



Dublin, 2nd July 2018

Subject: Paris Agreement Targets and Ireland's Housing and Renovation Policies

Dear Minister Donohoe TD,

Dear Minister Naughten TD,

Dear Minister Murphy TD,

The housing crisis and climate change are two of the most imminent challenges facing our country. At least 500,000 new homes must be built by 2040 and Ireland is more than likely to miss its 2020 emission targets. Yet, many of our towns and cities centres are in decline and services such as schools and post offices cannot be maintained as populations move away from these areas leading to a steady downward spiral.

We welcome the publication of the National Planning Framework - NPF, but we believe that these challenges should not be tackled separately. One single, integrated approach is more than ever needed. Our towns and cities centres offer fantastic places to live and work. Yet, too often these centres are blighted with abandoned and underutilised buildings. By bringing these properties back into use through high quality renovations we can tackle several challenges at once. First, we can cut Ireland's buildings and transport related emissions through high quality energy upgrades of these properties. As people living in central locations are usually less reliant on cars, this would also reduce our fastest growing source of carbon emissions, transport. But this approach is not only good for the environment, it is also good for people and the economy. It represents a unique opportunity to make our city, town and village centres more vibrant, to enhance air quality, and to restore the cultural and aesthetic value of these areas.

The journey to achieve this vision will not be easy. It requires the full involvement and commitment of all departments of Governments in supporting and implementing a more holistic approach to renovation. More specifically, we believe that the following actions are needed.

- Large amounts of empty and underutilised properties are evident in most Irish towns and cities. However, comprehensive data on the scale of the issue and on why these properties are vacant/underutilised is missing. Pilot studies should be carried out to elicit accurate data in a couple of chosen areas as it was recently done in the UK by the Building Research Establishment (BRE).

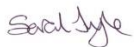
- Retrofitting houses with energy efficiency measures can create warm and healthy homes for residents. But retrofitting whole neighbourhoods, working with local people, ideas and skills, can create healthy sustainable communities. We suggest setting up a task group involving government, industry and local authorities to examine how high-quality whole home retrofits can be used to drive the regeneration of our inner towns and cities.

Each project is different and should reflect both the place and its people. Highly skilled professionals have a key role to play in ensuring we not only achieve more energy efficient buildings, but buildings that meet our communities' accessibility needs, improve occupants' health and wellbeing, are fire safe, and conserve our cultural heritage for future generations. Our members are keen to work with government to promote holistic renovations and ensure the NPF reaches its full potential. In fact, many are already investing time and energy in delivering high quality, innovative renovations.

However, they need clear signals from government that a more holistic approach to renovation is supported, and that building owners are encouraged to seek the highest quality advice.

We believe the government can lead and coordinate in promoting more retrofit-led regenerations and we look forward to discussing this further with you.

Yours sincerely,



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