



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government

Statement of Strategy 2017-2020

Prepared by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government

housing.gov.ie

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	2
Foreword by the Minister	3
Introduction by the Secretary General	5
Our Mission	6
Supporting Delivery	7
Planning	15
Housing	19
Water	27
Local Government.....	31
Met Éireann	34
Challenges, Risks and Opportunities.....	37
APPENDICES	38

Foreword by the Minister

It is a privilege to have been appointed Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government by An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar T.D., in June 2017. The wide-ranging remit of the Department, directed by Government policy, has an important and a very real impact across a broad area of Irish life. There is a very dedicated group of civil servants within the Department and it is an honour to lead them as we implement the various policies that make up our overall strategy.



Housing and homelessness is the Government's top priority and one of the biggest challenges that I believe we face as a country. The new configuration of the Department reflects that prioritisation: the resources of the Department are being deployed to continually drive delivery of the Government's Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness, Rebuilding Ireland.

Upon my appointment, I conducted a review of our action plan, initiated additional actions and priorities and we are now driving the delivery of Rebuilding Ireland through dedicated new resources in the Department, as well as through our Housing Summit series. Steady progress has been made, with a new target for the delivery of 50,000 social housing homes in the period to 2021, as well as increasing the annual level of construction to 25,000 homes by 2020. Realising these ambitious targets requires that we speed up the processes that deliver housing - we must make it more efficient to deliver the homes that people need in the places they need them, and at affordable prices.

Another major focus will be the implementation of Project Ireland 2040 and the National Planning Framework (NPF) contained therein for how we evolve and grow as a modern society and economy. The NPF is a long term spatial plan for Ireland that recognises regional differences and plays to diverse strengths. It will be placed formally as a framework at the top of the hierarchy of plans to guide Regional Spatial and Economic Plans, County Development Plans and Local Area Plans for a generation. It also aligns with the ten year National Development Plan to ensure consistency in and integrity of future investments.

My Department is the lead Government Department for coordinating the response to severe weather emergencies. We've had two episodes of major severe weather events in the recent past – Storms Ophelia and Emma – and we will continue to act as necessary, including convening meetings of the National Emergency Co-ordination Group (NECG), to ensure public safety and protection of all our citizens and visitors in such future events. Met Éireann, the national meteorological service, will also continue to provide timely and quality forecasting services to the public and colour coded weather alerts and warnings for the full range of weather hazards. Life safety and standards in buildings are also of course an ongoing concern for my Department, and this work is being led by the post Grenfell Taskforce.

In the immediate period ahead, the Department will also oversee a review of local electoral area boundaries, legislate for the extension of Cork City and implement the agreed structural solution for Galway City and County. In terms of franchise, preparations are underway to run a series of referenda before the end of 2018 and preparations will commence shortly in respect of the June 2019 local and European elections.

Work also continues apace on the transformation of our water services into a single national public utility, Irish Water, to deliver greater efficiency from economies of scale, use of standard operating models and technologies and the appropriate assignment of functions at local, regional and national level. In tandem, a working group will soon convene to conduct a wider review of investment needs required to improve and sustain rural water services.

I am pleased that the strategy outlines a range of measures the Department will be progressing in the area of protecting and enhancing our marine environment over the period ahead, including progressing the Maritime Area and Foreshore (Amendment) Bill to provide a new and modern consent regime for development in the Marine Area. By end 2020, the Department aims to have completed work on developing Ireland's first Marine Spatial Plan which will be the national framework for the sustainable development of our marine waters.

These are just examples – important ones – of our very broad agenda. This Statement of Strategy sets out a work-plan for the coming years that will enable the Department to continue to deliver in line with the Programme for a Partnership Government commitments. It is a strategy that looks forward, building on our national recovery and laying solid foundations for the future of all our citizens.

I look forward to continuing this work, together with Minister Damien English and Minister John Paul Phelan, and with officials in the Department, local authorities, stakeholders and agencies to deliver the objectives of our strategy together.

Eoghan Murphy T.D.

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government

Introduction by the Secretary General



Following on from the reconfiguration of the Department in mid-2017 and the transfer of community affairs functions to the new Department of Rural and Community Development, we have been working with our Ministers, staff and key stakeholders to develop this new *Statement of Strategy* in compliance with the requirements of the Public Service Management Act 1997.

The Statement of Strategy is structured on the basis of high-level or strategic goals, one for each of the Department's main programme areas. It sets out the objectives and actions the Department will pursue across its diverse range of functions, including housing, planning, water and local government services, as well as within Met Éireann.

As we look ahead to the period covered by this new Statement, tackling Ireland's housing crisis remains a top priority and the Department looks forward to continued close cooperation with local authorities and approved housing bodies to identify further solutions and increase social housing supports. Moving forward with implementation of *Rebuilding Ireland, the Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness* is a major and immediate focus for the Department and we remain deeply committed to addressing the significant challenges in meeting the housing needs of citizens.

Another key priority for the Department will be delivery of a new National Planning Framework as a strategic plan for Ireland to 2040. *Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework*, which was drafted following an inclusive consultation process with stakeholders and the general public, will serve as the overarching national framework for spatial planning and will address the future development direction of our cities, towns and rural areas.

Over the next three years, we will also actively pursue the strategic goals in each of our other programme areas and continue to provide a top-quality meteorological service.

Successful implementation of this Strategy Statement will depend on collaboration with our external partners in the public and private sectors. It will also be contingent on the steps we are taking to ensure that we have the capacity and capability as a Department to meet the challenges to deliver for the State and the people of Ireland. In this respect, the Department will continue to strongly support initiatives that underpin the development of excellence within the civil service such as the *Civil Service Renewal Plan* and the recently published *People Strategy for the Civil Service 2017-2020*.

Together with my colleagues in the Department, I look forward to working with our Ministerial team and with our many partners to implement this Statement of Strategy.

John McCarthy
Secretary General

Our Mission

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

Our Strategic Goals

Our strategic goals are:

- 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.



Our Values

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

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

Supporting Delivery

Introduction and Context

The Department's core roles are to:

- (i) provide impartial, evidence-based policy advice to the Minister and Minister(s) of State in the context of our overall policy development role;
- (ii) deliver programmes and projects, directly and through other bodies; and
- (iii) manage expenditure;



to facilitate the achievement of Government policy objectives in an efficient and effective manner. The Department also has representative and negotiation roles in relation to EU and other international responsibilities.

The Department, many of whose activities are carried out on a co-operative basis across multiple Business Units, comprises the Office of the Minister (and Ministers of State, where appointed to the Department), the Management Board and six Divisions. In addition, the independent Local Government Audit Service is a part of the Department.

In accordance with the Public Service Management Act 1997, the Department develops a Statement of Strategy at least once every three years, which takes account of Programme for Government commitments. The Statement of Strategy provides a clear statement of the Department's mission and goals and provides the framework for more detailed planning and individual performance management across the Department.

Our work involves us addressing economic and social issues that are complex, interdependent and rapidly changing. We need to remain a responsive, flexible and agile organisation and we are committed to a continuous process of modernising and improving how we operate. Given the Department's extensive role it is also important that the governance regime we work within is robust and effective.

The Department is committed to working within a network of associated Agencies, local authorities, other Government Departments and public bodies to deliver on the objectives of

Government. We work particularly closely with the 31 local authorities and with the agencies listed in the table below (and their subsidiaries) under the aegis of the Department.

Table 1: Agencies under the aegis of the Department

Body	Accountable Person (Head of Office)	Governing Legislation¹
An Bord Pleanála	Dr Mary Kelly	Planning and Development Act 2000
Housing Finance Agency	Mr Barry O'Leary	Housing Finance Agency Act 1981
Housing Sustainable Communities Agency	Mr John O'Connor	Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency (Establishment) Order 2012
Ervia	Mr Mike Quinn	Gas Act 1976
Irish Water	Mr Jerry Grant	Water Services Act 2013
Gas Networks Ireland	Mr Liam O'Sullivan	Gas Regulation Act 2013
Local Government Management Agency	Mr Paul C. Dunne	Local Government Management Agency (Establishment) Orders 2012 & 2013
Ordnance Survey Ireland	Mr Colin Bray	Ordnance Survey Ireland Act 2001
Property Registration Authority	Ms Liz Pope	Registration of Deeds and Title Act 2006
Residential Tenancies Board	Ms Rosalind Carroll	Residential Tenancies Act 2004
Valuation Office	Mr John O'Sullivan	Valuation Acts 2001 and 2015

¹ As amended.

Workforce Planning



Our *Workforce Plan* highlights that effective business delivery requires that we “*have the right people with the right skills in the right place at the right time to deliver the priorities of the Department*” and identifies the critical workforce issues that need to be addressed over the coming years to enable the Department to deliver its priorities. In response to the transfer of the community functions to the Department of Rural and Community Development, and the subsequent restructuring of the Department, a new Workforce Plan will be developed. This new Plan will support this Statement of Strategy and the process of identifying future resourcing and skills needs is underway together with measures to respond to specific human resource issues. Succession planning and talent management will also be a feature of the workforce plan in view of the challenges presented by the demographic profile of staff.

A new *Human Resource Strategy* for the Department is also being prepared which will update policies relating to staff engagement, leadership, mobility, learning and development, performance management and other issues identified in the *People Strategy for the Civil Service 2017-2020*.

Freedom of Information

The Department is subject to the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2014 and to the Access to Information on the Environment (AIE) Regulations and must meet all statutory requirements in relation to answering FOI and AIE requests. An FOI ‘Requests Log’ is published on the



Department’s website on a quarterly basis. In accordance with the Freedom of Information Publication Scheme, information in relation to the Department, its services, policy proposals, procurement and financial and other information is published on our website [here](#).

Customer Service



The Department’s *Customer Service Action Plan* and the associated *Customer Charter* (available [here](#)) reaffirm our commitment to the delivery of high quality services to all. Our Customer Charter outlines the standards of service that customers can expect to receive when they interact with us by phone, in writing or in person. The Action Plan sets out how we will implement the Charter commitments and review and report on our performance in this regard. In addition, the Department is committed to providing quality services in Irish

and / or bilingually to its customers. Our [Irish Language Scheme](#), prepared in accordance with Section 15 of the Official Languages Act 2003, sets out commitments on behalf of the Department and staff to develop the extent to which services are currently available through Irish and it identifies areas for future enhancement.

In pursuing the high-level goals in each of our programme areas of housing, planning, water, local government and meteorological services, the Department must also ensure that the strategic goals, objectives and actions used to measure performance are fully aligned with a number of other strategies that cut across the whole of Government. Just as we look to other Departments and agencies to deliver on aspects of our work, including implementation of the National Planning Framework, *Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework* and the *Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness*, we also need to work collaboratively with other bodies in delivering on a wider range of policies and action plans, including, the *Action Plan for Jobs*, the *Action Plan for Rural Development*, the *National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020*, the *Migrant Integration Strategy* and the *National Disability Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021*.

Oireachtas Engagement

The legislative process is a significant element of the work of the Department both in terms of the Government Legislation Programme and also in terms of our engagement on Private Members' Bills. We also answer significant numbers of Parliamentary Questions each year (an average of 3,800 Parliamentary Questions in each of the past two years) and have regular engagement with Oireachtas Committees on a range of issues.



Human Rights and Equality



The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act was enacted in 2014. Section 42 of the Act places a responsibility on 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. The purpose of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty is to ensure that equality and human rights considerations are factored into the day-to-day operations of all business functions of the organisation. The Department has identified the following as the most pertinent aspects of its business to which human rights and equality considerations apply:

- the issue of access to housing;
- the provision of housing for people with disabilities;
- the provision of housing for Travellers;
- the impact of the housing crisis on particular segments (e.g. tenants in the private rented sector, students);

Plans and policies are in place to address these issues including:

1. *Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness*; provisions of the Housing Acts 1966-2014;
2. extension of the *National Housing Strategy for People with a Disability 2011-2016* to continue to deliver on its aims; development of local strategic plans to identify and address the housing needs of people with a disability over the next 5 years;
3. an independent review of funding for Traveller-specific accommodation overseen by the Housing Agency; auditing, by the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, of the delivery of Traveller accommodation;
4. implementation of the *Strategy for the Rental Sector*; reform of the Residential Tenancies Board; review of the standards in rental accommodation; development of a national student accommodation strategy.

In 2017, a cross-Departmental internal working group, representative of all Divisions of the Department, was established to address the implementation of our Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty. This group has commenced work on an assessment of human rights and equality issues relevant to the Department's functions as policy maker, employer and service provider. The Department is being guided by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) in this process. Working group members also participated in workshops organised by IHREC in November 2017, which will assist in the process of identifying pro-active steps that can be taken by the Department in this regard.

Over the period of this Strategy Statement, we will report on progress on the implementation of our Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty in the context of our Annual Reports.

Annual Report

The Department is required under Section 4(1)(b) of the Public Service Management Act 1997 to prepare a progress report on the implementation of its Statement of Strategy on an

annual basis. Each *Annual Report* details progress in relation to the achievement of the Department's strategic objectives as set out in the relevant three year Statement of Strategy.

Budgeting and Finance

The Department is committed to the performance budgeting initiative and this Strategy Statement is structured in such a way that each of the Department's business functions (or 'programme' areas) can be related to the financial information in the Revised Estimates Volume.



The Department's Finance and Accounts Section has a central role in implementing a range of strategies connected with resourcing and managing the Department. It has a key role in the financial resourcing of the Department, particularly through engagement with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform during annual estimates negotiations.

The Secretary General is the Accounting Officer for the Department. The Comptroller and Auditor General audits the Department's Vote (that is, the Appropriation Account) and the Local Government Fund. The Public Accounts Committee reviews the reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General and holds the Secretary General accountable.

The Department also maintains and supports an Internal Audit Unit which carries out its activities in accordance with the Internal Audit Standards of the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform. The Department's Audit Committee provides objective advice and recommendations on the work of the Internal Audit Unit and supports it in the execution of its work.

Renewal and Reform



The *Civil Service Renewal Plan* is a significant part of the overall *Public Service Reform Framework* and supports the development of the Civil Service to ensure its organisations and staff can meet existing and future challenges. It aims to drive practical change in terms of managing the Civil Service as a single, unified organisation; maximising the performance and potential of all Civil Service employees and organisations; changing Civil Service culture, structures and processes to become more agile, flexible and responsive; and continuously learning and improving by being more open to external ideas, challenge and debate. To achieve this, the Plan committed to implementing 25 actions, which include

104 sub-actions, many of which have a direct impact on our Department and have an agreed timeline for completion.

The Civil Service Renewal Programme and the broader reform agenda will position the Department in the optimum way to fulfil its mission and to achieve its strategic goals. To complement this, the Department will be supported in fulfilling its mission in the following ways:

1. Supporting our People and Structures

- Aligning Departmental structures and staff deployment with strategic goals;
- Reflecting the new People Strategy for the Civil Service in a new Departmental HR Strategy;
- Engaging proactively in Workforce Planning in tandem with developing and investing in our Learning and Development Strategy to ensure that the right staff with the right skills are available;
- Ensure that the Department has the required capacity and skills and knowledge base to achieve our strategic goals;
- Continually monitoring and updating our Workforce Plan in order to ensure it is aligned with the Department's changing business priorities;
- Building on the experience gained through cross-Divisional team-working and extending the practice in the Department and across Government Departments where interests and goals need to be aligned;
- Implementing new practices and initiatives associated with *Civil Service Renewal*;
- Developing our capacities in policy formulation and analysis as active participants in the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES).



2. Driving gains through technology and process improvement

- An ongoing programme of business analysis to identify opportunities for ICT solutions to support business processes;
- Participation in cross-Departmental programmes such as shared services, Open Data and the build-to-share solutions under eGovernment;
- Utilising ICT tools to maximise efficiency and improve the productive capacity of the Department.



3. Improving governance

- Continued enhancement of our risk management process;
- Improved alignment of strategy with business planning and reporting obligations;
- Further development of our Corporate Governance Framework (available [here](#)) to increase transparency, increase visibility and strengthen recognition of the work of the Department;
- Oversee implementation of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (available [here](#)) by the various organisations under the aegis of the Department and ensure good governance by these Agencies including compliance with their statutory obligations.

4. Improving how data is collected, managed and shared

- Broadening the involvement of other public sector bodies in the development of housing and planning statistics;
- Moving the Department towards compliance with the Irish Statistical System Code of Practice;
- Examining the potential to improve the quality, accessibility and usability of key datasets;
- Progress the development of cross Departmental programmes such as the National Data Infrastructure (NDI).

Planning

As outlined in the Government's Planning Policy Statement, published in 2015, Ireland's planning process serves to ensure that:

“the right development takes place in the right locations and at the right time...”



The process of planning is therefore two-fold; on the one hand, looking forward, anticipating change and setting objectives and then, on the other hand, acting to implement those objectives by joining up wider public policies and guiding physical development through the regulatory/development consent process.

A key objective is to further develop an effective regulatory and policy framework for planning that drives efficient, effective and transparent planning processes at national, regional and local levels to meet wider economic, social and environmental requirements and ensure that Local Authorities and An Bord Pleanála are resourced and enabled to provide the planning services that people need. Over the period of this Statement of Strategy, implementation of planning and land management actions of the Government's *Rebuilding Ireland* Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness to enhance housing supply, formulation and initial stages of implementation of a new National Planning Framework as a strategic plan for Ireland to 2040 (complemented by new Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies at Regional Assembly level), establishment of an Office of the Planning Regulator, development of new urban regeneration initiatives and introducing enhanced on-line planning services, will be particular priorities.

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

Forward Planning - National Planning Framework (NPF)

Objectives

- Publish a new National Planning Framework (NPF) titled *Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework*, as the overarching national framework for spatial planning and regional development for Ireland. *Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework*, will represent the Government's policy on how nationally significant planning matters should be addressed by relevant Government Departments and Agencies and inform Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies together with City and County Development Plans.

Actions

- Publish NPF document by early 2018, including highlighting the cross cutting high-level objectives that will impact and influence policy formation across all Government Departments.
- Ensure *Project Ireland 2040 – National Planning Framework* is aligned with the 10-year National Investment Plan being published by Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.
- Put in place relevant monitoring and oversight governance arrangements for implementation of the NPF, to ensure delivery of national policy objectives by the relevant authorities.
- Oversee preparation of Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies ensuring they are consistent with the objectives of the NPF and subject to oversight by the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR), thereby ensuring policy alignment between all tiers of the statutory plan making processes at national, regional and local levels.

Planning Policy

Objectives

- Ensure the planning process continues to play a proactive and facilitative role in supporting and guiding the process of economic recovery and sustainable national and regional development, including its key guiding and facilitating role in accelerating housing delivery through implementation of *Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness*.

Actions

- Having an appropriate legislative and policy framework for planning in Ireland to support the operation of an efficient, effective and transparent planning system and ensure Ireland's compliance with relevant EU and UN obligations, by ensuring appropriate planning legislation, regulations and planning guidance are in place.
- Further to recent measures introduced in this area, ongoing consideration of opportunities to further streamline the planning system, where appropriate.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and support initiatives to promote urban renewal and regeneration, specifically with a view to ensuring our main cities and towns are attractive places in which to live and to work, revitalising our city, town and village centres and addressing the problem of dereliction in many urban centres. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage the high-level Working Group on Urban Renewal to deliver proposals for urban regeneration measures, including in relation to re-use of existing vacant buildings, derelict sites and operation of the vacant site levy by local authorities. Deliver a new Urban Renewal Scheme to commence in 2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the planning system remains accessible and responsive to the likely increased activity, in relation to residential, commercial and mixed development proposals, including in facilitating additional on-line planning services and enhanced performance monitoring capability, and developing mapped housing and planning spatial data (e.g. through Myplan.ie) for use by state and private sectors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a review of the planning system, focusing particularly on forecasting, planning and delivery of residential development Availability of improved e-planning services at departmental, authority and Board levels to enhance the ease with which citizens and customers of the planning process conduct their business. Ongoing collection and updating of system with new data on statutory plans nationally, and introducing new datasets such as a national viewer for live planning application data from 31 local authorities as a precursor to the introduction of a wider national on-line planning application and planning submissions portal in conjunction with Local Government Management Agency.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide updated Ministerial planning guidance to planning authorities, including revisions to the Wind Energy Development Guidelines (WEDG) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advance finalisation of the Wind Energy Development Guidelines, in conjunction with DCCAE. Progress update and issuing of other statutory Guidelines, as required.
An Bord Pleanála	
Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enable the Board to effectively carry out its mandate, including in dealing with large housing developments, and to minimise the time period for their determination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the Board has the powers, capacity and guidance to carry out its statutory functions efficiently and effectively. Oversee implementation of the An Bord Pleanála Review Group recommendations through the established Implementation Group, representative of the Department and the Board. Ensure the Board is appropriately resourced, financially through the provision of necessary operational grant aid, and staffing as required in conjunction with D/PER.

Office of the Planning Regulator	
Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver an effective and modern planning system which is plan-led rather than developer-led; and to improve confidence in the transparency and objectivity of the Irish planning system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a statutory basis through the Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2016 for early enactment, and associated Regulations as appropriate thereafter. Establishment of the Office thereafter. In establishing the OPR, the aim is to ensure proper oversight over the systems and procedures used by planning authorities and ensure public confidence in the delivery of quality outcomes, while avoiding overlap with existing appeals procedures in relation to individual cases operated by An Bord Pleanála and the role of the criminal justice system. Responsibility for planning policy remains with the local government system, working within the legislative and policy framework for planning established at the national level.
Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF)	
Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department will continue to work with Local Authorities regarding the ongoing management and oversight of the 34 LIHAF projects approved for funding under LIHAF, in March 2017. The total cost of these infrastructure projects is €226.5m. They will be key to the delivery of 23,000 housing units by 2021 with a longer term projection of up to 70,000 units. Additional funding of €50m from 2019 was announced as part of Budget 2018. This funding will facilitate more infrastructure to unlock further sites and activate more housing supply. A further call for proposals will issue to Local Authorities early in 2018 to submit projects for consideration under this additional LIHAF funding stream.

Housing

The provision of quality housing in the right locations underpins wider national and regional economic and social progress, not least by ensuring that our cities, towns and villages are successful and attractive places to live and work. The challenges currently faced in the housing sector are complex, heightened by legacy effects of the post-2008 economic contraction, the impacts of which were extreme by any international measure. Since 2009, persistent under-supply, especially in Dublin, means that a serious housing supply deficit has developed.



We are now facing significant challenges in meeting the housing needs of a growing economy which is why housing has been identified as a key priority for Government. The publication of *Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness* in July 2016, the publication of the *Strategy for the Rental Sector* in December 2016, and further policy reforms and initiatives arising from ongoing assessment and review of the effectiveness of measures, sets out a clear roadmap to address the homelessness challenge, significantly increase and expedite the delivery of 50,000 social housing homes, boost private housing construction, improve the rental market, and deliver on the commitment to see housing supply, in overall terms, increase to some 25,000 new homes every year by 2020. There are five key pillars in Rebuilding Ireland which can be summarised as follows:

Pillar 1 – Address Homelessness

Provide early solutions to address the unacceptable level of families in emergency accommodation; deliver inter-agency supports for people who are currently homeless, with a particular emphasis on minimising the incidence of rough sleeping and enhance State supports to keep people in their own homes.

Pillar 2 – Accelerate Social Housing

Increase the level and speed of delivery of social housing and other State-supported housing.

Pillar 3 – Build More Homes

Increase the output of private housing to meet demand at affordable prices.

Pillar 4 – Improve the Rental Sector

Address the obstacles to greater private rented sector delivery, to improve the supply of units at affordable rents.

Pillar 5 – Utilise Existing Housing

Ensure that existing housing stock is used to the maximum degree possible - focusing on measures to use vacant stock to renew urban and rural areas.

The Department's objectives for housing in the period covered by this Statement of Strategy are set out in detail in *Rebuilding Ireland*, which is fundamentally concerned with accelerating the delivery of housing in the right locations for the private, social and rented sectors. Achieving the aim of accelerated delivery will contribute to the following core objectives:

- Addressing the unacceptable level of households, particularly families, in emergency accommodation;
- Provision of 50,000 new social housing homes to those who need them;
- Moderating rental and purchase price inflation, particularly in urban areas;
- Addressing a growing affordability gap for many households wishing to purchase their own homes;
- Maturing the rental sector so that tenants see it as one that offers security, quality and choice of tenure in the right locations and providers see it as one they can invest in with certainty;
- Ensuring housing's contribution to the national economy is steady and supportive of sustainable economic growth; and
- Delivering housing in a way that meets current needs while contributing to wider objectives such as the need to support sustainable urban and rural development and communities and maximise the contribution of the built environment to addressing climate change.

Strategic Goal B: To provide for a stable, sustainable supply of good quality housing.	
Local Authority Housing	
Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) to provide 50,000 new social housing homes as set out in <i>Rebuilding Ireland</i>, through a combination of finance and delivery mechanisms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In conjunction with a range of stakeholders, implement and accelerate the delivery of the broad range of social housing programmes, with a view to ensuring the delivery of 33,600 of these new social housing homes by local authorities and AHBs by end 2020². Review existing social housing programmes, to ensure they are relevant and meeting the needs of citizens, and develop and roll out new programmes, as required, including the <i>Repair and Leasing Scheme</i> and <i>Buy and Renew Scheme</i>. Monitor the implementation of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and issue statutory guidelines as necessary, to ensure the provisions are working efficiently to deliver 10% social housing in new private housing developments. Operate a Housing Agency rolling Fund of €70 million, with the specific focus of engaging with banks and investment companies, to acquire vacant properties for social housing tenants.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide access to the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) to any household that can benefit from the secure housing support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the operation of HAP to ensure that it is accessible to those households that require support, including raising awareness and communicating the benefits HAP. Increase the number of households transferring to HAP from rent supplement, in order to complete the transfer of all eligible rent supplement recipients to HAP by 2021.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide housing supports, including HAP, which are fair and sustainable and prioritise those most in need. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the disparate systems of differential rents in local authorities. Review the eligibility and allocation systems in place for social housing across local authorities. Increase the regularity of the

² The Statement of Strategy covers the period 2017-2020. In 2016, 4,240 new homes were delivered; the remaining 12,160 homes of the 50,000 targeted will be delivered in 2021.

	Summary of Social Housing Assessments by undertaking it on an annual basis.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To actively pursue mixed-tenure developments on State lands and other lands. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote a mixed tenure approach to development, particularly on publicly-owned lands, including working directly with local authorities and AHBs on a range of exemplar and pathfinder projects. Support local authorities in managing the overall planning and development of large-scale mixed tenure housing developments.
Voluntary and Cooperative Housing	
Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support development of innovative financial models, to enhance the potential combined contribution of the AHB sector, and to provide for better coordinated and strategic delivery by AHBs under various funding streams across all LA areas, and enhanced cooperation between AHBs and local authorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roll out an Innovation Fund for Tier 3 AHBs to support increased delivery using a variety of funding streams. Ensure that the dedicated one-stop-shop within the Housing Agency provides proactive support for AHBs and better coordinated delivery across all local authority areas. Review Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP), Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF), and Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) financing facilities in order to support AHBs with the cost of construction and acquisition of new social housing units. Establish a Regulator for the AHB sector to oversee the effective governance and financial management of voluntary and co-operative housing bodies.
Housing Inclusion Supports	
Objectives	Actions
<p>To deliver a range of homeless related measures, as outlined in <i>Rebuilding Ireland</i>, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to ensure that hotels are only used in limited circumstances for emergency accommodation for families; to expand the provision of housing-led approaches to homelessness; and to ensure an adequate supply of emergency accommodation nationally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet housing needs of families through a range of housing delivery mechanisms. Expand the Housing First Programme in Dublin and extend the housing-led approach to other urban areas. Review availability of emergency accommodation and temporary emergency accommodation in our main urban areas to determine appropriate supply consistent with need.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To deliver on a range of disability related measures, as outlined in <i>Rebuilding Ireland</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support community-based living for people with disabilities, including provision of capital funding to support the programme of transitioning people from congregated settings to community-based living. Collaborate with the Department of Health, HSE and local authorities on issues around housing people who are transitioning from HSE accommodation and for clients of the mental health services living in community-based accommodation. Extend the <i>National Housing Strategy for People with Disabilities (2011-2016)</i> beyond its timeframe to continue delivery and ensure that the needs of people with disabilities are incorporated into all future housing policies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To deliver on a range of Traveller specific measures, as outlined in <i>Rebuilding Ireland</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake an expert, independent review of capital/current funding for Traveller-specific accommodation, as a key platform to undertake an audit in 2017 of implementation and delivery of the Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs). Review and maintain an effective framework of legislation, policy and funding in relation to Traveller accommodation and oversee implementation, through local authorities, of effective programmes and supports.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support LAs in responding to the needs of tenants, in particular those with distinct needs such as persons with a disability and older people, and in improving the quality of social housing stock. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the implementation of the Energy Efficiency Retrofitting Programme to improve the fuel efficiency of social housing stock nationally, tackle fuel poverty and contribute to the reduction of emissions. Promote the implementation of the Disabled Persons' Grant/Improvement Work programme to adapt social housing to meet the needs of persons with a disability and older people.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To incentivise new supported living/assisted living arrangements which will meet the housing needs of certain older people and to examine the potential for mainstreaming best practice projects, which bring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Department of Health to develop policy options for supported housing/housing with care so that older people have a wider range of residential care choices available to them.

<p>together the HSE and local authorities with designers and academic groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To cater for those who have healthcare needs that can be met in the community, we will advance pilot projects taking a cross-Departmental/inter-agency approach to housing initiatives for older people.
Estate Regeneration – Social Housing Improvements	
Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To assist in improving social housing areas/estates that are amongst the country's most disadvantaged communities and are defined by the most extreme social exclusion, unemployment and anti-social behaviour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement an holistic programme of physical, social and economic regeneration. Support local authorities to deliver an ambitious programme of regeneration projects, including large scale projects in Dublin, Cork and Limerick. Collaborate and work with the North Inner City Task Force in order to improve social housing/estates and community facilities in those areas.
Private Housing Grants	
Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enable local authorities provide support to private home owners with significant social benefit in terms of facilitating the continued independent occupancy of their own homes by older people and people with a disability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to support LAs in implementing the Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes for Older People and People with a Disability. Collaborate with stakeholders including the LAs and disability/older people representative bodies, to maximise the benefit and impact of this funding programme.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop innovative systems for the delivery of affordable high quality residential development and to stimulate development and increase social housing stock. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine approaches to both affordable and quality residential delivery.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that local authorities as mortgage lenders operate to the highest regulatory standards and in line with a prudent and responsible credit policy and to work across Government and to ensure that holders of commercial banks in long-term mortgage arrears have sustainable solutions to their mortgage debt. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor local authority mortgage products and support local authorities to manage their mortgage loan books. Implement the review of the Mortgage to Rent scheme and ensure that it is effective in providing a long-term solution for those in the most acute arrears with a long-term social housing need.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To facilitate off-balance sheet investment in delivering both social and private housing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate with all stakeholders how Credit Unions can support the delivery of social housing. Explore the option of incentivising developers to build and lease back homes for social housing.

Rental Sector	
Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To increase the supply of affordable rental accommodation and support the development of a strong viable and sustainable rental sector that can provide choice, quality, value and security for households and secure, attractive investment opportunities for rental providers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the comprehensive range of actions proposed in the Strategy for the Rental Sector, to include examination of the role a “cost rental” model could play in the sector’s long-term development and a review of the current regulatory regime, to ensure an appropriate balance between the rights and interests of landlords and tenants. Examine how we can better incentivise landlords and tenants to agree long-term leases in the private sector.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide long-term affordable residential accommodation for low to moderate income key-worker households in urban areas of high demand and provide an economic incentive to increase supply of rental accommodation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify pilot projects to develop new affordable rental models to enhance the capacity of the AHB and private rented sector to provide accommodation for households at more affordable rents.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To increase understanding of the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords and broader understanding of the rental market, so as to inform policy, monitor the impact of changing policy and monitor trends in the market. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend the role of the RTB to include a one stop shop for accessible information and advice and to monitor and provide data on the rental sector, including linking of the Quarterly Rent Index with an Affordability Index, and undertaking annual surveys of tenants and landlords.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide additional funding mechanisms for the Higher Education Institutions sector, in conjunction with the Housing Finance Agency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following legislative and regulatory changes in 2016, facilitate the Higher Education Institutions (HEI) sector, to access Housing Finance Agency funding, where feasible and warranted.
Utilise existing housing	
Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To allocate social housing in a more efficient manner that offers more choice and involvement for applicant households in selecting a new home, thereby reducing the likelihood of refusals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce across all local authorities a choice-based or equivalent allocation system, tailored to their specific circumstances and continuously monitor the practical operation of this system.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that local authorities have sufficient discretion to limit the disposal of certain types of social housing in short supply, that the scheme is attractive for social housing tenants, and that it has sufficient potential to raise new funds for housing development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme and make revisions, having regard to experiences during its first year of operation.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Making better use of the existing housing stock by providing older people with appropriate accommodation suited to their needs, while potentially freeing up larger dwellings for use as family homes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explore ways to promote the availability of step-down, specialist housing, for older people and incentivise down-sizing, where appropriate.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support local authorities to work with owners of private vacant houses to bring them back into use for social housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Roll out the Repair and Leasing and the Buy and Renew Schemes on a national basis.

Water

The Department is committed to protecting and improving freshwater and marine water quality through full implementation of the Water Framework Directive, the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Nitrates Regulations and such other measures as are required to address all sources of water pollution. The Water Framework Directive provides the overarching set of arrangements governing the management of water quality across Europe. It requires Member States to manage their water resources on an integrated basis to achieve at least “good” ecological status and to avoid deterioration in the status of any waters. Related directives, often referred to as ‘daughter’ directives, deal with matters such as drinking water quality, urban waste water treatment and bathing water quality.



As part of Ireland’s commitment to achieving good ecological status in our waters as mandated in the Water Framework Directive, the Department will introduce a second cycle of river basin management plans (including programmes of measures) during the lifetime of this Strategy.

The Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) requires EU Member States to develop a strategy based on the ecosystem approach to achieve or maintain Good Environmental Status (GES) in their marine waters by 2020. Over the period of this Strategy the Department must commence the second cycle of the Directive and work with others on the up-dating of our initial assessment, targets and indicators which are due for report in 2018.

With a view to establishing a more integrated approach to managing human activities in our marine waters and complying with the requirements of the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive, the Department will lead the implementation of maritime spatial planning and reform of the foreshore consenting process during the period covered by this Strategy.

Public water services have undergone significant reform since 2013, including the establishment of Irish Water and the introduction of economic regulation by the Commission for Regulating Utilities (CRU). Over the period of this Strategy, the implementation of a sustainable, long-term funding model for domestic water and wastewater services, based on the Water Services Act 2017, will be a core priority. The Department will continue to work with key stakeholders to consolidate water sector reforms and on the modernisation of the public and rural water systems.

Strategic Goal C: To provide a framework for the sustainable management of water resources from source to sea.	
Water Quality	
Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete the second cycle River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021 for Ireland, pursuant to the EU Water Framework Directive, and progress implementation of the measures outlined in that Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise the River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021. Put in place an implementation framework focusing, in particular, on catchment management and ensuring wider public engagement. Monitor implementation of the River Basin Management Plan and water quality with respect to targets in the Plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put in place a Nitrates Action Programme 2018-2021 for Ireland that outlines the rules for the management and application of livestock manures and other fertilisers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise and adopt appropriate regulations. Ensure extensive consultations on draft regulations prior to their adoption.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure full transposition and implementation of relevant EU Directives to promote ongoing protection and improvement of water quality and water-dependent ecosystems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full compliance with relevant EU Directives.
Rural Water	
Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reform of the Rural Water Sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Registration System for Group Water Schemes. Policy Framework for Rural Water Sector and review of group water sector investment needs and monitoring and supervision arrangements. Preparation of the 2019-2021 Rural Water Multi-Annual Programme through remedial action list for schemes on a national basis with administrative procedures and guidance.
Maritime Spatial Planning	
Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement maritime spatial planning in Ireland. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out initial public and stakeholder engagement process. Define MSP policy goals and objectives. Commence collection, mapping and analysis of data on current conditions. Finalise and secure approval for MSP implementation plan. Conclude service level agreement with Marine Institute in respect of services to be provided.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish inter-departmental senior officials group to coordinate and manage cross-cutting issues.
Marine Environment and Foreshore	
Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The achievement and maintenance of good environmental status of our maritime area, including through implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and the OSPAR Convention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of a monitoring programme for the ongoing assessment of the environmental status of Irish marine waters. Implementation of a programme of measures to achieve and maintain of good environmental status in Irish marine waters. Commence preparation for the second cycle of MSFD implementation. Work with international partners to co-ordinate actions under the OSPAR Convention with MSFD requirements.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operation of the foreshore consenting regime in respect of developments and activities on the foreshore. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process applications for consent under the Foreshore Act. Estate management of the foreshore property portfolio. Manage foreshore litigation involving the Minister as plaintiff or defendant.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alignment of the foreshore and planning consent processes and provision for a single environmental assessment of projects within the planning system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress the Maritime Area and Foreshore (Amendment) Bill through the legislative process. Enact secondary legislation to commence and implement the Bill's provisions. Make procedural arrangements for transition to the new regime.
INTERREG Programme	
Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage the Department's interaction with the Special EU Programmes Body in respect of the funding of water and biodiversity projects under the INTERREG VA Programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure timely consideration of projects and the associated administration of funding requirements.
Remediation Grant / National Lead Strategy	
Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure full implementation of the National Lead Strategy to mitigate health risks from exposure to lead in drinking water. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor, jointly with the Department of Health, the implementation of actions proposed under the National Lead Strategy. Monitor uptake of the grant scheme to assist low-income households with the costs of replacing lead pipes and fittings within their homes.

Other Services/Functions	
Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water Services Policy Statement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publication of a water services policy statement in line with the provisions of the Water Services Act 2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full implementation of water sector reform. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for Irish Water, the local government sector, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities and the Environmental Protection Agency to deliver an enduring single utility model for the delivery of public water services, and implementation of the new funding model for Irish Water.

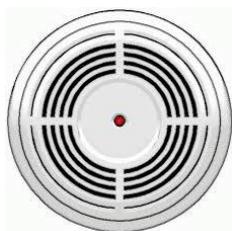
Local Government

The Department works in partnership with local authorities to shape, develop and support local government in its role representing and serving communities effectively and efficiently. The Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government has responsibility for policy, legislation and, at a broad level, oversight in respect of the local government system. Other Government Departments, including the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the Department of Rural and Community Development also have oversight functions in respect of their policy areas. However, local authorities are entirely independent corporate entities, with constitutional recognition and their own democratic mandate, having full responsibility under law for the performance of their functions and the discharge of their governance and other statutory responsibilities.



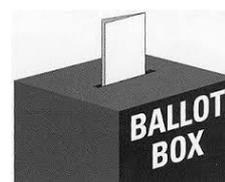
The Department's role includes overseeing local authorities' finances and requiring them to maintain their finances on a sustainable footing, ensuring that they operate high standards of financial management and accountability and, in a wider context, seeking to ensure that local government has an appropriately structured funding system to meeting existing and emerging challenges. The Department reports to the Department of Finance on the overall compliance of the sector with the General Government Balance (GGB).

The local government sector has been part of a major reform and restructuring programme over the past few years. The process of reform is set to continue over the period of this Statement of Strategy, starting with a report on potential measures to boost local government leadership and accountability.



The Department has responsibility for fire services policy and is also the lead Government Department for coordinating the response to nine emergency / crisis scenarios: severe weather; flooding; fire; hazardous materials; environmental/ pollution; water services, quality or supply; building collapse, accidental explosions and landslide.

The Department also has responsibility for the legislative framework for elections, referendums and political funding. An ongoing task is to ensure that at all times arrangements are in place to respond to the calling of a general election, a referendum, a Presidential election or a bye election. In addition to responding to proposals for electoral reform that arise to be addressed over the period of this Statement of Strategy, a priority in this area over the period will be the development of a Bill on the establishment of an Electoral Commission.



Strategic Goal D: To support and enable democratic, responsive and effective local government and a modernised electoral management framework.	
Financing Local Government	
Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the finances of local authorities are on a sustainable footing and that the local government sector has an appropriately structured funding system to meet existing and emerging challenges and strengthen local democracy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribute Local Property Tax (LPT) allocations in accordance with both Government decisions and local variation decisions. Liaise with the local government sector on funding issues and on the budget and financial processes generally. Review Debt Management Processes and associated legislation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that local authorities operate to the highest possible standards of financial management and that accounting standards are maintained in accordance with internationally recognised accounting practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with the sector and Local Government Audit Service on financial reporting and oversee, collate and publish amalgamated Budgets, Annual Financial Statements and other financial reports for the sector. Maintain the Accounting Code of Practice for the sector, reviewing it annually and making changes in consultation with the Local Government Audit Service and the sector, where necessary.
Developing Local Government	
Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support and advance Government policy to enhance and develop local government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare a report for Government, and for the Oireachtas, on potential measures to boost local government leadership and accountability.
Fire and Emergency Services	
Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support local authorities in achieving fire safety and consistent quality fire services for their communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Devise and implement development and support programmes for fire safety and fire services.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead the development and use of internationally benchmarked emergency management in Ireland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shape policy and implement co-ordination arrangements to deliver appropriate emergency management capability.
Franchise	
Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop policy and systems to ensure effective electoral management and reform. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide the necessary support for the smooth running of elections and referendums over the period of this Statement of Strategy, including Presidential, European and local elections.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of necessary legislation for referendums on extending the franchise at Presidential Elections to Irish citizens resident outside the state and reducing the voting age to 16. • Develop an Electoral Commission Bill. • Support the further development of the electoral legislative framework.
Other Services / Functions	
Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversight of local authority Staffing Levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor employment numbers in the local authorities. • Support progress on My Pay Shared Services Office.

Met Éireann

Met Éireann, Ireland's National Meteorological Service, is the leading provider of weather information and related services in the State. Its mission is to monitor, analyse and predict Ireland's weather and climate and to provide a range of high quality meteorological and related information to the public and to specific customers in, for example, the aviation and agricultural sectors. As a scientific and technical organisation, it strives to utilise the latest technological and scientific advances in order to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and accuracy of its forecasts.



Met Éireann has prepared a long term Strategic Plan for the period 2017-2027. Its vision is to 'Make Ireland Weather and Climate Prepared'. The Strategic Plan's high level Goals are to:

- GOAL 1: Enhance support for impact-based decision making for weather events
- GOAL 2: Provide climate information services which promote the safety of citizens and supports economic and environmental resilience
- GOAL 3: Deliver a high quality national flood forecasting service
- GOAL 4: Continue to provide an effective authoritative voice on meteorology in Ireland
- GOAL 5: Maintain and support an expert, professional workforce
- GOAL 6: Lead a modern, integrated meteorological infrastructure and support an enterprise environment framework for weather and climate services

Over the period of this Statement of Strategy, Met Éireann will expand and develop its range of weather and climate services. The modernisation of aviation meteorological observation systems, upgrading of numerical weather prediction capacity and the establishment of a new flood forecasting unit will be key new developments during this period. A project to modernise and develop Ireland's rainfall radar network will also commence during this period.



The issue of our changing climate and the impact of weather on Ireland will continue to be a major focus. Accordingly, Met Éireann will strengthen operational monitoring capacity for detection of climate trends through the upgrade of the national climate monitoring network. We will continue to work on attribution, analysing climate trends and downscaling to regional level.

There is a growing demand from the Irish public for more up to date and localised weather information to ensure safety and to improve their general quality of life. Met Éireann will enhance its public communications role by upgrading our digital services and by the delivery of weather information through our new website and app. A strong focus will also be placed on educating the public in relation to weather events and their impacts so that people can act accordingly to protect their own safety and their property.

Met Éireann will enhance its research role during the 2017-2020 period through increased participation in national and international research programmes in collaboration with other national meteorological services, agencies and academia by greater engagement with funding opportunities such as Horizon 2020.

Meteorology is intrinsically international in nature and Met Éireann will continue to participate as a member of International Meteorological Organisations such as WMO, ECMWF and EUMETSAT to exchange high quality satellite, observational and other data to feed into forecast models as well as collaborating in international best practice in various fields of meteorology.

Strategic 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.

Objectives	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand and develop the delivery of authoritative impact based weather and climate services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further development of Met Éireann's website and app to provide additional digital services, including podcasts and videocasts. Expand range and scope of forecast products and climate information services available to sectoral stakeholders and policy makers through digital media. Introduce an improved system for the production and dissemination on national weather warnings. Strengthen the communication of weather and climate information to support impact based decision making. Continue to participate in International Meteorological Organisations to exchange high quality satellite, observational and other data to feed into our forecast models as well as collaborating in various focussed research fields of meteorology. Achieve improved forecast capability through research and upgrade of Met Éireann's numerical weather prediction suite.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of high quality meteorological services for aviation in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) standards, the European Air Navigation Plan and European Regulations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modernise Met Éireann's aviation observation systems at the State's airports through implementation of the AMAP project to ensure compliance with EU Common Requirements Regulation (EC 373/2017) by December 2020. Retain designation as Ireland's Meteorological Service provider for ICAO Annex 3 services and maintain Aviation Services Division ISO 9001 accreditation. Continuously improve the quality of observations and forecast services in consultation with aviation users.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the Office of Public Works (OPW) in establishing '<i>a new national flood forecasting system to provide regular, detailed and localised information on flood forecasting.</i>' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Flood Forecast Centre in Met Éireann, in conjunction with the Office of Public Works, as a first stage in the implementation of a National Flood Forecasting and Warning Service.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain and develop expertise and skills and meteorological infrastructure required to deliver on Met Éireann's strategic goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain, develop and certify scientific and technical competence in line with international standards. Ensure Met Éireann's meteorological infrastructure meets the evolving requirements of weather and climate services. Upgrade Met Éireann's national climate monitoring network. Further integrate third party observations to enable more efficient and effective weather and climate service delivery. Maintain resilient 24/7 operations through robust fit for purpose ICT expertise and infrastructure. Enhance support for high impact weather events through strengthened remote sensing capability. Commence project to modernise and enhance the rainfall radar network.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further development of research role. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased participation in national and international research programmes in collaboration with other national meteorological services, agencies and academia by greater engagement in funding opportunities such as Horizon 2020.

Challenges, Risks and Opportunities

The key challenges, risks and opportunities in our operating environment in the period 2017-2020 will be:

Continued economic recovery – the signs of economic recovery that emerged in 2012 and that have continued through to 2017 will need to be sustained over the period of the Strategy. Legacies of the most recent economic and financial crises in the domestic, European and global contexts, together with new uncertainties such as the implications of Brexit, will continue to present challenges for economic activity and for the national fiscal position.

Working relationships with other Departments and Public Sector Bodies – continuing to develop the constructive working relationships built up with key Departments and other bodies will be necessary for achievement of the Government's objectives, particularly regarding *Rebuilding Ireland*.

Brexit – the implications of the UK exit from the EU will need to be monitored carefully to manage the potential impact on the Department's business regarding North/South EU-funding mechanisms and other transboundary relationships.

Public Service Reform / Civil Service Renewal – the Department will continue to contribute to the delivery of public service reform objectives.

Local Government Reform – we will lead on the process of local government reform, working across Government and in consultation with relevant stakeholders on initiatives to boost local government leadership and accountability.

Water management – providing a sustainable basis for the investment needed for our drinking water and waste water infrastructure.

Adequacy of Resources – demographic trends will give rise to spending pressures, especially on housing; we will enhance and refine our budgetary planning to ensure that resources continue to be aligned with evolving strategic priorities.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

The organisation structure of the Department can be viewed via the Department's website [here](#)

Appendix 2

Programme for a Partnership Government

The Department's Statement of Strategy 2017-2020 has been informed by the following commitments in the Programme for a Partnership Government:

We will support the Oireachtas Committee on Housing as a forum for consulting with all relevant State and non-State stakeholders, including builders, developers and housing charities, on the design and implementation of new housing policies. (First 100 Days Action)

We will seek the views of stakeholders on the role and function of the Housing Agency in the provision of additional housing (First 100 Days Action)

The first major initiative of the new Minister for Housing and the Government will be to, draw on the work of the new Oireachtas Committee on Housing and Homelessness, draft and publish within the first 100 days a new Action Plan for Housing, to include, but not be limited to, the actions laid out in this document. The drafting of the new Action Plan will be a collaborative process with opportunities for all stakeholders, including local authorities, housing agencies and the voluntary sector, to contribute ideas through submissions to the Minister and a new Oireachtas Committee on Housing. When completed, each action will be assigned to a specific organisation with published timelines for implementation. (First 100 Days Action)

The Action Plan will look at existing housing stock that is uninhabited, and vacant commercial units, with a view to incentivising the refurbishment and change of use to homes.

The Department will publish a monthly release on all housing construction activity and output in the State for public, voluntary and private housing. (Year 1 Action)

We will significantly increase and expedite the delivery of social housing units. The new Government will accelerate the delivery of the committed €3.8billion Social Housing Strategy – funded through the existing Capital Programme - which targets the delivery of 35,000 new social housing units. The local authorities will deliver new housing in two phases: (1) 18,000 additional housing units by end 2017, and (2) 17,000 additional housing units by end 2020. Local authorities will be provided with the resources and the power to implement this.

Steps will be taken to introduce more coordination between local authorities, housing agencies and voluntary housing associations, to ensure value for money for the taxpayer when purchasing housing or land.

<p>Enhancing security of tenure is essential for the HAP to be an effective means of delivery for tenants. For this reason the new Government will introduce a new model of affordable rental to provide more housing options for low income households and to relieve pressure on the social housing sector.</p>
<p>We will also increase Rent Supplement and Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) limits by up to 15% taking account of geographic variations in market rents, and extend the roll out by local authorities of the HAP, including the capacity to make discretionary enhanced payments.</p>
<p>To accelerate delivery we will devolve more power, responsibility and resources to local authorities, including for the design of social housing. Drawing from the benefits of the devolved grant system for schools, we will increase the threshold for the single-stage process for social housing approvals by central Government from €2million to €5million, subject to agreement between central Government and local authorities on a new risk-management mechanism to ensure cost control. (Year 1 Action)</p>
<p>We will encourage the expansion of Voluntary Housing Services through a dedicated “best practice” and central coordination support section in central Government with responsibility for increasing delivery by housing associations for funding schemes and coordinating policy implementation for the sector. We will investigate with all stakeholders how Credit Unions can support social housing through Voluntary Housing Services (Year 1 Action).</p>
<p>As part of the Action Plan for Housing, we will look to support housing associations in their establishment of a sector led special purpose vehicle to provide long term finance for the sector.</p>
<p>The new Tenant Purchase Scheme will make specific provision for local authority discretion to limit the disposal of certain types of social housing in short supply.</p>
<p>The new Government will incentivise local authorities to return more vacant social housing units to use by linking exchequer funding for local authorities with better performance in estate management and will publish regular statistics on their performance. (Year 1 Action)</p>
<p>As part of the Action Plan for Housing process, we will explore the option of incentivising developers to build and lease back homes to housing authorities and associations. As part of the same process, the new Minister for Housing will review and strengthen the regulations governing listed buildings that are derelict.</p>
<p>We will review the disparate systems of differential rents for social housing across local authorities to ensure that housing supports, including the HAP, are fair and sustainable, prioritise those on the lowest incomes and avoid creating social welfare traps that stop people returning to work or to the private housing market. (Year 1 Action)</p>
<p>We will ensure that the needs of people with disabilities are incorporated into all future housing policies.</p>
<p>To this end the new Government will introduce a new model of affordable rental by working with housing associations and local authorities to develop a “cost rental” option for low-income families, as recommended by the NES. The new Minister for Housing will provide leadership, work with all relevant stakeholders, and will set out in the Action Plan for Housing, a roadmap to implement the cost rental model. The Minister will set out a plan on how we will scale up the number of cost rental housing units in the years ahead. Cost rental will help to keep rental costs</p>

manageable for tenants and allow them to avoid future rental increase shocks. (First 100 days)
We will examine, as part of the Action Plan for Housing, how we can better incentivise landlords and tenants to agree long-term leases in the private sector.
We will re-prioritise the capital programme to put in place a new €100million Local Infrastructure Housing Fund, from which local authorities can deliver local projects needed to unlock development land in high demand areas. (Year 1 Action)
We will review the CPO powers available to local authorities in order to fast-track the opening up of land in both public and private housing developments.
We will expand the existing targeted development contribution rebate scheme in Dublin and Cork to other areas suffering a housing shortage in order to encourage immediate development. (Year 1 Action)
We will examine the possibilities for new and innovative roles for local authorities in housing provision, via means such as Municipal Housing Companies and arm's length management organisations. (Year 1 Action)
We will support housing associations to purchase houses being sold by investors, in such situations where a sale and vacant possession could lead to families becoming homeless.
The new Government will help fund the completion of the remaining unfinished housing developments, which have been reduced from nearly 3,000 in 2010 to 668 by the end of 2015. We will seek to fund another €10million Special Resolution Fund from increased capital funding available from 2017. (Year 2 Action)
To deter "land hoarding" by developers, we will monitor and benchmark the use by local authorities of the new "Vacant Site Levy" legislated for by the last Government, to take effect from 2018.
In recognition of the potential of third level institutions to provide or facilitate more student accommodation on their property or in their environs the new Minister for Housing will examine new measures to boost student accommodation supply as part of the Action Plan on Housing.
The new Action Plan for Housing will reinforce proactive land management to increase the pipeline of suitable land for social and private housing development, in partnership with local authorities.
<p>The new Action Plan for Housing will contain a specific section on 'preventing homelessness' that will consult on and target new measures such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Family mediation services ● Step down services and facilities after drug rehabilitation ● Preventing youth homelessness ● Services to victims of domestic abuse ● Structured programmes for those leaving hospital, prison or state care after a long period of time ● Community mental health services

<p>We will end the use of unsuitable long-term emergency accommodation, such as hotels and B&Bs, for homeless families by, in part, delivering 500 rapid-delivery housing units. 22 Units have been made available in Ballymun. More units will be targeted for completion in Dublin in 2016. All local authorities will be allowed to develop their own rapid build housing schemes for emergency accommodation if appropriate.</p>
<p>Maintain the rent limits available under the HAP Homeless Pilot to 50% above the rent supplement levels (Ongoing)</p>
<p>Implement a housing-focused strategy to end involuntary long-term homelessness (Ongoing)</p>
<p>End the need for rough sleeping by providing a high level of funding for homeless services that supports emergency beds and accommodation options. Currently €70million a year is budgeted for and we will keep this financial support under review as the homeless situation evolves (Ongoing)</p>
<p>Establishing a national register of derelict sites, in addition to the new vacant site levy, to bring vacant and underutilised sites into beneficial use for housing and urban regeneration purposes (Year 2 Action)</p>
<p>Mandating local authorities with better land management powers, including the possibility of additional CPO (Compulsory Purchase Order) capabilities (Year 2 Action)</p>
<p>Reclassifying and incentivising the use of underutilised or vacant areas over ground floor premises in towns, for both residential and commercial use (Year 1 Action)</p>
<p>We will propose to reform the Derelict Sites Act to tackle the under use and hoarding of derelict land by the State, semi-State and private sectors. (Year 1 Action)</p>
<p>We will propose a new Rural Resettlement Scheme to promote the advantages of rural living and ease housing pressures in high demand urban areas. (Year 1 Action)</p>
<p>We will promote higher urban densities in terms of housing design, particularly in public transport corridors, through a new National Planning Framework to replace the National Spatial Strategy, to be finalised by the first quarter of 2017. (Year 1 Action)</p>
<p>We will commission a “root and branch” review of the planning system with the aim of reducing the uncertainty and length of planning processes. This will include a review of the resources and structures required by An Bord Pleanála to meet its statutory objective of deciding appeals within 18 weeks. (Year 1 Action)</p>
<p>We will conduct a review of nationwide housing building standards. (Year 1 Action)</p>
<p>We will commission an audit of land holdings by State bodies and local authorities that might be used for housing. (Year 1 Action)</p>
<p>We will consult on possible amendments to the planning guidelines to support the construction of on campus or near-campus, high-quality, purpose-built student accommodation, and retirement villages for the elderly.(Year 1 Action)</p>
<p>We will review the current regulatory regime for the private rental sector to ensure an</p>

appropriate balance is struck between the rights and interests of landlords and tenants. (Year 2 Action)
We will overhaul the terms of the Tenant Purchase Scheme to make it more attractive for social housing tenants and to raise new funds for housing development. (Year 1 Action)
We will also instruct all county councils to publish the breakdown of how all commercial rates collected are spent, facilitating comparisons across different local authorities. This provision will encourage efficient local authorities to adopt commercial rates policies that help sustain existing businesses and encourage new start-ups.
The Government commits to reviewing the position in relation to the planning code as it relates to turf cutters for domestic use.
We will establish dedicated funding supports for tenancy sustainment for people transitioning from HSE supported accommodation and for clients in mental health services living in other types of accommodation in the community.
We will ensure that the needs of people with disabilities are incorporated into all future housing policies.
The Housing Adaptation grants provided to local authorities are a vital support to keeping people in their homes. Budget 2016 increased this scheme by 10% to €55million, which will see over 8,500 households benefit from the scheme. We support further increases in funding for this scheme.
We will invest significantly in the Housing Adaptation Scheme
We will establish a special working group to audit the current delivery and implementation of local authorities' Traveller Accommodation plans and consult with stakeholders on key areas of concern. The group should report a plan for the delivery of safe, culturally appropriate accommodation.
We will also work with local authorities to improve the carbon footprint of social housing, including the replacement of oil heating with other fuels such as natural gas or woodchip where possible.
Following the unprecedented flooding in December 2015 we will review the response protocols of the State to examine if a more rapid and coordinated response to local incidents can be achieved.
A new dedicated Minister for Housing will accelerate the delivery of the committed €3.8billion Social Housing Strategy and ramp up the supply of private housing.
The new Government will implement a range of measures to prevent families from becoming homeless and end the use of unsuitable long-term emergency accommodation, such as hotels and B&Bs, for homeless families by in part delivering rapid-delivery housing units (see Housing chapter for more detail).
In conjunction with the Oireachtas, we will examine new incentives to regenerate derelict and

underused buildings in urban centres.

We will seek to extend state funding, on the same basis on which political parties are funded, to political groups who stood on a common policy platform in the general election.

We believe that Ireland needs an independent electoral commission, as a matter of priority. The new commission should examine the voter registration process and in particular the possibility of the PPS system being used to automatically add people to the electoral register once they reach voting age. It should also look at ways to increase participation in our political process through voter education and turnout.

The new commission could also:

- Assume the role of Registrar of political parties
- Regulate political funding and election expenditure
- Oversee the Referendum Commission, which would be a sub-section of the commission

The newly established Electoral Commission would be independent of Government and directly accountable to the Oireachtas.

As part of the next wave of local government reform the relevant Minister, having consulted widely with all relevant stakeholders, will prepare a report for Government, and for the Oireachtas, by mid-2017 on potential measures to boost local government leadership and accountability.

We will also consider:

- Directly elected mayors in cities
- Devolution of new powers to local authorities
- Reducing the size of local electoral areas
- Establishing town and borough councils subject to a local plebiscite and local funding

There will be a review, involving consultation with AILG and LAMA, of the supports provided to councillors to enable them to do their important work.

housing.gov.ie

Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government



Riailas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland