



Housing Ireland

How we deliver the homes
that people need

Autumn 2023

STRONGER TOGETHER

CONGRESS

Irish Congress of Trade Unions







Foreword

Access to secure, affordable housing is a deep and abiding concern of the trade union movement. Indeed, it was the squalor of the Dublin slums in the early years of the 20th century that provided much of the motive force for the establishment of the modern trade union movement. For trade unions, the need for decent housing remains wholly indivisible from the need for decent pay and decent work.

More than a century on, the demand for secure, affordable housing is again to the fore. This arises from the failed housing policy of recent decades. Housing has been stripped of its essential value and transformed into no more than a tradable, saleable commodity.

The consequence is a housing emergency without parallel in our recent history and one that has locked out and effectively disenfranchised an entire generation.

The resulting social dislocation is visible on our streets on a daily basis. Such is the scale of the emergency that we need to see a dramatic step change in policy, a systemic response to a deep systemic crisis.

This is precisely the level and nature of the response now proposed by Congress and which is set out on these pages. Congress is calling on the government to focus on creating a unitary housing system with a significant role for the state in the direct provision of public housing at scale.

We believe this can help end the emergency, build a strong, sustainable housing system and deliver secure, affordable homes for all.

Owen Reidy,
General Secretary,
Irish Congress of Trade Unions



Contents

	Page
Foreword	1
Executive Summary	3
1. Ireland's Homegrown Housing Crisis	4
2. Housing Ireland: a new model for housing delivery	9
3. Additional Challenges: Labour Supply, Land, Secure Tenancy	13



Executive Summary

Our housing system is not fit for purpose.

In truth, it has been dysfunctional for more than two decades and fails in its most basic function of ensuring access to secure, affordable accommodation for all who need it.

We are now in a housing emergency with record numbers of homeless and many more 'hidden' homeless.

There is an acute crisis of housing affordability and housing supply. House prices and rents have outstripped wage growth over multiple years. Many young adults are forced to live at home because they have no viable housing options. Among 25-29 year olds the number of those still at home has almost doubled in the last decade.

The problem is rooted in the systematic erosion of the social value of housing and the move to a financialised, speculative and unstable private model.

Ireland has a dualist system with public housing seen as a tenure type of last resort. Public housing lacks the scale to influence the profit driven rental market, or indeed the housing system as a whole with families 'pushed' into home ownership.

Congress calls on government to focus on creating a unitary housing system with a much more significant role for the state in the direct provision of public housing.

Congress believes that this should be done through the establishment of a new housing semi-state - **Housing Ireland** - that works in conjunction with local authorities. It would initially be financed on a once-off basis using a portion of the exchequer's 'windfall' corporation tax receipts.

The new body would be mandated to leverage its size and funding advantages to directly provide secure and 'genuine' cost rental housing at a scale great enough to exert a transformational reduction in rents across the economy.

We will also need to increase labour supply in construction. This means improving conditions, pay and job security in the sector, incentivising inward migration, and significantly increasing investment in relevant vocational education and apprenticeships.

We should also take steps to reduce the cost of land and disincentivise non-use and hoarding, including by introducing a meaningful site value tax.

Finally, we must address the chronic insecurity in the private rental sector by ending 'no fault' evictions and by introducing effective rent regulation.



1. Ireland's Homegrown Housing Crisis

"Contrary to international human rights obligations, investment in housing in the Republic of Ireland has disconnected housing from its core social purpose of providing people with a place to live in with security and dignity."

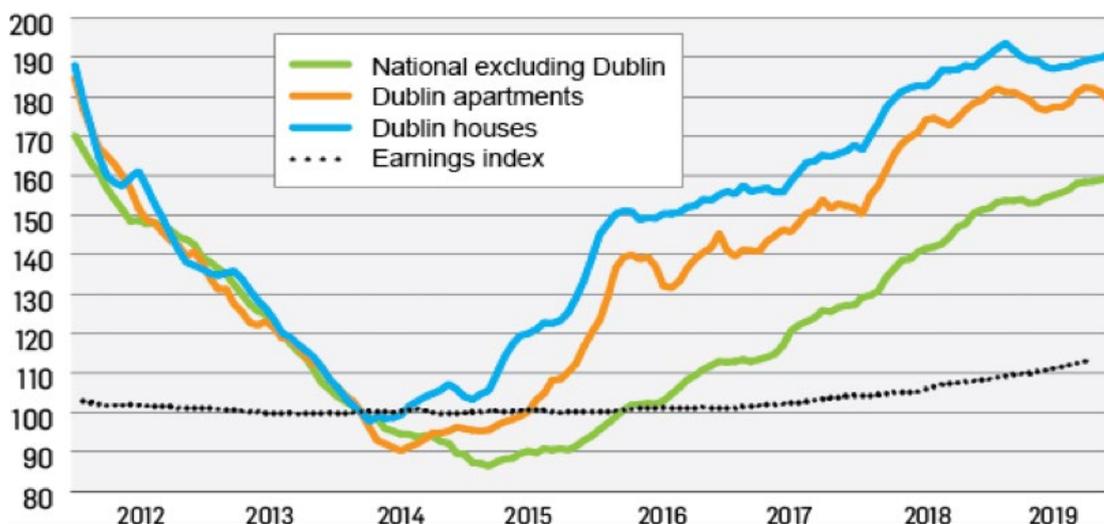
*Leilani Farha, former UN Special Rapporteur on Housing (2014-2020).
Official letter to Irish government, March 2019.*

No government would consciously opt for a model that promised only record homelessness and severely unaffordable housing. Yet that is where we are today. Record homelessness, including for children, at a time of full employment and large budget surpluses.

There is now an acute and persistent crisis of housing supply with house price growth dramatically outstripping earnings growth (Chart 1). Policy has failed and failed utterly. We are in a housing emergency.

Chart 1: The Affordability Gap: 2012-2019

House prices vs earnings growth (2012 = 100)





1.1 The shift from state to the private sector

While Irish state policy traditionally focused on home ownership, public housing was available to wide sections of the population for decades. More than 55% of all new housing between the 1930s and the 1950s was delivered in this manner - a total of 112,144 new homes.¹ Public housing provided high quality, affordable accommodation that was available to many families, helped stabilise the housing system during recessions by adding supply when the private sector wouldn't, and provided a consistent source of employment.² By 1961, almost one in five households (18.6%) were resident in public housing.³

However, from the 1970s onwards, the Irish housing system underwent fundamental changes. A combination of drastic cuts in public funding, fewer new builds, and the sale of existing public housing - as much as two thirds of all units built since 1936⁴ - resulted in the serious depletion of the public housing stock over the following decades. This had the effect of changing who qualified for public housing and effectively introduced a welfare approach to public housing.⁵ Where previously public housing had been an option for wide sections of the population, access to the increasingly limited stock was subject

to means testing. In practice, this meant social housing was a tenure of last resort for those who could not afford for-profit market housing.

This shift in government's approach to public housing led to a new market dominated model of housing provision. Where once the public sector acted as an addition to private sector supply, complementing and balancing output during recessions and upswings, housing now came to be dominated by for-profit provision. Households who would have been able to avail of public housing in prior decades were increasingly forced into overheated property markets. Economically unwise and regressive fiscal supports (i.e. tax breaks) for home ownership exacerbated this trend.

Government increasingly relied on the private sector for social housing needs, either through supports for rents in the private sector or through purchase of existing dwellings.⁶ Rather than dampening the boom bust cycle in housing, the reliance on the private sector, the range of inappropriate tax breaks, and the general withdrawal of the government from housing provision, all fueled the fire of speculative finance that ultimately caused the 2008 economic crash - including the turmoil in the construction sector and the significant loss of construction employment.⁷

1 Norris and Fahey 2011: <https://researchrepository.ucd.ie/entities/publication/59fd6b3b-40b3-4b4b-a43d-738c8511b58f/details>

2 Norris and Byrne 2016: <https://www.ucd.ie/geary/static/publications/workingpapers/gearywp201615.pdf>

3 Norris and Fahey 2011: <https://researchrepository.ucd.ie/entities/publication/59fd6b3b-40b3-4b4b-a43d-738c8511b58f/details>

4 Irish Times <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/a-century-of-housing-how-the-state-built-ireland-s-homes-1.3785939>

5 Norris and Fahey 2011: <https://researchrepository.ucd.ie/entities/publication/59fd6b3b-40b3-4b4b-a43d-738c8511b58f/details>

6 Norris and Byrne 2016: <https://www.ucd.ie/geary/static/publications/workingpapers/gearywp201615.pdf>

7 Norris and Byrne 2017: <https://www.ucd.ie/geary/static/publications/workingpapers/gearywp201705.pdf>



In the wake of the 2008 financial crash and the move towards fiscal austerity, successive governments cut funding for new public housing by 88.4% between 2008 and 2014, leading to a near total collapse (91.5%) in public housing output.

The 2009 Housing Act saw local authorities divested of responsibility for the provision of public housing. They were charged instead with providing 'support' for such housing.⁸

1.2 Housing policy as residual welfare policy

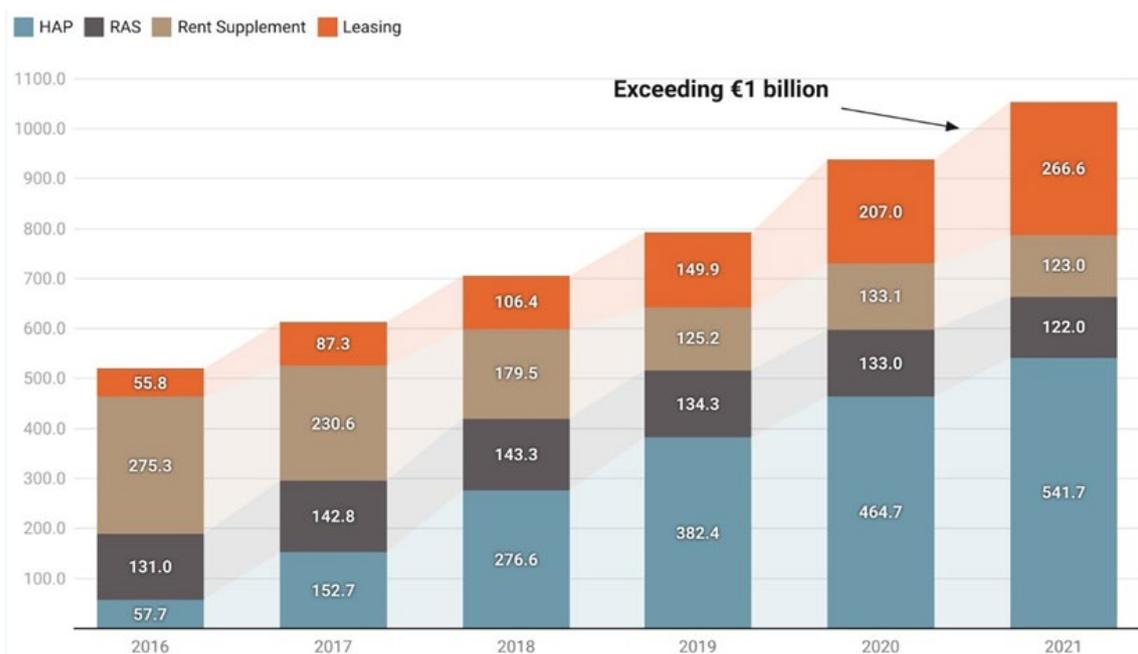
As the economy recovered, a growing crisis in housing supply developed. Instead of intervening directly the government leaned into private provision for public housing. In 2014, government introduced the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP). Initially conceived as an emergency measure, HAP is now embedded in housing policy and represents very poor use of official resources, as the state gains no asset despite very significant expenditure.

Under HAP 'public housing' was now to be redefined to include accommodation sourced from private landlords, who would be paid directly by the state.

Crucially, HAP recipients are removed from public waiting lists and deemed to have their housing needs met – masking the true scale of public housing need. Despite being underwritten by the state, HAP tenants enjoy none of the protections associated with publicly-provided housing and are as vulnerable to arbitrary eviction as all others in the private rental sector.

Chart 2: Spending on Privately Sourced Public Housing: 2016 to 2021

Current Expenditure on Social Housing (€ million)



⁸ Prof Padraic Kenna *100 Years of Irish Housing* <https://www.jcfj.ie/article/100-years-of-irish-housing/>



Similarly, there has been an increase in the use of leasing as a means of providing housing. Leasing property is widely recognised as a poor use of resources. For example, Eurostat has explicitly warned against the practice, saying there is no gain for local authorities as private investors reap “most of the rewards.”⁹ Official figures show the average per unit lease cost is €425,000 paid over 25 years, after

which the state is left with nothing.¹⁰ The new policy of widespread public support for private leasing has proved costly for government, while HAP and other rent supports have merely chased climbing rents. As Chart 2 shows, spending on rental supports and leasing nearly doubled in the five years after 2016, exceeding €1 billion in 2021. This was driven by a near tenfold increase in HAP payments.

1.3 State policy is making the problem worse

State policy has also acted to inflate the private market for home purchase. While welcome macroprudential rules have limited lending, the state has perversely acted to support housing demand through measures such as the Help to Buy scheme and preferential tax treatment for housing. In a situation of limited housing supply, these policies further boost already rapidly climbing house prices and disproportionately benefit higher income households.¹¹ Where the state has acted to intervene on supply, it has taken the form of subsidy for private developers through tax breaks, for example the government’s announced suspension in the development levy.¹²

The policy mix of reduced public builds, demand and price fueling tax breaks, and the band-aid of HAP supports, has had predictable consequences that are, by this stage, well known. Between 2012 and 2021, house prices for purchase



rose by 77%¹³ while wages only grew by 23%.¹⁴ This has priced many out of the market, leaving people at the mercy of an insecure private rental market. Meanwhile, private rents have doubled since 2012. In contrast to many other European states, private tenants have few rights and are

9 Business Post, December 26, 2021 <https://www.businesspost.ie/news/new-social-housing-leases-will-cost-state-over-e1-4-billion/>

10 <https://www.irishtimes.com/business/economy/state-increasing-reliance-on-costly-social-housing-leases-1.4623972>

11 Mazars 2021 <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwiYz-XbwNb-AhXS0cAKHeFEA-sQFnoECA4QAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fassets.gov.ie%2F235748%2F3b8ca22f-969c-40ab-a278-08583d533b48.pdf&usq=AOvVaw07iTG38ljhfRT3sh3gv5ES>

12 Irish Examiner, 24 April 2023 <https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/arid-41123116.html>

13 CSO, Data - CSO - Central Statistics Office

14 CSO, Earnings and Labour Costs Q4 2022 (Final) Q1 2023 (Preliminary Estimates) - CSO - Central Statistics Office



easily evicted.¹⁵ This is the main cause of homelessness in Ireland, with enormous social costs.

This dysfunctional spiral is also affecting the productive economy. Rising house prices prevent workers from moving, either within Ireland or into Ireland. This is costly for workers and the wider economy – workers aren't able to avail of better jobs which more appropriately reflect their skills and the economy doesn't benefit from the deployment of those skills.

Indeed, rising house prices and rental prices are a further burden on the productive economy because they add to the cost base and undermine competitiveness and ultimately jobs.

Policy choices made over the last decade mean the state is now hugely dependent on private developers for provision of housing, in all forms.

In 2021, 72% of all public housing was provided by HAP, leasing and similar measures. Local authority builds comprised just 8.6% of that need.

Housing for All relies on for-profit developers for the bulk of its output, hoping that increased supply will drive prices down. This is highly unlikely. To secure financing, the for-profit speculative model requires prices to continually rise. It cannot hope to ever deliver genuinely affordable homes.

The interests of private developers now clearly conflict with the needs of wider society. Official policy must urgently prioritise the latter and and, as a core goal, seek to drive down prices and deliver affordable homes for all.

¹⁵ The Journal 27th March <https://www.thejournal.ie/how-irish-tenant-rights-compare-with-european-countries-6026428-Mar2023/>



2. Housing Ireland: a new model for housing delivery

2.1 Moving to a unitary model – The state as a supplier of homes

Ireland exhibits the classic features of a **dualist** housing system.¹⁶ Public housing within a dualist system is a tenure type of last resort. In practice, this means that social housing is only seen as a viable option for the poor and is often stigmatised. It lacks the scale to influence the profit driven rental market, or indeed the housing system as a whole, with families “pushed” into home ownership due to the unfavourable terms offered elsewhere.

This mixture of limited scale and limited access is key. An artificially restricted, means-tested approach to public housing undermines a key tool by which the state can shape the wider housing market. State interventions are limited to chasing trends in the private for-profit market, inflating prices to increase supply, or offering subsidies or tax breaks to the for-profit sector at poor value to the state.

A unitary market, in contrast, retains a significant role for the state in the provision of housing. Non-profit housing delivered by state bodies offer a secure, affordable option available to much of the population.¹⁸ Crucially, this option is

large enough to compete with the private sector. This dynamic controls prices and raises standards in the for-profit rental and purchase sector. A virtuous circle means that imbalances are restrained, limiting boom-bust economic damage, and promoting security for the public at large.

Congress calls on the government to focus on creating such a unitary housing system in Ireland using the tools available at its disposal. In practice, this means the large-scale return of the state into public housing provision, not as a customer but as a supplier of homes.¹⁹ This new housing system should operate in tandem with a new set of rights for private renters, providing security of tenure and rental stability in the private market. A new body mandated to add supply should limit the consequences of any future exits from the private market, and drive a virtuous circle of build standards, security and affordability across the housing market.

16 NESC 2014 http://files.nesc.ie/nesc_reports/en/138_Social_Housing.pdf

17 Norris and Byrne 2017: <https://www.ucd.ie/geary/static/publications/workingpapers/gearywp201705.pdf>

18 The New Statesman 3 September 2019 <https://www.newstatesman.com/spotlight/2019/09/housing-basic-human-right-vienna-model-social-housing>

19 A referendum to ensure a ‘Right to Housing’ in the constitution would serve to underpin this ambitious new housing model and programme.



2.2 A housing semi-state

Even with existing rent controls, rents remain too high. Policy should focus on a transformational reduction in rents that will impact across a wide constituency of tenants. The current rental market is divided between market-based rents provided by for-profit actors; and a residual means-tested public (social) housing sector. This binary division of the rental market – private and public – should give way to a new model which abolishes the distinction between private market rents and means-tested rental accommodation. There are two key elements:

- **Cost-rental:** rent is based on the cost of building, managing and maintaining the units. It does not include profit for a developer or land-owner (where land is already owned by a local authority or public body) but could include a modest mark-up to provide funds for investment into additional housing stock. This contrasts with current 'cost-rental' schemes that target a reduced market rent level with many units delivered by for-profit actors.
- **Unitary market:** an integrated model where social/public housing is accessible to a broader range of income levels, creating competition with the private rental sector. Thus, in providing lower rents to a larger cohort, it is capable of exerting downward pressure on private rents. Ultimately, the unitary market blurs and eventually abolishes the distinction between the social and private rental sectors (though it doesn't abolish the latter).

A genuine cost-rental unitary model would make public housing universal, available to all in need of housing, regardless of their income or their employment status. In effect, a cost-rental unitary network would be social housing without the means test although, at first, preference could be given to those already on social housing waiting lists.

Thus, Congress believes that in order to break the crisis, the state must immediately re-enter the Irish housing market as a major player. In Congress's view, the most effective way to do this is the creation of a new housing semi-state - **Housing Ireland** - to work alongside local authorities, in order to provide public housing at scale, and available to a wide variety of household types.²⁰ Doing so should effectively break the link between means testing and social housing – such tenure will be available to wide sections of the population. The semi-state would provide medium-term certainty in what are often speculative markets, would gather needed skills while promoting high quality work, and would develop rebuilt green communities which meet our environmental and planning goals.

Congress welcomes the widespread consensus about the desirability of cost rental as a new housing option to help address the housing crisis. This tenure offers tenants higher standards, rent certainty and security. As Clúid has found in surveys, where available, tenants report high levels of satisfaction with their cost rental housing.²¹ However, to truly affect the wider housing market, this new tenure type must be

²⁰ For example, a national company that works through a decentralised structure constituting local authorities and/or local housing associations. This could retain local planning while maximising scale advantages (financing, design, procurement costs etc). In addition, local authorities would have responsibility for maintaining the existing and future stock of public housing. The new national company could also potentially absorb relevant existing bodies such as the Land Development Agency.

²¹ The Week in Housing <https://theweekinhousing.substack.com/p/is-cost-rental-making-a-difference>



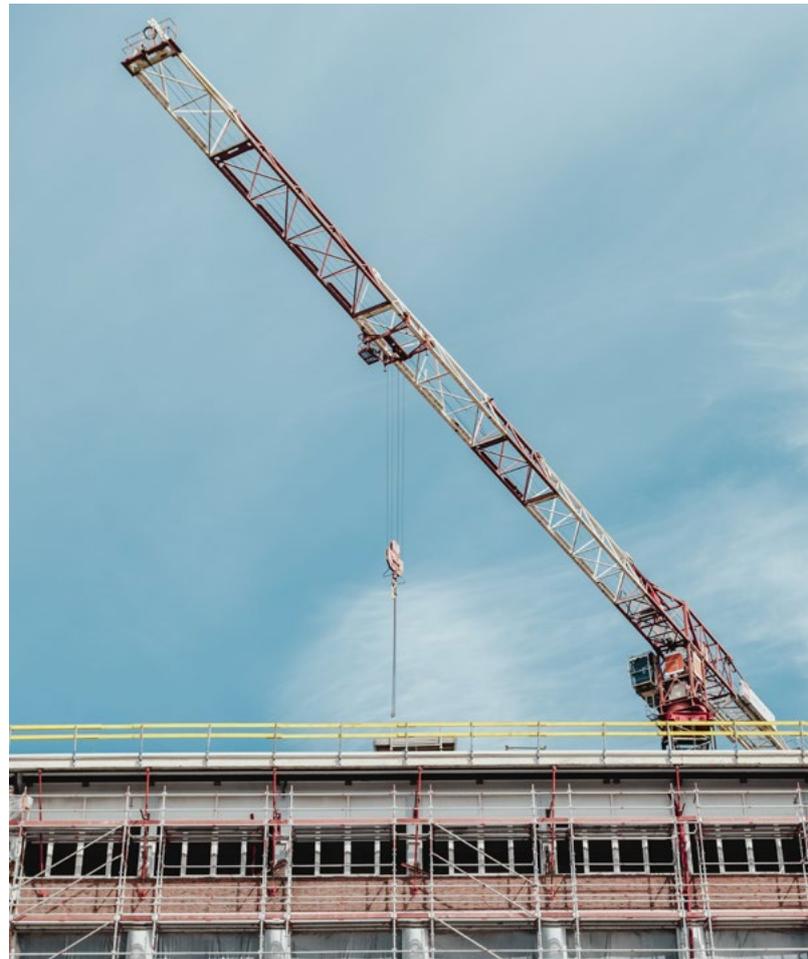
available at scale, particularly in the cities, where housing demand and the private rental sector in particular, are most imbalanced.

Crucially, this tenure should be provided on a non-profit basis. While a new semi-state would have the ability to raise funds through bond issuance, and therefore retain a degree of independence from state budgets, the cost rental system shouldn't be configured as a source of private profit. Current government definitions of cost rental include inappropriate provisions for equity returns and worryingly define "cost rents" in relation to prevailing rents on the private market.²² Public cost-rental housing should be provided on the terms that the name indicates, rental costs set to reflect borrowing costs and the price of building and maintaining properties.

In other countries, state funds, loan guarantees and other subsidies help housing bodies deliver housing at well below prevailing market rates at high standards, driving a virtuous cycle across the housing system. This ability to intervene at scale and leverage finance on the best available terms will help the new semi state deliver new housing at low cost, feeding into lower rents for tenants. This represents a key advantage over smaller scale, private schemes which currently exist.

A mechanism similar to the state's existing rent supports such as HAP could top up rents for lower income households that would still need support, as is currently done within the private rental system. However, unlike the private rental system, these payments won't chase markets, and these funds will ultimately feed back into the system, helping to deliver new units.

This new state building programme could potentially include a new and limited Affordable House Purchase (AHP) scheme with the new body building homes to sell directly at cost price to first time buyers. However, to remove the risk of this new sector contributing to market speculation these homes would only be available for resale back to the public housing body while taking account of inflation, the outstanding mortgage on the property, and the value of improvements made by the resident. In addition, these homes would not be available to sublet.



²² Dublin Inquirer June 30 2021 <https://dublininquirer.com/2021/06/30/should-private-finance-play-any-part-in-the-roll-out-of-cost-rental-homes-in-ireland/>



These systems – if offered at scale – would drive house prices and rents down by putting pressure on the private market to compete, offer secure and affordable tenures to people currently locked out of the housing system, and release funds towards productive uses.

Finally, this new semi-state housing body could work closely with local authorities to deliver specialised social housing and shelters for a variety of groups who may need it, for example homeless people, people with disabilities, and refugees.

2.3 Financing the public housing network

There is no need for an off-the-books financial model. The government has acknowledged that a portion of the large budgetary surplus in future years arises from ‘windfall’ corporate tax receipts that can’t be relied upon as a steady source of income. The estimated windfall amounts run into billions each year over the 2023 to 2026 period and perhaps beyond. This suggests that these receipts should not be used to fund current ongoing spending or to finance tax cuts.

On the other hand, once-off productive investments do represent macroeconomically legitimate uses of these resources. For example, we could transfer a portion of the National Reserve Fund and/

or the excess corporation tax windfall, on a once-off basis, to provide the proposed national semi-state company with start-up capital. The company would then be able to issue state-backed long-term bonds as required.

In addition, in order to provide an initial capital base, local authority estates could be transferred to the new cost-rental network. In effect, the new network would be responsible for all public housing tenants – whether those on differential rents or on cost-rental. This would provide the new network with a formidable asset base from the beginning, rather than waiting for this asset base to be built up over time.

2.4 Spatial planning

A further advantage of a new scaled up semi state will be direct influence over the direction of spatial planning. The sprawling unconstrained development patterns we see are the worst of all worlds – they often result in high costs, infrastructural difficulties, long commutes and high environmental costs.

The new housing body should be assisted by other state agencies to deliver public,

affordable housing options on public land.

An integrated approach, using the state’s extensive existing assets - enough land to deliver at least 114,000 homes²³ - will enable the state to effectively organise infrastructure at good value to build desirable and ecologically sustainable communities with a reduced emissions footprint. New developments could facilitate clean public transport infrastructure, district heating and renewable energy schemes.

23 Dáil Debates 24th June 2021 <https://www.kildarestreet.com/debates/?id=2021-06-24a.24&s=%22114%2C000%22+section%3Adebates#g32>



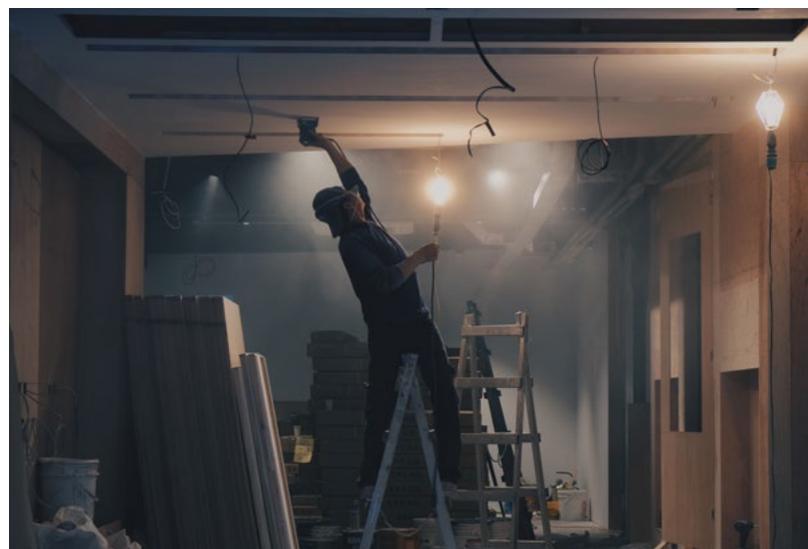
3. Additional Challenges: Labour Supply, Land, Secure Tenancy

3.1 Increasing labour supply in construction

This new state led housebuilding programme will require skilled workers. However, the legacy of a generation of failed policy hangs over the sector. Alongside the mass emigration that characterised the sector in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, we have seen numerous failures to induce new workers into the sector. New apprenticeship numbers collapsed²⁴, and recent analyses indicate that there are significant unmet skills needs if we're to deliver an average of 33,000 houses annually, and retrofit close to half a million homes to 2030.²⁵ This is likely related to the very problems that Housing Ireland will help address – in an uncertain market which has often gone from boom to slump, the construction sector is an unattractive place to make a career.

In the short term, policy measures to close this skills gap can include inducements to shift labour away from commercial builds, and a proactive immigration policy to draw in the talent we need to deliver a new and balanced housing system.

In the longer term, the state must address the self-inflicted damage of undervaluing workers in the construction sector. The state also doesn't seem to value vocational



training. This is particularly egregious in light of the huge investments we need to meet our climate ambitions. Existing stock will need upgrades, new builds will need to be of high standard, and whole new infrastructures will need to be put in place.

Alongside the proposed new semi-state company, the state will need to significantly increase investment in vocational education and offer attractive courses in sustainable construction. These courses should offer both upskilling for the existing workforce, to help drive new environmental standards

²⁴ Ó Murchadha and Murphy 2016 <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1105&context=beschrecon>

²⁵ Department of Further and Higher Education 2022 <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/10ae6-report-on-the-analysis-of-skills-for-residential-construction-retrofitting-2023-to-2030/>



throughout the construction sector, and apprenticeships for new workers. Such courses should be accompanied by a bursary – a new training programme won't be effective if workers are not in a position to afford to undertake this education.

In addition, conditions within the sector are often precarious, with high levels of

bogus self-employment. Housing Ireland will drive employment standards upwards in the sector making construction a more attractive career for new entrants. The proposed new body would also provide a key source of demand for skilled environmentally sustainable construction, shaping the wider market for the better.

3.2 Cost of land

The delivery of genuinely affordable homes at all levels will require strategic, targeted interventions in the market, on the part of the state. While the state possesses significant land holdings and proposed Land Value Sharing (LVS) legislation may help address this in the future, there are other means whereby land can be brought into development at a lower price. Two examples from post-war Europe - a time of acute housing scarcity - serve to illustrate what might be possible.

In 1946, the UK created New Town Development Corporations (NTDCs), public bodies with a wide remit for development and provision of housing. Intervening directly in land markets was key to their role. This involved the purchase or CPO of agricultural land at existing value. The savings made helped fund provision of affordable, high quality homes, infrastructure and amenities. By the 1970s the NTDCs had provided some 330,000 new homes in 25 towns. A portion were owner-occupied and the majority were later transferred to local authorities.

The following decade (1958) saw a similar initiative unveiled in France with the creation of Zones à Urbaniser en Priorité (ZUPs), which were specifically designed to assemble land banks and combat land speculation. Here, land was acquired on the basis of average market prices over the preceding five years. The model was augmented in 1962 with the introduction of Zones D'aménagement Différée (ZADs) to ensure availability of land for 'public development'. This saw the State retain a pre-emptive right to purchase land for up to 14 years, at a set price, again helping to ensure a steady supply of development land where it was required.

More recently, the Commission on Taxation and Welfare²⁶ have proposed the introduction of a tax on land a 'site value tax' which they argue will reduce the cost of land, improve the efficiency of land use, encourage the development of undeveloped land and disincentivise the non-use and/or hoarding of land. The introduction of a meaningful site value tax would therefore increase the supply of land and put downward pressure on house prices and on rents.

26 Commission on Taxation and Welfare (2022) gov.ie - Report of the Commission on Taxation and Welfare (www.gov.ie)



3.3 Secure tenancy and a right to housing

As part of the development of a new housing model, the private rental sector must see significant reform to ensure it is a secure and stable place to live and build a home. In its current form, the sector is a byword for insecurity. Congress previously (Feb 2021) called for the creation of a secure tenancy model in the sector. This would entail the creation of genuine tenancies of indefinite duration that allow families and individuals to take up long-term residence. These tenancies are common across the EU.

While legislation allows for this in principle, the relevant provisions are undermined by the continued existence of 'no fault evictions,' which includes allowing tenants to be evicted due to the sale of property. This is the single largest source of evictions in the rental sector today. Such evictions are prohibited in many EU States. An end to 'no fault' evictions would mean tenancies could only finish in cases of breach of lease/ anti-social behavior, or failure to pay rent, as is common elsewhere.

To address affordability in the short-run, the sector will require a clear and coherent system of rent regulation to replace the existing patchwork of Rent Pressure Zones. This could be based on existing models, such as Germany's Mietspiegel ('rental mirror') or the more recent Mietpreisbremse ('rental brake'). The former sees local authorities use rental data over a four/ five-year period as a reference point for rent setting, while the latter was introduced to tackle high inflation and acted to cap high rents.

Congress fully supports the proposition from housing and tenant groups for an NCT-style system of inspection and enforcement of accommodation standards. Inspections in the sector are low (although rising slightly) and compliance with accommodation standards is poor. Building long-term and secure tenancies must be buttressed by a proper inspection regime and compliance with national accommodation standards.

The decision to lift the Eviction Ban without having sufficient supports in place has resulted in growing levels of homelessness. Congress believes the ban must be reinstated as a matter of urgency and retained until such time as the necessary protections and supports are in place, to ensure people will not be forced into homelessness when a tenancy is ended.

Housing is a fundamental human right and this must be reflected across official policy. To that end, Congress fully supports the proposition to hold a referendum in order to insert a new, legal Right to Housing, into the Constitution. Such a right would serve to underpin housing policy and also provide a clear, rights-based framework for all initiatives, measures and programmes in this area.

It would also serve as a very powerful indicator as to the type of society that we aspire to create and the values we seek to uphold.



Notes





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