultation on the draft revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines was launched on 12 December 2019. The consultation closed on 19 February 2020. Almost 500 submissions were received as part of the public consultation, many of which are quite detailed and technical in nature.

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.

## **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 National Planning Application Database services.

The Department is currently 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 standardised national approach. In conjunction with Ordnance Survey Ireland and local authority partners, the Planning Application Capture Environment application was developed for this purpose and underwent testing during 2020 ahead of a phased release in 2021.

## **Statutory Plans**

Ministerial powers under Section 31 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 were used twice in 2020, in relation to the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (final direction), and Cork County Development Plan 2014 Variation No.2 (draft and final directions).

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

### Rebuilding Ireland



Since Rebuilding Ireland began in 2016, there has been significant progress made year on year in meeting the targets set out in that strategy, with some understandable reductions in 2020 as a result of restrictions arising from the COVID-19 public health measures. In 2019, the State had 24,394 new homes available for use to meet demand for housing. As can be seen in the table below, this reduced only slightly in 2020 to 23,568. There has been a significant increase in the numbers of social homes provided under a mix of delivery channels since 2016 and at the end of 2020, family homeless numbers dropped to the lowest level recorded since March 2016. During 2020, 5,886 adults and their associated dependants exited homelessness into homes and 59,800 active tenancies were being supported by the Housing Assistance Payment Scheme.

Over €2.6 billion was invested in housing in 2020, up 8% on 2019 and 179% on 2016.

### Overall housing delivery indicators for 2020:

Indicator	% Change From 2019	2020 Figure
New Homes Available For Use in 2020	3%↓	23,568
New Homes Granted Planning Permissions in 2020	13.5%↑	44,538
Commencement Notices Submitted	17%↓	21,686

### Social Housing Delivery

In 2020, over 24,000 households had their housing needs met through the allocation of a new social home, or by the Housing Assistance Payment and Rental Accommodation Scheme.

In 2019, the social homes build output (6,074) had doubled when compared with the output in 2016 (2,965). Output in 2020 was affected by the restrictions placed on construction as part of the Government's efforts to control the spread of COVID-19 but final output figures for 2020 show that 5,073 new build homes were delivered, with a further 2,754 social homes delivered through the mechanisms of leasing (1,440) and targeted acquisition (1,314). The total number of social homes delivered in 2020 was 7,827, 70% of the pre-COVID-19 target.

Details of social housing delivery across individual programmes are set out in the table below.

<b>Delivery Method</b>	<b>2020 Output (excluding Voids)</b>
Build <sup>1</sup>	5,073
Acquisitions	1,314
Leasing	1,440
Rental Accommodation Scheme	913
Housing Assistance Payment	15,885
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,625</b>

The restrictions and partial shutdown of construction activity due to the COVID-19 pandemic impacted on the delivery of social homes in 2020, with a number of projects delayed until 2021. The Construction Status Report for Quarter 4 2020 showed that there were 8,555 social homes under construction at the end of 2020 and 9,085 further homes were progressing through the various stages of planning, design and procurement. Overall, at the end of 2020, the programme included 2,383 schemes (or phases), encompassing over 33,000 homes, a substantial increase on the 26,015 homes a year earlier.

In 2020, Voids activity, which seeks to return vacant local authority housing to productive use, was very strong in relation to vacant units required for COVID-19 support, the normal annual Voids programme and also additional funding made available as a result of the July Stimulus Programme.

COVID-19 Voids funding of €3.7m supported the return of 406 properties for providing social housing qualified households with alternative accommodation in order to tackle overcrowded family homes, vacate emergency accommodation, traveller sites, homeless hubs, communal/congregated settings, or for cocooning/isolation.

The normal annual Voids programme ran in 2020 with funding of €14.85m recouped to local authorities for the return of 738 units to use as social homes.

In addition to the above, as a result of the funding made available under the July Stimulus Programme, 2,463 units were funded at a cost of €37.9m.

Across all Voids streams, therefore, funding of some €56.4m was recouped to local authorities to support work in this area, which saw 3,607 properties funded and made available as social homes as part of the 2020 programmes.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

## 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 2020, there were over 59,800 active tenancies being supported under the HAP scheme in 31 local authority areas, including 15,885 additional tenancies set up in 2020.



At the end of 2020, 17,429 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 10,140 households have been supported by the Homeless HAP scheme in the Dublin region up to the end of Q4, 2020. Nationally, the corresponding figure was over 15,400 households.

## Homelessness

In 2020, the number of individuals presenting to homeless services and the number of people accessing emergency accommodation was reduced considerably. Funding of €271m was provided to local authorities in Exchequer funding towards the provision of homeless services in 2020.

At the end of 2020, there were 8,200 individuals accessing emergency accommodation, a decrease of 1,531 individuals (16%) on the 9,731 total recorded at the end of 2019. The decrease in family homelessness was more pronounced, falling by 37% from 1,548 at the end of 2019 to 970 at the end of 2020. This represents the lowest number of families in emergency accommodation since March 2016.

During 2020, 5,886 adults and their associated dependants exited homelessness into homes.

Over the course of 2020, and in response to COVID-19, the Department worked closely with local authorities, the HSE and service providers to ensure an appropriate response was in place for the protection and safety of those accessing emergency accommodation.

Significant additional capacity was provided to allow for social distancing, de-congregating of existing services, shielding for most at-risk person and self-contained accommodation to allow for self-isolation. This coordinated response was effective in keeping rates of infection relatively low in homeless services.

The Department continued to support the objective to provide more suitable emergency accommodation for families experiencing homelessness; 35 family hubs had been brought into operation by the end of 2020, providing over 760 units of accommodation for families. These family-focused facilities offer a greater level of stability and allow for more intensive supports to be provided where they are needed in areas such as welfare, health and housing services.

A High Level Taskforce to address homelessness was established in 2020. The Taskforce, is chaired by the Minister, and includes representatives from the Dublin Regional Homelessness Executive, Crosscare, Depaul, Focus Ireland, the Peter McVerry Trust, Dublin Simon Community and Threshold. The Taskforce met for the first time on 13 July 2020 and continued to meet regularly over the course of 2020.

Significant progress was made in the delivery of Housing First nationally in 2020, with service delivery arrangements now in operation in each of the nine homeless administrative regions and in all local authorities across the 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. By the end of 2020, 508 individuals had been housed under Housing First, including 208 individuals over the course of 2020.

## **The Affordable Purchase Scheme, Cost Rental and Serviced Sites Fund**

In December 2020, the Government approved the detailed drafting of the Affordable Housing Bill, which will provide for:

- new provisions to allow local authorities make affordable homes available for sale
- the establishment of a new Affordable Purchase Shared Equity scheme which will see the State take an equity share in a home while the owner takes out a mortgage with a bank on the remainder as usual
- the establishment of 'Cost Rental' as a new form of tenure placing it on a statutory footing.

The development of Cost Rental sector in Ireland will introduce a new tenure between social housing and private rental, in which the rents will be directly linked to the cost of provision of the homes rather than being subject to the variations of the open market.

These rents will increase only in line with annual inflation, meaning that a substantial stock of affordable rental homes will become a feature of housing in Ireland over the longer term.

Policy development for this new sector continued in 2020, with stakeholder engagement helping to confirm the most viable delivery model, while a European Investment Bank funded research project commenced in May.

In October 2020, a new Cost Rental Equity Loan was introduced as part of Budget 2021, with €35m being secured to give Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) access to low-cost loan finance over a period of 40 years to develop Cost Rental housing. Matching finance of €100m is being made available at competitive rates by the Housing Finance Agency for the remainder of the costs. These funds will help reduce rents for the tenants of these homes. A Call for Proposals was issued to all AHBs in December 2020.

This is in addition to the ongoing work being undertaken in conjunction with local authorities, AHBs, and the Land Development Agency, to develop homes for this new sector.

To support local authority capacity to deliver more affordable homes in areas where a demonstrated affordability issue arises, the Serviced Sites Fund (SSF) of €310m was made available to local authorities to carry out on-site servicing works to make their land available for affordable housing.

To date, funding of almost €188m has been approved in support of 38 infrastructure projects in 14 local authority areas, which will assist in the delivery of almost 4,000 more affordable homes.

Supported by SSF grant funding, construction has begun 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. It is expected that the first 400 Cost Rental homes in the State will be delivered in 2021 with many more in the pipeline in the years thereafter.

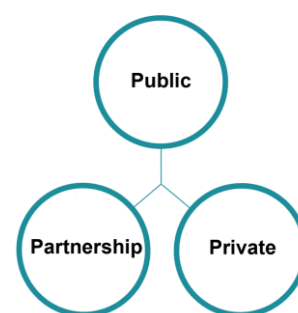
## Summary of Social Housing Assessments 2020

The Summary of Social Housing Assessments is now carried out on an annual basis and is used to set targets for social housing delivery. 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 2020 assessment showed that 61,880 households were in need of social housing support, as at 2 November 2020. This represented a decrease of 6,813 households or -9.9% on the previous assessment in June 2019. Since the first annual exercise in 2016, the numbers have decreased from 91,600 to 61,880, a reduction of 32.4%.

## 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 2020.

Bundle 1, which will provide 534 houses and apartments across six sites in Dublin, Kildare, Louth and Wicklow, delivered 384 homes with the remainder scheduled for completion in 2021.



In 2020 construction was underway in Bundle 2, which will deliver 465 homes in 2021 across eight sites in Cork, Clare, Galway, Kildare, Roscommon, and Waterford.

Design development commenced in late 2020 on Bundle 3 following the procurement of project technical advisors. Bundle 3 will deliver in the region of 440 new homes across six sites in Dublin, Kildare, Sligo and Wicklow. Tenants for all these homes will be drawn, in the normal manner, from the local authority's social housing waiting list in accordance with its allocation scheme.

## 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 it is anticipated will provide for the delivery of approximately 17,800 homes across the lifetime of the programme, are published on the Rebuilding Ireland website.



Up to the end of 2020, 5 LIHAF projects have completed infrastructure construction. 12 projects were at infrastructure construction stage or have been approved to move to same. These projects have delivered 2,831 homes to the end of 2020 including 264 Social/Part V and 1,272 were cost reduced/affordable units.

Of the remaining projects, two were ready to proceed to construction and a further five were advancing through the detailed design and planning stage.

## **Long Term Social Housing Leasing**

Now over 10 years in operation, the Leasing Programme has expanded year-on-year and has been an important option available to local authorities to supplement delivery. The Leasing Programme includes standard long-term leasing, Enhanced Leasing, the Repair and Leasing Scheme and Mortgage-to-Rent units. While all leasing schemes had significant 'pipeline' in place for 2020, the construction shutdowns during 2020 affected output. However, despite the impact of COVID-19, leasing delivery did increase year on year. Total delivery in 2020 was 1,440 dwellings, an increase of over 20% on 2019. The Enhanced Leasing programme also expanded during 2020 and the funding limit for the Repair and Leasing Scheme increased from €40,000 to €60,000, which it is expected will lead to additional delivery.

## **Payment and Availability and Capital Advance Leasing Facility**

Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF), coupled with Payment & Availability (P&A) payments, have become one of the main funding mechanisms for the supply of social housing, particularly supporting the Approved Housing Bodies (AHB) sector.

In Q4 2020, a review of the CALF programme was undertaken to analyse and validate the operational costs (management costs, reactive maintenance costs, cyclical maintenance costs and sinking fund provision) with engagement from the AHB sector. The results of the review are currently being considered and it is envisaged that recommendations will be approved and implemented in 2021.

At the end of 2020, the P&A-CALF programme assisted AHBs, with support of local authorities, to deliver 2,549 new homes for social housing use.

## **Acquisitions Fund**

The Housing Agency continues to be actively engaging with banks and investment companies in acquiring mainly vacant homes in their portfolios. The revolving Acquisitions Fund of €70m, coupled with AHB borrowings, aims to support the acquisition of some 1,600 homes for social housing use over the period to 2021. As of 31 December 2020, the Agency had bids accepted on 846 homes.



## Housing for People with a Disability and Older People

The Housing Agency is responsible for the implementation of the National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability, which it oversees through a sub-group comprising representatives from the Department, the HSE, Department of Health, local authorities, the Irish Council for Social Housing and various disability representative organisations. The sixth Progress Report on the implementation of the Strategy was published in 2020. It details progress on the programmes and projects during 2019, which provided housing supports for people with a disability and is available on the Department's website at

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/49dc7-housing-for-people-with-a-disability/>.

Six principles inform the development of the policy statement 'Housing Options for Our Ageing Population' of which the first, and most fundamental, is 'ageing in place' espousing the philosophy that research on older people has consistently shown that they wish to remain living in their own homes and communities as they age. A Monitoring Group to oversee how the Actions are being implemented has been established and is representative of the relevant stakeholders. It has published two reports on its work to the end of 2020. The reports are available at the following link <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/83781d-housing-options-for-our-ageing-population-policy-statement/>

The Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability are aimed at enabling 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. In 2020 over 8,000 households benefitted from the grants at a total cost of over €56.7m.

A streamlined application process for the grants was introduced from January 2020, using a single application form to cover all three grants. This update made the application process more user friendly and accessible, as well as also improving the consistency of approach to their implementation nationwide.

## Regulation of the Approved Housing Bodies Sector

The Housing (Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies) Act 2019 will establish a Regulator to oversee the effective governance, financial management and performance of voluntary and cooperative housing bodies. Preparatory work was carried out in 2020 for the establishment of the Approved Housing Bodies Regulatory Authority (AHBRA). The position of CE Designate/CEO was filled in Q4 2020, following an open recruitment campaign. Another separate campaign was held to recruit members of the Regulator.

As part of the move to statutory regulation, the Department began reviewing its AHB Register in 2020 in advance of the transfer of this function to the AHBRA.

Bodies listed on the register were contacted to ascertain if they are active (or not) in the provision of social housing, are dissolved or wish to apply to rescind their approved status. 30 AHBs had their approved status rescinded as a result of this work as of 31 December 2020. The Department will continue this work until the register is transferred to the AHBRA, which is anticipated to be early 2022.

Regulation of the sector continued in the form of the Voluntary Regulation Code administered by the interim Regulation Office. As of 31 December 2020, a total of 285 AHBs were signed up to the Code including all the larger AHBs.

## **Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan**

The Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan allows low and moderate income first time buyers aged between 18 and 70 who cannot secure a sufficient mortgage from a commercial lender to access sustainable mortgage finance. By the end of 2020, provisional figures show that over 2,100 loans with a value of just approximately €364m had been drawn down under the scheme.

## **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.

Budget 2020 provided funding of €20m to fund the operation of the Defective Concrete Blocks Grant scheme which became operational in counties Donegal and Mayo in June 2020.

Given the lead-in times in approving applications, and the commencement of works, it is expected that the significant expenditure for the scheme will only start in 2021 and subsequent years.

## **Pyrite Resolution**

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. A sum of €20m was announced under Budget 2020 to fund the operation of the pyrite remediation scheme in 2020. This allocation facilitated the remediation of 201 additional dwellings in 2020 giving an aggregate total of 2,091 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.

In September 2020, the Minister extended the pyrite remediation scheme to include the administrative area of Limerick City and County Council.

## **Rental Sector – COVID-19 Protections**

In order to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 in the residential rental market, significant protections for tenants and landlords were provided under a range of legislative instruments introduced in 2020. These instruments were introduced to safeguard public health by temporarily prohibiting tenancy terminations and rent increases or requiring longer notice periods for specified periods of time in certain circumstances during 2020.

## **Rental Sector Reforms**

Provision was made for €6m to be provided to local authorities in 2020 to support the carrying out of inspections of rental properties, 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, rising from 19,645 to 41,018.

However, given the need for local authority inspectors to enter tenants' homes, COVID-19 pandemic restrictions greatly impacted on private rental inspections in 2020. On-site inspections fell to circa 24,300. In response to the pandemic some local authorities piloted virtual inspections. Dublin City Council have led this initiative, which entails landlords receiving a checklist for self-assessment and being required to submit photographic/video evidence by email, tenants being invited to raise any non-compliance issues they are aware of and the Council reserving the right to conduct a subsequent physical on-site inspection when it is safe to do so. The initiative has been supported by significant funding (on the same basis as traditional inspections) from the Department.

Circa 1,400 virtual inspections were undertaken in 2020 by three local authorities participating in the pilot – Monaghan County Council, Kildare County Council and Dublin City Council – with the latter accounting for 1,226 of those.

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

### Irish Water

Some €1.303 billion was required to meet the cost of domestic water services in 2020, of which €679m related to capital investment and €624m to current expenditure. This supports a significant programme of investment in the State's water infrastructure to ensure a sustainable, high quality supply of water for homes and businesses across Ireland.



The Programme for Government provides that the Government will retain Irish Water in public ownership as a national, standalone, regulated utility and the Minister undertook to bring forward a clear set of policy recommendations setting out the Government's expectations in relation to the next phase of transformation for the water sector.

Work on the Policy Paper was significantly progressed during 2020, with the ultimate objective of ensuring that Ireland has modern and effective systems in place for the delivery of water and wastewater services.

During 2020, three Orders were made transferring 298 water services asset properties from local authorities to Irish Water. In total, 18 Ministerial Orders have been made, from the establishment of Irish Water in 2014 up to the end of 2020, with some 2,936 asset properties having now transferred to Irish Water. The focus has been on the transfer of larger assets, resulting in assets equivalent to 73% of water supply capacity and 83% of wastewater treatment capacity being transferred to Irish Water by end 2020.

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 met on five occasions during 2020.

Since its establishment, the Steering Group has devised a Work Programme and identified actions across six 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 2021, to oversee the implementation of separation.

## Water Abstractions

The Water Environment (Abstractions) Bill will regulate and license the removal of water from rivers, lakes and from the ground. The General Scheme of the Bill was agreed by Government on 29 September 2020 and referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The Committee commenced pre-legislative scrutiny of the proposals on 20 October 2020.

The legislation is being brought forward to bring Ireland into compliance with the EU Water Framework Directive, to modernise provisions for abstractions by Irish Water for public water supplies, and to allow for population growth and economic development under the National Development Plan while giving necessary environmental protections to water sources.

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 (EPA), based on 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. The Bill will establish the register in primary legislation and will modernise provisions for abstractions by Irish Water and by others, and give necessary environmental protections to water sources.

## Reform of Irish Water Charges for Non-Domestic Customers

This significant area of reform will over time see the various charges which Irish Water apply for their services being standardised for customers in place of a myriad of historic, locally-based charging arrangements. The Commission for the Regulation of Utilities as the economic regulator of Irish Water is responsible for setting these charges, based on proposals by Irish Water, and following a process of public consultation.

The charges are designed to recover the cost of supplying water and waste water services to non-domestic customers in line with the polluter pays principle and in a way in which avoids cross-subsidisation of one set of customers by another set.

On this basis, commercial and business customers of Irish Water had been advised that a new tariff framework would become effective on 1 May 2020. In response to the COVID-19 emergency, Irish Water, having conferred with the regulator and the Department, has deferred implementation until 1 October 2021. Some 184,000 water connections will be subject to the new arrangements, with customers ranging 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. It is anticipated that the majority of customers will face modest adjustments in their bills, while strong measures are included to mitigate the impact of any significant increases in bills.

## **Reform of the Rural Water Sector**

The review of the Rural Water Sector considers how best to position and resource the Sector so that it contributes best to the need of water services in rural Ireland. This review, which considers issues such as governance, supervision and monitoring, supports the development and long-term sustainability of a comprehensive and cohesive Sector that will have the capacity to produce quality outcomes comparable to those available to customers of public water services. The reform process continued in 2020 across a number of areas.

### **i. Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme**

In 2020, the Department recouped just under €15.3m for capital expenditure across the eight measures of the Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme. Four Statutory Instruments were published in 2020 to regulate and enable an improved grant scheme for private wells, and improved and expanded grant schemes for domestic waste water treatment systems (mostly septic tanks). This completed the roll out for all measures of the Programme.

### **ii. Rural Water Working Group**

A procurement process commenced in August 2020 inviting tenders for the preparation and provision of research and information on the Sector, to support the Rural Water Working Group. It is expected that the report produced by the successful tenderer through this process will result in further recommendations being made to the Minister. The work of the Working Group in relation to this review will continue through 2021 and into 2022.



### iii. Geographic Information System (GIS)

In 2020, a review of a GIS-based registration system for relevant group water schemes and small private supplies, to aid local authorities in meeting their obligations under the Drinking Water Regulations, was undertaken.

The review included consideration of feedback received from a pilot phase carried out by two local authorities and developments in relevant IT software and recommended that further improvements be made to the system. Work on these commenced in 2020.

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

The funding allocations under the new Multi-Annual Developer Provided Water Services Infrastructure Resolution Programme 2019-2021, were announced in September 2020. Allocations totalling over €3.36m were made for 26 housing estates across 10 counties, with almost 950 households to benefit. In addition to the allocations, a number of pilot demonstration projects for four locations across three local authorities, are being supported under the announcement. It is expected that this scheme could expand further in the future.

### River Basin Management Planning

Ireland's River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021 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.

The Department is currently preparing the third River Basin Management Plan for Ireland, to cover the period 2022–2027, which 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 2020 the



Department concluded the second phase of consultation on the Significant Water Management Issues for Ireland.

This consultation provided people with the opportunity to contribute to the development of new approaches to addressing the significant water management issues in Ireland, by promoting discussion on options around what should be done, and by who, so that the best outcomes are achieved.

The responses received will help to shape the overall management of the water environment, with the information gathered influencing the content of a draft third River Basin Management Plan, to be published as part of the final phase of consultation in 2021.

## **Ireland's Nitrates Action Programme**

The Department is currently undertaking the fourth review of Ireland's Nitrates Action Programme, which seeks to protect waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources. Its primary emphasis is on the management of livestock manures and other fertilisers.

In accordance with the Nitrates Directive, Ireland's Nitrates Action Programme (NAP) must be reviewed by the end of 2021. This will lead to the implementation of a new NAP, covering the period 2022 to 2025. The launch of the first of two consultations in 2020 by the Department formed the starting point of this process.

## **Marine Environment**

In June 2020 Ireland reported that it had achieved good environmental status, under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), for pollution including eutrophication, non-indigenous species and hydrographical conditions and had partially achieved it for elements of biodiversity, commercial fish and shellfish, sea-floor integrity, marine litter and underwater noise within its maritime area. Ireland also revised its environmental targets to bring them into line with revised technical standards.



Work on revising the MSFD Marine Strategy (Monitoring Programmes) started in September 2020 and is supported by a cross-government steering group with the participation of the civil society environmental pillar.

The work of the expert advisory group on Marine Protected Areas continued via remote meetings in 2020. In August 2020, stakeholder consultation commenced as part of the work of the group through on-line moderated meetings. On foot of this stakeholder consultation, the group finalised their report and submitted it to the Department in October 2020. Wider public consultation is expected to commence in early 2021.



The Department continued to play a leading role for Ireland in the OSPAR Regional Sea Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic.



Work continued on the development of a new draft 10-year strategy to address the biodiversity and climate crises and to reduce pollution, including marine litter and noise, in the North-East Atlantic.

## **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**

Over the course of 2020, the Department worked in partnership with the City and County Managers Association and the Local Government Management Agency to coordinate and oversee the local authorities' response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the key highlights of the work undertaken by local authorities were:



- Community Response Forums and helplines were coordinated and delivered support to those needing help during COVID-19. Local authorities received more than 58,000 calls from those in need of practical or social supports during the height of the initial restrictions, and Community Call helplines handled up to 1,400 calls per day.
- Local authorities through the Local Enterprise Offices, Business Support Hubs and Economic Development Sections, have played a central role in supporting our economy through the pandemic by managing grant schemes such as the Small Business Assistance Scheme for COVID-19 and the Trading Online Voucher Scheme via the Local Enterprise Offices.
- Extensive work has been underway across the local authority sector to develop, reimagine and accommodate new ways of utilising the public realm including facilitating outdoor dining and other uses of public space, ensuring additional space is allocated to pedestrians and shoppers to allow for social distancing and implementing measures to support active travel.

### **Tipperary Town Revitalisation**

In 2019, the Government committed to supporting the revitalisation of Tipperary Town. Funding to support this project amounts to €215,000 over the period 2020 to 2022.

In 2020, payment was made to support the recruitment of a project manager on a 3-year contract and to fund project expenses arising. A contribution was also paid towards the Collaborative Town Centre Health Check for the town which was carried out by the Heritage Council.

## **Louth Strategic Development**

A once-off grant of €200,000 was provided to Louth County Council in 2020 to assist in the creation of two dedicated senior posts in Dundalk and Drogheda.

These posts will specifically focus on the strategic development of both towns given their size and their unique position on the Dublin-Belfast economic corridor.

These two posts will facilitate development and implementation of key projects that align with the NPF, the delivery of urban area plans for both towns and, in the case of Drogheda, coordination with Meath County Council on a range of key developmental strategies.

## **Directly Elected Mayor for Limerick**

Following the 2019 plebiscite vote in favour of establishing a directly elected mayor in Limerick City and County, the Implementation Advisory Group submitted its report to Minister Burke in October 2020. The report represents the culmination of intensive consideration and consultation with key stakeholders in Limerick, as well as political representatives at national level and local government representative organisations. The University of Limerick was commissioned by the Implementation Advisory Group to carry out a public consultation within Limerick, overcoming the challenges posed by the public health situation.

The report makes numerous recommendations, particularly in relation to the devolution of functions to the directly elected mayor in Limerick, which will inform the development of legislation to support the creation of this new role.

## **Supporting Gender Balance and Diversity in Local Government**

The Department continued a programme of engagement with appropriate stakeholders to advance the commitment in the Programme for Government of increasing the number of female candidates who wish to run for local election. Throughout the year, organisations such as Women for Election, Longford Women's Link and the Immigrant Council of Ireland were funded for various activities, such as training and capacity building, research, public information campaigns on political roles, social media and communication campaigns, and mentoring programmes.

Funding was also provided to the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi) to conduct research into establishing a local level female caucus. This follows previous funding that supported the NWCi to publish a guide in early 2020 on establishing a caucus for female elected members.

The Department also oversaw a scheme that provided funding to political parties, to encourage diversity and gender balance within political parties. This was based on applications from the parties and a previous activity report from the 2019 allocation.

The Department invited proposals from local authorities for initiatives to encourage gender balance and diversity in Local Government. This resulted in the provision of funding to 15 local authorities, which issued In December 2020.

## **Independent Review of the Role and Remuneration of Local Authority Members**

The final report of the Independent Review of the Role and Remuneration of Local Authority Elected Members, led by Ms Sara Moorhead SC, was submitted to Government in June 2020 and is available on the Government's website at the following link:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d928f-independent-review-of-the-role-and-remuneration-of-local-authority-elected-members-final-report/>

Defining the role of a councillor was a key objective of this review exercise. The Report concluded that the role of councillor entails five main areas of work based on the councillors' reserved functions and position of leadership in the communities they represent. These are:

- Policy making and local authority performance in the delivery of its services
- Oversight, Governance and Compliance of and by the local authority
- Representing the local authority and the community on external bodies
- Community leadership and political advocacy
- Representation of individual constituents

The Report found that councillors' workload has increased since the 2014 local government reforms. The Report proposed a range of non-remunerative supports to assist councillors fulfil their role, including flexibility in the timing of meetings, enhanced training, administrative support consistently provided, and new procedures and systems.

The Programme for Government has a commitment to implement the Report within 12 months. Further consultation regarding the implementation of the Report took place later in the year with councillor representative associations and with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

## **Remote Meetings**

On 20 October 2020, the Minister signed an Order to designate local authorities under Section 29 of the Civil Law and Criminal Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020, allowing meetings to be held remotely. This supports the important work of elected councils and ensures that the local democratic process can continue to function while public health restrictions to protect against COVID-19 remain in place.

The Minister signed a separate Order for regional assemblies, which means they can also convene remote meetings.

Guidelines for standing Orders for remote meetings were also issued to local authorities and regional assemblies to assist them in ensuring that such meetings are held in an effective and efficient manner.

## **Local Government Funding**

The basis for the distribution of Local Property Tax (LPT) to local authorities remained unchanged in 2020. 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 €517m in 2020.

Local authorities also received €110m in funding from the Department to assist with additional payroll costs arising from the implementation of various public sector pay agreements.

The Department continued its monitoring and oversight of the financial performance of local authorities throughout 2020. This included reviewing the key financial indicators in their financial reports and working with local authorities to address issues affecting their finances.

In order to support businesses and ratepayers, and in recognition of the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 and the associated public health restrictions, the Government put in place a waiver of commercial rates for 9 months of 2020. This was an unprecedented measure, which offered support to businesses and financial certainty to local authorities. A 100% waiver was applied to all businesses with the exception of a small number of categories; mainly banks, utilities, large supermarkets and corporates. €900m was allocated by Government to fund the waiver in 2020, the final cost of which was €730m. The balance of the funding was distributed to local authorities in recognition of income pressures and unanticipated costs arising from the pandemic.

## **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. The transfer of administrative responsibility for the relevant area took place on 31 May 2019 and work on the transfer of functions was completed in 2020.

## **National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management**

The National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management (NDFEM) supported local authorities in achieving fire safety and consistent quality fire services for their communities in 2020. Capital funding amounting to €12.45m was recouped to local authorities in the course of 2020 for Fire Stations, Fire Service equipment and Fire Service vehicles. Extensive Fire Safety training programmes were managed and coordinated by the NDFEM and delivered to the Fire Services throughout 2020.

Fire Safety Promotion activities were also managed and coordinated by the NDFEM in 2020, in line with the National Framework Policy document 'Keeping Communities Safe'.

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

In relation to Emergency Management, in 2020, NDFEM supported the response to severe flooding events. NDFEM also chaired the interagency National Oversight Group established to manage the response to excess mortality arising as a result of COVID-19.

## **Electoral Management**

The Department provided legislative and operational support for the Dáil General Election held on 8 February 2020 and the Seanad General Election held on 30 and 31 March 2020. Ballot Paper Templates, which enable blind and visually impaired voters to vote independently, were made available at a Dáil General Election for the first time. They were also used previously at the Presidential election 2018, the European and local elections in 2019, as well as referendums held since 2018.

Ireland's representation in the European Parliament increased from 11 to 13 MEPs on 1 February 2020 when the Withdrawal Agreement between the European Union and the United Kingdom entered into force. As provided for under the European Parliament Elections (Amendment) Act 2019, the taking-up of these two seats had been temporarily deferred from the outcome of the elections to the European Parliament held on 24 May 2019 due to the delay in the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union.

The Department made significant progress on electoral reform in 2020. The Government approved the General Scheme of the Electoral Reform Bill in December 2020, which provides for a range of significant electoral reforms including:

## **Establishment of Electoral Commission**

The Electoral Commission will be a new independent organisation with responsibility for several electoral functions that will report directly to the Houses of the Oireachtas. It will take on several existing statutory electoral functions from the outset, including responsibility for the registration of political parties, and the work currently carried out by Referendum Commissions, Constituency Commissions and Local Electoral Area Boundary Committees. In addition, it will have responsibility for the regulation of online political advertising during electoral periods, oversight of the modernised Electoral Register, and a new public information, research and advisory role in relation to electoral matters. These functions will give the Commission a central role in our electoral system from the outset, bringing together a broad range of responsibilities.

## **Online Political Advertising**

The General Scheme also provides for the regulation of online political advertising to ensure that the electorate will be made aware of who is behind a political advertisement and why they are being targeted with such an advertisement.

## **Modernisation of the Electoral Register**

The General Scheme also includes provisions to enable the modernisation of the electoral registration process in line with the Programme for Government commitment. Modernisation proposals include, the introduction of rolling (continuously updated) registration; the simplification of forms and the registration process, including an online option; a single national Electoral Register Database; a move to using PPSNs as part of the registration process; 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. It is expected that the Bill will be significantly progressed in 2021.

## **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**

### **Weather and Climate Services**

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.



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 and will be operational in January 2023.

Met Éireann provided meteorological advice and support to the National Emergency Coordination Group in the lead up to and during 2020's severe weather events.

2020 saw Met Éireann lead the preparation of a bid on behalf of the State to host the European Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting EU funded activities in Ireland.

### **Aviation Services**

A project to ensure compliance of meteorological services to aviation with the EU Common Requirements Regulation was completed in 2020 allowing ongoing designation of Met Éireann's Aviation Services Division as Ireland's Meteorological Service provider for ICAO Annex 3 services.

Innovative procedures and technology were implemented to ensure aeronautical meteorological service continuity and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **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 2020 on a project to select the optimal operational fluvial (river) flood forecast model for the Flood Forecast Centre, the operational element of the Flood Forecast Division. The HYPE model was selected for the fluvial flood forecast model and the Delft-FEWS system was selected as the integrator/scheduler system to run the HYPE models.



A Technical Trial of the OPW's Tide and Storm Surge Forecast Service was implemented on Met Éireann's High Performance Computing Centre. The aim of the trial was to determine if the model could be run on a different operating system without and degradation of the technical elements of the Service. The results of the trial will be made known in 2021.

## Infrastructure

Met Éireann progressed its Climate Modernisation Project with additional climate monitoring stations installed, bringing the total to 70. A new automatic sounding system and additional environmental monitoring instrumentation was also installed at Valentia Observatory.

Under the National Radar Upgrade Project, a Radar Scoping Exercise was completed and a tender issued for replacement of the Shannon weather radar.

## Research

In collaboration with partners, Met Éireann continued to develop and expand its participation in national and international research programmes. The Met Éireann Research programme was further expanded with the commencement of the TRANSLATE Research call on Climate Services.

Further achievements were made in the research space with the completion of 60% of Regional Downscaling climate simulations, review of satellite meteorology applications and three research projects on Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning. In addition, the geolocation forecast system was developed further to include additional parameters.

## **Goal F - To conserve, protect, manage and present our built, natural, archaeological heritage and our biodiversity, for its intrinsic value, including to the environment as well as a support to local communities, regional economic development and sustainable employment**

### **Heritage Ireland 2030**

Drafting continued during the year on Heritage Ireland 2030, Ireland's new national heritage plan, with additional high-level consultation with other Government Departments. The Plan will be a coherent, comprehensive and inspiring framework of values, principles, strategic priorities and actions to guide and inform the heritage sector over the next decade. The drafting was informed by public submissions, existing Government strategies/plans, and was developed in conjunction with key heritage partners including the OPW and Heritage Council. Heritage Ireland 2030 will be published in 2021.

### **Natural Heritage**

Through the Department's Division of National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), the Department is responsible for the management and maintenance of an 87,000 hectare network of sites across six National Parks and more than 80 Nature Reserves and other conservational/recreational properties. During 2020, these sites remained operational and accessible to the public throughout the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, providing lifeline access to areas where people could exercise, get fresh air and experience nature whilst still being able to adhere to physical distancing protocols.

A key pillar of the Project Ireland 2040 investment programme is continued investment in our natural heritage. In 2020, including the July Stimulus funding package, over €14m was invested to promote the conservation of biodiversity, protect and restore our peatlands and to enhance National Parks and Nature Reserves. Individual projects are targeted at upgrading these sites, tackling invasive species and enhancing conservation, improving visitor facilities and information, improved signage, as well as developing and maintaining new & existing trails and walkways, including the development of new routes.

Highlights of the 2020 investment programme include;

- **Management of Invasive Species:** rhododendron clearance continued across various NPWS sites, including Killarney National Park, Connemara National Park, Wild Nephin Ballycroy National Park, Glenveagh National Park and Union Wood Nature Reserve with 420km worth of clearance work undertaken
- **Tomies Wood:** this project provided a new public access in Tomies Wood, Killarney National Park and a car park for the users of the amenity, eliminating parking problems in the area
- **Glenveagh National Park:** health & safety upgrading works to the water supply & waste water treatment facilities
- **Derrycunihy Church:** this successful conservation project protected and repaired the historic structure of the church whilst sustaining and enhancing the protected Lesser Horseshoe Bat roost
- **Trails network improvement and repairs:** road and trail repairs were carried out across the network, including works on the Dinis Loop and repairs to Cardiac steps in Killarney National Park. A new trail was created in Letterkeen (Wild Nephin Ballycroy National Park). Trail resurfacing works took place in Dromore Wood and Coole-Garryland Nature Reserve
- **Electric Buses:** as part of a number of projects co-funded under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, two electric buses were purchased for Glenveagh National Park in order to provide environmentally-friendly shuttle service for park visitors. The introduction of electric buses will eliminate the noise and fumes of the original diesel buses and will ultimately improve the whole visitor experience for those travelling on the bus as well as those walking or cycling within the Park.

## National Inventory of Architectural Heritage

The Department is responsible for maintaining the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH), with surveys providing the basis for the recommendations of the Minister to the planning authorities for the inclusion of particular structures in their Record of Protected Structures.

As part of the on-going NIAH surveys, Phase 4 of Dún Laoghaire Rathdown was undertaken in 2020. Phase 15 of Dublin City also commenced in 2020 but was paused due to COVID-19 restrictions.

## **National Policy on Architecture**

The Department, supported by a steering committee of key stakeholders, undertook a public consultation process in 2020 allowing the opportunity for all communities, stakeholders and citizens to have their say on the proposed new National Policy on Architecture.

The consultation phase considered the main ways in which architecture and our built environment affect society, our health and well-being and our ability to prosper. As well as receiving online and written submissions and engaging on social media, the Department held a series of workshops and meetings, including virtual workshops in line with public health restrictions, to allow wide-ranging involvement in the drafting of the policy.

The new Policy will be informed by the feedback from the consultation phase, with over 150 submissions received, and it is expected that it will be published in 2021.

## **Advice for Custodians of Historic Buildings**

The Department continued the development of its Advice Series for the owners and custodians of historic buildings with the publication in 2020 of a new volume entitled 'Disaster: a guide to prevention and preparedness in the historic built environment'. This new volume is designed to guide those responsible for historic buildings on how best to protect, repair and maintain their properties. It offers advice on preventing disasters, such as fire and flooding, and preparing disaster risk management plans that can be implemented in an emergency.

## **Guidance on Energy Efficiency in Traditional Buildings**

Under the Climate Action Plan 2019, the Department was tasked with leading the development of a retrofitting guidance document for traditionally built buildings. A Project Steering Group was established including officials from this Department, the Department of Climate, Environment and Communications, Department of Education and Skills, Heritage Council, Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland and Office of Public Works. A team of contractors was appointed in 2020 and work is advancing a with a view to publication in late 2021.

## **Heritage Skills Training**

The Department was successful in 2020 in receiving EU funding, as part of a group of countries, under a new Erasmus+ Sectoral Skills Alliance project - Cultural Heritage Actions to Refine Training, Education and Roles. This four year project will create a lasting, comprehensive, sectoral skills strategy to ensure Europe has the necessary cultural heritage skills to support sustainable societies and economies.

## The Heritage Council

The Minister announced the appointment of a new board of the Heritage Council on 3 November 2020, with appointees selected following a public competition.

The Department provided €7.505m in funding to the Heritage Council in 2020. The allocation covers the administrative and general operational costs of the Heritage Council and also funds a range of programmes, including capital funding of €1m for the delivery of the Historic Towns Initiative, which is a joint undertaking by the Department and the Heritage Council.

The Historic Towns initiative aims to promote the heritage-led regeneration of Ireland's historic towns. This programme includes works to significant historic buildings, streetscape conservation and the public realm. In 2020, funding of €1m was shared between Ballina, Co Mayo; Callan, Co. Kilkenny; Sligo, Co. Sligo; Tralee, Co. Kerry; Ramelton, Co. Donegal; Clones, Co. Monaghan; and Roscommon, Co. Roscommon.

In December 2020, applications were invited for the heritage-led regeneration of towns under the Historic Towns Initiative for 2021, with funding of €1.5m available.

## Funding for other Heritage Initiatives

The Department provided €650,000 in current and capital funding in 2020 for the Irish Heritage Trust to support its work, in particular for the restoration of the Head Gardener's Cottage, Fota House, Co. Cork.

Support for other bodies included the Irish Architecture Foundation, the Irish Architectural Archive, and International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) Ireland.

The Department provided just under €1m in funding to the OPW in 2020 for the conservation, preservation or presentation of historic properties and national monuments under the ownership or guardianship of the Minister, supporting projects at State owned heritage properties including Emo Court, Co Laois, Céide Fields, Co Mayo and Carrowmore, Co. Sligo.

Work progressed on developing a new 10 year Management Plan for the World Heritage Property of Sceilig Mhichíl. The draft Management Plan 2020 – 2030 underwent extensive public consultation in 2019 and, in November 2020 underwent further statutory consultation as part of the Strategic Environmental Assessment process.

Extensive stakeholder engagement was conducted in relation to the review of the World Heritage Tentative List. This included a workshop in Killarney, Co. Kerry, and subsequent online events, in partnership with ICOMOS Ireland.

The Department supported applicants to the Tentative List and oversaw a number of studies to inform its future.

## National Monuments

The National Monuments Service in the Department continued its regulatory work under the National Monuments Acts. 1,253 licences/consents for archaeological activity were issued in 2020. The Department continued to develop excavation licence compliance procedures building on steps taken in recent years. Engagement continued with planning authorities, the OPR, EPA and An Bord Pleanála to ensure effective protection of the archaeological heritage.

The Department's National Monuments Service continued to ensure high levels of public engagement during 2020, including online lectures by staff, social media activity, radio interviews and TV appearances all of which contributed to publicising events and collaborations relevant to the work of the National Monuments Service and Ireland's archaeological heritage. The 3rd annual National Monuments Service public archaeology conference was held online in October 2020.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to an increase in the numbers of new monument discoveries reported to National Monument Service in the Department as a result of people getting to know their local area better.

## Moore Street

The Moore Street Advisory Group, set up by the Minister of State for Heritage to engage with relevant stakeholders in relation to the regeneration of the Moore Street area, began the final phase of its work in December 2020. The main tasks assigned to the Advisory Group were to:

- Provide the Department and OPW with a vision for the 1916 National Monument buildings and site on Moore Street
- Reflect on the Report of Dublin City Council's Expert Group on the street market and provide comments to the City Council, as market authority
- Engage with and give feedback on the development plans of the owner of the Dublin central site that extends from Moore Street to O'Connell St.

The Advisory Group is due to report to the Minister in 2021.

## Zoos: Emergency Funding in Response to Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic

In response to the impact on the zoo sector of closures as a result of restrictions in place to stem the spread of COVID-19, the Department, in November 2020, provided an emergency scheme of grants to assist zoos and aquaria remain open through the winter months and into 2021.

Under the scheme, 64 zoos and aquaria applied for and were allocated an amount of funding based on the size and costs involved in maintaining the welfare of their animal collections. €500,000 was set aside for small and medium zoos while an amount of €1.1m was divided between Dublin Zoo and Fota Wildlife Park, reflecting the large scale of their operations and their importance both nationally and internationally.

## **Prioritised Action Framework – Natura 2000**

A Prioritised Action Framework (PAF) is a strategic multiannual planning tool, aimed at providing a comprehensive overview of measures that are needed in each EU Member State to manage the EU-wide Natura 2000 network and restore habitats and species to the status required under the Habitats and Birds Directives. The frameworks specify the financing needs for these measures and linking them to corresponding EU funding programmes for the relevant funding period.

Ireland's Prioritised Action Framework was drafted by the Department in 2020, with inputs from other Departments and associated agencies. Farming representative bodies and environmental NGOs, via the Irish Environmental Network, were also consulted on the draft PAF. It then went through an eight-week period of public consultation, with submission for Government approval expected in 2021.

## **LIFE Programmes**

The NPWS launched two new major EU LIFE projects in 2020:

- LIFE IP–PAF Wild Atlantic Nature, which aims to improve Ireland's performance in conserving habitats, particularly blanket bog, and
- LIFE Atlantic Crex, which focuses on improving the conservation status of the Corncrake.

A technical grant was also awarded to the NPWS by the EU LIFE programme for the preparation of a Strategic Nature Project proposal. Restoration measures on protected raised bogs continued in 2020 under the EU LIFE 'Living Bog' Project. The Department are partners in a new EU LIFE project - LIFE IP- Peatlands and People - led by Bord na Móna, which was awarded grant funding in 2020 of almost €10m that aims to engage people with the benefits of peatlands restoration and to realise the power of peatlands to effect positive climate action.

## **NPWS Farm Plan Scheme**

The NPWS farm plan scheme was allocated an increased budget in 2020 and forty new farm plans were approved, with further expansion anticipated in 2021.



## **Curlew Conservation Programme**

The Curlew breeding population in Ireland has declined hugely in recent years, from between 3,300 and 5,500 pairs in the late 1980s to less than 150 pairs in 2020. A number of initiatives are underway to support the species. The Curlew Conservation Programme is coordinated by the NPWS Division of the Department and supported by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. It involves a research programme and local action teams in nine pilot key breeding areas who work closely with landowners and others to protect nesting Curlew and improve their habitat in these areas. Landowners with Curlew on their land were paid for the costs of undertaking actions, such as works to improve habitat quality.

## **Local Authority Biodiversity Grant Scheme**

The Local Authority Biodiversity Grant Scheme provides funding to assist local authority biodiversity officers or heritage officers with the implementation of projects contained in the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021. The Department awarded funding totalling €619k in 2020, supporting 56 projects and ranging from those tackling invasive alien species, the surveying of breeding birds to projects raising awareness of biodiversity.

## **Habitats Designation and Management Programme**

Ireland is required, under the EU Habitats Directive, to formally designate its Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs). This involves the adoption of a Statutory Instrument for each site. Ireland currently has a Natura 2000 network of 439 sites selected for conservation as SACs and 154 sites selected for conservation as SPAs.

The total number of sites formally designated by Statutory Instrument as SACs at the end of 2020 was 276. The signing of Statutory Instruments for four SPAs (expected in 2021) will complete the formal designation/classification process for SPAs.

## **Peatlands Conservation, Management and Restoration Programme**

A programme of conservation measures set out within the National Raised Bog Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) Management Plan 2017-2022 continued apace in 2020. The Plan sets out the roadmap for the long-term management, conservation and restoration of Ireland's protected raised bogs in keeping with legal obligations, in particular, under the EU Habitats Directive.

Part of the programme of conservation measures to preserve designated raised bog SACs and Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) protected under the EU Habitats Directive and the Wildlife Acts is the cessation of turf cutting activity on those sites.

The Cessation of Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme was introduced to compensate for the loss of domestic fuel supply to households affected by the cessation of turf cutting on raised bog SACs and NHAs encompassed by the scheme.

During 2020, under the Cessation of Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme, 2,682 annual and lump sum payments and 65 deliveries of turf were made to qualifying applicants. Once off incentive payments of €500 were also made in respect of 25 qualifying applicants. As part of this scheme 107 turf cutters have been relocated from raised bog SACs and one raised bog NHA to non-designated bogs.

The Department continues to monitor sites with respect to turf cutting activity.

## **Peatlands Restoration**

Peatland habitat restoration measures were completed on four raised bog SACs in 2020 (Carrowbehy/Caher Bog, Co. Roscommon, Clara Bog, Co. Offaly, Raheenmore Bog, Co. Offaly and Killyconny Bog, Co. Cavan) under a €5.4m project - 'The Living Bog' - funded through the EU LIFE Nature 2014-2020 programme.

As part of Ireland's Climate Action Plan actions, further restoration measures were completed by the Department on predominately State-owned lands and project managed by Bord na Móna on behalf of the Department within Clonydonnin Bog NHA, Co Offaly/Westmeath, Cloncrow Bog NHA, Co. Westmeath and Scohaboy Bog NHA Co. Tipperary.

In 2020, Bord na Móna were engaged by the Department following a public procurement process to also project manage, provide professional services and to carry out restoration measures on up to 1,900 hectares of protected raised bog on Crosswood Bog SAC, Co. Westmeath, with preparatory work to be undertaken on other sites.

## **Regulator to the Enhanced Decommissioning, Rehabilitation and Restoration Scheme**

The Enhanced Decommissioning Rehabilitation and Restoration Scheme (EDRRS) was approved by the Government in November 2020. The Department is the Regulator of the Scheme, the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications administers the Scheme and Bord na Mona is the Operator of the Scheme. EDRRS encompasses work on approximately 33,000 hectares of Bord na Móna peatlands, across 82 bogs, previously harvested for peat extraction for electricity generation. The funding of €108m for this scheme is being sourced from the Climate Action Fund and the works under the scheme are expected to be completed by the end of 2025.

## **Peatlands Community Engagement Scheme**

The Peatlands Community Engagement Scheme encourages local peatland communities, groups, schools and individuals to engage with the Department in relation to the conservation and revitalisation of raised and blanket bog SACs, NHAs and other peatland areas. In 2020, eight organisations were awarded grant funding totaling €106,000 under this scheme.

## **Wildlife Licensing**

The Department is responsible for the licensing requirements under the Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2018 and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 to 2015. 7,941 licences and permits were issued by the Department for a variety of activities in 2020, of which 67% (5,344) were issued for deer hunting.

## Cross-Cutting Activities

### Climate Action

The Programme for Government commits to a 51% reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions over the next decade, and to achieving net zero emissions by 2050.

The Department has a key role in creating the regulatory framework and support for Climate Action. In 2020, it progressed a number of actions in Climate Action Plan 2019 including an ambitious programme of retrofitting social housing, the implementation of standards for Nearly Zero Buildings and the development of Marine Planning Legislation.

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.

In 2020, the Department established a Climate Change Planning Team of external stakeholders to oversee the implementation of the Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan for Built and Archaeological Heritage which was published in October 2019.

The Plan is one of nine adaptation plans prepared by seven different Government Departments as part of the National Adaptation Framework. The sectors included cover natural and cultural capital, critical infrastructure, water resource, flood risk management and public health and set out the climate adaptation measures necessary to ensure that the State is ready to protect people from the negative effects of climate change in Ireland and the steps needed to limit any damage caused.

Through 2020, the Department's National Monument Service led in scoping out key priorities and developing strategies for delivering on actions. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Department and Historic Environment Scotland in December 2020 on Cultural Heritage and Climate Action, thereby meeting a key objective of the Adaptation Plan to develop international partnerships and share knowledge.

## Brexit Readiness

The Department's Brexit readiness efforts continued throughout 2020 in advance of the finalisation of UK EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement on 24 December 2020 and the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020.

The Construction Products Regulation remained a key focus area, along with outreach and communications to raise awareness of the implications of Brexit for the construction sector.

The Department provided updated Frequently Asked Questions explaining the impacts of the end of the Brexit transition period on the supply and use of construction products in the Irish construction sector.

The Department, as notifying authority designated additional organisations, bringing the total number of Notified Bodies under the Construction Products Regulation to 10 and total number of Technical Assessment Bodies under the Construction Products Regulation to three in Ireland.

Legislation was passed appointing Dublin City Council as a competent authority for the carrying out of market surveillance of construction products under the Construction Products Regulation on a nationwide basis.

## Sustainable Development Goals

The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a significant and ambitious policy agenda that concerns all Government Departments. The Department has responsibility for leading implementation on:

- SDG 6 'Clean Water and Sanitation' with input from the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine;
- SDG 14 'Life Below Water', with input from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Department of Foreign Affairs;
- SDG 15 'Life on Land', with input from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the Department of Finance and the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The Department also has input into SDG 1 'No Poverty', SDG 11 'Sustainable Cities and Communities', and SDG 17 'Partnerships for the Goals'; however does not lead on the implementation of these goals.

The Department is represented on the Senior Officials Group and the Inter-Departmental Working Group for SDGs, reporting on progress to the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, which oversees the whole-of-Government initiative on the SDGs.

## North-South Ministerial Council

Meetings of the North-South Ministerial Council resumed in July 2020, following the establishment of the new Northern Ireland Executive and the formation of the new Irish Government. The first North-South Ministerial Council Plenary meeting following resumption took place on 31 July, attended by Minister O'Brien, who was also present for the subsequent Plenary on 18 December, 2020.

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage engages with the North-South Ministerial Council in two key areas:

- The Environment Area of Co-Operation
- Waterways Ireland.

The Environment Area of Co-Operation engages and decides on common environmental policies and approaches, in a cross-border context. The Department's principal engagement is on Water Quality Management. The first Environment sectoral meeting since 2016 was held in October 2020 and the Department prepared a joint Water Quality paper with colleagues from the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs. Inter alia, it noted the publication of the second-cycle River Basin Management Plan for Ireland in April 2018 and welcomed the ongoing preparation of the third cycle River Basin Management Plans in both Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Waterways Ireland has responsibility for the management, maintenance, development and restoration of specified inland navigable waterways, principally for recreational purposes. At the November 2020 meeting the Department's contribution noted the increased recreational use of inland waterways since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the surge in popularity of inland waterways as a holiday destination for the domestic market.

## Corporate Information

### COVID-19

The Department's corporate function worked throughout 2020 to ensure the ongoing provision of services while the workforce worked remotely.

The ICT unit responded to the COVID-19 crisis by enhancing the Department's remote capabilities through accelerating a One Device Policy and providing Direct Access for all staff. The ICT unit quickly and effectively enabled staff to work remotely with full access to all ICT services including the deployment of an additional video conferencing solution to allow staff communication to continue internally and externally with Department stakeholders.

57 staff were redeployed internally, with the majority of them providing support to the Department's Facilities Management and ICT business units. Over eighty staff were identified as releasable for redeployment under the central Temporary Assignment Scheme that was managed by the Public Appointments Service. In addition, four Ballina-based staff participated in training for Contact Tracing, and 10 staff were assigned briefly to provide support with the initial processing of emergency payments to those who found themselves out of work due to the impact of COVID-19.

Under our internal people strategy, 'WELL', we rolled out a series of webinars and Lunch and Learn sessions covering topics such as 'building Resilience, 'stress management' and 'coping with loss' in the COVID-19 context. These initiatives were further enhanced by presentations to staff from our Employees Assistance Officer.

### Internal Audit

The Department's Internal Audit Unit completed six internal audits and seven audit reviews/ follow-ups during 2020. The Department's Audit Committee held four meetings during the year.

### Green Public Procurement

The Department is developing its Corporate Procurement Plan which includes requirements in respect of Green Public Procurement.

Green Procurement is one of the environmental aspects covered under the Department's Environmental Management System Work Programme. This Management System is in place in the Custom House, Ballina and Wexford and is accredited to the ISO 14001:2015 Standard.



<b>2020 Green Public Procurement (GPP) Spend</b>		
<b>Priority Sector</b>	<b>Number Of GPP Contracts Issued Over €25,000</b>	<b>Value Of GPP Contracts Issued Over €25,000</b>
<b>Energy</b>	1	€225,530.92 (VAT inclusive) €198,705.67 (VAT exclusive)
<b>Cleaning Products and Services</b>	2	€214,751.05 (VAT inclusive) €189,252.84 (VAT exclusive)
<b>Totals</b>	3	<b>€440,281.97 (VAT inclusive)</b> <b>€387,913.56 (VAT exclusive)</b>

## 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 2020, the Department's internal working group, continued to address the implementation of our Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.

An action plan for the period 2021-2025 was developed in 2020 and, commencing with the Department's 2021 Annual Report, implementation of that plan will be reported on.

## Irish Language Commitments

The Department published its fifth Language Scheme in May 2020 under the Official Languages Act, 2003. The Department remains committed to providing services in Irish and/or bilingually to its customers as set out in the Scheme, and to the statutory obligations arising on foot of the Official Languages Act.

In 2020, the Department translated 202 reports, press releases and policy documents to Irish.

## Freedom of Information and Access to Information on the Environment

In 2020, the Department received 267 Freedom of Information requests in addition to 14 that were live at the start of the year. Of these 60 requests were granted; 88 were part-granted; 63 were refused; 48 were withdrawn and 22 were live at year-end.

In addition, the Department received 27 requests under the Access to Information on the Environment regulations. Of these seven requests were granted; two were part-granted; seven were refused and two were withdrawn. Nine requests were live at year-end.

## 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 2020, the Department received 1,321 queries to our quality customer service mailbox. A 137% increase compared to 556 emails received in 2019.

An analysis of queries indicates that 94% of queries were resolved within the 15-day time-frame, a 4% increase compared to 2019.

Details of our Charter and Plan are available on

<https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/28f3d1-quality-customer-service/>.

Parliamentary Questions	2018	2019	2020*
Questions Received	3,638	3,286	2933
Questions Answered <sup>1</sup>	3,307	2,776	2,445
<b>Type of Question Answered:</b>			
Oral	401	411	230
Written	2,906	2,365	2,215
<b>COVID-19-related Queries from Deputies **</b>			
Received	-	-	145
Answered <sup>1</sup>	-	-	129
<b>Topical Issues Debates</b>			
	185	134	139
<b>Commencement Matters</b>			
	83	89	51
<b>Representations and Invitations</b>			
Representations <sup>2</sup>	3,749	3,515	3,457
Invitations <sup>3</sup>	633	1,077	883

\*The 2020 figures do not reflect Heritage items prior to the transfer of functions

\*\*In the absence of Parliamentary Questions during April and May 2020, TDs submitted COVID-19-related queries

1 The remainder of questions/COVID-19 queries 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 Department's People Strategy for 2018-2020, 'WELL', contains over 50 separate actions across the four themes/pillars of Wellbeing, Engagement, Learning & Development and Leadership. In 2020 in light of the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department's Human Resources, Training and Facilities Units adapted work processes and implemented new practices to support and develop staff in such a way to allow the successful continuation of service to the public.



Our Mentoring programme is now 'business as usual' in the Department. This year we harnessed the power of WEBEX and the digital delivery of services to implement a completely virtual programme with approximately 50 participants.

## Staff Numbers

The Department's staffing compliment increased by over 50% following the transfer of the Heritage function to us last September. A total of 453 staff (432 Heritage Division staff and 21 corporate support staff) transferred across from the former Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

The number of staff serving in the Department at year-end 2020 equated to 1,206.58 Whole Time Equivalent posts; 108 staff were recruited and promoted through a variety of different routes in 2020, including internal promotion and open competitions.

## 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 89% compliance rate achieved in 2020.

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. In 2020, we moved the delivery of training from classroom tutor led to virtual delivery via WEBEX, ZOOM and MS Teams platforms.

Under the Learning and Development 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.

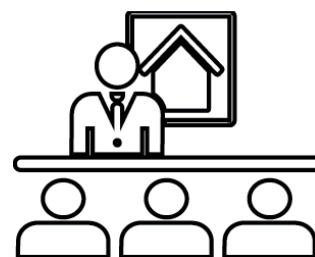
Support is provided to staff undertaking formal education in subjects relevant to their work through our Refund of Fees Scheme and dedicated learning structures, and our Refund of Professional Fees Scheme ensures staff have access to membership of accredited and professional bodies as required.

In 2020, 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.



## ICT Developments

The Department continued to utilise the Build to Share initiative in line with the Civil Service Renewal Plan and the Public Service Reform Framework. The Department successfully migrated to the centralised Build to Share Managed Desktop solution in October 2020, adopting this shared service under e-Government to maximise efficiencies and productive capacity. The implementation of a new document management system, eDocs, was completed for the majority of the Department in 2020 which has improved how data is collected, managed and shared. Met Éireann and Heritage Divisions will migrate to eDocs in separate projects.

The Department recruited a Chief Information Officer in 2020 who will lead a programme of digital transformation in the Department and support our agencies and the local government sector in this respect also.

## Prompt Payment

In 2020, the Department paid 84.24% of all invoices within 15 calendar days, and 97.95% of all invoices within 30 calendar days.

In respect of the year overall, the Department incurred late payment interest charges of €3,805. The value of all late payments as a percentage of all invoiced payments in 2020 was 2.05%. In addition to the late payment interest, compensation costs amounting to €9,580 were paid in 2020.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Legislative Activity In 2020

#### Relevant Acts of the Oireachtas in 2020

Part 2 and Part 3 of the Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (COVID-19) Act 2020 (No. 2 of 2020)

Residential Tenancies and Valuation Act 2020 (No. 7 of 2020)

Residential Tenancies Act 2020 (No. 17 of 2020)

Planning and Development, and Residential Tenancies, Act 2020 (No. 27 of 2020)

#### Statutory Instruments in 2020

S.I. No	Description
25/2020	Dwellings Damaged by the use of Defective Concrete Blocks in Construction (Remediation) (Financial Assistance) Regulations 2020
34/2020	Electoral Act 1992 (Special Difficulty) Order 2020
36/2020	Microbeads (Prohibition) Act 2019 (Commencement) Order 2020
40/2020	European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) (Amendment) Regulations
44/2020	Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018 (Commencement) Order 2020
45/2020	Planning and Development Act 2000 (Exempted Development) Regulations 2020
46/2020	Planning and Development (Amendment) Regulations 2020
61/2020	Planning and Development Act 2000 (Section 44a) Order 2020
92/2020	Planning and Development Act 2000 (Exempted Development) (No. 2) Regulations 2020
93/2020	Planning and Development Act 2000 (Section 181) Regulations 2020
100/2020	Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (COVID-19) Act 2020 (Part 3) (Commencement) Order 2020
112/2020	Building Control Act 1990 (Section 5) Order 2020
113/2020	Building Control Regulations 2020

114/2020	European Union Habitats (Dromore Woods and Loughs Special Area of Conservation 000032) Regulations 2020
115/2020	European Union Habitats (Shankill West Bog Special Area of Conservation 000326) Regulations 2020
116/2020	European Union Habitats (Galtee Mountains Special Area of Conservation 000646) Regulations 2020
117/2020	European Union Habitats (Killala Bay/Moy Estuary Special Area of Conservation 000458) Regulations 2020
118/2020	European Union Habitats (Carrowmore Lake Complex Special Area of Conservation 000476) Regulations 2020
119/2020	European Union Habitats (Slieve Fyagh Bog Special Area of Conservation 000542) Regulations 2020
129/2020	Planning and Development Act 2000 (Subsection (3) of Section 251a) Order 2020
131/2020	Planning and Development Act 2000 (Subsection (4) of Section 251A) Order 2020
136/2020	Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Athy) Order 2020
137/2020	Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Killarney) Order 2020
138/2020	Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Mallow) Order 2020
139/2020	Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Mullingar) Order 2020
140/2020	Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Tullamore) Order 2020
165/2020	Planning and Development Act 2000 (Subsection (4) of Section 251a) (No. 2) Order 2020
166/2020	Water Services (No. 2) Act 2013 (Property Vesting Day) Order 2020
180/2020	Planning and Development Act 2000 (Section 38) Regulations 2020
184/2020	Housing (Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems Financial Assistance) Regulations 2020
185/2020	Housing (Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems Financial Assistance For Prioritised Areas For Action) Regulations 2020
186/2020	Housing (Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems Financial Assistance for High Status Objective Catchment Areas) Regulations 2020
188/2020	Housing (Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies) Act 2019 (Commencement) Order 2020
192/2020	Housing (Private Water Supply Financial Assistance) Regulations 2020

214/2020	European Union (Waste Water Discharge) Regulations 2020
224/2020	Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (COVID-19) Act 2020 (Section 4) Order 2020
225/2020	European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations 2020
247/2020	Rent Pressure Zone (Local Electoral Area of Bandon – Kinsale) Order 2020
254/2020	Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (COVID-19) Act 2020 (Section 4) (No. 2) Order 2020
293/2020	Planning and Development Act 2000 (Exempted Development) (No.3) Regulations 2020
339/2020	Heritage (Transfer of Departmental Administration and Ministerial Functions) Order 2020
340/2020	Inland Waterways and Waterways Ireland (Transfer of Departmental Administration and Ministerial Functions) Order 2020
380/2020	Rent Pressure Zone (Administrative Area of Kildare County Council) Order 2020
384/2020	Water Services (No.2) Act 2013 (Property Vesting Day) (No.2) Order 2020
408/2020	Housing, Planning and Local Government (Alteration of Name of Department and Title of Minister) Order 2020
445/2020	Civil Law and Criminal Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020 (Section 29) (Local Authorities) (Designation) Order 2020
446/2020	Civil Law and Criminal Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020 (Section 29) (Regional Assemblies) (Designation) Order 2020
468/2020	Building Control (Prescribed Qualifications) Regulations 2020
517/2020	Civil Law and Criminal Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020 (Section 29) Order 2020
518/2020	Civil Law and Criminal Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020 (Section 31) Order 2020
526/2020	Water Services Act 2017 (Membership of Water Forum) Regulations 2020
528/2020	European Union (Environmental Impact Assessment) (National Monuments Act 1930) (Section 14D) (Amendment) Regulations 2020
529/2020	European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2020



<b>544/2020</b>	Registration of Deeds and Title Act 2006 (Fees) Order 2020
<b>559/2020</b>	Housing, Local Government and Heritage (Delegation of Ministerial Functions) Order 2020
<b>612/2020</b>	Appointment of Special Adviser (Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage) (No. 2) Order 2020
<b>662/2020</b>	Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Consequential Provisions) Act 2020 (Part 22) (Commencement) Order 2020
<b>681/2020</b>	Water Services (No. 2) Act 2013 (Property Vesting Day) (No.3) Order 2020
<b>682/2020</b>	Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Consequential Provisions) Act 2020 (Construction Products – Market Surveillance) Regulations 202
<b>692/2020</b>	Planning and Development (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2020
<b>747/2020</b>	Housing, Local Government and Heritage (Delegation of Ministerial Functions) (No. 2) Order 2020

## Appendix 2: Publications In 2020

The main publications produced by the Department during 2020 are detailed below:

- 33rd Dáil - General Election Results
- Annual Report 2019
- Protected Disclosures Annual Report 2019
- Determination under Regulation 9(2) of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations, 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004), as amended concerning the proposed Ministerial Direction (proposed to be made in accordance with section 31A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended) in relation to the Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019 – 2031
- Determination under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011, as amended concerning the proposed Ministerial Direction (proposed to be made in accordance with section 31A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended) in relation to the Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019 – 2031
- Determination under Regulation 9(2) of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations, 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004), as amended concerning proposed Planning and Development (Amendment) Regulations 2019 (S.I. 46 of 2020)
- Determination under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011, as amended concerning proposed Planning and Development (Amendment) Regulations 2019 (S.I. 46 of 2020)
- Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report concerning proposed update of the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (March 2018) to inform a determination under Article 9 of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations, 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004), as amended.
- Appropriate Assessment Screening Report concerning proposed update of the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (March 2018) to inform screening for Appropriate Assessment under Article 42(2) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2011), as amended.

- Determination under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011, as amended concerning proposed update of the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (March, 2018).
- Determination under Regulation 9(2) of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations, 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004), as amended concerning proposed update of the Sustainable Urban Housing: Design Standards for New Apartments - Guidelines for Planning Authorities (March 2018).
- Determination under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 (as amended) concerning Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning - Guidelines For Planning Authorities issued under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).
- Determination under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 (as amended) concerning the Circular to City and County Councils, An Bord Pleanála, Office of the Planning Regulator and the Housing Agency Re. Structural Housing Demand in Ireland and Housing Supply Targets (December 2020).
- Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report concerning proposed Planning and Development Act 2000 (Exempted Development) Regulations, 2021 (S.I. 114 of 2021) to inform a determination under Article 9 of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations, 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004), as amended.
- Appropriate Assessment Screening Report concerning proposed Planning and Development Act 2000 (Exempted Development) Regulations, 2021 (S.I. 114 of 2021) to inform screening for Appropriate Assessment under Article 42(2) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2011), as amended.
- Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Report concerning proposed Planning and Development Act 2000 (Exempted Development) (No.2) Regulations, 2021 (S.I. 115 of 2021) to inform a determination under Article 9 of the European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations, 2004 (S.I. 435 of 2004), as amended.
- Appropriate Assessment Screening Report concerning proposed Planning and Development Act 2000 (Exempted Development) (No.2) Regulations, 2021 (S.I. 115 of 2021) to inform screening for Appropriate Assessment under Article 42(2) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2011 (S.I. 477 of 2011), as amended.

- Disaster, A guide to prevention and preparedness in the historic built environment
- Scientific Reports and related biodiversity policy documents published by the Science and Biodiversity Policy Unit in 2020:
- Interim review of the National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021
- Review of options to enhance business contribution to Ireland's national biodiversity objectives
- Technical publications detailing survey results for marine habitats, marl lakes, squirrel, pine marten, breeding waders, golden plover, pearl mussel and clubmoss species
- Scientific inventories including stonefly red list, bryophyte checklist, important insect areas and cutover bog habitats
- Farming for nature – the Role of Results-based Payments
- Policy and institutional review of finance arrangements for biodiversity conservation in Ireland
- Special issue of Biology and Environment: Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy covering the 2019 National Biodiversity Conference
- Site Specific Conservation Objectives were published for 20 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)
- National Peatlands Strategy Progress Report 2018 & 2019
- Review of the use of peat moss in the horticultural industry
- Co-Living/Shared Accommodation Report
- COVID-19 Planning FAQ Documents
- Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets Interim Guidance Note
- Design Standards for New Apartments – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2020) (Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines)
- Housing Supply Target Methodology for Development Planning – Guidelines for Planning Authorities (Section 28 Ministerial Guidelines)
- Ministerial Direction - Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2019 – 2031
- Ministerial Direction – Variation Number 2 to the Cork County Development Plan 2014

#### Additional Publications from **National Oversight and Audit Commission**

- Local Authority Satisfaction Survey 2018 – 2020 (Infographic Report) – September 2020
- Local Authority Satisfaction Survey 2020 – September 2020
- Local Authority Performance Indicator Report 2019 – December 2020
- Public Spending Code Report 2019 - December 2020

#### Additional Publications from **Water Advisory Body**

- WAB Report 1 of 2020 – March 2020
- WAB Report 2 of 2020 – September 2020
- WAB Report 3 of 2020 – December 2020

## Appendix 3: Public Consultations Undertaken In 2020

- Nationwide public consultation on the UK's proposed Sizewell-C Nuclear Power Plant - held in accordance with the provisions of the Espoo Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context. The public consultation coordinated by the Department was open for submissions from 2 September 2020 to 28 October 2020
- Public Consultation on Ireland's Nitrates Action Programme
- National Policy on Architecture – submissions were invited and a series of workshops held in 2020 as part of the public consultation process
- Skellig Michael Management Plan/SEA consultation, 4 November – 16 December 2020
- Public Consultation on the development of the Department's Statement of Strategy 2021 – 2025
- Outdoor Recreation NI conducted a public consultation on our behalf in September 2020 as part of the development of a Visitor Experience Management Plan for Slieve Bloom Mountains Nature Reserve. The consultation consisted of an online questionnaire

## Appendix 4: Bodies under the Aegis of the Department at Year-End 2020

Body	Accountable Person (Head of Office)	Governing Legislation
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 and 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	Residential Tenancies Act 2004
Valuation Office	John O'Sullivan	Valuation Acts 2001 and 2015
Valuation Tribunal	John O'Sullivan	Valuation Act 2001, s. 12
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	John F. McCarthy	Local Government Reform Act 2014
Water Advisory Body	John F. McCarthy	Water Services Act 2017
An Fóram Uisce	Dónal Purcell	Water Services Act 2017
National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee	Eoin O'Sullivan	Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998 - S. 21
Waterways Ireland	John McDonagh	British-Irish Agreement Act, 1999
Heritage Council	Virginia Teehan	The Heritage Act 1995, s. 5 (amended by Heritage Act 2018)



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