

Review of Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan

Key Documents:

[Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness \(July 2016\)](#)

[Information Note on Review of Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan \(July 2017\)](#)

Name of Organisation / Respondent:

Irish Green Building Council - www.igbc.ie: The IGBC is an independent non profit inclusive organisation with members drawn from all parts of the value chain, from occupiers, design professionals, contractors, suppliers, academics and public authorities and affiliated with a global network of 70 national councils within the World Green Building Council. This allows us to create workable solutions and tools to deliver transformative change towards a sustainable built environment.

No.	Specific Questions (Optional) / Brief Overview of area of concern	Response
Q.1	Do the objectives set out in the <i>Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan</i> remain relevant and valid - see page 5 of accompanying information note - and are there other priorities we should also be focussing on over the medium term?	Rebuilding Ireland's objectives remain highly relevant and valid. However, quantity should not be achieved at the expense of quality: We need to ensure that all new built and renovated building are high quality developments and that the mistakes of the past in terms of planning and transport are not repeated. To this end, the IGBC with support from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and after extensive research and consultation with the industry has developed the Home Performance Index (HPI) label - Ireland's first national certification system for quality and sustainable residential development. The HPI certificate demonstrates that the home has been designed and constructed with care to minimise environmental impacts, ensure low running costs and enhance the health and wellbeing of the occupants. Organisations involved in certified projects so far have found HPI a useful and simple exercise in gathering together the existing documentation and using it to benchmark against current best practice. Further information on this tool is available at http://homeperformanceindex.ie/ . To promote quality, the Government should encourage all new developments to work towards compliance with HPI indicators.
Q.2	What further action should now be considered in order to prevent homelessness, to find more permanent solutions for those in emergency accommodation and to help individuals and families to remain living in their own homes?	NA
Q.3	What further action should be taken to increase both the scale and speed of delivery of Social Housing? Are there new delivery models or mechanisms to accelerate output?	With the current housing difficulties and the increased demand for social housing, the need for urgent delivery is highly welcomed. Yet, while it is tempting to focus on speed alone, when procuring new dwellings, we believe it is essential to remain focused on the triple bottom line of social, economic and environmental impacts and avoid future costs. For new builds, the HPI tool can be used to streamline and accelerate the procurement and delivery of quality homes. HPI has been developed to simplify for procurers, the process of specifying and encouraging achievement of quality targets in the new residential sector. The set of resources provided as part of the HPI system include the technical manuals and tools to help procure more sustainable dwellings. This pulls together a lot of things in one place with over 30 indicators for quality. E.g. we have developed a sustainable location index, skills calculators, and worked with the Centre of Excellence for Universal Design to develop a simple check list for Universal design. For all these reasons, we suggest that the Government requires all new developments to work towards compliance with HPI indicators. For existing social housing buildings, the development of common templates for evaluating renovation projects using a triple bottom line approach was recommended during the comprehensive consultation process for a better national renovation strategy run by the IGBC in 2016 - www.buildupon.eu/ireland . Such templates could be used by local authorities and other social housing providers to make the business case for renovation, potentially streamlining funding applications and ensuring integration of quality at all stages.
Q.4	What additional initiatives or policy tools can best activate housing lands and deliver new housing supply to buy or rent at more affordable levels?	More rational and efficient use of land, including regeneration within existing cities, towns and villages must be encouraged. HPI's land use indicator (https://www.igbc.ie/hpi-site/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/HPI-technical-manual-v1-final-v3-1.pdf) could be used to encourage brownfield developments. When building apartment blocks, underground car parks are the most expensive part to deliver. However, apartment blocks located close to public transport and with access to all amenities may not require extensive underground car parks. HPI's sustainable location category measures how well dwellings relate to existing transport infrastructure and the accessibility of amenities. In urban areas, this could be used to drive demand for development located closer to public transport, potentially reducing costs. It is also worth noting that the IGBC is currently involved in the Energy efficient Mortgages Action Plan (EeMAP) project - http://energyefficientmortgages.eu/ . The EeMAP initiative aims to demonstrate that energy efficiency has risk mitigation effects for banks because of its impact in enhancing a borrower's ability to service their loan and on the value of the property/collateral which could, therefore, qualify for a better capital treatment. Green mortgages could have a positive impact on both Ireland's climate targets and contribute to make homes more affordable.
Q.5	How can we encourage increased supply of rental accommodation and foster a sustainable sector that meets the needs of all tenants across the different rental market	NA
Q.6	What further actions should be taken to identify, target and encourage the greater use of existing vacant properties for both social and private housing purposes?	For social housing, please see Q.3 and Build Upon recommendations in relation to the development of common templates for evaluating renovation projects using a triple bottom line approach (i.e. quantifying environmental, social and economic impacts).
No.	Add your own summary of your areas of concern below:	Indicate your preferred resolution to these concerns
1	Rebuilding Ireland's objectives remain highly relevant and valid, but quantity should not be achieved at the expense of quality	The Government should encourage all new developments to work towards compliance with HPI indicators. For procurement authorities, this would streamline the procurement process, thus accelerating the process of delivering quality homes. A copy of the HPI technical manual can be downloaded at https://www.igbc.ie/hpi-site/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/HPI-technical-manual-v1-final-v3-1.pdf .
2	Housing needs to account for changes in demographics. E.g. the occupancy density of cities outer suburbs is falling with household size. This leads to further reduction in population density that makes the provision of vital infrastructure such as schools, and public transport even more challenging.	The focus on elderly people wishing to downsize and support for less able people to live independently in the community is welcomed. To ensure flexibility is designed in, to allow homes to adapt to occupants' needs throughout their lives, the IGBC worked with the Centre of Excellence for Universal Design to develop a simple check list for Universal design (HPI's indicator EC 4.0). The Government should encourage all new developments to work towards compliance with this indicator.

3	<p>The construction industry is a vital sector of the Irish economy with immediate impacts on economic growth, competitiveness, jobs and productivity. The quality of our building stock is also key in reaching our climate targets, reducing fuel poverty and improving people's health and wellbeing. Yet, the numbers working in construction declined significantly since the economic downturn, with many emigrating and / or changing industry. Furthermore, the level of new apprenticeship registrations declined at an unprecedented rate during that period. The re-establishment of a strong skills base across the industry is of paramount importance to deliver Rebuilding Ireland's objectives.</p>	<p>While a full section of Rebuilding Ireland's Action Plan is dedicated to "Construction Sector Capacity and Skills", we believe this should have been further developed in the "Review of Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan" document. In fact, the lack of investment in skills at all levels of the supply chain represents a risk to the successful implementation of the strategy. Construction Team and Design Team Skills indicators have been developed as part of the HPI certification scheme - see https://www.igbc.ie/hpi-site/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/HPI-technical-manual-v1-final-v3-1.pdf for further details. The Government should encourage all new developments to work towards compliance with this indicator. Furthermore, the IGBC in conjunction with all relevant professional institutes is currently developing a customer-friendly accreditation system for construction professionals - see https://www.igbc.ie/policy-and-regulation/renovation-strategies/eccopro-environmental-certification-construction-professionals/ for further details.</p>
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