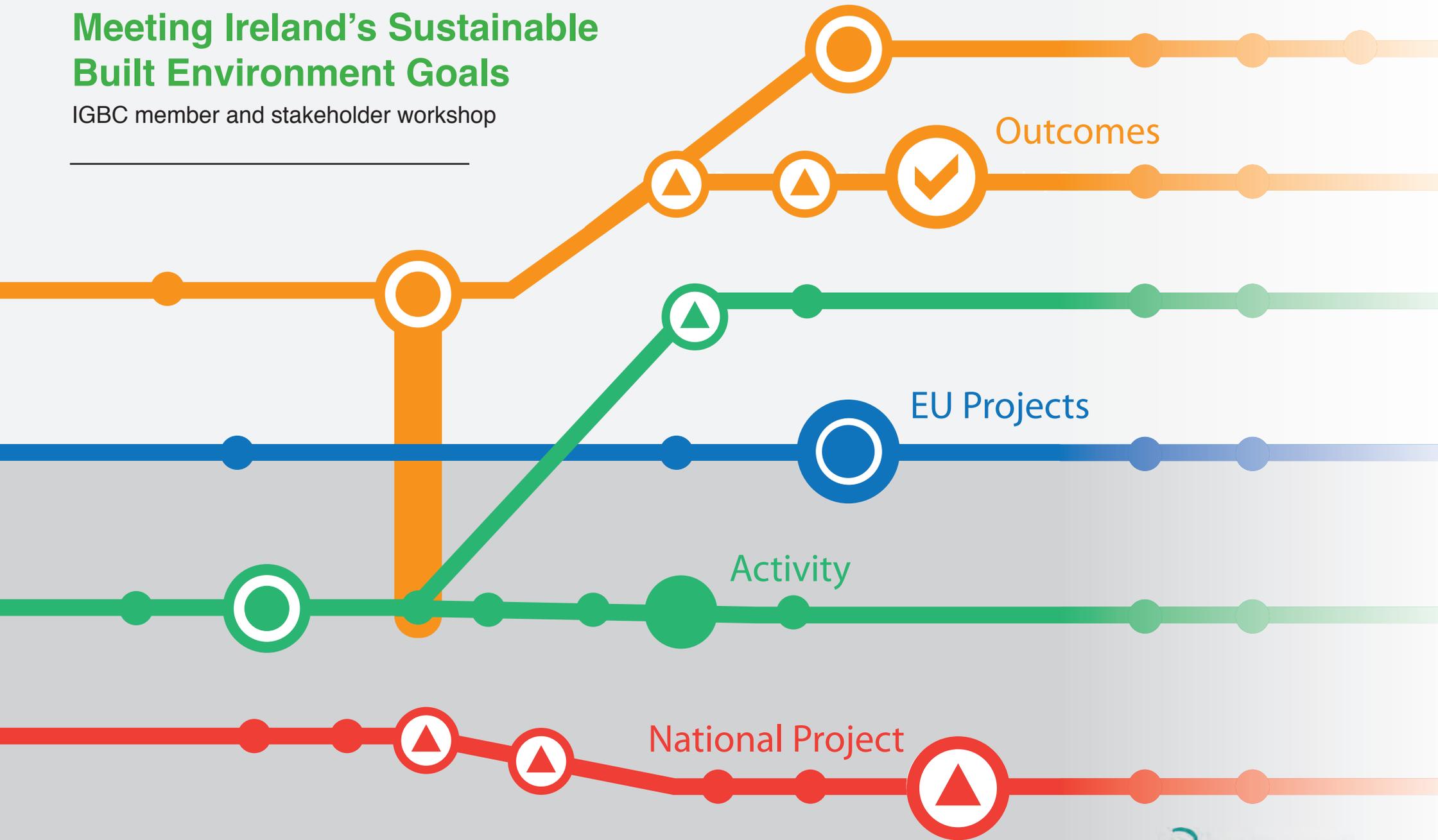


Meeting Ireland's Sustainable Built Environment Goals

IGBC member and stakeholder workshop



On Tuesday, 12th March the Irish Green Building Council (IGBC) organised a stakeholder engagement workshop to develop and define the communication of key sustainability goals for the Built Environment to external stakeholders in industry and government.

The event forms one key part of a year long strategy development process for IGBC seeking to clarify what it is currently doing, to form a clearer external facing strategy and set of priorities for communication.

A number of additional events including IGBC's annual conference the Green Room will propose the level of ambition through international case studies such as Powerhouse and World GBC's Advancing Net Zero.

The key findings of the day were as follows:

- IGBC must be an influential organisation which drives rapid change towards a more sustainable built environment through collaboration and engagement.
- To do so, IGBC should do more advocacy work. In particular, IGBC should:
 - Advocate for a better alignment between the National Planning Framework and Ireland's climate ambitions, including higher investment in under-utilised buildings in cities, towns and villages.
 - Support the introduction of green loans and mortgages.
 - Support a ban on fossil fuel combustion for new built.
 - Encourage government to develop and commit to long-term roadmaps for energy efficiency and for the circular use of resources in the construction sector.
 - Support mandatory Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) for construction products, and the introduction of regulations for full carbon LCA of buildings as part of public procurement.

IGBC's publications are of high quality and extremely valuable for building professionals with an interest in sustainability. However, simple, condensed and attractive messages are needed to reach a broader audience in the industry.

- Several members feel IGBC should do more to raise awareness about sustainable buildings among the general public.
- IGBC should develop and promote more guidance notes, "do and don't" documents, high quality case studies, as well as templates for the industry. E.g. a simple "do and don't" factsheet for Home Performance Index certification, a comprehensive template to better assess the opportunity of demolishing commercial buildings vs. renovating them, and a sustainable master planning template for local authorities so that new development support Ireland's climate ambitions.
- IGBC should develop new partnerships and better use existing partnerships to engage with prospective members and have a bigger impact on the industry.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to thank all our members who attended and contributed to this workshop, as well as James Drinkwater, Director World Green Building Council Europe and the facilitator, Chris Chapman.

Workshop participants are [listed here](#).



INTRODUCTIONS

Pat Barry, CEO of the Irish Green Building Council opened the session with a short presentation on IGBC's past, current, committed and proposed activities. These are summarised in the route map [page 3](#). His presentation included a brief introduction to a number of new EU funded projects that are starting in May, including two on renovation and one on the development of a green mortgages programme.

James Drinkwater of the World GBC subsequently gave an overview of Green Building Councils' activities in Europe and beyond. In particular, he focused on some of the most recent developments around embodied carbon – [Net Zero project](#), the circular economy and the European framework for sustainable buildings, Level(s).

Participants were then asked to introduce themselves and to use two words to describe the role they would like the IGBC to play in the next 5 years. Most workshop participants said that IGBC should be **an influential organisation which drives rapid change through collaboration and engagement**. More specifically, they felt that IGBC should be associated with sustainability, decarbonisation – including retrofit, and to a lesser extend resource-efficiency.

The word cloud shows the words members would like to see associated with the IGBC in the next five years.





Draft IGBC routemap presented at the workshop describing past, current actions and the expected outcomes.

SESSION I: IGBC'S CURRENT ACTIVITIES

During this session, workshop participants were asked to reflect on IGBC's current activities and to discuss which ones have the most relevance for them or the potential to have the greatest relevance.

Most groups struggled to rank IGBC's activities in order of priorities. Many workshop participants felt that all of them were important and that none should be dropped. Given the diversity of IGBC's membership, a one-size fits all approach does not seem appropriate.

However, workshop participants would like the IGBC to do more in the areas of advocacy and awareness raising. IGBC should advocate for the introduction of policies which support the transition to a more sustainable built environment - e.g. Green public procurement. Communication on the other hand is critical to motivate people to act.

Advocacy

The IGBC should inform and support decision makers, keeping them away from "poor decisions". To do so, the IGBC should develop a comprehensive policy charter to improve standards and develop guidance notes that can be used by government. It would also make sense to partner with organisations sharing similar policy goals on specific topics.

Communication and Awareness raising

The IGBC should spend time developing the brand and raising brand awareness in the industry. More work should be done to communicate the organisation's messages in a clear, coherent, condensed way. This could be done through simple, attractive graphics and videos that could be used on social media. One group said that IGBC's publications were very good but only read by people with an interest in sustainability. The messages the IGBC is communicating must be simplified to reach a wider audience in the industry and attract new members. Several workshop participants felt that the IGBC should target a wider audience and communicate beyond the built environment. Homebuyers, students and children were specifically mentioned. Short videos, social media and TV programmes (e.g. Dermot Bannon) could all be used to reach these audiences.

Education

In the area of education, it would make sense for the IGBC to develop simple "do & don't" guidance documents. These could be used by building professionals, but also government officials and clients who want to learn more in a specific area. The challenge will be to make the guidance outputs general enough for wide appeal but not so general you don't learn anything new. The IGBC's guidance could also signal areas for further research.



Certification

Most workshop participants perceive certification as important. However, they also felt that to have a real impact certification must be accompanied by a real culture change (so that it does not become a simple "ticking the box" exercise) and must be accurate. One group said that certification should be accompanied by monitoring to ensure performance. It was suggested to introduce low-cost third-party monitoring systems for buildings and potentially some sort of low-cost monitoring certification. Another option could be to launch an "Under 100 club" for all office buildings that actually consume less than 100/150kWh per annum. A number of organisations operate data gathering at an international scale – E.g. [ARC](#) backed by US GBC, the [International Sustainability Alliance](#) backed by BRE and [GRESB](#) for larger portfolios. However, one workshop participant pointed out that initiatives to get companies in Ireland to share their performance data in the past had failed as many organisations were unwilling to share data – E.g. [Docklands 21](#). Finally, one workshop participant expressed concerns at the high number

of certifications which create confusion in the market. One or a small number of certifications would be better, and these should be comparable.

B2B Networking

B2B networking should be a core part of all IGBC's activities to create value for members but is not a specific activity on its own. One group said that the IGBC should produce a directory of members with information on organisations' areas of expertise and interests.

IGBC's own Resilience

IGBC's own financial resilience should also be a focus area, hence the importance to deliver value for members – in their diversity. IGBC could learn from other networks (non-competitors) on how to innovate on B2B Networking and how to offer exciting new activities that members want to fund. IGBC should develop new partnerships with organisations that can bring credibility, and maximise the existing partnerships, including with members. These connections could be used engage with prospective members and spread the IGBC's messages.

SESSION II: SUPPORTING MEMBERS OVER THE NEXT 5 YEARS

James Drinkwater of the World Green Building Council opened session 2 with an overview of the World GBC Europe's priorities for the next few years, and of the network's strategy.

Each group selected a project to develop at the beginning of the session. Two commercial and two residential projects were developed as part of this process, as well as educational projects. These are presented in greater details below.

Other suggested potential projects included quantifying the multiple benefits of energy efficiency in Irish homes, developing the Home Performance Index for renovation and financing mechanisms for retrofit.



COMMERCIAL PROJECTS

Improving the users' experience in commercial buildings

Desired outcomes:

- A feasibility study on the opportunity of introducing Soft-landing certification in Ireland
- "Do and Don't" factsheets for building professionals
- Case studies on how to improve the users' experience in commercial buildings

Challenges and barriers:

- The split incentive between owners and tenants
- Lack of user education and of maintenance plan
- Use and misuse of new technologies
- Current demand for air conditioning

Actions required:

- Make building dashboard more common, with indicators such as temperature, relative humidity and air pollution (PM and CO2)
- Make sure that building occupiers receive all the information needed on how the building works, etc. (soft Landing approach)
- Collect building occupiers' feedback
- Develop high quality case studies on natural and mixed mode ventilation in commercial buildings.

Key partners:

Building owners, brokers and agents, SEAI and the World Green Building Council – Better places for people.

Potential funding mechanisms:

EPA and SEAI

Developing the Business Case for Renovation of Commercial offices

Desired outcomes:

A template that includes all numbers to make an argument to take to building decision makers and funders. This cost-benefits analysis should include benefits such as reduction in embodied carbon, wellbeing and business reputation.

Challenges and barriers:

- Urgency to build
- Lack of long-term vision
- Lack of understanding of environmental issues

Actions required:

- Develop high quality case study on exemplar buildings
- Produce a baseline report which includes information on all relevant aspects, from energy and water usage to LCA and corporate image
- Benchmark it against current practices
- Quantify the overall value of renovation vs. demolition
- Develop a comprehensive template that can be used by decision-makers to assess specific projects.

Key partners:

Members with good case studies, OPW and good communicators

Potential funding mechanisms:

EPA and SEAI

RESIDENTIAL PROJECTS

Making the Home Performance Index a real success

Desired outcomes:

The Home Performance Index is the go-to standard (superseding BER) for all new homes by 2023.

Challenges and barriers:

- A sellers' market: Homebuyers would buy anything, and it can be difficult to sell the benefits of the Home Performance Index to developers
- Using the Home Performance Index isn't a statutory requirement
- Lack of awareness among homebuyers, renters and the industry
- Fear among local authorities that it adds cost but little value.

Actions required:

- Gain a better understanding of highly successful residential certification schemes in countries such as Sweden, France or the Netherlands
- Gain a better understanding of homebuyers' needs and priorities. As it's not statutory, it MUST become something people want. For this to happen, it must be the reliable standard. Current issues around apartment blocks may be an opportunity to promote quality and the Home Performance Index

- Commission a short video on what a Home Performance Index certified home is
- Develop a comprehensive business case for homebuyers and local authorities. This could include a cost-benefit analysis over 25 years
- Select Home Performance Index ambassadors to promote it in the industry
- Refine the Home Performance Index indicators
- Use green mortgages and green loans to promote the Home Performance Index i.e. Make green mortgages available for HPI certified homes

Key partners:

SEAI, the Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment, the Department of Housing, Banks, Land development agencies, local authorities, the World Green Building Council and PR professionals.

Potential funding mechanisms:

EPA and SEAI

Retrofit pre-1940's buildings

Desired outcomes:

- A standard template for government on pre-1940s retrofits
- Exemplar projects
- Quality data on return on investment for these buildings
- Training modules available.

Challenges and barriers:

- No standards
- Condensation and moisture control
- Preservation of architectural integrity
- Heating systems and internal comfort
- Cost effectiveness and affordability

Actions required:

- Develop guidance to retrofit pre-1940s buildings (including risks identification)

Key partners:

Department of Housing, NSAI, Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment, SEAI, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, the heritage council developers, suppliers, building owners, land development agencies, local authorities, BRE Trust, 3rd level institutions, financial institutions.

Potential funding mechanisms:

SEAI, the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, contractors and suppliers.



EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS



Setting out an education strategy to ensure that all relevant stakeholders in Ireland are empowered with the knowledge, guidance and roadmaps to move towards a sustainable built environment.

Desired outcomes:

All ordinary building professionals in Ireland understand the basics and the how of a sustainable built environment.

Challenges and barriers:

- A very fragmented market, with many small players including small architecture and engineering companies with limited time and resources to upskill.

Actions required:

- Define education targets (professionals first, then out to students and wider public?) and develop a roadmap
- Create simple 'Dos and Don'ts' guidance documents for building professionals
- Use revenues in professional education to drive longer-term partnering with universities to deliver curriculum content (packaged) to next generation of students.

Key partners:

Universities and professional institutes

Potential funding mechanisms:

Revenues from professional education.

Developing research questions for super retrofit: Research questions that IGBC should advocate, promote and drive

Desired outcomes:

- Ability to develop robust and safe guidance notes for deep retrofits
- Grade the quality of research that underpins Ireland's Building Regulations

Challenges and barriers:

- Ireland is a small country with under funded building regulations and research for generations
- A lack of understanding that there are gaps in research that weaken and limit clear guidance

Actions required:

- Establish where robust guidance is and what areas are poor, unclear, incorrect.
- Engage with SEAI to discuss ideas and needs
- Engage with research bodies to come up with research questions and filter them
- Promote the agreed questions in industry

Key partners:

SEAI, Irish Universities and Institutes of Technology, IERC, CIF and professional bodies.

Potential funding mechanisms: SEAI

OTHER IDEAS RAISED

Circular economy

Longterm investors are increasingly worried about costs of future demolition in light of developments in countries such as the Netherlands who are moving to fully circular economy principles. Are construction product manufacturers taking this into in terms of considering the potential recyclability or reuse of their products after end of life or refurbishment of building?

What can IGBC do to help?



SESSION III: SUPPORTING GOVERNMENT AND POLICY MAKERS TO HELP MEET BUILDING RELEVANT UN SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

During the last session, workshop participants were asked to support the IGBC's team in developing a list of "key asks" for politicians. More specifically, they had to rank 17 "key asks" mentioned in recent IGBC's policy submissions.

Workshop participants would like the IGBC to advocate for a better alignment between the National Planning Framework (NPF) and Ireland's climate ambitions. In particular, investment in under-utilised buildings in cities, towns and villages should be prioritised to save carbon emissions, resources and bring communities back to life.

Fiscal incentives could be introduced to support better planning decisions and renovations. The IGBC should also support the introduction of Building Renovation Passports to map route to zero carbon for each building, and support phased deep retrofit. For new built, the IGBC should support a ban on fossil fuel combustion, and potentially support feed-in tariff for on-site building integrated renewables.

Many comments related to procurement, including green public procurement. Many workshop participants said that Environmental Product Declarations (EPD) for construction products should be required, and that IGBC should support the introduction of regulations for full carbon LCA of buildings in public procurement in the medium term. Another suggestion was to include the cost to dispose as part of all procurements. Most workshop participants felt that the IGBC should support the introduction of green loans and mortgages.

Finally, the IGBC should encourage the government to develop and commit to long-term roadmaps for both energy efficiency and for the circular use of resources in the construction sector.

Based on these discussions, the workshop participants worked on four specific "key asks", and the actions required to achieve real changes. These are presented in greater details below.



Better aligning the National Planning Framework (NPF) and Ireland's climate ambitions

End goal:

Develop a sustainable master planning template and guidance materials and ensure an ongoing understanding and commitment so that all Local Authorities use the template - mandate its use.

Challenges:

- Lack of understanding of sustainability, buildings and of the importance of better using brownfields in Irish politics;
- Fragmented traditional practices in Ireland and "parish pump" politics;
- The housing crisis and the urgency to build;
- Viability of public transport infrastructure given low density of many developments in Ireland;
- Lack of community feelings in many dormitory towns.

Actions required:

- Benchmark vs. other EU examples, learn from other European examples.

- Improve coordination between infrastructures and service providers.
- Better education consumers (prosumers) on this topic and on smart energy and PV i.e. it's not only about feed-in tariff but also about the value of using your home more efficiently.
- Develop master planning templates and guidance materials.
- Promote sustainable development plan.
- Mandate use of sustainable planning templates.
- Design incentives to support sustainable development plan - e.g. use EU cohesion funding, and investment in more sustainable homes – e.g. green mortgages

Key partners:

Department of Housing, Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment, Local Authorities, EPA, IPI, SEAI, An Bord Pleanála, NESCC (?), RIAI, SCSi and Engineers Ireland.



Prioritise investments in under-utilised buildings in cities, towns and villages

End goal:

- Develop a comprehensive national database of empty and under-used buildings by 2020;
- Develop programmes and financial incentives to better incentivise people to use these buildings e.g. Tax for empty-houses;
- Develop policies and regulations that clearly support this objective.

Challenges:

- Lack of data on underused and empty buildings in Ireland;
- Identifying underused and empty buildings with true potential;
- Some of these buildings are derelict;
- Quality and functionality: Bringing them to modern standards;
- Ownership;
- Lack of incentives to renovate these buildings.

Actions required:

- Learn from international best practices;
- Develop methodologies for identifying true potential and good case studies;
- Upskill construction workers.

Key partners:

Department of Housing, Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, local authorities, IDA, Enterprise Ireland, SEAI, Local Development Agencies, property owners including local SMEs and businesses, local historical societies.

Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) for all construction products

End goal:

- Require EPDs for all construction products by 2021 to give ability to all building professionals to select sustainable materials easily.

Challenges:

- Cost of EPDs;
- Initial contractors' buy-in.

Actions required:

Set percentage of materials by volume that must have EPDs (type 3) in buildings and make sure the threshold is higher in public buildings – i.e. Amend Part D (materials) of the Building Control Act 1990 accordingly.

Key partners:

Department of Housing, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment, OPW, SEAI, EPA, manufacturers, designers and contractors.

Green Loans & Mortgages

End goal:

- Only green mortgages

Challenges:

- Banks see it as unnecessary in the current market i.e. A sellers' market;
- Interest rates are perceived as low by banks and lending caps leave no room to increase loans;
- Banks can borrow money at a low rate and don't see why they should bother with green bonds.

Actions required:

Green loans and mortgages must be made more attractive for banks. This could be done through:

- "Green gain scheme" whereby a developer can develop more homes in exchange for greater environmental efficiency;
- Tax relief on green mortgages;
- Greater capital allowances for landlords who get green mortgages or loans;
- Increase lending/borrowing allowances for green mortgages.

Key partners:

Department of Housing, Department of Finance, central bank, banks, local authorities, housing finance agency, homebuyers and EIB.



CROSS CUTTING ACTIONS AND OUTCOMES FOR RADICAL REDUCTION IN CARBON EMISSIONS FROM THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

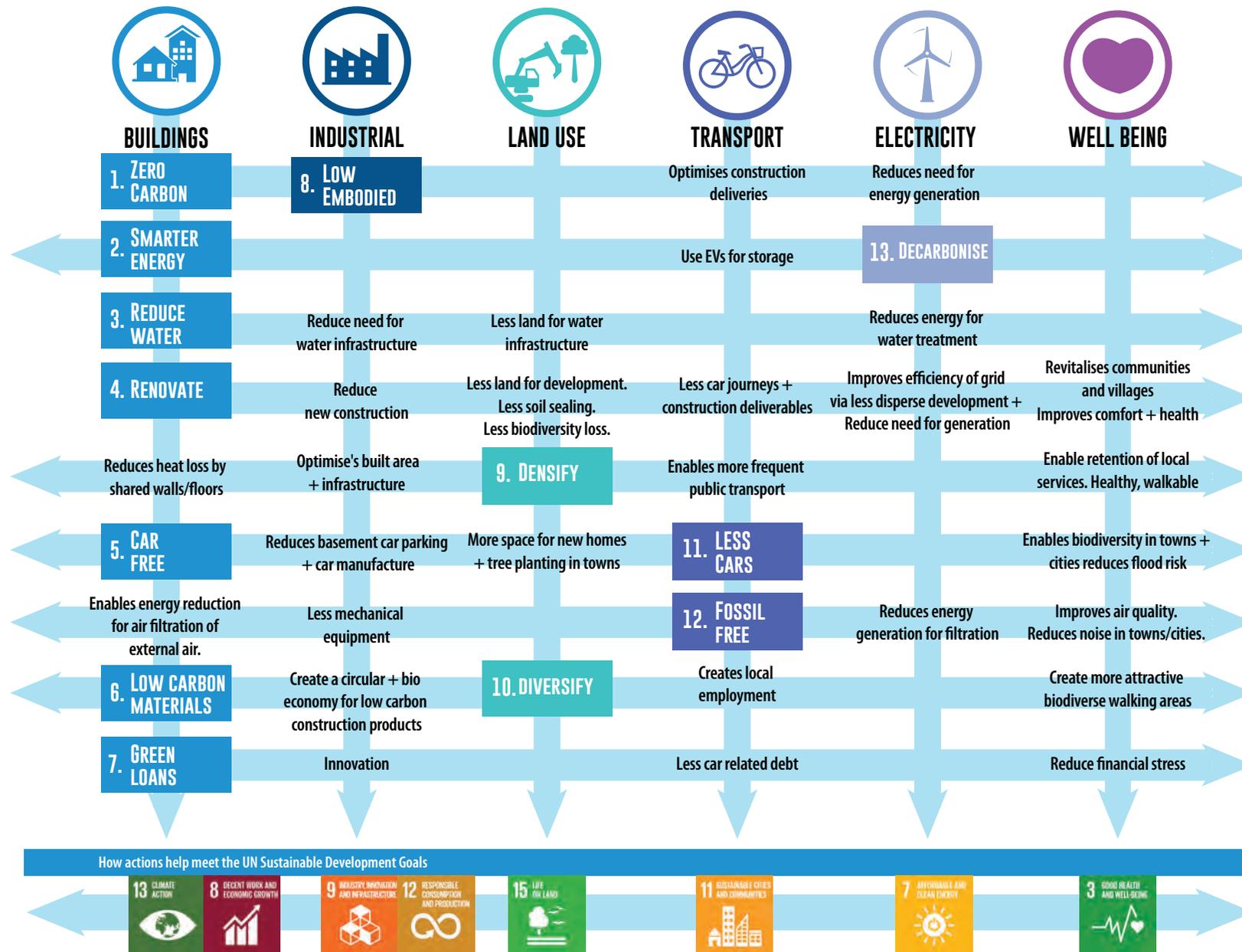


Diagram presented at workshop showing cross cutting benefits of actions in different sectors for the built environment submitted as part of the National Energy and Climate Action Plan.

CONCLUSION

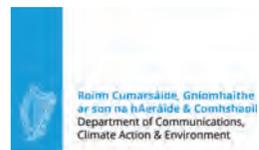
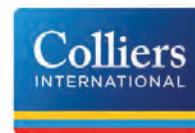
To become a truly impactful organisation which drives rapid change towards a more sustainable built environment, IGBC needs to improve its communication, develop simple guidance documents and templates, and increase its advocacy work. All these should be done through extensive engagement with members and collaboration with key stakeholders.

Given IGBC's limited resources, further work is needed to better define its target audiences and develop clear and simple messages which resonate with them. Although members have highlighted the need for the IGBC to advocate for a better alignment between the National Planning Framework and Ireland's climate ambitions, to support renovation and decarbonisation of the built environment, and to encourage government to develop and commit to a long-term roadmap for the circular use of resources in the construction sector, further work is needed to further refine IGBC's advocacy priorities.

IGBC members will have the opportunity to comment on the key findings of this workshop through an online survey in March-April 2019 and further discussions will take place through the year. Visit www.igbc.ie for further information.



THANK YOU TO ALL OUR WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS





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Built Environment**

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