

# 10 measures to implement in Government

For a truly sustainable built environment - General Election 2020



## WELL OVER 50% OF IRISH CO<sub>2</sub> EMISSIONS ARE INFLUENCED BY OUR BUILT ENVIRONMENT.

This does not only relate to the energy we use to heat, cool and power our buildings. Where we build them impacts our transport emissions. How we build them impacts our industrial emissions from the production of construction materials.

Irish homes have 58% higher carbon emissions<sup>2</sup> than the European average<sup>3</sup>.

Ireland had the second highest rate of asthma hospital discharge in Europe<sup>2</sup> in 2016. This can be related to both damp cold houses and levels of air pollution in towns and cities.

**Commit your political party if elected to radical action over the next 5 years in Government to change this and create a better built environment for all.**

### **Provide absolute long-term financial certainty on renovation**

The renovation industry is just finding its feet. In order to scale up deep energy renovation, businesses need to train staff, build new business models and guarantee long term work for their reskilled employees. This will only happen with a longterm commitment from Government.

**HOW?** Commit to a long-term large scale ring-fenced multi annual 10-year Government investment plan for renovation.

### **Support the buying and renting of the greenest buildings**

Encourage the construction and renovation of the greenest zero carbon buildings through incentives and regulations for renters, landlords and buyers. Make actual energy performance transparent to all.

**HOW?** Introduce minimum energy performance of buildings as part of a comprehensive package of measures to include technical and financial supports and incentives.

### **Create more homes at less cost by regenerating rural towns, villages and city centres**

Guarantee alignment between the National Planning Framework and Ireland's climate ambitions, including prioritising higher investment in underutilised buildings in cities, towns and villages. This will revitalise our town and city centres, while reducing carbon emissions from homes, transport and industry.

**HOW?** Enhance or streamline existing incentives such as living city grant, conservation grants, energy efficiency grants, property tax reductions etc. to prioritise better use of existing well-located buildings, and discourage hoarding of vacant space by use of land value tax.

### **Facilitate the purchase of the greenest new homes**

Use the financial system to encourage home builders to go beyond building regulations, to build the greenest, healthiest, zero carbon homes, and address all the impacts of new homes including transport, embodied carbon, biodiversity, land use and climate resilience. This will strengthen the Irish banking system by ensuring that their loans are climate proofed.

**HOW?** Strongly encourage banks to offer preferential loans to home buyers and home builders of the Greenest new homes based on 3rd party verified certification such as Home Performance Index.<sup>4</sup> Warn them to avoid green washing financial products which must align with climate science.

### **Reduce the cost of transportation for all**

Nobody should be saddled with the high costs of a car just to meet their housing need. Every new home must be built in a location that enables the occupier to access basic services like schools, healthcare, and other amenities, by walking, cycling or public transport. This is also essential to addressing Ireland's obesity crisis.

**HOW?** Strengthen the planning system and require all new homes to meet a basic benchmark for walkability and public transport access.

### **Enable independent impartial advice for homeowners and support high-quality energy renovation**

Beyond financial support, homeowners, tenants and small landlords would benefit from the development of a network of skilled, trusted local advisors providing low cost advice. The cost of VAT on professional services currently discourages homeowners from seeking independent advice that is essential to high quality energy renovation.

**HOW?** Reduce costs of accessing trusted advice e.g. reduce VAT on professional services offered for energy renovation and for qualified accredited renovation contractors.

### **Make our cities and towns healthy places to live**

Create emissions free zones in our towns and cities to improve the air quality and people's health. This would reduce respiratory disease and save on health spending. It is also the quickest way to reduce carbon emissions from transport.

**HOW?** Invest heavily in cycling, walking, and public transport and radically reduce access within all towns and cities for private petrol and diesel cars. Enforce and extend the smoky coal ban.

### **Reduce the upfront carbon impact of new construction**

The construction of new buildings and infrastructure accounts for 11% of global carbon emissions<sup>5</sup>, before they are even used or operated. These 'embodied carbon' emissions result from use of carbon intensive construction products and wasteful practices in the design and construction process. Government can reduce this by up to 50% by 2030, encouraging innovation and creating opportunities in rural communities from the development of low carbon bio-based construction materials.

**HOW?** Introduce public procurement requirements to reduce embodied carbon immediately. Over the following five years, introduce building regulations based on the European standard EN15978 setting target reduction figures. Discourage unnecessary demolition through planning system.

### **Help every homeowner finance their high-quality deep renovation**

Quality deep energy renovation requires large scale investment and Government cannot pay the full costs. However, it can make it much easier for all homeowners and small landlords to access low interest finance.

**HOW?** Work with financial institutions to reduce risks and transaction costs enabling low interest rates 1-3%. This could be through a loan guarantee scheme or a local authority renovation loan.

1 Global Warming Potential

2 Energy in the residential sector – SEAI report 2019

3 Asthma Association Ireland

4 [www.homeperformanceindex.ie](http://www.homeperformanceindex.ie)

5 World Green Building Council report - Bringing embodied carbon upfront