



A HOME OF YOUR OWN

SINN FÉIN'S PLAN TO MAKE
HOUSING AFFORDABLE





TEACH DE DO CHUID FÉIN

PLEAN SHINN FÉIN LE
TITHÍOCHT AR PHRAGHAS
RÉASÚNTA A CHINNTIÚ



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A

HOME

OF YOUR

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A Home of Your Own Making Housing Affordable

Executive Summary

Sinn Féin has a plan to make housing affordable and to bring homeownership within reach of working people. Sinn Féin will transform housing in Ireland, from how we think about and plan homes, the communities they are part of, to how we build homes. We will ensure that everyone has a home, their own front door.

Sinn Féin is committing to delivering 300,000 new homes, private and public, affordable and to rent over the lifetime of the next government. We are committed to enabling people to build homes in their own communities.

In Government, we will deliver the most ambitious public housing programme in the history of the state.




At the core of Sinn Féin's social and affordable housing plan is a new model of public housing. Delivering such an ambitious public housing programme will require a radical transformation in planning, approval, and tendering processes.

This is a whole of government approach to housing, whether you are a first-time buyer, a social housing tenant, a family looking to expand, a low- or middle-income family, or an older person looking for appropriate long-term security and safety.

Sinn Féin's new model of public housing will combine a greater focus on mixed income housing with an appropriate needs-based volume of age friendly housing, as well as housing for people with disabilities and wheelchair users and culturally appropriate homes for Travellers.

Sinn Féin is committed to ending Ireland's housing crisis.

Sinn Féin will:

-  Create a single Public Housing Fund.
-  Proactively increase the use of new building technologies to deliver low carbon building systems
-  Seek to expand the social rental and cost rental tenant-in-situ schemes.

- 🏠 Immediately end the policy of long-term leasing for social housing delivery.
- 🏠 Develop a pilot programme in conjunction with Local Authorities and the Arts Council to deliver public housing with appropriate studio space for cultural workers.
- 🏠 Pilot the delivery of public housing through direct labour.
- 🏠 Support the four Dublin Local Authorities to establish a publicly owned building contractor.
- 🏠 Ensure that tenants in Local Authority and Approved Housing Bodies estates are provided with the opportunity to become active participants in the decisions about the management and development of the communities in which they live.
- 🏠 Agree an accelerated multi annual inner city flat complex regeneration programme. The current budget of €50m would be doubled to €100m.
- 🏠 Reduce the use of private sector rent subsidies to meet social housing need.
- 🏠 Introduce a Social Housing (Reform) General Scheme with the intention of having it passed and enacted within 12 months.
- 🏠 Sell homes to eligible purchasers at prices between €250,000 and €300,000 depending on size and location.
- 🏠 Introduce a three-year emergency ban on rent increases for all existing and new tenancies.
- 🏠 Introduce a series of reforms that would activate the private residential development sector to fund and build 175,000 private homes to buy and rent over five years.
- 🏠 Introduce reforms in the private rental sector, supporting the increased professionalisation of the sector while strengthening security of tenure, enforcing minimum standards, and improving affordability.
- 🏠 Ensure that residential zoning should be made on a use it or lose it basis.
- 🏠 Introduce a Compact Development Site Support Programme for private residential developers who want to develop higher density mixed use schemes on inner urban sites where compact growth is desirable.
- 🏠 Introduce a stamp duty exemption for First Time Buyers, so that if you are buying your first home you will pay no stamp duty on a property valued at €450,000 or less.
- 🏠 Provides tenants with adequate, secure and affordable homes while enabling landlords to make a reasonable return on their investment.

- 🏠 Strengthen the building control and building product surveillance functions in Local Authorities.
- 🏠 Put in place a world class building control and building products surveillance regime.
- 🏠 Introduce a comprehensive redress scheme for those living with building defects. Sinn Féin has committed to providing 100% redress to all those homeowners living with Celtic Tiger era building defects and defective block homes.
- 🏠 Create a single Building Defects Resolution Board.
- 🏠 Establish a Building Control and Consumer Protection Agency.
- 🏠 End long term homelessness and the need to sleep rough.
- 🏠 Fund a dedicated stream of age friendly housing to meet the needs of 10,000 households in social and affordable housing.
- 🏠 Champion high quality architecture, and in particular in the delivery of our public housing programme.
- 🏠 Build a planning system that enables the public, semi-state and private development sectors to meet the social, economic and environmental needs of our society.
- 🏠 Establish an Active Land Management Agency, focused solely on the issue of strategic management of public land and where appropriate intervening in the private land market to ensure an adequate supply of public land.
- 🏠 Establish, as a matter of urgency, an on-line platform detailing all vacant and derelict properties in the state

The full cost of Sinn Féin's public housing programme over five years, adjusted for inflation, would be €39bn. This includes a total cost of €37bn for the new build programme and €2bn for the acquisitions programme.

This would be provided for through €25.3bn in voted capital expenditure from the exchequer and €13.7bn in non-voted expenditure comprising of loans from the Housing Finance Agency and other sources.

The annual average expenditure would be €7.8bn of which an average of €5.1bn would be from the exchequer and €2.7bn would be borrowing from the HFA and others.



Do Theach Féin

Plean Shinn Féin le Tithíocht ar Phraghas Réasúnta a chinntiú

Achoimre Fheidhmeach

Tá plean ag Sinn Féin tithíocht a dhéanamh inacmhainne agus úinéireacht tí a chur ar fáil do dhaoine atá ag obair. Athróidh Sinn Féin tithíocht in Éirinn, idir an chaoi a smaoinimid agus a bpleanáilimid tithe, na pobail a bhfuil siad mar chuid díobh, agus an chaoi a dtógfaimid tithe. Cinnteoidimid go bhfuil a theach féin ag gach duine, a dhoras tosaigh féin.

Tá Sinn Féin tiomanta do 300,000 teach nua a sholáthar, príobháideach agus poiblí, inacmhainne agus ar cíos thar shaolré an chéad rialtais eile. Táimid tiomanta do dhaoine a chumasú chun tithe a thógáil ina bpobail féin.

Sa Rialtas, cuirfimid an clár tithíochta poiblí is uailmhianaí ar fáil i stair an stáit.

I gcoirílár phlean tithíochta sóisialta agus inacmhainne Shinn Féin tá samhail nua tithíochta poiblí. Chun clár tithíochta poiblí chomh huailmhianach sin a sholáthar, beidh gá le hathrú ó bhonn sna próisis phleanála, formheasa agus tairisceana.

Is cur chuige uile-rialtais é seo maidir le tithíocht, cibé an ceannaitheoir céaduaire thú, tionónta tithíochta sóisialta, teaghlach atá ag iarraidh leathnú, teaghlach ar ioncam íseal nó ar mheánioncam, nó duine níos sine atá ag lorg slándála agus sábháilteachta cuí fadtéarmaí.

Díreoidh samhail nua tithíochta poiblí Shinn Féin níos mó ar thithíocht ioncaim mheasctha le méid cuí bunaithe ar riachtanais tithíochta atá oiriúnach do dhaoine scothaosta, chomh maith le tithíocht do dhaoine faoi mhíchumas agus d'úsáideoirí cathaoireacha rothaí agus tithe atá oiriúnach ó thaobh cultúir de don Lucht Siúil.

Tá Sinn Féin tiomanta deireadh a chur le géarchéim tithíochta na hÉireann.

Déanfaidh Sinn Féin an méid seo a leanas:

- 🏠 Ciste Tithíochta Poiblí amháin a chruthú.
- 🏠 An úsáid a bhaintear as teicneolaíochtaí nua tógála a mhéadú go réamhghníomhach chun córais tógála ísealcharbóin a sholáthar.

- 🏠 Féachaint leis na scéimeanna sóisialta cíosa agus cíosa costais tionónta-in-situ a leathnú.
- 🏠 Deireadh a chur láithreach leis an mbeartas léasaithe fhadtármaigh do sheachadadh tithíochta sóisialta.
- 🏠 Clár píolótach a fhorbairt i gcomhar le hÚdaráis Áitiúla agus leis an gComhairle Ealaíon chun tithíocht phoiblí a sholáthar ina mbeidh spás stiúideo cuí d'oibrithe cultúrtha.
- 🏠 Tithíocht phoiblí ar bhonn píolótach a chur ar fáil trí shaothar díreach.
- 🏠 Tacú leis na ceithre Údarás Áitiúla i mBaile Átha Cliath conraitheoir tógála faoi úinéireacht phoiblí a bhunú.
- 🏠 A chinntiú go dtugtar an deis do thionóntaí in eastáit Údaráis Áitiúil agus Comhlachtaí Tithíochta Ceadaithe a bheith rannpháirteach go gníomhach sna cinntí maidir le bainistiú agus forbairt na bpobal ina gcónaíonn siad.
- 🏠 Clár athghiniúna casta lín lárchathrach ilbhliantúla luathaithe a chomhaontú. Dhéanfaí an buiséad reatha de €50m a dhúbailt go €100m.
- 🏠 Laghdú a dhéanamh ar an úsáid a bhaintear as fóirdheontais chíos a ón earnáil príobháideach chun freastal ar riachtanas tithíochta sóisialta.
- 🏠 Scéim Ghinearálta um Thithíocht Shóisialta (Athchóiriú) a thabhairt isteach agus é ar intinn go rithfí agus go n-achtófaí í laistigh de 12 mhí.
- 🏠 Tithe a dhíol le ceannaitheoirí incháilithe ar phraghsanna idir €250,000 agus €300,000 ag brath ar mhéid agus ar shuíomh.
- 🏠 Cosc éigeandála trí bliana ar mhéaduithe cíosa a thabhairt isteach do gach tionóntacht atá ann cheana agus do gach tionóntacht nua.
- 🏠 Sraith athchóirithe a thabhairt isteach lena gcuirfí an earnáil forbartha cónaithe príobháidí i ngníomh chun 175,000 teach príobháideach a mhaoiniú agus a thógáil lena gceannach agus lena ligean ar cíos thar thréimhse cúig bliana.
- 🏠 Athchóirithe a thabhairt isteach in earnáil na gcíosanna príobháideacha, tacú le gairmiúlú méadaithe na hearnála agus, ag an am céanna, slándáil tionachta a neartú, íoschaighdeáin a fhorfheidhmiú, agus inacmhainneacht a fheabhsú.
- 🏠 A chinntiú gur chóir criosú cónaithe a dhéanamh ar bhonn úsáide nó é a chailleadh.
- 🏠 Clár Tacaíochta Láithreáin Forbartha Dlíithe a thabhairt isteach d'fhorbróirí cónaithe príobháideacha ar mian leo scéimeanna úsáide measctha ard-dlúis a fhorbairt ar láithreáin uirbeacha inmheánacha ina bhfuil fás dlúth inmheánaithe.
- 🏠 Díolúine ó dhleacht stampála a thabhairt isteach do Cheannaitheoirí Céaduaire, ionas nach n-íocfaidh tú aon dleacht stampála ar mhaoin ar luach €450,000 nó níos lú má tá do chéad teach á cheannach agat.

- 🏠 Tithe leordhóthanacha, slána agus inacmhainne a chur ar fáil do thionóntaí agus ag an am céanna a chur ar chumas tiarnaí talún toradh réasúnach a fháil ar a n-infheistíocht.
- 🏠 Na feidhmeanna rialaithe foirgníochta agus faireachais táirgí tógála sna hÚdaráis Áitiúla a neartú.
- 🏠 Córas den chéad scoth a chur i bhfeidhm maidir le rialú foirgneamh agus faireachas ar tháirgí foirgníochta.
- 🏠 Scéim chuimsitheach sásaimh a thabhairt isteach dóibh siúd a bhfuil lochtanna tógála orthu. Tá Sinn Féin tiomanta do chúiteamh 100% a chur ar fáil do na húnéirí tí go léir atá ag déileáil le fabhtanna tógála agus blocthithe lochtacha ó ré an Tíogair Cheiltigh.
- 🏠 Bord Réitigh amháin maidir le Lochtanna Foirgníochta a chruthú.
- 🏠 Gníomhaireacht um Rialú Foirgníochta agus um Chosaint Tomhaltóirí a bhunú.
- 🏠 Deireadh a chur le heaspa fadtéarmach dídine agus an gá atá le codladh amuigh.
- 🏠 Maoiniú a chur ar fáil do shruth tiomnaithe tithíochta atá oiriúnach do dhaoine scothaosta chun freastal ar riachtanais 10,000 teaghlach i dtithíocht shóisialta agus i dtithíocht inacmhainne.
- 🏠 Ailtireacht ardchaighdeán a chur chun cinn, go háirithe inár gclár tithíochta poiblí.
- 🏠 Córas pleanála a thógáil a chuireann ar chumas na n-earnálacha forbartha poiblí, leathstáit agus príobháideacha freastal ar riachtanais shóisialta, eacnamaíochta agus chomhshaoil ár sochaí.
- 🏠 Gníomhaireacht Ghníomhach Bainistíochta Talún a bhunú, a bheidh dírithe go hiomlán ar an tsaincheist maidir le bainistíocht straitéiseach talún poiblí agus, nuair is iomchuí, idirghabháil a dhéanamh sa mhargadh talún príobháidí chun soláthar leordhóthanach talún poiblí a chinntiú.
- 🏠 Ardán ar líne a bhunú, mar ábhar práinne, ina mbeidh mionsonraí ar gach maoin fholamh agus tréigthe sa stát.

€39bn a bheadh i gcostas iomlán chlár tithíochta poiblí Shinn Féin thar thréimhse cúig bliana, arna choigeartú don bhoilsciú. Áiríonn sé seo costas iomlán de €37bn don chlár tógála nua agus €2bn don chlár éadálacha.

Dhéanfaí foráil dó seo trí €25.3bn i gcaiteachas caipitil vótáilte ón státchiste agus €13.7bn i gcaiteachas gan vóta a bheadh comhdhéanta d'iasachtaí ón nGníomhaireacht Airgeadais Tithíochta agus ó fhoinsí eile.

Is é an meánchaiteachas bliantúil a bheadh ann ná €7.8bn agus ar an meán bheadh €5.1bn de sin ón státchiste agus bheadh €2.7bn á fháil ar iasacht ón HFA agus ó dhaoine eile.

HOUSING





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Sinn Féin believes that having
a **home of your own** is a **fundamental
human right**. It is our view that such a right,
subject to approval by the people, should be
enshrined into the Constitution.

01. VISION

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A Home of your own

Sinn Féin believes that everyone should have a home of their own. A home is not just a roof over your head. It is fundamental to the wellbeing of people, families, communities, public service delivery, the economy, and the nation.

Sinn Féin believes that everybody should have the right to secure, adequate and affordable homes.

We are committed to bringing homeownership back within reach for working people

Secure, adequate & affordable

A secure home is one where you feel safe, which is built to proper standards and where you have long term security of tenure.

An adequate home is one that meets your needs in terms of size, space, light, accessibility, proximity to work and support networks and culture.

An affordable home is one where your housing costs are a reasonable percentage of your disposable income.

Whether you own your own home, rent in the private rental sector, or live in public housing, your home should be safe, adequate, and affordable.

A balanced housing system

Sinn Féin's long term objective is to see the housing system rebalanced with a greater emphasis on not-for-profit public housing to meet social and affordable need. At present the housing system in the State is overly weighted to the private market, with 84% of all housing 'private for profit', (66% owner occupier and 18% private rental) and just 10% constituting social housing.

This would mean having a long-term objective of increasing the portion of non-market public housing to 30% of the housing system. In Government, we would also rebalance private housing output in favour of owner occupation with the aim of halting the decline in home ownership. Home ownership would rise through the increased provision of private purchase and affordable homes for purchase.

There would also be an increase in the volume of social and affordable cost rental homes. In turn the private rental sector would become a smaller portion of the overall housing system. Such a distribution would not only ensure the housing system properly meets people's housing need. It would also ensure the system is

better able to absorb cyclical disruption from the private market. The table below outlines how the provision of housing has changed in the State.

Table 1: Housing Provision 1991 to 2022

Tenure	1991	2002	2006	2011	2016	2022
Owner occupied	79.3%	77.4%	74.7%	69.4%	69.7%	65.9%
Social housing	9.7%	7.9%	10.7%	8.7%	9.4%	10%
Private rental	8%	11%	9.9%	18.5%	18.2%	18%
Total	1,019.7m	1,279.6m	1,769m	1,994m	2,003m	2,112m

The role of Government

The role of Government is not to promote one form of tenure over another. Rather its role should be to ensure that through the delivery of public housing and the regulation and activation of private housing there is a sufficient supply of secure, adequate, and affordable homes to meet society's needs.

In the first instance, the role of Government is to deliver a sufficient volume of public homes to meet social and affordable housing need. Government must also, through positive progressive regulation of the private sector, activate builders and developers to deliver large volumes of high-quality private homes to rent and buy at fair prices.

Housing & Climate Change

The built environment – what, how and where we build – is the fourth largest emitter of carbon, after energy, transport, and agriculture. We must dramatically reduce the volume of embodied carbon across all forms of development if we are to meet our Paris Agreement carbon emission reduction targets and the States own legally binding sectoral emissions reduction targets.

Government has a responsibility, through planning legislation, building regulations, construction product surveillance and public procurement, to ensure that housing is delivered in a manner that meets and where possible exceeds our emissions reduction targets in the built environment. This means greater use of vacant and derelict homes and buildings and a clear and credible transition to low and in turn net zero building materials and processes.

A Constitutional Right to a Home

Sinn Féin believes that having a home of your own is a fundamental human right. It is our view that such a right, subject to approval by the people, should be enshrined into the Constitution.

Enshrining such a right into the Constitution has four main values:

1. It would clarify the balance of rights in the constitution with respect to property rights and the right to a home.
2. It would place a legal obligation on Government to vindicate the right over time through legislation, policy implementation, and budgetary funding.
3. A successful referendum would create an expectation of action among the public and be a catalyst for change in housing policy and delivery.
4. It would provide those most excluded from the housing system with a legally enforceable right.

The Eighth Report of the Convention on the Constitution dealing with Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was published in March 2014. The Convention voted by a majority of 85% that, in principle, the Constitution be amended to strengthen the protection of Economic, Social and Cultural rights. A majority of 59% voted that the State shall progressively realise Economic, Social and Cultural rights, subject to maximum available resources and that this duty is cognisable by the Court. When asked specifically about inserting the right to housing into the Constitution a majority of 84% voted in favour. In July 2023, the Housing Commission recommended a proposed amendment to the Constitution providing for access to adequate housing in the Constitution.

Following consultation with the Oireachtas, the Housing Commission and others, Sinn Féin would publish draft legislation, which following pre-legislative scrutiny, would be put to the people within 12 months of Government formation.

Conclusion

Housing is Sinn Féin's number one priority. Meeting society's housing need requires ambition, determination, and political will. It also requires change. Change to the Constitution, to the State's laws, and to Government's policies and budgets. Sinn Féin is committed to driving this change to ensure that everyone person and every family has a secure, adequate, and affordable home of their own. We are committed to making housing affordable and bringing home ownership within reach for working people.





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In Government we would aim to **deliver 300,000 new homes**, through direct public housing delivery and better activation of private sector delivery. **At least 125,000** of these must be **public homes** to **meet social** and **affordable housing need**.

02.

NEED

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Objectively Assessing Need

Any credible housing plan must be based on an independent and objective assessment of the current and expected future need for new homes. This must involve an assessment of the number of new homes required to meet existing unmet demand as well as an assessment of projected new household formation and population growth. Such an assessment should include a breakdown of the total volume of housing need by tenure including social, affordable rental, affordable purchase, private rental, and private purchase. It must also include an assessment of the number of homes for people with disabilities, for older people, and for Travellers.

The information must not only be available at the State-wide level. It must include breakdowns at Local Authority and Local Electoral Area and where possible District Electoral Division level. This will ensure that Governments housing targets, both for public and private homes, are based on need. It will ensure that Local Authority housing plans and strategies and the planning process are geared to match housing delivery with real housing need.

The Current Targets

In 2020, the Economic and Social Research Institute published a report on Regional Demographics and Structural Housing Demand. The report estimated that between 26,000 and 33,000 new homes would be required each year to meet population growth.

The report's growth projects were based on the 2016 census. Importantly the reports terms of reference, set by the Department of Housing, did not include an examination and assessment of unmet housing need within the existing population. As a result, the 26,000 to 33,000 range has been challenged by independent academics, residential developers, and the Opposition in Leinster House.

An Alternative Assessment

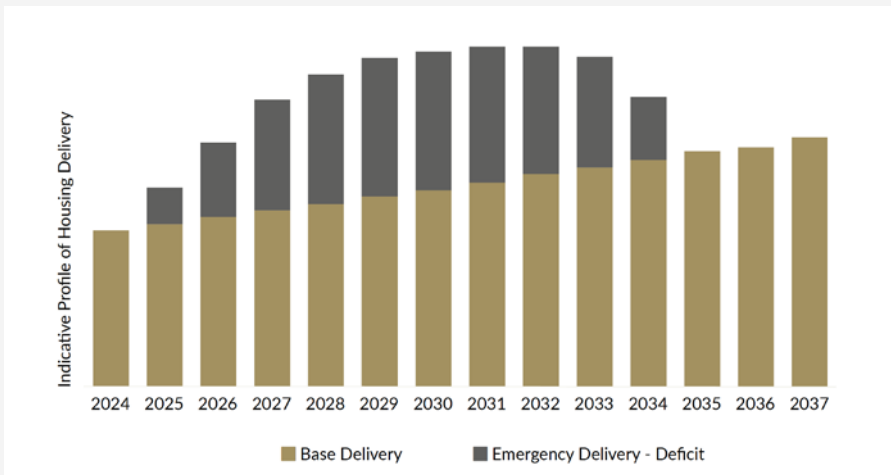
In 2020, Sinn Féin argued that, as unmet social and affordable housing need was significantly underestimated by Government, at least 40,000 new homes would be required each year. Since 2020, Governments social and affordable housing targets, which were too low to begin with, were not met. Meanwhile economic growth and inward migration brought significant population growth.

As a result, Sinn Féin revised our own assessment of housing need to 50,000 new homes a year in 2023. This was in line with independent assessments from

academics and industry. In June 2024, the Housing Commission published their report which included a critique of the Government housing targets. They argued that a decade of undersupply had created a housing deficit. The Commission estimated that this unmet need ranged between 212,500 to 256,000 homes.

They argued that this unmet housing need must be added to the Government’s baseline. Importantly they also argued that meeting this need must be front loaded in the short term. Achieving these recommendations would require on average 60,000 new homes a year over the next five years. The table below sets out the Housing Commission’s recommendations with the Government baseline targets in gold and the Commissions deficit target in green.

Chart 1: Indicative Profile of Housing Delivery 2024 to 2037



In July 2024, the ESRI updated their 2020 housing need assessment report. The terms of reference set for the report by the Department of Housing again did not include unmet pent-up demand. Their conclusion was that to meet structural demand created by demographic demand from 2024 to 2030 an annual average of 44,000 new homes would be required, dropping down to 40,000 from 2030 and 2040. This is only a marginal change from the implications of their 2020 report for the years from 2024 to 2030 and does not fundamentally alter the wider Housing Commission recommendations.

Meeting housing need from 2025 – 2029

Meeting the Housing Commissions overall assessment of need from 2025 to 2030 would require at least 300,000 new public and private homes over the lifetime of the next Government. Sinn Féin accepts this assessment and if in Government we would aim to deliver 300,000 new homes, through direct public housing delivery and better activation of private sector delivery. At least 125,000 of these must be public homes to meet social and affordable housing need, with an average of 15,000 social and 10,000 affordable homes delivered annually.

The remaining 175,000 homes would be delivered by the private sector. Government cannot control private sector output in the same way as it can with public sector output. However, Sinn Féin wants to see a rebalancing of private sector output in favour of homes for sale to owner occupiers. To achieve this, in Government, we would work with the private residential development sector to reduce the size of the private rental sector as a percentage of overall stock with the objective of delivering an annual average of 23,000 owner occupier homes, 7,000 private rental homes and 5,000 self-build homes. If achieved, this would mean a total of 25,000 self builds, 35,000 private rental and 115,000 owner occupier homes over five years.

The table below works on the assumption that a general election will be held either in late 2024 or early 2025.

Table 2: Sinn Féin's Proposed Housing Provision 2025 to 2029

Type	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Total
Social rental	13,500	14,000	14,750	15,750	17,000	75,000
Affordable purchase	4,000	4,500	5,000	5,500	6,000	25,000
Affordable rental	4,000	4,500	5,000	5,500	6,000	25,000
Private	25,000	30,000	35,000	40,000	45,000	175,000
Total	46,500	53,000	59,750	66,750	74,000	300,000

We believe this is both ambitious and deliverable. Chapter Three sets out how a Sinn Féin Government would deliver the most ambitious public housing programme in the history of the state. Chapter Four details how such a government would better activate the private residential sector to deliver a larger volume of good quality homes at fair prices.

Conclusion

The housing need estimates set out above are based on the most up to date information at the time of writing. However, these targets must be revised regularly and amended as new information becomes available, including levels of private sector output, demographic change, and economic conditions. This must be done independently of Government to ensure there is no political massaging of the level of need to then justify lower delivery targets.

Sinn Féin believes that a Housing Needs Demand Assessment group should be established involving the CSO, ESRI and the Housing Agency. They should be tasked with annually updating the overall housing need assessment data and the more detailed breakdowns by region, tenure, and typology to ensure that both central and local government and the wider development community can both plan and deliver homes based on need.









This **new model of public housing** will combine a greater focus on mixed income housing with an appropriate needs-based volume of **age friendly housing**, **housing for people with disabilities** and **wheelchair users** and culturally appropriate **homes for Travellers.**

03.

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A New Model of Public Housing

Sinn Féin in Government will deliver the most ambitious public housing programme in the history of the state. At the core of Sinn Féin's social and affordable housing plan is a new model of public housing. This will focus on the delivery of a mix of small, mid, and large-scale residential developments, determined by housing need, site size and context. These would fully integrating social, affordable rental and affordable purchase homes.

This new model of public housing will combine a greater focus on mixed income housing with an appropriate needs-based volume of age friendly housing, housing for people with disabilities and wheelchair users and culturally appropriate homes for Travellers.

The Targets

We believe that it is possible to deliver at least 125,000 social and affordable homes over a full term of Government. This would require an annual average of 25,000 social and affordable homes delivered by Local Authorities, Approved Housing Bodies, Community Housing Trusts, and those homes currently in the Land Development Agency pipeline.

The table below sets out Sinn Féin's public housing targets over a full term of office. The first months in office would involve agreeing the public housing programme with Local Authorities and others and making the necessary changes to funding, procurement, and delivery streams to ramp up delivery in the first full year in office. These targets, as set out below, will be subject to agreement and revision with Local Authorities and other delivery agents based on the most up to date information at the time.

Table 3: Sinn Féin's Public Housing Targets 2025 to 2029

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Total
Total	21,500	23,000	24,750	26,750	29,000	125,000
Social	13,500	14,000	14,750	15,750	17,000	75,000
Affordable Purchase	4,000	4,500	5,000	5,500	6,000	25,000
Affordable Rental	4,000	4,500	5,000	5,500	6,000	25,000

The Delivery Programme

Within six months of taking office Sinn Féin will agree and publish a five-year public housing delivery programme for each Local Authority. These will be published by the Department of Housing on their website as a consolidated delivery programme and individually on each Local Authority website. This delivery programme, in as far as possible, will set out in full detail the annual total number of social, affordable rental and affordable purchase homes to be delivered in each local authority area in each year from 2025 through to 2029.

This will include a breakdown of the delivery targets by Local Authorities, Approved Housing Bodies and Community Housing Trusts. It will also include a breakdown of the targets by delivery stream including: Direct Delivery, Design and Build, Part V and Turnkeys. The delivery programme will also identify existing land banks to be developed and land deficits that must be addressed to meet the targets. The delivery programme will be reviewed annually and where necessary updated.

Accelerating Delivery

Delivering such an ambitious public housing programme will require a radical transformation in planning, approval, and tendering processes. It will also require a fundamental shift in the existing roles and relationships between the Department of Housing and the Local Government sector. Under Sinn Féin's public housing programme the Department will be responsible for policy development and oversight of expenditure. In turn greater responsibility will be devolved to Local Authorities for project management and delivery. This will require a radical reform of the Department of Housing's Four Stage Approval Process to ensure efficiency without compromising accountability.

The Department of Housing will establish a single unit for engagement with Local Authorities on mixed tenure public housing projects. In order to remove duplication and delay Approved Housing Bodies principal point of contact will be the Local Authority rather than the Department.

Streamlining Delivery

Once a public housing development is included in a Local Authority's five-year delivery programme it will automatically have Stage 1 approval and can proceed to planning. Local Authority, Approved Housing Bodies and Community Housing Trusts will process planning applications via Part 8 or standard planning process as appropriate. Design will be in accordance with the Standard Design Manual & Capital Appraisal Requirements.

An emergency planning facility will be available to Local Authorities for the delivery of a dedicated stream of smaller age friendly homes and housing for people in emergency accommodation on public land. This is part of our plan to reduce and ultimately end long term homelessness, the details of which are set out in Chapter Five.

The Department of Housing will be a statutory consultee in the planning process for all public housing projects directly delivered by Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies, submitting observations for consideration to the Local Authority.

Once planning has been approved the Local Authority will prepare a detailed cost plan or approve a detailed cost plan submitted by an Approved Housing Body. This cost plan will operate within the Department of Housing Unit Cost Guides, which will be updated annually.

Where the Local Authority or Approved Housing Body is operating within the average cost ceiling as set out in the Unit Cost Guide, they will proceed with the development in accordance with the approved planning permission as approved by the Director of Housing.

Where the cost of the development, either at tender stage or during construction, is running above the average cost ceiling but in line with general construction sector inflation the Local Authority will engage with the Housing Delivery Office in the Local Government Management Association for advice, possible modification and sign off by the Chief Executive. This will be known as the yellow flag mechanism.

Where the cost of the development, either at tender stage or during construction is running above the average cost ceiling and above general construction sector inflation the Local Authority will engage the Department of Housing for advice, possible modification and sign off by Departments Housing Delivery unit. This will be known as the red flag mechanism.

The purpose of these three procedures is to avoid duplication and delay while ensuring proper management of public finances.

Streamlining Funding

In addition to streamlining the planning and approval process for public housing Sinn Féin would also reform the way public housing projects are funded. The current five principal funding streams for the delivery of social and affordable housing (SHIP, CALF, CAS, AHF & CREL) would be merged into a single Public Housing Fund.

The amount of funding paid by the Department of Housing for each type of public housing project or for units within a mixed tenure development will continue to operate broadly on the same basis as is currently the case as set out below:

- 🏠 **Local Authority construction, Part V and Turnkey paid at 100%**
- 🏠 **Approved Housing Body general needs construction, Part V and Turnkey paid at range of between 20% and 30%**
- 🏠 **Approved Housing Body special needs construction, Part V and Turnkey paid at up to 100%**
- 🏠 **Local Authority & Approved Housing Body affordable purchase paid at a range of between 20% and 33%**
- 🏠 **Local Authority and Approved Housing Body cost rental paid at a range of between 30% and 55%**

The Public Housing Fund contribution for affordable purchase and cost rental will vary depending on land related costs as set out below. Funding will be provided on a multi annual basis, paid in instalments and in advance. Local Authorities will submit funding requests in advance on a rolling basis as per their five-year delivery programme.

Streamlining Procurement

The current practice of tendering for each individual construction project will be replaced with multi annual framework agreements. This would involve building contractors competing for places on panels of contractors to whom each job will then be allocated, subject to final agreement on price.

Local Authorities in consultation with Department of Housing and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform will develop multi-annual agreements operating across nine regions. The regions are set out below.

Table 4: Proposed Public Housing Development Regions

Region	Councils
Dublin	Dublin City, Fingal, South Dublin, Dún Laoghaire Rathdown
Mid-East	Kildare, Meath, Wicklow
Midlands	Laois, Longford, Offaly, Westmeath
Mid-West	Clare, Limerick
North-East	Louth, Monaghan, Cavan
North-West	Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo
South-East	Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Waterford, Wexford
South-West	Cork City, Cork County, Kerry
West	Galway City, Galway County, Roscommon, Mayo

One Local Authority will take the lead in overseeing the multi annual framework agreements on a shared service basis with their regional partner Councils. To ensure a maximum level of competition and to allow new entrants into the frameworks they will be broken into three tiers based on development size, small, medium, and large. There will be restrictions on the number of frameworks which any given contractor can be on to prevent larger contractors monopolising the contracts and then passing the work on to sub-contractors.

In addition, the multi-annual frameworks will not only apply to building contractors on public land Sinn Féin will also introduce the option for Local Authorities to enter multi annual framework agreements with private developers for Design and Build developments and Turnkey developments. Where multi annual frameworks are put in place for Turnkey developments, the Local Authority will have the option of providing the development finance for their portion of the scheme. This will assist in reducing the cost as a greater discount can be applied for multi-annual purchases. The state will not be paying the developers higher cost of finance.

To ensure that these agreements do not have a negative impact on private supply, the developer will be asked to demonstrate that the framework agreement will result in a larger quantum of new homes ensuring not only increased social and affordable housing delivery but also increased private sector output on what would otherwise have been delivered in the absence of the agreement.

Sinn Féin would also ensure the funding will cover both the acquisition and refurbishment costs where Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies are acquiring and refurbishing vacant and derelict properties.

Tackling Vacancy & Dereliction

Sinn Féin believes that the state must lead in tackling vacancy and dereliction. Making greater use of existing buildings makes social, economic, and environmental sense. The five-year public housing delivery programme will include an overall minimum percentage of all new public housing to come from vacant and derelict building stock.

Each individual Local Authority delivery programme will include the specific target for their functional area determined by local levels of vacancy and dereliction. The current Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant will continue to be available for the purchase of private vacant and derelict homes as part of the overall strategy to tackle vacancy and dereliction.

The scheme will be improved by allowing for staged payments directly from the Local Authority to approved building contractors as work is undertaken subject to compliance with the Building Control Amendment Regulations and submission of appropriate certificates via the Building Control Management System. The affordable purchase eligibility criteria set out in this document will apply to this scheme.

New Building Technologies

In addition to greater use of vacant and derelict properties the Local Authorities five-year public housing delivery programme will proactively increase the use of new building technologies including 3D volumetric off-site manufactured building systems. Specific multi-annual framework agreements will be put in place for homes delivered using these low carbon building systems with annually increasing targets. This is to enable the emerging low carbon new building technology sector to develop their capacity during the lifetime of the delivery programme.

The first full year target will be the delivery of at least 1,000 homes using these systems. Subject to the outcome of the framework competition the objective will be to have an increasing percentage of all new public homes manufactured from low carbon building technologies each year of the delivery programme.

Turnkey Developments

Turnkey developments, where Local Authorities or Approved Housing Bodies enter into forward purchase agreements with private developers will continue to be used under the proposed five-year public housing delivery programme. However, the current overreliance on the use of this delivery stream will be reduced so that by the end of the full five-year programme Turnkeys will form a smaller portion of overall public housing delivery.

Design and Build Developments

The five-year public housing delivery programme will recognise Design and Build as a distinct delivery mechanism. Design and Build involves a private builder-developer working with a Local Authority or Approved Housing Body on a development from the outset. Unlike Turnkey developments, a Design and Build Development would be intended from the outset to be for social and affordable housing.

Tenant-In-Situ & Second-Hand Acquisitions

Sinn Féin believes that meeting the need for social and affordable housing involves not just new build and renovation of vacant and derelict stock, but also the acquisition of second-hand properties and private rental properties with tenants-in-situ. Our five-year public housing delivery programme would seek to expand the social rental and cost rental tenant-in-situ schemes. It would also allow Local Authorities to purchase vacant one bed, four and five bed and disability adapted second hand properties as per the current rules.

The tenant-in-situ scheme would be reformed to speed up the decision-making process and purchase times. The requirement for the tenant to have received a notice of termination will be replaced with a letter from the landlord outlining an intention to sell.

The cost rental tenant in situ scheme will also be reformed to make it easier to access by allowing prospective cost rental tenants to apply directly to the Housing Agency, rather than the Local Authority as is currently the case.

Sinn Féin would also require the Residential Tenancies Board to write to all tenants in receipt of evictions notices, setting out the various schemes available including the social and cost-rental tenant-in-situ schemes. Over five years Sinn Féin would fund the acquisition of 7,500 second hand homes. 1,000 of these would be vacant one bed, four bed and disability adapted properties for households in emergency accommodation or at risk of homelessness.

The remaining 6,500 would be social and cost rental tenant-in-situ acquisitions. While tenant-in-situ is a demand led scheme, Sinn Féin believes that this demand will decline over time, as a result of the increased delivery of public housing, the reform of the private rental sector and the stabilisation of private house prices. Therefore, our funding commitment provides for 1,800 tenant-in-situ acquisitions in year one, declining by 250 a year to year five.

The table below sets out the acquisition's targets from 2025 to 2029.

Table 5: Tenant-In-Situ Acquisition targets 2025 to 2029

Scheme	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Total
Vacant	200	200	200	200	200	1,000
Tenant-in-Situ	1,800	1,550	1,300	1,050	800	6,500

Long Term Leasing

Sinn Féin would immediately end the policy of long-term leasing for social housing delivery. This would mean that no new long-term leases would be entered into as part of our public housing programme.

Separately we would explore the feasibility of transferring the existing 11,000 long term leased stock into publicly owned social housing.

Community Housing Trusts

Sinn Féin's public housing delivery programme will see a significant increase in delivery by Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies. We would also put Community Housing Trusts on a statutory footing. Such trusts, made up of individuals who qualify for public housing under the social and affordable criteria, could apply for long term leases on public land to deliver co-operative or self-organised architectural developments. The conditions attached to the use of the land would be the same as with other public housing projects.

Credit Union lending

Sinn Féin would engage with Credit Unions, including public sector credit unions, to explore the feasibility of the sector providing development capital for the delivery of public housing.

Credit Union finance could be mobilised to finance the Community Housing Trust sector or public sector employers to deliver affordable housing on their own land, or general investment in the delivery of affordable rental and purchase homes.

Cultural Workers Housing and Studio Space Pilot Project

In Government Sinn Féin would develop a pilot programme in conjunction with Local Authorities and the Arts Council to deliver public housing with appropriate studio space for cultural workers. The scheme would be funded through the public housing capital programme with the same eligibility criteria for social and affordable housing. The homes would come with appropriate studio space suitable for a diverse range of cultural forms.

Increasing Part V

Sinn Féin in Government would continue to operate Part V of the Planning and Development Act to increase the delivery of social and affordable homes. We would introduce legislation within the first six months of taking office to increase the portion of a development to be covered by Part V to an amount up to 30% of the development as determined by local housing need.

Direct Labour Pilot Scheme

Sinn Féin's public housing delivery programme will be built in the main by private building contractors. However, in Government Sinn Féin would pilot the delivery of public housing through direct labour. The pilot would operate within a mid-size Council, aiming to deliver a portion of their public housing with tradespeople employed directly by the Council.

The purpose of the pilot would be to examine, in real time, the benefits of the use of directly employed labour within Councils to delivery public housing. The outcome of the pilot project would determine whether other Councils would adopt a similar approach in future years.

A Public Building Contractor

In Government Sinn Féin would support the four Dublin Local Authorities to establish a publicly owned building contractor. With funding from the Strategic Infrastructure Fund, such a company would operate in the commercial market, competing for public works contracts.

The value of such a company would be to ensure that profits generated from the building of public homes would be recycled back into the public housing budgets by way of dividends to the company's shareholders, i.e., the four local authorities. Such a company could also play a positive role in ensuring meaningful competition, particularly for larger and more complex residential developments.

Tenant Empowerment and Participation

Sinn Féin is committed to ensuring that tenants in Local Authority and Approved Housing Bodies estates are provided with the opportunity to become active participants in the decisions about the management and development of the communities in which they live. Tenants are best placed to understand the needs and requirements of the built environment in which they live.

In Government Sinn Féin would fund a multi annual programme to ensure that tenants are supported to become active participants in local decision making. Starting on a pilot basis the programme would take a human rights-based approach to allow for meaningful tenant participation on issues such as but not exclusive to: estate regeneration, environmental management, estate management, and estate enhancement.

Longer Term Reforms

In addition to the immediate reforms of public housing delivery Sinn Féin believes that there is also a need for longer term strategic reviews of several key aspects of public housing provision. These include a review of the Approved Housing Body Sector and Public Housing funding.

Approved Housing Body Sector Review

Given the importance of the Approved Housing Body sector in the delivery of social and affordable housing in Government Sinn Féin would initiative a review of the sector the aim of which would be to develop a 20-year strategy. This would be done in partnership with the Approved Housing Body sector, their tenants, funders, and other relevant partners.

Public Housing Funding Review

The capital and current funding mechanisms for the delivery of social and affordable housing have developed from the 1930s to the present. There are very clear challenges, particularly for Local Authority social housing provision.

In Government Sinn Féin would initiate a comprehensive review of all aspects of funding the delivery, management, and maintenance of public housing provision, building on the recommendations of the Housing Commission. The review would aim to make recommendations for the longer-term reform of public housing funding to ensure long term sustainability of the delivery of new housing stock and proper maintenance of existing housing stock.

SOCIAL HOUSING

Social Housing Eligibility

Currently social housing eligibility is based on net household income across three bands, adjusted for household size.

Table 6: Current Social Housing Eligibility Income Bands

Areas	Maximum net income limits for a single person and a family of 2 adults and 2 children
Cork City, Dublin City, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Fingal, Galway City, Co Meath, South Dublin, Co Kildare, Co Wicklow	€40,000 - €48,000
Co Carlow, Co Clare, Co Cork, Co Galway, Co Kerry, Co Kilkenny, Co Laois, Limerick City and County, Co Louth, Waterford City and County, Co Westmeath, Co Wexford	€35,000 - €42,500
Co Cavan, Co Donegal, Co Leitrim, Co Longford, Co Mayo, Co Monaghan, Co Offaly, Co Roscommon, Co Sligo, Co Tipperary	€30,000 - €34,500

Sinn Féin does not support the existence of the third lowest band and would amend the eligibility bands as set out below.

Table 7: Sinn Féin’s Proposed Social Housing Eligibility Income Bands

Areas	Maximum net income limits for a single person and a family of 2 adults and 2 children
Cork City, Dublin City, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Fingal, Galway City, Co Meath, South Dublin, Co Kildare, Co Wicklow,	€40,000 - €48,000
Co Carlow, Co Clare, Co Cork, Co Galway, Co Kerry, Co Kilkenny, Co Laois, Limerick City and County, Co Louth, Waterford City and County, Co Westmeath, Co Wexford, Co Cavan, Co Donegal, Co Leitrim, Co Longford, Co Mayo, Co Monaghan, Co Offaly, Co Roscommon, Co Sligo, Co Tipperary	€35,000 - €42,500

The estimated cost of ending Band 3 on current expenditure would be in the region of €2.5m annually on HAP expenditure, using the same calculations used by the Department of Housing when they moved five counties from Band 3 to Band 2 in 2023.

We would also review the bands every two years to ensure that they are reflective of housing need.

Social Housing Delivery

There are currently close to 134,000 households in need of social housing, including those on Local Authority housing waiting lists, and those in the private rental sector subsidised through the Housing Assistance Payment and the Rental Accommodation Scheme.

While no official figure exists for the number of households who join the Council social housing lists each year a preliminary analysis of the Housing Agency’s Summary of Social Housing Assessments 2023 report suggests that the number could be in the region of 8,000 households. Tackling existing and emerging social housing need while ending long term homelessness and the need to sleep rough requires a level of ambition in setting targets.

Sinn Féin believes that at least 82,500 additional social homes can be delivered

during a full term of Government. This would include: new builds, restoring vacant and derelict sites, acquisitions and utilising new build technologies.

In addition to the new build targets the table below sets out additional social housing delivered through acquisition.

Table 8: Proposed Social Housing Acquisition 2026 to 2030

Delivery stream	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
Acquisitions	2,000	1,750	1,500	1,250	1000	7,500

The total combined new build, acquisition and lease to buy social housing targets are set out below.

Table 9: Proposed Social Housing New Build, Leasing & Acquisition 2026 to 2030

Delivery stream	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
New Build	13,500	14,000	14,750	15,750	17,000	75,000
Acquisition	2,000	1,750	1,500	1,250	1,000	7,500
Total	15,500	15,750	16,250	17,000	18,000	82,500

The public housing delivery plan will also include clear targets for each Local Authority for the delivery of specific categories of social housing, to ensure that delivery matches need.

Table 10: Local Authority Housing Need Targets 2026 to 2030

Housing type	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
LA General Needs	5,000	5,500	6,000	6,500	7,000	30,000
AHB general needs	3,450	3,950	4,450	4,950	5,450	22,250
AHB special needs	250	250	250	250	250	1,250
Housing First	500	500	500	500	500	2,500
Age Friendly	1,000	1,500	2,000	2,500	3,000	10,000
Disability	1,400	1,600	1,800	2,000	2,200	9,000
Total	13,500	14,000	14,750	15,750	17,000	75,000

Improving Existing Housing Stock

Sinn Féin believes that public housing landlords must maintain their stock to the highest standards. The state, in particular, has a responsibility to ensure its tenants are living in homes that meet all legal standards.

In Government we would increase funding for the maintenance of existing stock, the regeneration of older inner city flax complexes and the retrofitting of public homes to address both climate change and energy poverty.

Social Housing response maintenance

Sinn Féin would require all Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies to conduct periodic stock condition surveys with estimates for works required to bring properties up to appropriate standards. These surveys would inform an estimate of costs to address legacy issues within existing stock. An initial annual budget of €50million would be provided to begin addressing these legacy issues.

As part of the first round of stock condition surveys Sinn Féin would request the Department of Housing and the Housing Agency to undertake a review of all maintenance funding with a view to ensuring that adequate provision is made for stock maintenance from rents, exchequer funding and a portion of annual savings from HAP and RAS expenditure as reliance on social housing rent subsidies reduces as social housing output increases.

Inner City Flat Regeneration

Within the first six months in Government Sinn Féin would agree an accelerated multi annual inner city flax complex regeneration programme. The current budget of €50m would be doubled to €100m a year for five years to insure an accelerated upgrading of older inner city flat complexes in Dublin City and Cork City.

HAP & RAS

In Government Sinn Féin would have, as a policy objective, the annual reduction in the use of private sector rent subsidies to meet social housing need. Subsidies such as HAP and RAS should be seen as temporary supports while waiting for real social housing provided by Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies. Our ambitious social housing programme would allow for year-on-year reductions in the number of such subsidies and their overall cost to the state.

It is not possible to provide a target for the annual reduction in HAP and RAS tenancies. However, it is possible to estimate the savings that would accrue from any such reduction. The average net cost of HAP tenancies (HAP payment to landlord minus tenants differential rent to Council) is €754pm or €9,048 per year. For every 1,000 tenants that move from HAP to real social housing an exchequer saving of €9,048,000 would accrue.







The savings from a reduction of RAS tenancies would be slightly lower as RAS rents are typically lower than HAP rents. Any savings would have to be adjusted by possible increases in new HAP tenancies where tenants are availing of the discretionary increase (50% above the base rate in Dublin and 30% outside Dublin). Thus, if a reduction in overall HAP and RAS tenancies of the order of an average of 2,500 to 5,000 annually could be achieved that would result in a saving of €22.6m to €45.2m a year.

Social Housing Reform

In addition to delivering the most ambitious social housing programme in the history of the state, Sinn Féin in government would undertake a fundamental reform of social housing legislation.

In the first year of Government, we would introduce a Social Housing (Reform) General Scheme with the intention of having it passed and enacted within 12 months.

Among the issues to be addressed in the legislation would be:

-  Redefining the legal definition of social housing as long-term homes provided by Councils, and AHBs.
-  Redefining social housing supports such as HAP and RAS temporary housing supports.
-  Merging all existing rental subsidies for households on social housing waiting lists into a single scheme, while maintaining Rent Supplement as a social protection support for households above the eligibility for social housing in need of short-term income support
-  Providing for periodic reviews of social housing income eligibility thresholds.
-  Introducing a Social Housing Passport to allow applicants to move from one housing list to another.
-  Removing the prohibition on all pets from AHB tenancies and aligning their pet policy with the relevant Local Authority.

- 🏠 Reviewing and reforming the tenant purchase scheme to bring in into line with the affordable purchase scheme to ensure that such properties are retained within the public housing stock.
- 🏠 Ending the 12-month income assessment for social housing eligibility and replacing it with a six-month income assessment with flexibility for significant changes in personal circumstance.

Social Housing and the Residential Tenancies Board

Sinn Féin believes that all tenants should have access to the legal protections of the Residential Tenancies Act and the services of the Residential Tenancies Board. It is neither equitable nor sustainable for Local Authority social housing tenants to be excluded from these protections and services when private rental tenants, cost rental tenants and Approved Housing Body social tenants have access to the RTB.

In Government Sinn Féin will bring a phased process of bringing all social housing tenancies under the remit of the Residential Tenancies Act and Residential Tenancies Board. The timeline for this phased approach will be agreed following consultation with the Residential Tenancies Board, the City and County Managers Association depending on available resources.

This will ensure that all tenants have the same rights irrespective of landlord and in turn Local Authorities will have the same access to RTB services on issues such as antisocial behaviour and breach of contract as private landlords and AHBs.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Defining Affordability

Sinn Féin believes that affordability with respect to housing costs must be defined against income. Social housing rents are set at a percentage of net disposable household income, ranging from 10% to 20% depending on the individual Local Authority differential rent scheme. Current cost rental schemes operated by Approved Housing Bodies and the Land Development Agency apply an affordability test of 33% of net disposable income. The Local Authority Home Loan has a 33% of net disposable income affordability criteria as part of their mortgage assessment.

Sinn Féin believes that for those on or below average incomes, housing costs in affordable cost rental should be no more than 33% of net income and less where possible, while mortgage costs in affordable purchase should be no more than 33% of net disposable income.

Making Cost Rental Affordable

Cost rental public housing is based on the principal that the rent paid covers the cost of delivering and maintaining the home over a set time period. In other European Countries this would typically be up to 60 years, after which the rent paid generates a surplus that is then reinvested in the public housing stock. Such long-term financing, coupled with the delivery of new build homes on public land by not-for-profit agencies would ensure that the cost rents are also affordable rent, i.e., no more than 33% of the take home pay of the renter.

Cost rental is intended for those whose incomes are above the threshold for social housing and who need medium to long term rental. Some cost rental tenants will rent for life. Others will rent while saving to buy an affordable purchase or private purchase home. Others will require cost rental on retirement.

The first generation of cost rental homes being delivered here by Approved Housing Bodies and the Land Development Agency deviate from the standard cost rental model in a number of ways. Firstly, delivery to date has been via forward purchase agreements with private sector developers. This means that all in development costs include layers of market pricing and profit taking that would ordinarily not be included in not-for-profit delivery models of cost rental.

Secondly rent setting mechanisms are based on a discount from equivalent new market rents not full cost recovery. Both AHBs and the LDA require entry level rents to be 25% below market rents and no more than 33% of the tenant's net disposable income. Thus, high all-in development costs and high new private sector rents mean that a significant capital subsidy in the form of state equity (Cost Rental Equity Loan for the AHBs and Sustainable Tenancy Affordable Rent for the LDA and other operators) must be made to ensure the rent setting criteria are met.

However even with such a subsidy, as high as €150,000 per unit in some cases, entry level rents are only affordable under the schemes criteria for those at the upper limit of eligibility. In 2023, Government had to increase the upper eligibility limit to €66,000 net in Dublin and €59,000 net elsewhere to ensure they would have eligible applicants.

Initially cost rents for a two-bedroom property were being set at €1250 per month. However, overtime as all in development costs increased rents for two-bedroom properties have edged up beyond €1400 per month and in some schemes are approaching €1600 per month. While this may be 25% below new market rents,

it is higher than market rents for existing renters.

There is also a growing cohort of people who are not eligible for social housing but also deemed ineligible for cost rental because the rent would be more than 33% of their take home pay. Significantly no cost rental has been delivered to date in Dublin City where all in development costs, particularly in the private development sector, are highest.

A recent LDA cost rental scheme, purchased from Cairn Homes in City West, in the suburbs of Dublin highlights the worrying upward trend of cost rents. The table below sets out the rents:

Table 11: Example of LDA Cost Rental Scheme

Unit Size	Per month	Per year	Net salary	Gross salary
1 bed	€1,390	€16,680	€50,040	€75,000
2 bed	€1,580	€19,960	€56,880	€85,000
3 bed	€1,750	€21,000	€63,000	€100,000

The social housing eligibility thresholds in this area range from a net income of €40,000 for a single person to a net income €45,000 for a couple with three children. As entry level cost rents continue to rise a growing number of households will be left ineligible for the very form of housing that was intended to meet their needs.

Can cost rents be brought down?

The straight answer is yes, there are several policy measures that would bring cost rents down. The first is a shift from the current 40-year financing model available to Approved Housing Bodies (30 years fixed at a low rate and final 10 years variable) to a 60-year fixed rate financing model. Such long-term finance could be provided at low fixed interest rates it would significantly ease the level of entry level rents.

This could be achieved in a number of ways:

- 🏠 Through securing 60-year fixed rate market finance via the National Treasury Management Agency.
- 🏠 Through refinancing the existing 30-year Housing Finance Agency fixed rate finance at the same or a similar interest rate. Where such refinancing involved a higher rate for the second 30 years Government could put in place a contingency fund for Local Authorities and Approved

Housing bodies to fund the rate difference without impacting on rents. This would be repayable by the Local Authorities or Approved Housing Bodies once the principal loans were paid down in full,

- 🏠 Increasing the level of capital subsidy, depending on the scheme to reduce the overall level of borrowing, and resulting interest.
- 🏠 Shifting from the purchase of expensive private sector developments in favour of not-for-profit developments by Local Authorities and Approved Housing bodies on public lands and the use of Part V for cost rental.
- 🏠 Greater use of new building technologies at scale.
- 🏠 Allowing larger Local Authorities such as in Dublin to form a single cost rental delivery body to achieve economies of scale, efficiencies in procurement and reduce development risk and in turn financing costs.

The combination of the above policies would reduce development and finance costs in turn allowing for reductions in entry level cost rents, making them more affordable.

Delivering Affordable Cost Rental

In Government Sinn Féin would seek to mobilise all of these policy levers to ensure that costs rents were affordable rents and that all eligible households would be able to access cost rental schemes at or below 33% of their net disposable income. This would involve seeking to bring cost rents down to an average of €1,000 per month and if possible, even lower.

Cost rental homes would be delivered by Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies with the Housing Agency operating a centralised portal through which all cost rental tenancies are advertised in addition to being advertised on the web sites of individual social housing landlords. The household income limit eligibility criteria for affordable cost rental would remain at €66,000 of net income in Dublin and €59,000 outside of Dublin. This would be reviewed annually.

In Government Sinn Féin would reform the affordable cost rental scheme to make it easier to operate and to ensure genuine affordability. Both Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies would operate the same financing and rent setting model as set out below:

- 🏠 The Department of Housing would provide a Public Housing Fund contribution to cover all costs related to land. This would include land acquisition, site servicing and utility connections. Development levies would be waived. The level of contribution would also be set at a rate to ensure genuinely affordability. The payment would range between

30% and 55% of the all-in development cost whether new build or acquisition, allowing variance for more expensive and less expensive developments.

- 🏠 Where Approved Housing Bodies access the Public Housing Fund for the delivery of cost rental homes the state would retain ownership of the land and lease it out free of charge in perpetuity to the social landlord on condition that the homes remain cost rental. Any change to the status of the homes would require the consent of the Local Authority.
- 🏠 The Local Authority and the Approved Housing Bodies would continue to borrow the remainder of the financing from the Housing Finance Agency, the European Investment Bank or other low-cost lender.
- 🏠 While currently interest rates for public housing providers typically range between 3.3% and 3.75% fixed for 30 years with an assumed 5% rate the final 10 years, The Department of Housing working with the NTMA would attempt to secure longer term finance as already set out.
- 🏠 Management and maintenance costs would be set at an average of 25% of rental income.
- 🏠 Local Authorities and Approved Housing bodies would, over the five-year housing plan, shift from higher cost turnkey purchases to lower cost own development on public land and Part V developments.
- 🏠 Such developments would increasingly use new building technologies which, as they reach economies of scale, would result in reduced construction and development costs.
- 🏠 The Department of Housing would work with the four Dublin Local Authorities to develop a single cost rental delivery vehicle to achieve economies of scale, efficiencies in procurement as well as lowering risk, while delivering low cost finance.

Below are a number of indicative examples based on the most recent all-in development cost details for a range of public housing projects delivered in 2023 as set out by the Minister for Housing in Parliamentary Question's on 3rd of January 2024 and 20th March 2024.

They demonstrate what can be achieved with the right combination of longer-term low interest finance, lower land costs and a greater focus on direct delivery over turnkey purchases.

Table 12: Scenario 1 - Lower development cost public development on public land

	Public Housing Fund contribution at 35% & 60 year finance at 3.52%	Public Housing Fund contribution at 40% & 60 year finance at 5%
Average Local Authority (SHIP) Construction	€309,700	€309,700
Public Housing Fund contribution	€108,395	€123,880
Loan amount	€201,305	€185,820
Monthly loan repayment over 60 years	€672.06	€815.08
Monthly 25% of total rent management charge	€223.75	€223.75
Rent per month	€895.81	€1,038.83

Table 13: Scenario 2 - Medium cost Part V development with land discount

	Public Housing Fund contribution at 39% & 60 year finance at 3.52%	Public Housing Fund contribution at 45% & 60 year finance at 5%
Average AHB Part V	€332,700	€332,700
Public Housing Fund contribution	€131,395	€149,265
Loan amount	€201,305	€182,435
Monthly loan repayment over 60 years	€672.06	€800.24
Monthly 25% management charge	€223.75	€223.75
Rent per month	€895.81	€1,023.99

Table 14: Scenario 3 - Expensive private sector turnkey will full development costs

	Public Housing Fund contribution at 52% & 60 year finance at 3.52%	Public Housing Fund contribution at 52% & 60 year finance at 5%
Average South Dublin Local Authority turnkey	€424,200	€424,200
Public Housing Fund contribution	€222,895	€222,305
Loan amount	€201,305	€201,305
Monthly loan repayment over 60 years	€672	€883.01
Monthly 25% management charge	€223.75	€223.75
Rent per month	€895,81	€1,106.76

These scenarios are based on average costs including one, two and three bed properties in lower and higher cost sites and locations. They demonstrate that with longer term finance and lower all-in development costs rents can be brought down significantly from current cost rents delivered by AHBs and the LDA. Even in the most expensive development cost scenario involving higher cost turnkey developments, lower rents are achievable.

However, as all in development costs move beyond €350,000 the level of Public Housing Fund contribution becomes prohibitively expensive. While this may be appropriate in a small number of developments, it would not be sustainable for large volumes of affordable cost rental on an ongoing basis.

Across the range of development types, the Public Housing Fund contribution will vary in order to maintain the entry level rent at a genuinely affordable level. The average Public Housing Fund contribution is expected to be €150,000 per home.

Affordable Purchase

Sinn Féin believes that it is both possible and necessary to deliver homes at prices that working people can actually afford. This means selling homes to eligible purchasers at prices between €250,000 and €300,000 depending on size and location. This price range would be kept under periodic review and adjusted as appropriate based on factors including the movement of wages, construction sector inflation and interest rates.

The purchaser would own the home, have the same rights as private purchasers to alter the property and the right to pass the property on to their children and subsequent generations. The affordable purchase price is achieved by separating the cost of land and site servicing from the cost of building the home, with additional criteria to ensure affordability. In essence under Sinn Féin's affordable purchase scheme the state pays for all land related costs and retains ownership of the land.

According to the Society of Chartered Surveyors Real Cost of New Housing Delivery 2023, land related costs including siteworks and development, utility connections, land, land finance range from 29% of all in development costs in the Greater Dublin Area to 25% in the Northwest Region.

According to the Department of Housing (PQ 322, 30/1/2024) public housing on public land has varying land costs from "no cost to land purchased at market value" cost. And land costs on Part V homes is valued at existing use rather than market value.

This means that the cost of land across developments will vary depending on whether the development is delivered on existing public land, newly purchased public land, Part V discounted land or Turnkey market value land. Sinn Féin estimates that the per unit cost of the Public Housing Fund contribution to cover all land related costs will range from 20% to 33% of all in development costs. The level of contribution would also be set at a rate to ensure affordability. Development levies, estimated at 1% of all in development costs by the Society of Chartered Surveyors of Ireland, will also be waived.

Initial eligibility criteria for the scheme will be up to a gross household income limit of €90,000, reviewed annually. The scheme will be open to all applicants who neither own a home at the time of purchase or whose savings and access to mortgage finance would be insufficient to purchase a home on the open market.

Mortgage finance would be accessed under the existing rules from commercial mortgage providers, Credit Unions or Local Authority mortgages, the details of which would be provided following consultation with these lenders.

The purchaser buys the home, at or near the full cost of construction. The purchaser is given free indefinite use of the public land subject to a legally binding covenant providing them, their children and subsequent generations free indefinite use of the public land subject to two primary conditions.

These conditions which relate to the onward sale and use of the property are necessary to ensure protection of the wider taxpayers' interests, which is important given the significant size of the public subsidy involved, and the imperative of ensuring a supply of affordable homes into the future.

The property cannot be rented out in the private rental sector. This condition is necessary to guard against exploitation of the scheme designed to promote

owner occupation by would be investors. If the owner has to live elsewhere for an extended period for work or family reasons, then the property can be rented out temporarily as part of the local authorities cost-rental scheme.

If the owner sells the property, they will be obliged under the term of the covenant to sell it to another eligible affordable purchaser at the future affordable purchase price determined by factors, such as wage inflation and home improvements.

Where no affordable purchaser is forthcoming the Local Authority will have the first option to purchase the property for social or cost rental homes. Where no such need exists, the property may be sold on the open market subject to the agreement of the Local Authority, with the owner receiving the future affordable purchase price and the Local Authority recouping any additional gain.

Other conditions relating to responsibility for structural repair, issues of accessing nursing home schemes such as Fair Deal will also be provided for in the scheme.

The benefit of affordable leasehold purchase approach is twofold. Firstly, it reduces the initial purchase price of the home. Secondly it ensures permanent affordability for subsequent buyers. The aim, over time, is to create a market of privately owned, privately traded and permanently affordable homes. This market will be separate from and parallel to the private for purchase market.

Below are a number of scenarios based on average all in delivery costs for public housing in 2023 provided by the Minister for Housing by way of Parliamentary Question (PQ 322 30/1/24 & PQ 11684 20/3/24). As more up to date information on all in cost of public homes becomes available from the Department of Housing the level of Public Housing Fund contribution will be adjusted accordingly.

Table 15: Scenario 1 - Local Authority direct delivery

Average Local Authority (SHIP) Construction	€309,700
Public Housing Fund contribution at 20%	€61,800
Development levy at 1%	€3000
Affordable purchase price	€244,900
Minimum gross household income of purchaser	€55,350

Table 16: Scenario 2 - Approved Housing Body Part V

Average AHB Part V	€332,700
Public Housing Fund contribution at 25%	€83,000
Development levy at 1%	€3300
Affordable purchase price	€246,400
Minimum gross household income of purchaser	€55,440

Table 17: Scenario 3 - Higher Cost Dublin Local Authority Delivery

Average Dun Laoghaire (SHIP) construction	€388,000
Public Housing Fund contribution at 30%	€116,000
Development levy at 1%	€3400
Affordable purchase price	€268,600
Minimum gross household income of purchaser	€60,435

Table 18: Scenario 4 - Higher Cost Dublin Turnkey

Average South Dublin County Council turnkey	€424,200
Public Housing Fund Contribution at 33%	€139,000
Development levy at 1%	€4200
Affordable purchase price	€281,000
Minimum gross household income of purchaser	€63,225

These scenarios are based on average costs including one, two and three bed properties in lower and higher cost sites and locations. The minimum gross household income of the purchaser is based on the current central bank mortgage lending rules.

Across the range of development types, the Public Housing Fund contribution will vary depending on the land and site related costs and the affordability objectives of Government policy. We estimate the Public Housing Fund contribution, based on the most up to date information from the Department of Housing, would range from €65,000 to €145,000 per home, with an average cost of €100,000 per home.

The Cost of Sinn Féin's Public Housing Programme

The full cost of Sinn Féin's public housing programme over five years, adjusted for inflation, would be €39bn. This includes a total cost of €37bn for the new build programme and €2bn for the acquisitions programme.

This would be provided for through €25.3bn in voted capital expenditure from the exchequer and €13.7bn in non-voted expenditure comprising of loans from the Housing Finance Agency and other sources. The annual average expenditure would be €7.8bn of which an average of €5.1bn would be from the exchequer and €2.7bn would be borrowing from the HFA and others.

The basis of Sinn Féin's calculations are the most up to date costings from the Department of Housing and Department of Children on social, affordable, and modular housing delivery, adjusted for inflation. The average Public Housing Fund contribution of €103,000 per affordable purchase homes and an average Public Housing Fund contribution of €155,000 per affordable cost rental home.¹

¹ PQ on new build housing delivery costs: [Local Authorities – Tuesday, 9 Apr 2024 – Parliamentary Questions \(33rd Dáil\) – Houses of the Oireachtas](#)

PQ on acquisition costs: [Departmental Data – Wednesday, 8 May 2024 – Parliamentary Questions \(33rd Dáil\) – Houses of the Oireachtas](#)

PQ on modular delivery costs: [International Protection – Tuesday, 9 Apr 2024 – Parliamentary Questions \(33rd Dáil\) – Houses of the Oireachtas](#)







We would work with the private residential development sector with the aim of **delivering** an annual average of **23,000 owner occupier homes, 7,000 private rental homes** and **5,000 self-build homes**. If achieved, this would mean a total of **25,000 self builds, 35,000 private rental** and **115,000 owner occupier homes** over five years.

04.

PRIVATE HOMES

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In addition to delivering the most ambitious public housing programme in the history of the state, a Sinn Féin Government would also introduce a series of reforms that would activate the private residential development sector to fund and build 175,000 private homes to buy and rent over five years. These reforms would support the building of private homes to high standards while reducing developer risk and cost, resulting in a moderation of prices for new homes and new rental stock.

Private Purchase Homes

Sinn Féin's approach would also seek to reverse the trend in recent years towards increased private rental sector supply, in favour of owner occupation. Dr Lorcan Sirr of TUD Dublin has produced an independent analysis of stamp duty transactions since 2017 (see table below). What his analysis shows is that despite an overall increase in new home completions since 2017, the number of homes being sold on the market to individual buyers has remained relatively static in real terms but falling significantly in percentage terms.

Table 19: Stamp Duty Transactions 2017 to 2023

Year	Total new residential completions by year	Sold to owner occupiers	Sold homes as % of total completions	Sold apartments as % of total apartment completions	Sold houses as a % of total house completions
2017	14,267	7,312	51%	37%	82%
2018	17,861	8,538	48%	38%	70%
2019	21,097	8,679	41%	21%	63%
2020	20,533	7,092	35%	11%	56%
2021	20,516	7,549	36%	11%	65%
2022	29,716	9,049	30%	6%	55%
2023	32,695	8,911	27%	7%	52%

Importantly Sirr's analysis includes government funded Affordable Purchase Scheme homes from 2022 and 2023 in his stamp duty transaction figures. When these are excluded the number of new homes for sale on the open market in those years are 8,726 in 2022 and 8,412 in 2023.

The current Governments housing plan includes an annual average private home delivery target of 18,300 homes a year out to 2030, with an average annual breakdown of 11,800 owner occupier and 6,500 private rental homes. To date they have missed their owner occupier target significantly. Government cannot

control private sector output in the same way as it can with public sector output. However, Sinn Féin wants to see a rebalancing of private sector output in favour of homes for sale to owner occupiers.

To achieve this in Government we would work with the private residential development sector with the aim of delivering an annual average of 23,000 owner occupier homes, 7,000 private rental homes and 5,000 self-build homes. If achieved, this would mean a total of 25,000 self builds, 35,000 private rental and 115,000 owner occupier homes over five years as set out in the table below.

Table 20: Proposed Private Dwelling Construction 2025 to 2029

Owner Occupier	13,000	18,000	23,000	28,000	33,000	115,000
Private Rental	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	7,000	35,000
Self-build	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	25,000

Property Price Inflation

Since 2016 the price paid for new homes has increased by 55%. The rate of inflation for purchases by non-occupiers has been even higher at 102%. Inflation on the purchase of new homes by former owner-occupiers was 33%, and for first time buyers was 38%.

Residential property price inflation is not just a function of the supply of and demand for new homes. It is also driven by interest rates, land values, supply chain challenges, affordable public housing delivery and Government policy interventions including rent regulation and developer subsidies. A range of factors have been driving the price of new homes since 2016. Some external factors, such as Brexit, Covid, the war in Ukraine and ECB interest rate rises, are beyond Governments control. However, other factors, such as rental yields and demand side subsidies, Government can control.

Sinn Féin believes that Government's failure to apply rent regulation to new build-to-rent stock and the low-to-no tax regime for institutional investors has increased the price paid for new rental properties which in turn has driven up rents.

Sinn Féin also believes that the introduction of so-called Help To Buy scheme in 2017, its expansion in 2020 and the introduction of the high risk First Home shared equity scheme in 2022 have contributed to inflation in the price of private homes to buy.

The private residential development sector is one of the most heavily subsidised industries in the state. The average Help to Buy subsidy, according to a 2022

report from the Oireachtas Parliamentary Budget Office report was €24,000. The current average First Home Scheme equity loan is €66,000. When combined this represents a subsidy to the developer of €90,000. The maximum such subsidy in Dublin can be as high as €150,000 for an apartment priced at €500,000.

Other subsidies to developers including the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund, The Croí Cónaithe Cities fund and the Development Levy and Utility Connection Waiver scheme have not resulted in any reduction in the price of new homes.

Constant attempts by Government to narrow what developers call the viability-affordability gap, with direct and indirect subsidies, have had the opposite effect. Government policies that chase that viability-affordability gap have in fact widened it significantly. Despite the existence of significant subsidies to private residential developers, the supply of new homes to buy on the market has not been increasing. Indeed, it has been decreasing as a percentage of overall completions.

Activating the Private Residential Development Sector

Sinn Féin's believes that there is a better way to support the delivery of private residential homes to buy and rent, which would increase supply and reduce costs at the same time.

Our approach in Government would be to introduce a range of policies and resources that would shorten the residential development time frame, de-risk the private developer, and in turn reduce development costs.

Planning Reforms

In Government Sinn Féin would ensure that our planning authorities have the resources to make good quality decisions in a timely manner. Currently Local Authorities have a planning staff deficit of approximately 500. An Bord Pleanála has a staff deficit of at least 50.

In Government Sinn Féin would undertake an immediate review of the staffing requirements of all planning authorities, taking account of current and future demands, in the context of Sinn Féin's alternative housing plan. This review would be concluded within six months and result in a five-year work force plan, with appropriate resources to ensure that both Local Authorities and An Bord Pleanála are in a position to scale up their operations in line with Sinn Féin's increased housing targets.

Sinn Féin would also increase the number of full-time judges on the High Courts planning and environmental panel to five to ensure that where judicial reviews are taken, they are expedited in a timely manner. This increased level of staffing would be accompanied by a more comprehensive and ambitious series of statutory timelines for all stages of the planning process including pre-planning meetings, further information requests, decisions by An Bord Pleanála and Judicial Review decisions.

Currently standard planning applications for residential development are only subject to statutory timelines at Local Authority decision phase. There are no timelines for pre-planning, further information or appeal or judicial review phase. This means that in many instances a planning application if appealed can take over a year and in some instances even longer. If the appeal is then subject to a judicial review the final grant can take over two years.

The introduction of the Large-scale Residential Development process in 2022 has provided statutory timelines for both the initial decision and appeal stages. This has improved the timeline for decisions for these applications.

These improvements must be applied to all residential planning applications and extended to the judicial review process. Ultimately this is a matter of resourcing. Sinn Féin's proposed timelines are set out below and represent a significant time saving in the final decision timeline across all stages of the planning and court processes:

Table 21: Proposed Planning Decision Times

	Pre Planning meeting	Pre planning opinion	Planning Authority Decision	Further Information decision	Final decision on application	Appeal decision from An Bord Pleanála	Judicial Review decision	Total
Developments of less than 10 homes	As resources allow	As resources allow	8 weeks from submission deadline	Within 2 weeks of submission of information	10 weeks	8 weeks	8 weeks from hearing	26 weeks
Developments between 10 and 99 homes	Within 6 weeks of request	Within 4 weeks of meeting	8 weeks from submission deadline	Within 4 weeks of submission of information	22 weeks	13 weeks	10 weeks from hearing	48 weeks
Large Scale Residential Development	Within 4 weeks of request	Within 4 weeks of meeting	8 weeks from submission deadline	Within 6 weeks of submission of information	22 weeks	16 weeks	12 weeks from hearing	50 weeks

It is important to remember that the vast majority of planning applications are approved by the Planning Authority (87% in 2022). Only a small percentage are appealed to An Bord Pleanála (7% in 2022) and an even smaller number being subsequently challenged in the courts (4% of appeals, 0.28% of applications)

Use it or lose it planning permission

In return for more efficient planning decision timelines, it is reasonable to expect that developers commence and complete their permissions within the approved timeframe. Sinn Féin will introduce legislation to allow Planning Authorities to apply commencement and work progress timelines as part of any grant of permission.

We will also empower Planning Authorities to withdraw planning permissions where in their opinion such conditions are not met and the landowner or developer is unable to justify why the development has not commenced. Arising from the streamlined planning decision timelines set out above the default position of a Planning Authority will be that any development consent granted within these timelines is assumed to be viable. Any delay in commencement or reasonable progress of development in such cases will be assumed to be speculative and result in withdrawal of the permission. This proposal will not apply to one off or self-build developments.

Zoning Reforms

As with planning permissions, Sinn Féin believes that residential zoning should be made on a use it or lose it basis. At the start of each Development Plan review, the previous zoning set out in the outgoing Development Plan should not be assumed as guaranteed in the new draft plan. Currently development plans run for six years. The Governments Planning and Development Bill 2023 proposes extending this to 10 years with a mid-term review.

In Sinn Féin's view, where a landowner or developer has not either sought planning permission on land zoned residential or where planning permissions have not been activated, the land's residential zoning should not be automatically carried over in the development plan review.

Rather the landowner or developer will be required to justify why the land in question was not subject to development during the lifetime of the previous development plan. Where legitimate grounds can be provided, such as legal challenges, economic conditions etc, then continued residential zoning can be considered. However, where landowners and developers cannot provide any legitimate grounds for not developing their sites, they must understand that this failure to develop land will result in the removal of the residential zoning.

During any such review, landowners, or developers with non-residentially zoned land contiguous to undeveloped zoned land, or in other suitable locations as per the core strategy of the Development Plan, will be invited to apply for residential zoning to ensure that any de-zoning for failure to develop land will be matched, where possible, by a corresponding residential zoning, to ensure an appropriate supply of residentially zoned land.

Existing Use Value Compulsory Purchase Orders

Where a landowner or developer is refusing to develop land with residential zoning and/or planning permission the state should have an option to compulsorily purchase the land at existing use value. This land would then either be used for public housing or sold on the open market to a developer who will develop the site for private housing.

Such compulsory purchases could only occur where an appropriate master plan was in place (such as an SDZ, UDZ or CDS) and subject to appropriate legal safeguards.

This will ensure that land determined by Development Plans and associated master plans as appropriate for residential development is either developed by the landowner or developer or is transferred to an appropriate public or private actor for the purposes of development.

Development Finance

Development finance, particularly for SME residential developers is too expensive. Whether secured from mainstream banks, equity investors or the states lender Home Building Finance Ireland, the cost of capital is simply too high. The consequence is either to render much needed residential schemes unviable or unaffordable. This problem is particularly acute outside Dublin and the Greater Dublin Area.

Sinn Féin believes that there is a need to refocus Home Building Finance Ireland (HBF) as a lender of more competitively priced development funding for the SME building sector, where the high cost of mainstream finance creates viability or affordability risks to the development in question.

In Government, Sinn Féin would amend the legislation underpinning HBF to provide for a specific loan product for this sector, based on a viability and affordability assessment. A lower cost finance will be provided where such an assessment concludes that higher cost mainstream finance renders the development unviable or unaffordable. The scheme would operate on a similar basis to the Local Authority Home Loan in order to be in compliance with EU state aid rules.

Site Servicing

Funding and delivering enabling infrastructure and site servicing can also be a significant barrier to commencing and completing residential development. This challenge led Cork County Council and the Strategic Investment Fund to create the Housing Services Infrastructure Company. HISCo, in collaboration with private developers, forward funds and manages the delivery of enabling infrastructure and site servicing.

Private developers pay for these services on a commercial basis but at the latter end of the development process. This removes the up-front funding requirement from developers, reducing their borrowing requirements and helping to activate sites more quickly. HISCo has proved to be a considerable success in a number of key projects providing access roads and other enabling infrastructure unlocking residential development sites.

In Government Sinn Féin would scale HISCo up to provide such services on a wider basis to assist the delivery of much needed private residential homes.

Compact Development Site Support Programme

Sinn Féin supports the concept of compact urban growth in our cities and towns. The benefits of transforming brownfield or commercial sites into higher density, mixed use developments providing public and private housing are many.

Such developments contribute to urban renewal, facilitate greater use of existing buildings, ensures new development is built in proximity to existing services and amenities all of which assists in reducing the carbon footprint of new residential development.

However, Sinn Féin also understands the very significant barriers to the development of inner urban brownfield or commercial sites. These include the risks inherent in securing appropriate zoning and planning and the costs of site preparation and servicing.

There is also a potential for speculative land acquisition or hoarding of sites that have the potential for higher density inner urban development. To address these barriers and risks in Government Sinn Féin would introduce a Compact Development Site Support Programme.

This programme would involve a package of supports provided by a Local Authority, HBFi and HISCo to private residential developers who want to develop higher density mixed use schemes on inner urban sites where compact growth is desirable. These supports will be provided on a commercial basis by the public authorities but in a manner that significantly de-risks the development process,

reducing time and cost. The programme would involve the designation of sites by the Local Authority as Compact Growth Sites, including where such designation was initially proposed by a landowner or potential developer.

Zoning on the site would be conditional on an in principal agreement between the developer and Local Authority on the parameters of the scheme in terms of use, density, and tenure mix. The Local Authority would masterplan the site with appropriate consultation with the landowner and the wider public.

The formal planning application process would then be reduced to a single stage without recourse to an appeal to An Bord Pleanála, as is currently the case with Strategic Development Zones. This would not result in any reduction in public participation as formal opportunities to engage with both the master planning stage and the formal planning application would be available. On foot of planning, enabling infrastructure and site servicing would be provided by HISCo on a forwarded funded commercial basis.

Developers would also have access to Home Building Finance Ireland's competitive funding product in recognition of the very significant viability and affordability challenges that would exist on such projects without these supports. This combination of zoning, planning, site servicing and funding supports would both reduce the development timeline and a significant level of development risk. This in turn would reduce the all-in development cost for the residential component of any such development. For a developer to be able to avail of this package of supports there would be a requirement that such all in development cost reductions would result in price reductions for the purchase or renting of the residential units.

This would be determined through an open-book engagement between the Local Authority and developer throughout the course of the support programme.

The Compact Development Site Support Programme would operate on sites ranging from small to large as determined by the City or County Development Plan, local housing need and developer interest.

In its design and implementation, the support programme must be flexible and nimble to allow timely development on sites that have a significant potential to deliver compact growth.

Priority Urban Development Zones

Sinn Féin supports the reform of the Strategic Development Zone master planning process into Urban Development Zones.

The proposed changes to the SDZ process provide for greater flexibility. However as with the current SDZs, the process is likely to remain slow and coordination

between landowners, developers, Government Departments, and semi state utilities will continue to be challenging.

There is a need to review and reform the process of implementing SDZ and future UDZs and in those locations deemed by Government as a particular priority to put in place more effective mechanisms for implementing development at pace.

Sinn Féin believes that there is a need to designate certain Development Zones as priorities which in turn would enable them to leverage additional resources such as the Urban Regional Development Fund or to make a priority call on the existing capital programmes of semi state utilities, public service providers such as transport and education and Local Authority Development Levies.

The North Quays in Waterford City, South Dock in Cork City, Poolbeg West in Dublin City and City's Edge between Dublin City and South County Dublin are prime examples of where a prioritisation would lead to greater resource allocation and inter agency coordination, ensure delivery in a timelier fashion.

In Government Sinn Féin would legislate to give Government, in partnership with Local Authorities the power to designate such sites as Priority Development Zones. The aim would be to accelerate the delivery of residential and other development on these sites.

Multi-Annual Turnkey Framework Agreements

As detailed in Chapter Three the delivery of Sinn Féin's ambitious public housing programme will require the continued use of turnkey forward purchase agreements with private developers.

One of the down sides of the use of turnkey agreements is a reduction in the number of private homes developed for the owner occupier market.

Sinn Féin's proposal for the creation of multi annual framework agreements with large private developers for the delivery of turnkey social and affordable housing is that it will also increase the overall quantum of private homes for the private market.

As detailed in chapter 3 this can be achieved by the state stepping in with development finance for its portion of the development. In turn the private developers own development capital is freed up to be invested in increasing the overall volume of new homes.

Targeting the Development Levy & Water Connection Waiver

The current development levy and water connection waiver is an expensive and untargeted measure. Large profitable residential developers or institutional investors in the private rental sector do not need such a waiver. In these sectors the waiver does not increase development, nor does it lead to lower prices. Rather it simply boosts the profits of developers and speculative funds who are already making a significant return on their investment.

However, there is a case to be made for the application of such a waiver for SME developers, serving the owner occupier market, with viability and affordability challenges or on inner urban higher density schemes that face similar challenges. In Government Sinn Féin would reform the current waiver scheme to ensure that it is only available for developments where it is required. This would be reviewed annually.

The detail of the waiver would be published following consultations with Local Authorities, Uisce Éireann, and the Irish Home Builders Association. It would be regularly reviewed to ensure that the funding contributing to increased supply and reduced costs.

Stamp Duty Exemption

Sinn Féin would introduce a stamp duty exemption for First Time Buyers, so that if you are buying your first home you will pay no stamp duty on a property valued at €450,000 or less.

Phasing out the Help to Buy Scheme

The Help to Buy scheme was introduced in 2017. To date almost €1bn has been spent on this scheme. Two independent reports have been highly critical of the scheme. The Oireachtas Parliamentary Budget Office (OPBO) report in 2021 and the Department of Finance commissioned Mazars review in 2022 highlighted that a third of those who received the funding did not need it and half of all Help to Buy funding went to this cohort of buyers. The Mazars report recommended phasing out the Help to Buy scheme.

More broadly many economists and housing policy experts argue that the scheme contributes to house price inflation. Sinn Féin agrees with both the criticisms of the Mazars and OPBR reports and shares the concerns of others that it puts upward pressure on house prices. In light of this Sinn Féin in Government

would phase out the Help to Buy scheme, as we are ramping up the delivery of affordable purchase homes.

On assuming office, we would introduce legislation setting out the phased ending of the scheme. We would immediately raise the Loan to Value Ratio to 85%, with a maximum relief of €30,000. The rate of relief would then be reduced by €6,000 in each subsequent budget, to €6000 in 2029. The scheme would close to new applicants in December 2029.

The timeline for phasing out the Help to Buy scheme would be as follows:

Table 22: Timeline for Phasing Out Help to Buy Scheme

2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Raise Loan to Value ratio to 85% and reduce the relief to a maximum of €30,000	Reduce the relief to a maximum of €24,000	Reduce the relief to a maximum of €18,000	Reduce the relief to a maximum of €12,000	Reduce the relief to a maximum of €6,000 and close scheme to new applicants in December 2029

Ending the First Home Scheme

The First Home Scheme was introduced in 2021 following significant lobbying from the developer and institutional investment lobby. It is closely based on a shared equity scheme in Britain called the Help to Buy scheme (not to be confused with the Irish Help to Buy scheme).

There is a significant body of research from the London School of Economics empirically demonstrating the negative impact of the UK equity scheme on house prices in high demand areas.

During the passage of the legislation underpinning the scheme in the Oireachtas in 2021 it was sharply criticised by both the Economic and Social Research Institute and the Central Bank.

Indeed, concerns from the Central Bank resulted in a significant delay in the schemes introduction and a significant reduction in the volume of equity that the scheme would acquire over time. Sinn Féin is fundamentally opposed to this scheme. It will push up house prices and create significant risk for home buyers.

On this basis in Government Sinn Féin would immediately close the scheme to new applicants. Existing applicants with approvals under the First Home scheme would have those approvals honoured.

Ending other subsidies

In addition to Help to Buy and the First Home scheme there are a number of other subsidies to developers including the Local Infrastructure Activation Fund and the Croí Conaithe Cities fund. In Government Sinn Féin would undertake a review of these funds with a view to determining the best course of action with respect to contracts signed to date and uncommitted expenditure. During the review no new contracts for these funds would be entered into.

The guiding principle with respect to existing contracts and uncommitted expenditure would be to ensure, in as much as is possible, that such contracts and uncommitted expenditure are used to deliver genuinely affordable homes under the various affordable housing schemes set out in Chapter Three.

PRIVATE RENTAL HOMES

Regulating the Private Rental Sector

The private rental sector grew rapidly and dramatically during both the Celtic Tiger era and the subsequent financial crash. In 2005 there were 83,983 private rental tenancies registered with the Residential Tenancies Board. By 2015 this number had increased by 280% to 319,609 tenancies.

Much of this growth was in the form of single property landlords, with a small portion made up of commercial landlords of small to medium sized portfolios. Within the single property landlord sector there is significant variance as to how people became landlords. Many purchased investment properties during the Celtic Tiger era with buy-to-let mortgage tax reliefs, often to supplement their pension income or lump sum on retirement. Others inherited a family home and opted to rent it out. A further group never intended to become landlords but were trapped in negative equity and forced to rent their first home out while they traded up to a larger rental property or second home as their family size grew. This cluster of single property landlords are generally semi-professional in nature often underestimate the volume of work involved in maintaining a rental property.

The return of positive equity to the market in 2016, the age profile of much of this sector, and the fast pace of regulation in the private rental sector since 2016 has led to a steady flow of single property landlords from the market. Registrations with the RTB witnessed a 22% decline from 2015 to 2022, with 246,453 private rental tenancies registered in that year. Thus, according to the RTB 73,156 rental tenancies left the sector during the seven years from 2016 to 2022.

However, the 2022 Census contradicts this data as 330,632 households stated that they were living in the private rental sector on census night. This is a difference of 84,179 tenancies when compared by the RTB registration data for the same year. Some of this difference can be explained by illegal non-registration with the RTB, those renting from family who are not required to have their tenancy registered with the RTB and tenants living in long term leasing tenancies managed by AHB but declaring them as private rentals on their census form. However, this would not account for all of the 84,179 gap between the RTB and CSO figures. Both organisations are currently undertaking data analysis to better understand this gap.

Whatever the outcome of that research the private rental sector is contracting as a portion of single property landlords are selling up. This is confirmed by the steady volume of Notices of Termination's issued by landlords and the large volume of these notices that are issued on grounds of sale.

While a portion of this loss of rental stock is being compensated for by the arrival of institutional investors in the private rental sector, this new sector remains a relatively small portion of the rental market and is heavily concentrated in Dublin.

Expensive and Insecure

During all of this time rents in the private rental sector, for both existing and new tenants, have been rising. Since 2011, average new rents have increased by 110%, with Dublin City rents rising from a monthly average of €996 in 2011 to €2,098 in 2023. State-wide average new monthly rents have increased from €760 to €1,594.

Since 2023, the RTB now publish a rent index for both new and existing renters. During 2023 new rents had increased by 9% while existing rents increased by almost 6%. A third of private rental tenancies are made up of social housing tenants subsidised via Rent Supplement, the Rental Accommodation Scheme, the Housing Assistance Payment and Long-Term Leasing. 10% of these tenancies are in receipt of the higher rate of HAP for people at risk of or exiting homelessness.

Tenants often pay a significant top up bringing their rent to 33% of the net disposable income, paying significantly more than their counterparts in Council or AHB tenancies. Research from the ESRI has also highlighted the large proportion of renters, not in receipt of state subsidies, who have high housing costs. Private renters, particularly those living in Dublin and those on lower incomes can be paying as much as 40% of their disposable income on private rents.

This causes particular problems for workers approaching pension age living in the private rental sector. The 2022 census recorded an 87% increase in private renters over the age of 55, compared with the previous census. As the gap between existing rents and new rents remain significant and with up to 20,000

notices of termination issued in 2023, insecurity and affordability for a very significant number of renters is a serious challenge.

Thresholds 2024 renters' sentiment study found that 74% of those surveyed struggle to pay bills after paying rent; 53% feel insecure in their homes; 42% say their rents rise in the previous 12 months; and just 6% were in the private rental sector by choice.

Too many people are being forced to live in the private rental sector when it clearly does not meet their housing needs. Meanwhile poor regulation and bad policy has created a sector that is semi-professional, insecure and increasingly expensive.

Reforming the Private Rental Sector

Sinn Féin believes that we need a stable private rental sector that provides homes for people who want to live in that sector, either long term or while transitioning to social, affordable or private owner occupation homes.

We want to see a private rental sector that works for both tenants and landlords. That provides tenants with adequate, secure and affordable homes while enabling landlords to make a reasonable return on their investment.

Such a private rental sector would be smaller, as a percentage of the overall housing stock, than which is currently the case. It would also be more professional, less reliant on semi-professional or accidental landlords.

That does not mean an end to the single-property landlord or the commercial landlord with small portfolios. Rather, it means landlords understanding that their rental property is not only an active investment but they as landlords are providing a professional service.

In Government we would introduce reforms that would reduce the size of the private rental sector as a percentage of the overall housing stock, support the increased professionalisation of the sector while strengthening security of tenure, enforcing minimum standards, and improving affordability.

Sinn Féin would amend the Residential Tenancies Act to make RTB determinations legally enforceable. This would remove the current requirement for either the landlord or tenant who secures an RTB determination in their favour from having to go to court to have that order enforced. Instead, court action would have to be taken to prevent any such order from being enforced. We would also remove the outright prohibition on pets in both private rental tenancies and approved housing bodies tenancies and bring pet policies in line with that of the local authorities.

More secure tenancies

In Government Sinn Féin would amend Section 34 of the Residential Tenancies Act to give tenants greater security of tenure. We would remove sale of property as grounds for issuing a termination notice. We would also clarify the grounds on which a notice can be issued where a family member requires the use of the property.

Such grounds would be restricted to the property owners or their children and include grounds where the landlords are at risk of homelessness; where they need the property as their sole residential home including in cases of relationship breakdown or medical need, where they need the property for accessing education.

More affordable rentals

In Government Sinn Féin would introduce a three-year emergency ban on rent increases for all existing and new tenancies. This would apply to new tenancies in existing rental stock and to new stock to the market. Rents for new stock would be set at the local reference rent, comprised of a harmonised RTB rent index for new and existing rents in a given location and for a particular property type and size.

The emergency ban on rent increases would automatically expire after three years from which point annual rent reviews would be permissible and set against an index introduced by the Minister for Housing by way of regulation. The index would be introduced following consultation with the ESRI, Threshold the IPOA and IPAV, and will include factors such as wages and interest rates. The purpose of the index will be to ensure rent certainty and affordability while avoiding the unsustainable peaks and troughs that have been a feature of the private rental market since the 2000s.

Sinn Féin's ban on rent increases would be accompanied by a fully refundable renters tax credit that would put a full month's rent back into every private renter's pocket. The tax credit would be set at 8.8% of rent paid annually through a refundable tax credit with a minimum payment of €1,000 and maximum payment of €2,000.

Better Standards

In order to improve standards across the private rental sector and to ensure compliance with minimum standards Sinn Féin would introduce a mandatory certification system for landlords similar to BER certs. Landlords would be

required to have their properties independently inspected by the Local Authority every five years. A successful inspection would result in the granting of a Minimum Standards Certification which must be displayed in both the property and when advertising a property for rent.

The cost of the inspection regime would be revenue neutral for the state and would be funded via a €100 charge for each inspection. The inspection regime would be rolled out over four years with 25% of all rental properties being inspected each year, to achieve 100% inspection and certification by the start of year 5.

The mandatory requirement to display certificates would be introduced from year 5 but landlords who have been inspected and provided with their certificated would be required to display them earlier where appropriate.

Deposit Protection

Sinn Féin would commence the Deposit Protection scheme legislated for in 2015 but never introduced. The scheme would be managed by the Residential Tenancies Board and would hold all tenants' deposits for the duration of their tenancies. Claims on the deposit by the landlord or tenant would be managed by the RTB at the end of the tenancy and disputes would be handled in the normal manner.

Reforming tenant in situ

As detailed in Chapter Three, Sinn Féin would continue the social and cost rental tenant-in-situ schemes for the full period of Government. We would remove the requirement for a landlord to have served a notice of termination to be eligible to apply for tenant-in-situ. Rather a landlord could engage with the scheme prior to a notice being issued.

The purpose of the scheme is not simply about preventing people from becoming homeless. It is a valuable way to transfer housing stock from the private rental sector to the social and cost rental sectors.

Our expectation is that the number of landlords issuing vacant possession notices to quit will stabilise and in time reduce, resulting in a lower demand for tenant-in-situ year on year. To meet this demand our housing plan is funded to acquire 6,500 tenant-in-situ tenancies over five years. This would start with 1800 tenant-in-situ acquisitions in 2025 and reduce each year by 250 acquisitions to a final year total of 800 acquisitions in 2029.

In addition to the five-year funding commitment as detailed in Chapter 3 we would streamline the cost-rental tenant in situ process and ensure that both

schemes are properly advertised through the Residential Tenancies Board as tenants are serviced with notices of termination.

Rent to own

Many private rental tenants would like to have the option to buy the rental property in which they live. In many cases the rent being paid is equal to or more than the cost of a mortgage. However, access to mortgage finance is a barrier to such purchases. One possible alternative is the introduction of a rent-to-own scheme where a tenant acquires a property over time. Within three months of taking office Sinn Féin would request the Housing Agency to undertake research into rent-to-own schemes.

The research would look at schemes in existence in Ireland and in other jurisdictions. It would also involve a public consultation with landlords, tenants, their representative bodies, and others to assess the merits and challenges such schemes. The Housing Agency will be asked to make recommendations to Government as to whether such schemes have merit and if so what kind of schemes may best suit an Irish context.

Residential tenancy Board Review

The Residential Tenancies Board has been in operation for 20 years. During that time, it has grown significantly in terms of functions, powers and staffing. In Government Sinn Féin would conduct a comprehensive review of the RTB with a view to improving its efficiency and effectiveness.

Particular attention would be paid to the operation of the dispute resolution functions, enforcement, policy formulation and support services to both landlords and tenants. The review would be accompanied by a work force review leading to an agreed multi annual work force plan to ensure that the powers and functions of the RTB are matched by the appropriate level of staffing.





Sinn Féin has committed

to providing **100% redress** to all those homeowners living with Celtic Tiger era **building defects** and **defective block homes**. We are also committed to ensuring that **private rental tenants** and **social housing tenants** are **not left living in unsafe homes**.

05.

ADEQUATE HOMES






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In addition to significantly increasing supply and affordability, Sinn Féin's housing plan will also ensure that people have access to safe, secure, and adequate homes. This will require a strengthening of the building control and building product surveillance functions in Local Authorities and a comprehensive redress scheme for those living with building defects.

It will mean providing a pathway for the public and private development sectors to build homes from lower carbon building materials and to reuse existing buildings and building materials. It will involve ensuring that homes are not only well built and sustainable but properly designed to make a positive contribution to the built environment. Importantly it will also mean addressing inequality within the housing system to ensure that those groups most excluded from adequate housing have their needs not only met but prioritised.

Homelessness

Sinn Féin believes that it is possible to end long term homelessness and the need to sleep rough. We fully support the objectives set out in the Lisbon Declaration on Homelessness signed by the current Government in June 2021. That declaration commits the Government to work towards the ending of homelessness by 2030, so that:

-  **No one sleeps rough for lack of accessible, safe and appropriate emergency accommodation.**
-  **No one lives in emergency or transitional accommodation longer than is required for successful move-on to a permanent housing solution.**
-  **No one is discharged from any institution (e.g. prison, hospital, care facility) without an offer of appropriate housing.**
-  **Evictions should be prevented whenever possible and no one is evicted without assistance for an appropriate housing solution, when needed.**
-  **No one is discriminated against due to their homelessness status.**

Achieving these ambitious goals requires a clear plan to prevent people from becoming homeless, to improve the quality of emergency accommodation for those who are homeless and to increase the number of homes allocated to singles, couples and families in emergency accommodation.

Homeless numbers

Currently there is no comprehensive data on the number of people sleeping rough or living in emergency accommodation. Nor is there any reliable data on the number of people without a home of their own but not in emergency accommodation, often called the hidden homeless.

In Government Sinn Féin would immediately reconvene the Homelessness Data Sub Group involving the Housing Agency, Homeless Service Providers and relevant academic specialists. The group would be tasked with agreeing a methodology to provide an accurate count of all those people experiencing homelessness. The group would report quarterly detailing the number of rough sleepers, the number of people in all forms of emergency accommodation and the number of people without a home. The Department of Housing would continue to produce their monthly report of people in emergency accommodation funded by that Department.

Ending Homelessness Action Plan

Within three months of Government formation the Department of Housing will publish a five-year action plan detailing how the objectives of the Lisbon Declaration will be achieved by 2030. The action plan will include clear timelines and deadlines for all actions. The action plan will be produced in consultation with homeless service providers and service users, Local Authorities and relevant academic experts.

The plans will place a strong emphasis on prevention and increased exits from homelessness while improving the quality of emergency accommodation. The consultation underpinning the Ending Homelessness Action will also review and update the Youth Homeless Strategy 2023 – 2025 and extend the timeline of the strategy to 2030.

Prevention

Sinn Féin will immediately reintroduce the temporary emergency ban on evictions where the tenant has done nothing wrong. This ban will be reviewed after 6 months and removed when the numbers in emergency accommodation have fallen significantly.

Landlords will be able to issue notices of termination where there has been a breach of contract or where they need the property for their own principal residence. As detailed in Chapter Three we will extend the tenant-in-situ scheme for five years, funding the acquisition of 6,500 private rental properties with

tenants-in-situ transferring the properties into the social and cost rental sectors.

We will also fund the acquisition of a further 1000 vacant properties over five years, purchasing one bed, four bed and medically adapted homes ring fenced for households at risk of homelessness or in emergency accommodation.

The full acquisition programme is set out below.

Table 23: Proposed Tenant-In-Situ Acquisition targets 2025 to 2029

Scheme	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Total
Tenant-in-situ	1,800	1,550	1,300	1,050	800	6,500
Vacant acquisition	200	200	200	200	200	1000
Total	2,000	1,750	1,500	1,250	1000	7,500

We will also ensure that through a dramatic increase in the delivery of both social and affordable homes the number of households at risk of homelessness is reduced.

Exits from Emergency Accommodation

In addition to reducing the number of people presenting as homeless, Sinn Féin's housing plan will also seek to reduce the number of people in emergency accommodation year on year and reduce the length of time people are in emergency accommodation. To achieve this, we will significantly increase the number of social homes made available for people in emergency accommodation.

We will more than double the number of new Housing First tenancies to 500 each year while introducing greater flexibility in the eligibility assessment for the scheme to allow a wider range of people access Housing First.

We will double the number of social housing allocations to homeless service allocations from both casual relets and new builds from 2025 to 2027. These allocations will be made in accordance with the Local Authorities schemes.

Based on the number of such allocations in the last 12 months this would mean a commitment to allocate 3400 Council and AHB homes each year from 2025 to 2017 to homeless service allocations. This would then be reduced as the numbers in emergency accommodation reduces. We will also use emergency planning and procurement powers and new building technologies to deliver 10,000 age friendly homes in small, well designed infill developments within existing Local Authority estates.

These homes will be used, in the first instance, to end homelessness amongst the over 55s in a single year. The remaining allocations will be made to existing Council and AHB tenants looking to right size. In turn their larger homes will be ringfenced for families with children in emergency accommodation and at risk of homelessness. In this way we will utilise a dedicated stream of age friendly social housing to allow a more efficient use of existing Council stock which will in turn be used to reduce homelessness.

The combination of these three streams will provide up to 26,500 exits from homelessness over five years as set out below.

Table 24: Proposed Steams for Emergency Accommodation Exits

Scheme	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	Total
Housing First	500	500	500	500	500	2500
Homeless Allocations	3400	3400	3400	2400	1400	14,000
Emergency supply	1,000	1,500	2,000	2,500	3,000	10,000
Total	4,900	5,400	5,900	5,400	4,900	26,500

Alongside increased allocations of social homes through these three streams, all those in emergency accommodation will have access to a dedicated place finders service to ensure, where possible, exits into the private rental sector are also being secured.

The enhanced place finders service will not only include those in Department of Housing funded emergency accommodation but also Department of Justice funded domestic violence refuge accommodation, people with refugee status or leave to remain trapped in Department of Children funded IPAS accommodation and those in homeless hostels not in receipt of any state funding.

Ending the need to sleep rough

As the number of people in emergency accommodation reduces each year and the cost of emergency accommodation falls homeless service providers will be funded from these savings to improve and upgrade what will over time become a smaller but higher quality emergency accommodation sector.

This will allow for the phasing out of shared emergency accommodation and ending the use of hotel and B&B emergency accommodation. While there will always be a need for high quality emergency accommodation for single people and families these will be provided by the not-for-profit homeless services sector

and Local Authorities where appropriate.

Savings accruing from the reduced need for emergency accommodation will also be redeployed to fund tenancy sustainment programmes as agreed with Department of Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform on an annual basis.

Housing for people with disabilities

The Housing Strategy for Disabled People was published in January 2022. As the six-year strategy will reach its half-way point in January 2025, Sinn Féin believes that a comprehensive review of its impact to date would be timely.

To ensure that the review is open and transparent, Sinn Féin in Government would request the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage to lead the review. This would take the form of a number of public hearings and a committee report to the Minister.

This report along with the recommendations of the Housing Commission would inform an extension of the Housing Strategy to 2029 to cover the full term of the new Government.

In addition to updating and extending the strategy Sinn Féin's housing plan would make a number of immediate changes to ensure the housing needs of people with disabilities are met.

Our public housing programme will ensure that more than 10% of all new social and affordable homes to be suitable for people with a disability including wheelchair liveability. Each Local Authority public housing delivery plan will be required to include a detailed housing needs demand assessment including an assessment of the type and number of new homes for people with disabilities required.

We will also initiate a comprehensive review of Part M (Section 3, Access and Use) of the Building Regulations 2010. The purpose of the review would be to amend Section 3 to ensure that it provides for an appropriate number of full wheelchair liveable homes, rather than the current requirement covering just wheelchair visitable housing.

As part of our wider planning reform and the move towards a more evidence-based planning system, as detailed in the next chapter, we would work with the public and private residential development sectors to better integrate the needs of people with disabilities into the planning process. The aim would be to ensure that over time all new housing developments would have an appropriate minimum number of homes designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities.






Sinn Féin would also double funding for the housing adaptation grants to €50 million a year. We would also complete and publish the Department of Housing's review of the grant ensuring that it duly considered issues such as eligibility, thresholds and grant limits.

Age Friendly Housing

In 2019 Government published Housing Options for Our Ageing Population – A Policy Statement. The final report of the Implementation Group was published in 2022. While some Local Authorities have started to introduce age friendly housing developments as part of their housing plans there is a need for a greater focus on ensuring the needs of our ageing population are mainstreamed into both public and private housing provision.

As part of Sinn Féin's alternative housing plan, each Local Authority's housing delivery programme will include an assessment of need for age friendly housing in their administrative area and set out how this will be delivered. Specific funding for a dedicated stream of age friendly housing will be provided to meet the needs of 10,000 households in social and affordable housing who want to right-size and to end homelessness for those over 55.

Our commitment to increase the Housing Adaptation Funding will also allow more people to remain in their own home living independently. In addition to these specific measures, in Government Sinn Féin would also develop and publish a comprehensive Housing Strategy for Older People. The strategy would examine the challenges facing and needs of our aging population, whatever type of housing they are accommodated in. It would also specifically address the five key policy actions of the Housing Commission recommendation number 75, which are:

-  **Facilitate older people to live in their own homes and communities.**
-  **Increase the availability of age friendly homes.**
-  **Enable rightsizing through increased investment in age friendly homes.**
-  **Develop a dedicated policy response to the issue of bridging finance to enable rightsizing.**
-  **Support the adoption of Universal Design to meet the specific needs of older people.**

The strategy would be published following consultation with the public, older persons advocacy organisations and the Oireachtas.

Traveller Accommodation

The Traveller Accommodation Expert Review report was published in July 2019. While some of its recommendations have been implemented, many have not. Sinn Féin supports the implementation of the report and in particular those recommendations specifically highlighted by the Housing Commission Recommendation Number 73 related to the planning and delivery of traveller specific accommodation.

In Government Sinn Féin will implement the recommendations of the report and increase the annual funding allocation from within the overall social housing capital budget. We will also require Local Authorities to have clear annual targets for the delivery of new culturally appropriate Traveller accommodation with legally binding implementation sections added to their Traveller Accommodation Programme.

We will also invite the original authors of the 2019 Expert Report to produce and publish an independent assessment of the implementation of their recommendations within 12 months, including an assessment of the recommendations introduced from 2019 to the end of 2024.

Building Control & Building Defects

In Government Sinn Féin not only wants to see 300,000 new build homes delivered in five years, but we want to ensure that these homes fully comply with building regulations and building product regulations.

Sinn Féin has committed to providing 100% redress to all those homeowners living with Celtic Tiger era building defects and defective block homes. We are also committed to ensuring that private rental tenants and social housing tenants are not left living in unsafe homes due to the various defects scandal.

Given that the cost of dealing with these legacy defects will run into billions of euro it is incumbent that we also ensure that this can never happen again. This means putting in place a world class building control and building products surveillance regime.

Sinn Féin remains committed to the implementation of the 2017 Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government report Safe As Houses.

Building Control & Consumer Protection Agency

In Government Sinn Féin would transform the National Building Control Office from a function of Dublin City Council to a fully independent Building Control and

Consumer Protection Agency, similar to the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety Authority. This would require increasing the number of full-time staff at the Agency from its current allocation of 5 to a total of 20. We would aim to do this over two years.

In addition to the Head Office team of 5, there would be three regional teams covering the Northern/Western region, the Southern/Eastern region and the Midlands region. Each team would have an Executive Professional (i.e. an engineer, with experience and/or qualifications in construction and construction materials) and 4 other professionals working in that region.

Functions of the Building Control Agency

Sinn Féin envisions the role of the Building Control and Consumer Protection Agency to evolve over time through an increase in staff, strengthening of the Local Authority Building Control teams funded through developer certification fees and the merging of related state agencies.

The initial functions of the Agency would include:

- 🏠 Supporting the development of the Building Control and Building Product Surveillance functions of Local Authorities.
- 🏠 Conducting independent Building Control and Product Surveillance inspections and enforcement actions as appropriate.
- 🏠 Hosting and management of the Building Control Management System.
- 🏠 Producing and publishing data, research and policy advice on issues relating to building control and building product surveillance.
- 🏠 Hosting the Construction Industry Register.
- 🏠 Independently coordinating reviews and amendments to building standards, regulations and technical guidance documents.
- 🏠 Reviewing the Safe as Houses report and recommending to Government actions for legislative and policy reform to further strengthen the building control system.
- 🏠 Providing a one stop shop for the public impacted by issues relating to building control and building products, including information and advice service related to building defects and defective building materials.

One of the most important recommendations of the Safe as Houses report was to move to a fully independent inspection building control regime. This can be

achieved within the existing certifier system by breaking the link between the developer and the certifier.

Under the management of the Building Control and Consumer Agency responsibility for contracting and employing assigned and design certifiers will transfer to the Local Authorities. Developers will continue to pay for the certification but payment will be made to the Local Authority to cover the cost of inspections.

Defects

Sinn Féin believes that the most effective way to address the legacy of Celtic Tiger era building defects and that of defective concrete block and foundations is through the creation of a single Building Defects Resolution Board.





This can best be achieved by transforming the current Pyrite Resolution Board to deal with all of the defect issues. This would initially take place on a non-statutory footing pending enabling legislation.

The new Building Defects Resolution Board would involve a merger of the existing Pyrite Board and those Housing Agency staff currently working on the defective concrete block grant scheme. It would be co-located with the Building Control and Consumer Protection Agency to benefit from the wider engineering expertise of that body and to coordinate their consumer advice functions.

The Board would provide three distinct 'end to end' remediation schemes, one for pyrite in Leinster, one for defective concrete across the state and one for Celtic Tiger era fire safety and building defects in multi-unit developments of apartments, duplexes and houses.

It would also administer the interim fire safety remediation scheme established in December 2023.

All of the remediation schemes would work on the same basis providing those impacted by defects with equality of treatment. This would involve:

-  Adhering to the principal of 100% redress.
-  Providing an end-to-end scheme managed by the agency in consultation with the owner, with a self-build opt-out where appropriate at the same cost to the state.
-  Prioritizing principal private residences, social housing and private rental homes.
-  Procuring professional services and building contractors to achieve economies of scale and properly manage costs.

This will require amendments to the 2022 legislation underpinning the defective concrete block grant scheme to transform it into an 'end-to-end' scheme similar to the pyrite scheme currently operated by the Pyrite Resolution Board. It will also require the speedy conclusion of the review of Industry Standard 465:2018 to ensure that the scheme can include foundations and all deleterious materials as guided by the science.

In order for remediated properties to fully avail of Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland energy efficiency grants a protocol will be put in place between the Building Defects Resolution Board and SEAI to allow the retrofitting works to be done in tandem with the remediation work.

There will also be a need to fast track new legislation for the wider fire safety and building defects redress scheme while expediting the interim fire safety scheme based on best practice as recommended by the Local Authority Fire Service allowing for flexibility on the funding of essential fire safety upgrades along-side defect remediation. The cost of any such upgrades will be borne by the Owners Management Company and the homeowners and reasonable arrangements will be made for those OMCs who do not have sufficient sinking funds to ensure that no delay to essential fire safety works take place.

Funding Remediation

All of this will require a significant multi annual funding commitment from the exchequer. Sinn Féin is committing at least €200 million a year over five years for the remediation schemes.

However, we remain committed to the principal of supplementing this public funding with a levy on industry including the banks, insurance, quarries and construction sector. The taxpayer cannot be left with the full bill for defects which were in large part created by industry.

The design and rate of any such levy will require careful consideration in order to mitigate any risk of inflation on building materials, new home prices and insurance premiums. The details of the levy will be announced early in the first year in office following consultation with Department officials and relevant stakeholders.

Non-Principal Residences

Sinn Féin is acutely aware of the large number of non-principal private residential buildings impacted by defective concrete and building defects. These include rental properties, holiday homes, community facilities, commercial and agricultural premises.

While remaining committed to prioritising principal private residences in Government we would ask the Building Defects Resolution Agency to undertake a comprehensive survey of all buildings impacted by defects. This will inform Governments consideration of possible options to assist building owners remediate these properties.

A Public Inquiry

We will also consult with the Attorney General to establish the best mechanism to ensure full accountability for those responsible for the various defect's scandals. This may take the form of a public inquiry to establish the truth of what happened, hold those responsible to account and to give a voice to all those people whose lives have been impacted by building and building product defects.

The Property Services Regulatory Authority and the Multi Unit Development Act

In the context of addressing the legacy of building defects in multi-unit developments and in recognition of the considerable challenges faces by Owners Management Companies Sinn Féin in Government will undertake a comprehensive review and reform of the legislation and architecture surrounding multi-unit developments.

This will include:

- 🏠 Transferring responsibility for the Property Services Regulatory Agency (PSRA) and the Multi Unit Development Act to the Department of Housing.
- 🏠 Placing the PSRA on a statutory footing and providing it with powers to enforce standards on OMC and Property Management Agents.
- 🏠 Over time increasing its functions to provide greater support and training for OMCs.
- 🏠 Undertaking a comprehensive review of the MUD Act with recommendations for legislative reform.
- 🏠 Establishing an independent regulator for Owners Management Companies, initially on a non-statutory footing pending legislation, similar to the process for establishing an Approved Housing Body Regulator.

The statutory PSRA and OMC Regulator will be co-located with the Housing Agency as is the case with the AHB regulator.

Low Carbon Homes

The built environment is the fourth largest source of carbon emissions and a major contributor to climate change. To date much of the public debate has focused on the energy efficiency of and energy sources for buildings. There is now a need to place as much focus on reducing the volume of embodied carbon in the built environment. This means addressing the carbon emissions arising from what we build, where we built it and the materials used in construction. This can be achieved in four ways:

- 🏠 The renovation and reuse of existing buildings and existing building materials.
- 🏠 Positively incentivising a shift to low carbon building technologies.
- 🏠 Phasing out the use of high carbon building materials to the maximum extent possible.
- 🏠 Promoting compact residential growth and proximity to employment, services and amenities in cities, towns and villages and country side areas.

In Government Sinn Féin will undertake a consultation with all relevant stakeholders and produce a 10-year plan providing a pathway to the delivery of low carbon homes. The plan will be consistent with our International, European and domestic legal requirements to reduce carbon emissions by 2030 and 2050.

The Low Carbon Homes Transition Plan will include the following areas:

- 🏠 An agreed industry wide methodology for measuring the whole life carbon content of all building materials.
- 🏠 A timeline for phasing in and phasing out of building materials based on their whole life carbon content.
- 🏠 Amendment of Technical Guidance Document B – Fire Safety of the Building Regulations setting out the conditions for use of timber-based building systems in high density buildings.
- 🏠 Empowering Planning Authorities to refuse applications that involve unnecessary demolition or to place conditions on a grant of permission restricting elements of proposed demolition.

- 🏠 Empowering Planning Authorities to attach conditions on grants of permission for reuse or recycling of existing building material.
- 🏠 Development Plans to include policy on reuse of existing buildings, the demolition of existing buildings and the incorporation of whole life carbon measurement.
- 🏠 Promoting greater use of Transport Orientated Development in the National Planning Framework, City and County Development Plans and the planning process more generally.
- 🏠 Incentivising the use of low carbon building material by incorporating whole life carbon measurement into public procurement for public housing developments.
- 🏠 Creating stand alone multi annual framework agreements for low carbon new building technology contractors for public housing developments.
- 🏠 Greater use of vacant and derelict homes and properties in the delivery of public housing.

Making the transition to low carbon building technologies and a low carbon built environment is not only an environmental necessity, it is a real economic opportunity. Government policy and in particular public procurement must actively support the growth of locally based designers and manufacturers of low carbon building technologies.

As part of the Low Carbon Homes Transition Plan the Department of Housing will work with the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment, Enterprise Ireland and others to support public and private enterprises designing and manufacturing low carbon new building technologies.

Architecture

Architecture is important and public architecture is particularly important. Good quality design ensures homes are adequate to meet the needs of those who live in them. It also enhances and improves the built environment.

In Government Sinn Féin will champion high quality architecture, and in particular high-quality architecture in the delivery of our public housing programme. We will actively support an approach to the built environment that takes into account context, community, and layout- in order to ensure the best possible outcomes from public housing for people, the local community and society more generally.

To achieve this, we will support Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies to promote and utilise best practice in architectural design and delivery. We will

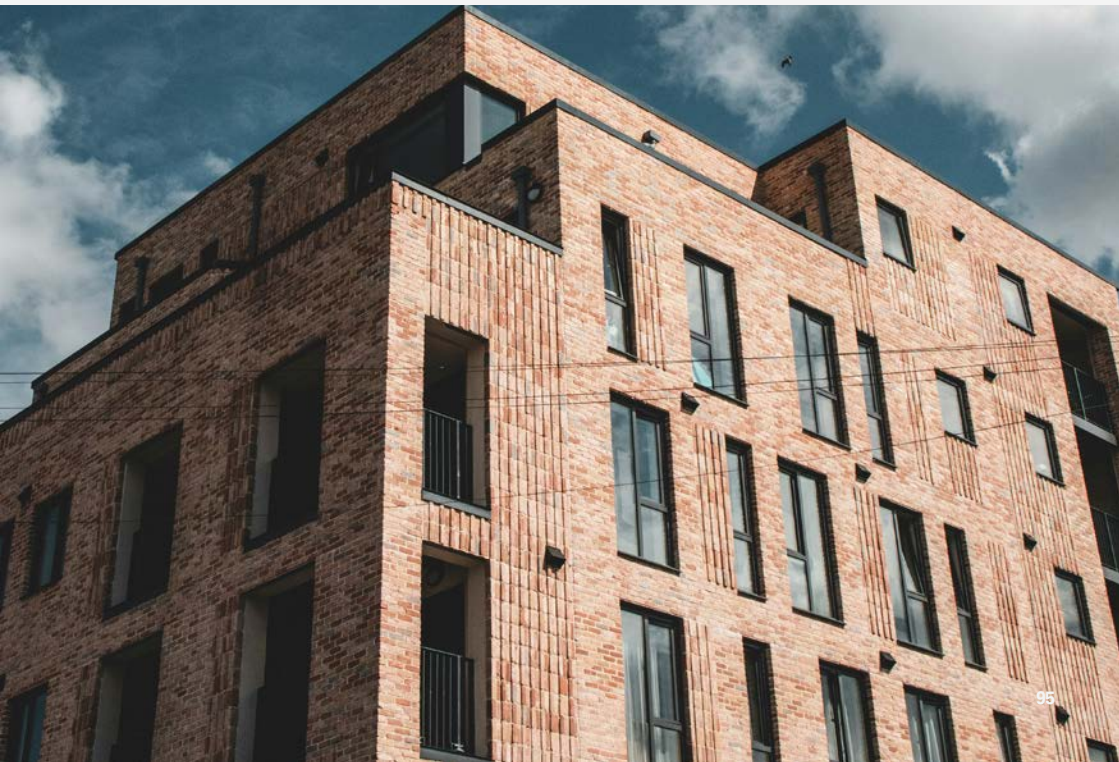
ensure that Local Authorities, either individually or through shared services, have access to architectural services.

We will also promote the use of private architectural practices through regional multi annual framework agreements to address issues identified by Irish architects where smaller and more creative firms are effectively excluded from tendering and procurement processes. These framework agreements will be tiered to support new and emerging architectural practices to secure public work.

As part of our ambitious public housing programme we will support Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies to run open competitions for signature buildings, promoting new architectural responses to contemporary challenges such as universal design and environmental sustainability.

We will also support the Irish Council of Social Housing, the Local Government Management Association and the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland, the Architectural Association of Ireland and others to promote best practice in public housing through a programme of research, publications, exhibitions and an annual award ceremony.

Sinn Féin will also commission the Housing Agency to undertake an independent review of the Places for People, the state's architecture policy launched in 2022, making policy recommendations where appropriate.





Sinn Féin's ambition in
Government is not just to **deliver
homes** but to **build communities**. To achieve
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06.

DELIVERING HOMES

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Ensuring the delivery of 300,000 new homes over five years, including 125,000 public homes will be an enormous challenge. It will require not only significant public and private investment, but significant reform to our planning system, to how we manage land and to how we tackle vacancy and dereliction. It will require using our construction sector work force better while growing that work force.

Most importantly it will require a completely new approach to coordinating the various public, semi-state and private agencies involved in the delivery of critical infrastructure, public services, housing, economic development, and public amenities. It will also need improved data to assist evidence-based policy making as well as training and development in housing policy and delivery for the sector generally.

Housing Delivery Oversight Executive

Sinn Féin supports the key Housing Commission recommendation to create a Housing Delivery Oversight Executive. The Commission's proposal is not to add another layer of bureaucracy to the housing delivery process. Rather their intention was to advocate for a statutory mechanism to bring together those public, semi-state and private bodies currently involved in the delivery of housing and related infrastructure to better coordinate their capital programmes and address blockages in the development process with greater urgency.

In Government, Sinn Féin would establish the Executive immediately on a non-statutory basis while preparing the necessary legislation. It would have a state-wide remit as set out by the Housing Commission to align government housing strategy with infrastructure delivery, support and coordinate a strategic and integrated plan-led approach to housing supply.

In line with the Housing Commission's recommendation for the Executive to prioritise and coordinate the implementation of high yielding Housing Delivery Zones, it would also have a key function in driving priority development zones including existing Strategic Development Zones, new Urban Development Zones or large-scale projects such as City's Edge in Dublin, Poolbeg West SDZ, Waterford North Quays and South Dock Cork.

Sinn Féin would prioritise both the establishment of the Executive and the passage of the legislation following an expedited consultation with all of the relevant stakeholders and the members of the Housing Commission.

There is also a role for similar coordinating structures at a regional and Local Authority level, including a cross-border dimension, to ensure proper coordination of housing delivery and related infrastructure, public services, economic development and public amenity. This will also be incorporated into the legislation.

Planning Reform

Sinn Féin's ambition in Government is not just to deliver homes but to build communities. To achieve this, we need a planning system that enables the public, semi-state and private development sectors to meet the social, economic and environmental needs of our society.


We need a well-resourced planning system to deliver high quality plans at a state, regional, county and local level and to do so at pace. We also need a well-resourced planning system to ensure good quality planning decisions are taken in a timely manner following meaningful public participation.


Much of our planning system works well. The vast majority of planning applications are approved by the Planning Authority (87% in 2022). Only a small percentage are appealed to An Bord Pleanála (7% in 2022) and an even smaller number being subsequently challenged in the courts (4% of appeals, 0.28% of applications)


However, decades of under resourcing of our Local Authorities, An Bord Pleanála and the courts service has meant that too often it takes much too long for planning decisions to be made. Likewise bad legislation by successive Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael governments has created a planning system that is complex and adversarial.


Sinn Féin wants a planning system that works and in Government we would make the following reforms to achieve these ends:


- 🏠 **Agree and fund a multi annual workforce plan for the entire planning system with sanction for over 500 additional staff in Local Authority planning and building control posts, an additional 50 staff for an Bord Pleanála and 3 additional full time planning and environmental judges on the high court.**
- 🏠 **Introduce statutory time-lines for all stages of the planning process and provide a statutory underpinning for high court practice guidelines on timelines for judicial review decisions.**
- 🏠 **Review the statute of the Planning and Development Bill 2023 and only progress those elements of the legislation that we believe will improve the planning system.**
- 🏠 **Amend the Planning and Development Act related to the provision of housing for people with disabilities and for Travellers.**
- 🏠 **Amend the Planning and Development Act that support the transition to a low carbon, built environment.**

- 

Prioritise amendments to the Planning and Development Act to address issues of vacancy and dereliction and introduce a one stop shop to assist the development of over the shop and other commercial premises for residential use in cities, towns and villages.
- 

In order to support people to live and work in rural, island and Gaeltacht communities, publish as a matter of urgency the draft rural planning guidelines, draft Gaeltacht planning guidelines and draft planning guidelines for the islands and undertake a meaningful public consultation on all three with a view to having the agreed guidelines enacted within 12 months. The guiding principle for all three sets of guidelines will be not only to halt population decline in our rural, island and Gaeltacht communities and to support population growth in these communities in a manner that is socially, economically and environmentally sustainable.
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Publish a summary of the report into certain planning matters in Co Donegal known as the Mulcahy Report and implement any recommendations arising from the report as appropriate.
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Upgrade the Housing Needs Demand Assessment tool to allow for more evidence-based planning policy and decision making at all levels including state, local authority, local electoral area and district electoral division.
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Fund a number of participative planning pilot projects through a number of Local Authorities

Table 25 Proposed Planning Decision Times

	Pre Planning meeting	Pre planning opinion	Planning Authority Decision	Further Information decision	Final decision on application	Appeal decision from An Bord Pleanála	Judicial Review decision	Total
Developments of less than 10 homes	As resources allow	As resources allow	8 weeks from submission deadline	Within 2 weeks of submission of information	10 weeks	8 weeks	8 weeks from hearing	26 weeks
Developments between 10 and 99 homes	Within 6 weeks of request	Within 4 weeks of meeting	8 weeks from submission deadline	Within 4 weeks of submission of information	22 weeks	13 weeks	10 weeks from hearing	48 weeks
Large Scale Residential Development	Within 4 weeks of request	Within 4 weeks of meeting	8 weeks from submission deadline	Within 6 weeks of submission of information	22 weeks	16 weeks	12 weeks from hearing	50 weeks

The significant increased resourcing and reform of the planning system will require a multi annual work force plan. In Government Sinn Féin would work with the Local Government Management Agency, An Bord Pleanála, the Irish Planning Institute and the Town Planning Institute and the various third level institutions to put in place a strategy for training, recruiting and retaining the appropriate level of staff in our planning authorities.

Land Management

Delivering 300,000 new homes over five years will require a completely new approach by Government to the management of land. Ensuring that 125,000 of these are public homes to meet social and affordable housing need will also require a significant pipeline of land for our Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies.

To achieve this the state needs an Active Land Management Agency, focused solely on the issue of strategic management of public land, and where appropriate intervening in the private land market to ensure an adequate supply of public land, and to stabilise a private market prone to speculation and instability.

The National Planning Framework, published in 2018, called for the creation such an agency to “co-ordinate and secure the best use of public lands”, and “to drive the renewal of strategic areas not being utilised to their full potential.” However, when the Land Development Agency was established later in 2018 its focus had changed to a state-wide residential developer. One of the consequences of this decision was that the LDA had neither the legal powers nor the singular focus to fulfil its land management function.

In Government, Sinn Féin would transform the Land Development Agency into the Active Land Management Agency. The residential functions and assets of the LDA would be transferred to the Local Government sector, in the form of an off-balance sheet Designated Activities Company owned by the Local Authorities in which the LDA properties are situated.

This will allow the Active Land Management Agency to focus solely on land supply and activation without causing any disruption to the current pipeline of developments and contracts currently underway within the LDA. The Active Land Management Agency will be given comprehensive compulsory purchase order powers including the power to purchase undeveloped residentially zoned land at existing use value as part of a wider reform of CPO legislation.

The immediate actions of the transformed agency will include:

- 🏠 To conduct a full audit of all Local Authority land either zoned for housing or suitable for such zoning and to identify the land deficits in each Local Authority set against the agreed Local Authority public housing delivery plans.
- 🏠 To conduct a full audit of all unused or under used public land held by Government agencies and semi state agencies that could be used to fill some of the land deficits identified in the first audit and make recommendations to Government with respect to the transfer of this land to Local Authorities for the purpose of public housing.
- 🏠 To conduct, in partnership with the Office of the Planning Regulator an assessment of the volume of all residentially zoned land in the existing City and County development plans and to identify deficits that may exist to achieve the overall target of 300,000 new homes by 2029 and make recommendations to the Minister with respect to possible development plan variation requests to the relevant Local Authorities.
- 🏠 To conduct an audit of all residentially zoned land in SDZs and other formal plans that is not being developed with a view to identifying possible sites that could be subject to the Existing Use Value Compulsory Purchase Order procedure.

The Active Land Management Agency will continue to be funded through capitalisation from the Strategic Investment Fund including any uncommitted LDA funding at the time the residential functions are transferred to the Local Government sector. Any committed funds at the time of transfer of the residential functions will be transferred to the Local Authorities DAC.

Where the Active Land Management Agency supplies land to Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies the cost of this land will be covered by the land element of the Public Housing Fund payments from the Department of Housing.

Once the Active Land Management Agency has completed these functions and is in the process of ensuring Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies have the necessary pipeline of land the Agency will have the power to intervene more broadly in the private land market.

They can do this either to acquire land for public housing or to acquire, plan and service land in strategically important locations for commercial lease or sale, where private development is not forthcoming or is unduly speculative in nature. Profits raised from such market transactions will be recycled into their public housing land programme.

It is important that the transition from the LDA to the Active Land Management Agency is as seamless as possible, so that both the existing residential development commitments are not disturbed or delayed and to allow the new Agency to focus on its land functions immediately.

Vacant Homes

The level of vacancy and dereliction across the state is too high. Sinn Féin believes that tackling this must be a central element of any successful housing plan. Addressing the impact of high levels of dereliction and vacancy plays an important role in meeting housing need. It revitalises our cities, towns and villages. It reduces the volume of carbon emissions from the built environment helping us meet our 2030 and 2050 emissions reductions targets.

We need the same level of ambition and investment in bringing thousands of vacant and derelict homes and converting over the shop and other unused commercial buildings into residential use. In Government Sinn Féin will increase and accelerate the re-use of existing vacant and derelict residential and commercial buildings to create good quality public and private homes.

How many homes are vacant?

According to the 2022 Census there were 130,469 houses and 32,964 apartments vacant on census night. These figures do not include holiday homes. The number of vacant homes that were empty in both the 2016 and 2022 censuses was 48,000. There were 33,653 vacant private rental homes in 2022, representing 7% of the rental stock and 1 in 5 of all vacant homes.

There were 17,472 homes classified as 'For Sale' representing 11% of all vacants. There were 23,205 properties vacant for the purpose of renovation representing 14% of the total. And 27,000 properties were recorded that the former residents were deceased.

There were also 11,000 properties vacant because the residents were in a nursing home or hospital and a further 5,018 where they were with relatives.

In addition to the Census data, there are quarterly reports from GeoDirectory, a service created by An Post and Tailte Éireann, that maps residential and commercial property.

Their most recent report identified 81,000 residential properties and 30,000 commercial properties as vacant at the end of 2023.

While this data has some value, it does not give us an accurate picture of how many residential and commercial buildings are vacant and derelict, the reasons

for their vacancy and whether they could be reasonably brought back into use as social, affordable or private homes.

Any credible plan to address the unacceptably high levels of vacancy and dereliction must start with an effective methodology for counting and sharing data on vacancy and dereliction.

A Vacancy & Dereliction Platform

In Government Sinn Féin will establish, as a matter of urgency, an on-line platform detailing all vacant and derelict properties in the state. This platform will be developed by the Department of Housing and GeoDirectory. It will not only include information on the size and location of properties, but distinguish between types of vacancy (sites, dwellings, buildings), conditions of buildings (habitable, minor/substantial repairs needed, derelict/rebuild needed), owners of buildings (individual, commercial, government agency); reasons for vacancy, (probate, fair deal, sale, refurbishment), and land use/zoning categories.

This database will be available to all local authorities, the Housing Agency and other proscribed bodies. It will be the foundation on which the Government vacant and derelict homes strategy will be based.

A Vacancy & Dereliction Unit

In order to ensure a dedicated focus on tackling vacancy and dereliction a Vacancy and Dereliction Unit will be established within the Department of Housing from existing staff. The unit will work with GeoDirectory, the Housing Agency, the City and County Managers Association and where appropriate professional advice from organisations including the Society of Surveyors of Ireland and the Royal Institute of Architects. The Unit will oversee the delivery of the Platform, drive the implementation of the various measures below and report in writing and in person bi-annually to the Oireachtas Housing Committee.

Re-Use Targets

As part of the Department of Housing's five-year public housing delivery programme, Local Authorities will agree with the Department the portion of their delivery programme to come from vacant and derelict buildings.

These targets will be ambitious and will be published as part of the public housing delivery programme and updated annually and as improved data on vacancy and dereliction becomes available.

Funding Reform

Local Authorities will be able to draw on their Public Housing Fund capital allocation both for the purchase and renovation of vacant and derelict properties.

The Department of Housing, in consultation with the Society of Chartered Surveyors of Ireland, will also compile indicative costings for refurbishment to guide local authorities as part of their annual review of the unit cost ceilings for public housing new builds and acquisitions. These will be updated annually.

Vacant and Derelict Property Refurbishment Grant

The Vacant Property and Refurbishment Grant will continue to be administered by Local Authorities. The scheme will be reformed to target those households eligible for affordable housing and payments to registered contractors will be paid directly by the Local Authority in stages as work is completed.

Planning Reforms

Increasing and accelerating the number of vacant and derelict homes brought back into use will require changes to the planning system.

These will include:

- 🏠 Legislating for a one-stop-shop planning and compliance service in every Local Authority to make it as easy and cost efficient for individuals, Approved Housing Bodies and Local Authority Housing Departments to secure the necessary change of use planning, planning for internal alterations and compliance certificates, or where necessary exemptions from certain forms of certification.
- 🏠 Reforming the planning code to require applicants proposing demolition to justify this course of action as the best use of the building, structure or land. Empowering Planning Authorities to refuse requests for demolition where in the opinion of the Authority the reuse of the building or structure is a better option based on both planning and embodied carbon criteria, taking viability into account.
- 🏠 Empowering Planning Authorities to apply recycling conditions to demolition permissions to ensure that where appropriate building material can be reused or recycled, either on the development in

question or elsewhere in the supply chain for building, taking viability into account.

- 🏠 Making it easier for organisations and individuals to apply for and Local Authorities to grant “meanwhile-use” use of existing vacant buildings, with a particular focus on community and cultural activities.

Compulsory Purchase Order Reforms

In Government Sinn Féin would introduce a comprehensive reform of the Compulsory Purchase Order process. The current process is based on legislation passed before the foundation of the state and is universally recognised as too slow and too expensive, particularly for the delivery of much needed critical infrastructure.

These changes along with the introduction of Existing Use Value CPOs will make it easier for Local Authorities and others to acquire vacant and derelict homes and commercial properties to bring them back into residential use.

Taxing Vacancy

While there are legitimate reasons why some properties can be left vacant for periods of time, Sinn Féin does not accept that in the middle of the deepest housing crisis in modern history, tens of thousands of potential homes lie empty for no good reason. In addition to empowering Local Authorities, Approved Housing Bodies and individual purchasers to turn these vacant and derelict properties into homes, we believe that it is necessary to have strong policies in place that disincentivise speculative vacancy.

The current tools in place, namely the Local Authority Derelict Sites Tax and the recently introduced Vacant Property Tax, are poorly designed, badly implemented and do not work. In Government Sinn Féin would transfer responsibility for the Derelict Sites Levy to Revenue. The new Vacant Sites Tax would be set at 7% in year one after the transfer and increase by 50% for each year the site was left vacant.

We would also increase the Vacant Property Tax to 1% of the market value of the property and increase it annually by 50%. Holiday homes, homes in the Fair Deal Scheme and in probate would be exempt. The purpose of these two taxes is not to raise revenue but to incentivise owners of vacant or derelict properties to either use, rent or sell the properties.

Review of Existing Schemes

There are currently a number of schemes in operation aimed at tackling vacancy and dereliction including the Buy and Renew Scheme, the Repair and Leasing Scheme, use of URDF funding and targeted use of CPO.

The Department of Housing Vacant and Derelict Property Unit should undertake a short review of all of these schemes and present recommendations to the Minister to either discontinue or reform the schemes.

Review of Oireachtas Housing Committee report

In May 2022 the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing Planning and Local Government published a report on Urban Regeneration. The report was based on a number of public hearings dealing with how best to tackle vacancy and dereliction. The report made 39 specific recommendations.

As part of their review of existing funding programmes for tackling vacancy and dereliction the Vacancy and Dereliction Unit of the Department will also review the report, recommendations and Joint Committee's hearings on Urban Regeneration and present a report to the Minister setting out their recommendations for possible further action.

Workforce Planning

The number of people working in construction has been rising since 2019 according to the CSO's Labour Force Survey, from 145,000 people in Q1 2019 to 171,000 in Q1 2024. Delivering Sinn Féin's ambitious housing plan will require the construction sector to grow further. However, it is also our view and that of many people in industry that more homes could be delivered by the existing work force if other barriers to delivery were addressed.

The last time the constructor labour force was of a similar size was in Q1 2004, when there were 165,000 people employed in construction. 2003 saw the construction of 68,000 new homes and 2004 saw a further 78,000 new homes built.

While any comparison with 2004 must consider different building standards and a much weaker building control regulation, it is still clear that we should be building more new homes with the workforce that we have.

To achieve this, we need to ensure that barriers identified elsewhere in this plan are addressed including in the approval and procurement of public housing, resourcing and decision-making timelines of the planning system and the

coordination of critical infrastructure. Addressing this issue would allow for both an increase and acceleration of public and private housing delivery by the existing workforce.

We also need to ensure that the builders we have are building what is most needed, namely affordable homes. This means ensuring that planning policy and tax policy are aligned to ensure social, affordable, and private for purchase residential developments get priority over other forms of development such as data centres, aparthotels or high end built-to-rent apartment schemes.

Combining all of this with a significant increase in public investment in social and affordable homes will allow the development trajectory as set out earlier in this plan. However, to get beyond those delivery targets will require a significant increase in the number of people working in construction and related professions. The Housing Commission have made a number of key recommendations in this regard which Sinn Féin believes form the basis for growing a highly skilled and well paid construction workforce.

In particular in Government Sinn Féin would:

- 🏠 **Ensure adequate funding for the third-level education sector to ensure a pipeline of people with high quality construction related qualifications.**
- 🏠 **Attract workers by ensuring construction is a stable and viable sector with high quality employment.**
- 🏠 **Update a forecast of skills requirements regularly.**
- 🏠 **Ensure teachers and guidance councillors are aware of the career options in construction and students have access to information.**
- 🏠 **Substantially increase the number of apprentices in training including in the public sector.**
- 🏠 **Review and increase remuneration levels for apprenticeships, particularly in years 1 and 2.**
- 🏠 **Support apprentices by abolishing fees and increasing travel and accommodation expenses during off-site training.**
- 🏠 **Address backlogs in apprenticeship training to ensure apprentice can qualify on time.**
- 🏠 **Leverage public procurement to increase apprentices recruitment.**

There is also a need to grow the new building technology sector through prioritising low carbon building technology in public procurement and through a dedicated framework agreement for the use of new building technologies in the delivery of public housing.

Sinn Féin also believes that there is a need to tackle the issue of bogus subcontracting in the construction sector. In partnership with trade unions and industry bodies we would set out a five year plan to achieve this specific objective.

Data, Research & Learning

Housing policy should be evidence led. To achieve this we need high quality, reliable and up to date data on all aspects of public and private housing delivery. It is widely recognised that our housing policy data is at best patchy and too often politicised by Government.

To overcome this in Government Sinn Féin would take the following actions to ensure that Government along with the public, semi-state and private sector development sectors have the best quality data, research and training.

- 🏠 **Establish a Housing Policy Data Hub consisting of the Housing Agency, the ESRI, the RTB, the CSO and relevant housing policy specialists from universities to agree methodologies and publish housing related data on a regular basis**
- 🏠 **The Hub would be tasked initially with reviewing and independently publishing data on homelessness, housing commencements, housing completions and private rental tenancies.**
- 🏠 **The Hub would also be tasked with a specific review of all housing related Census questions in advance of the next census and make recommendations on how best to improve this.**

The Hub's work would be produced and published independently of the Department of Housing. In addition to improving the quality of housing data Sinn Féin also believes that it is necessary to improve the educational opportunities for people working in housing policy and delivery as a career.

In Government we would work with the relevant universities to develop post graduate programmes in housing policy and delivery, combining an interdisciplinary approach along with practical experience and international best practice. The post graduate courses would offer Masters and PhD programmes in a number of housing policy and delivery specialisms.





Sinn Féin is committed to ending Ireland's housing crisis. This is our plan to make housing affordable and to bring homeownership within reach of all working people in Ireland.

Sinn Féin will transform housing in Ireland, from how we think about and plan homes, the communities they are part of, to how we build homes. We will ensure that everyone has a home, their own front door.

Sinn Féin is committing to delivering 300,000 new homes, private and public, affordable and to rent over the lifetime of the next government. We are committed to enabling people to build homes in their own communities.

Everyone has the right to housing, and to a safe, secure, affordable home. We will deliver the most ambitious public housing programme in the history of the state.

