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Housing Management Performance

The publication of the 2011 Annual Report of the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) highlighted the performance of local authorities across a wide range of indicators relating to many Local Government departments. The housing figures are particularly interesting in how they compare with the Housing Association Performance Management (HAPM) figures that assess the performance of voluntary housing associations. HAPM is a standardised tool developed by the ICSH, in consultation with members for measuring housing association performance. The aim of HAPM is to promote good housing management practice in the voluntary housing association sector.

The latest LGMA figures that are available are for 2011. These show that the average re-let time for local authority properties was just under 21 weeks, with three local authorities reporting average vacancy times of over a year - Sligo County Council (65.1 weeks), Cork City Council (57.8 weeks) and Limerick County Council (57 weeks). This time included the entire period properties were vacant including the time taken to complete all necessary repairs and refurbishment. In comparison, HAPM figures for the same period show that the average vacancy period in the voluntary housing sector was 14 weeks.

The report also highlights the performance of local authorities in carrying out repairs. It shows that 88.6% of repairs in local authority properties were completed within their target timescale. For the voluntary housing sector, 97% of emergency repairs, 92% of urgent repairs and 96% of routine repairs were completed on time, giving an average performance of 94.6% of valid repair requests successfully completed on time, comparing very favourably with the performance of local authorities.

Social housing providers - both local authorities and voluntary housing associations - have been operating in more difficult economic circumstances in recent years. HAPM has consistently demonstrated very high levels of housing management outcomes within the voluntary housing sector and it is very encouraging to see that voluntary housing associations continue to provide excellent service to their tenants even in such challenging times.

HAPM was established on 2007 and reports on housing management outcomes such as rents, repairs and maintenance, voids and landlord/tenant relations in the Voluntary Housing Sector.

For further information on HAPM or to take part in the current HAPM survey, please contact Catherine McGillycuddy, Membership Support Officer on 01 661 8334 or email Catherine@icsh.ie.

Good news for PUSH Europe

(PRACTICE AND UNDERSTANDING IN SUPPORTED HOUSING)

PUSH is an EU initiative led by FEANTSA, CECODHAS and EASPD. The aim of PUSH Europe is to deliver positive outcomes for vulnerable people such as people with high needs, including those who are disabled, elderly, and homeless through practical exchange on the integration of services and housing. To this end, PUSH brings together European supported housing practitioners that deliver and build capacity in affordable housing with support for vulnerable people.

One of the main outcomes to date from the PUSH initiative is the approval of funding for the ELOSH project which is ‘The European Core Learning Outcomes for the Integration of Support and Housing’. ELOSH is funded as part of the EU Leonardo programme and the ICSH is an national partner. The aim of the project is to develop and test a set of common learning outcomes to support the integration of housing and support services for vulnerable groups.

The ICSH is pleased to be involved as one of the national partners and will provide regular updates to members as the project develops.
Launch of ‘Building for the Future’: A Voluntary Regulation Code for Approved Housing Bodies in Ireland

On 15th July, Minister for Housing, Jan O’Sullivan T.D launched the voluntary regulation code ‘Building for the Future’ at The Iveagh Trust. The code will be a stepping stone ahead of a statutory regulatory framework which is anticipated by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) to be in place by 2016.

The code has been prepared by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government following feedback from a consultation document published in August 2012. It sets out key governance, management, measurement and financial principles that will apply to all approved housing bodies, depending on the size scope risk level etc. of the individual approved housing body. There will not be a charge for those who sign up to the code.

Key features of the code

Principles
The voluntary regulation code is underpinned by four guiding principles:
- Tenant focused delivery
- Proportionality
- Accountability
- Transparency

The code proposes three tiers. Each tier has a corresponding set of commitments to which Board members are asked to sign up to through a charter. This charter also allow the Board to attach an explanation as to how the organisation will meet the criteria or why it has not.

Management of the Code
All approved housing bodies have been asked to sign up to the charter of commitments and it is intending to publish the names of those that do sign up on the Department website. It has been stated that the main focus in the initial stages will be on Tier 3 (housing associations with over 300 units) and on individual organisations from Tier 1 and 2 that are identified as merit specific attention.

Next steps
The Department has contacted all AHBs regarding ‘Building for the Future’ and encouraging sign up to the code. The code states that for any future exchequer funding, priority will be given to those AHB who have signed up to the code.

A process is also underway to develop more detailed financial benchmarks to which AHBs seeking private finance would sign up to. A working group has been set up and further material will be made available specifically on this.

The ICSH will be running support seminars for members and is available to assist members in meeting the requirements set out in the code.

For further information, please contact Caren Gallagher on 01 661 8334 or by email on caren@icsh.ie

An option for the recruitment of Board members is outlined below:

Boardmatch Ireland

Boardmatch Ireland has placed almost 900 business people, sports professionals, academics and public representatives onto Boards of Not for Profits.

In 2012 alone, we made over 200 matches.

We’ve over 2000 people who actively want to go on your Board.

Get who you want, with the skills you want, at no cost. Register your Charity for free on our Database at Boardmatch.ie.
## Definition of Tiers and related commitments

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<tr>
<th>Tier</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Commitments</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tier 1</strong>&lt;br&gt;Small AHBs&lt;br&gt;– less than 50 units without development plans for more units</td>
<td>AHBs in Tier 1 have developed and completed projects, have housing units in management and have no further development plans.</td>
<td>• Have in place a properly functioning Board with&lt;br&gt;  – clear roles and responsibilities&lt;br&gt;  – at least 5 members, non-serving more than 2 consecutive 5 year terms&lt;br&gt;  – a general meeting at least once per year&lt;br&gt;  – no employee acting as Chairperson&lt;br&gt;• Comply with existing companies law, charities requirements, conditions of approved status&lt;br&gt;• Have a tax clearance certificate and a sinking fund&lt;br&gt;• Have an agreed set of performance management indicators&lt;br&gt;• Submit an Annual Report &amp; Accounts, and a copy of filing to the CRO or to the Registrar of Friendly Societies, to the Department&lt;br&gt;• Submit data on Tenant Services&lt;br&gt;• Submit a signed copy of this Charter to the Department</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tier 2</strong>&lt;br&gt;AHBs with between 50 and 300 units and/or with development plans in place to provide more units.</td>
<td>These AHBs have portfolios of between 50 - 300 units and/or have plans to develop new housing as part of their strategy in future in addition to the existing housing they manage.&lt;br&gt;&lt;em&gt;Tier 2 will also include AHBs with less than 300 units that are applying for, or are in receipt of loans from the Housing Finance Agency, private finance or other sources.&lt;/em&gt;</td>
<td>• All tier 1 requirements&lt;br&gt;• Have a Finance committee, or equivalent, in place&lt;br&gt;• Annual report to include details of fixed assets, liabilities, reserves, loans outstanding, capital repayments and evidence of a risk register.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tier 3</strong>&lt;br&gt;All AHBs with more than 300 Units</td>
<td>These AHBs include those larger bodies with more than 300 units but also includes all AHBs that have plans to develop new housing using loan finance.</td>
<td>• All tier 1 and tier 2 requirements&lt;br&gt;• Have an external audit process in place&lt;br&gt;• Maintain an active strategic plan&lt;br&gt;• 3-year financial plan in place&lt;br&gt;• Have an agreed range of Tenant Services indicators in place&lt;br&gt;• Submit a completed annual return, as specified by the Department&lt;br&gt;• Agree to be subject to an audit by the Department and / or its agents, if so requested&lt;br&gt;• Attend an annual review meeting with the Department and the Housing Agency, if so requested</td>
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1 This commitment will apply to Board members from July 2013 and service on the Board prior to this date will be disregarded for the purpose of this calculation.

2 It is recognised that, while all AHBs should have an adequate sinking fund in place, not all do; all AHBs should however outline a clear plan to build up a fund within a reasonable timeframe.

3 The Housing Association Performance Management framework (HAPM) is a standardised tool developed by the Irish Council for Social Housing, in consultation with members for measuring housing association performance. The aim of HAPM is to promote good housing management practice in the voluntary housing sector. The HAPM framework consists of a set of key performance indicators that gather information on size of housing stock, rent levels and service charges, rent collected and arrears, allocations, voids response repairs and maintenance and landlord tenant relations. The equivalent data tool used by housing co-operatives for this function is the Co-operative Housing Quality Service Provision Review.

4 The term audit refers to a more detailed examination of exchequer funding paid to a specific Approved Housing Body for the purpose of the provision of housing relief. This examination may involve a site visit to verify that funding paid is being used in accordance with the terms and conditions of original agreement [as set out for example in VHU: 2/02 under the terms and conditions of HFA loan finance agreement].
Housing Supply Update

Housing Finance Agency approves loan finance for 58 units
The HFA has recently approved loan finance of €3.42m for 58 units of accommodation. The volume of units to be delivered is a positive step for all concerned in this approval in terms of value for money.

To date there are six approved housing bodies who have ‘approved borrower status’ with a further three applications in progress.

A total of 29 loan applications have been received to date with 19 approved and four pending; six have been withdrawn. This equates to over €34 million in loans approved with over €13 million advanced to date.

Latest CAS Call - 135 homes provided
In July, the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG) issued a call for CAS proposals from approved housing bodies for the acquisition of properties for people with disabilities. The response from the sector was swift with a large number of proposals submitted to local authorities. From these proposals, 135 homes have been approved and will be provided by 22 housing associations across the country. Although the CAS programme has reduced significantly in recent years, this limited funding can contribute to meeting the objectives of the National Housing Strategy for People with Disabilities.

Number crunching – Housing Statistics

Breakdown of housing related statistics
Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS)
At the end of March 2013 under the Rental Accommodation Scheme there have been a total of 44,316 households transferred to RAS with another 18,187 transferred to other social housing options.

HAP (Housing Assistance Payment)
Currently the DECLG have stated that at the end of 2012 there were 87,000 household in receipt of rent supplement of which it is estimated that 60% were in receipt of the payment for over 18 months. The terms of the Housing Assistance Payment are currently being finalised with the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government who have indicated that legislation will be published on the payment by the end of 2013.

Housing Needs Assessment
The Housing Needs Assessment for 2013 took place at the end of April. The Department of the Environment, Community, and Local Government have stated that the results of the most recent assessment are likely to be published in the Autumn. The Housing Needs Assessment for 2011 showed an increase from 56,249 in 2008 to over 98,318 in 2011, this was an increase of 75% between the periods 2008-2011.

Projections for Housing Supply
A target of 500 units for leasing through NAMA has been set for 2013. The overall target for units sourced through NAMA is a total of 2,000 units. In addition, there is a target of 4,000 for new Rental Accommodation Scheme transfers in 2013.

The DECLG have stated that further targets for social housing will be dependent on the availability of finance through the budget process which takes place in October of this year. The ICSH will be keeping members updated on the outcomes of the 2014 budget for social housing.
Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill Update

The Residential Tenancy Amendment Bill (RTB) requires that tenancy agreements for approved housing bodies must be registered under the Residential Tenancies Board. License agreements (which should only be used in hostel type accommodation and where the tenant does not have exclusive possession of their unit) are excluded from the bill. The Residential Tenancies Board will provide a mechanism for landlord/tenant dispute resolution such as mediation and adjudication to the Voluntary Housing Sector.

Status of Bill
The Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill is at the final stages of debate, it is anticipated that it will be enacted in early 2014.

Recent Amendments

Time-frame for Tenancy Registration
The ICSH strongly advocated for an appropriate lead in time for the sector around the registration of tenancies under the RTB. In order to give the sector adequate time to adapt to the requirements of the legislation, an amendment has been introduced that where the tenancy was entered into before the commencement of the new provisions under the bill, it must be registered within 12 months from the commencement date. After this period, where the tenancy is entered into 12 months or more after the commencement of the new provisions, it must be registered within one month of the commencement of the tenancy. This is in line with tenancy registration in the private sector.

The bill also states that where the tenancy commences within the first year after the commencement of the new provisions, it must be registered either within 12 months from the commencement of the new provision or within one month of the tenancy, whichever happens to be later. The inclusion of this amendment was on the basis of advocacy from the ICSH to provide the sector with some consistency between re-lets and new tenancies which might commence within the 12 month period.

Cost of Registration
The ICSH have consistently highlighted the issue of costs around the RTB and the potential impact on Approved Housing Bodies. The Voluntary Housing Sector has obtained a 50% reduction in the registration fee for a period of one year post commencement of the new provisions of the bill. For the first year, it has been confirmed that housing associations will pay a registration fee of €45 per tenancy post commencement and a fee of €187.50 for composite registrations. Under the composite fee a landlord can register a maximum of 10 tenancies within the same property. It is important to note that after the initial one year period, the cost of tenancy registration will be €90 per tenancy with a composite fee of €375.

The bill requires that each tenancy must be re-registered with the RTB after a period of four years however the fee for re-registering a tenancy after this period (as long as the re-registration is done within the specified timeframes) will no longer apply. The ICSH highlighted the necessity for such an amendment in recognition of the fact that approved housing bodies predominantly offer long-term secure tenancies.

Late Registration Fee
It is important for housing associations to note that the Minister for Housing has announced an incremental late registration fee that applies to tenancies which are not registered within the initial one year lead in period or within one month of the commencement of the tenancy thereafter. The late fee will be €20 for each month the landlord is late in registering the tenancy. The Minister will announce a maximum total late fee that may be charged in due course.

Non-Payment of Rent by Tenants
The amended bill now provides that a Part 4 tenancy may be terminated by the landlord where the tenant is in rent arrears. It requires that the landlord need only serve one 14 day warning letter to the tenant. If the rent remains unpaid, the landlord may then serve a notice to terminate the tenancy, giving the tenant 28 days to vacate the dwelling. The bill also provides for a procedure where the PRTB itself can terminate a tenancy where the tenant does not pay off arrears but remains in occupation of the dwelling.

Rent Reviews
Approved Housing Bodies have been excluded from specific parts of the legislation which would limit their ability to conduct rent reviews to one per year. The ICSH requested this in recognition of the differential basis on which many Approved Housing Bodies calculate their rent, e.g. under CLSS, which may result in several rent changes per year.

Approved Housing Bodies will also be exempt from section 139 of the 2004 Act which provides that a landlord must update the details of his or her registration with the Private Residential Tenancies Board whenever the rent changes. The ICSH advocated that as the rent due could change a number of times in a given year under the differential rent scheme, it was necessary to exclude housing associations from this section due to the significant administrative burden it would place on the sector.
Breaking a Part 4 Tenancy
Under the RTA legislation, a tenant will be entitled to a Part 4 tenancy, which is a 4 year tenancy with all the rights it affords under the legislation. As such this tenancy can only be broken due to specific behaviour that is in breach of the legislation and the accompanying tenancy agreement, for example the non-payment of rent or anti-social behaviour etc. However under the bill, in very specific cases, a Part 4 tenancy can be terminated where the support and care needs of a tenant increase to such a point that they cannot be met within their current accommodation. This provision will only be applicable in certain cases and has been included to ensure that a tenant does not remain in unsuitable housing where their care needs are not being and cannot be addressed. It is advised that if such a case arises, that a Part 4 tenancy should only be terminated on the basis of medical advice/opinion and in consultation, where at all possible, with the tenant and their next of kin.

Support for ICSH Members
The ICSH will continue to advocate on behalf of the sector around any further amendments to the bill which may occur before the enactment of the legislation. The ICSH will also be providing on-going information and guidance to members on the legislation and its implementation within the Voluntary Housing Sector. Below is a summary of the supports which will be available to ICSH members:

ICSH Support and Guidance
- The ICSH will run a number of regional seminars to assist members with the changes that are agreed by Government and become legislation.
- Information and reminder bulletins will be sent to members around the legislation, informing members of the enactment of the legislation, reminding them of lead in times, costs, and all relevant aspects of the bill.
- The ICSH held a seminar on the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill in April of this year, which was attended by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. Other seminars around the legislation will be forthcoming throughout 2014 for the benefit of members.
- The ICSH are planning a series of guidance notes on the RTB. This includes how to register your tenancy, the process of dispute resolution under the RTB, changes to the sector’s tenancy agreement, Landlord/Tenant responsibilities, the RTB and special needs housing, as well as financial costs under the RTB.
- The ICSH have established the RTA Working Group to meet and discuss the application of the legislation to the sector and will continue to meet on relevant aspects of the legislation as they arise.
- The ICSH will provide a template tenancy agreement for the sector which will be compatible with the RTA legislation.

Upcoming Events
Launch of ICSH/QQI Certificate in First Line Management in partnership with National College of Ireland
This course is accredited by QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland, formerly HETAC) as a Level 6 special purpose award on the National Framework of Qualifications. It is designed to develop and educate first line managers with theoretical and practical knowledge and skills that can be directly applied to their workplace.

There are three core modules: Business Management, Leadership and Communication Skills and Legal & Regulatory Framework.

The course will be delivered through a blend of traditional classroom learning and interactive e-learning instruction. E-Learning instruction will include live streamed online classes, tutorials and other online learning activities such as question and answer sessions.

The core content of this course will focus on developing key management skills and students will take classes with management students from other sectors. However certain content focusing specifically on housing management will be delivered only to students from social housing providers, registered through the ICSH. This will allow students to develop vital and transferable management skills, learn best management practices from those in other sectors while maintaining a focus on housing through special training sessions and assignments.

The course will begin in January 2014. A full brochure will be available soon and will be distributed to all ICSH members.
North and East Housing Association turn the sod on a ‘Build to Lease’ scheme

Construction work is to begin shortly on 25 new homes as Drogheda Borough Council becomes the first local authority outside Dublin to use the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government’s ‘Build to Lease’ programme to provide social housing.

A sod-turning ceremony was held at the site of the scheme in Moneymore, Drogheda. The Council has combined with the Department, North & East Housing Association and lenders Ulster Bank to deliver the housing units which will help to reduce the town’s waiting list for social housing. The housing association has appointed Mullingar-based Andrews Construction for the project which has had a gestation period of over three years.

“This development – which we look forward to seeing completed next year – will bring 25 residential units on stream. Of these, five will be allocated to vulnerable adults and older people with one of these adapted for use by a person with a disability. Another three units will be sold under the new Incremental Purchase Scheme and the remaining 17 will be allocated on the basis of greatest need to people on the Council’s housing list.”

Slí Eile Housing Association - Opening of Slí Eile Farm in Co. Cork

Slí Eile Housing Association recently officially opened their latest project, Slí Eile Farm. The farm will provide a supportive living environment for up to 16 persons who are experiencing or who have experienced mental health difficulties. Building on the experience of how meaningful occupation impacts on personal responsibility, self-respect and acceptance of others, the tenants will experience the responsibilities required in the running of a community farm.

Limerick County Council honours citizens

The outgoing Cathaoirleach of Limerick County Council, Cllr Jerome Scanlan, held a special civic reception to honour individuals and organisations from around the county for their commitment and outstanding work.

The civic reception is the highest honour the council can extend to any citizen and Cllr Scanlan had words of praise for all those receiving scrolls of honour.

“It was, he said, a way to celebrate all those who “in their own way have made a significant contribution to their local community or who have achieved considerable success in their respective field of expertise.”

In presenting a scroll to Joe Kennedy, Chairman of the County Limerick Housing Services Company Ltd. Cllr Scanlon, in tribute, said that the contribution of the company to the support of associations providing homes for the elderly in the county was needed now more than ever.

European Neighbours Day

‘Get to know your neighbour’ was the message for European Neighbours Day which took place on 31st May. European Neighbours Day spans 33 countries, with over 12 million people taking part in the celebrations to bring neighbours and local people together and encourage community links. Respond!, Cluid, HAIL (Housing Association for Integrated Living), Sonas Housing, Túath Housing Association, North & East Housing Association and Anam Cara - Fold Housing Association were among the many organisations marking the day in locations across the country.

Mortgage to Rent review launched

Clúid Housing Association has completed a review of the Mortgage-to-Rent scheme.

The report makes a series of recommendations around the Mortgage-to-Rent scheme that aim to make the scheme function better. It acknowledges that the scheme is still in its infancy which means that many stakeholders’ experience of its operation is limited. However, the review concludes that the Mortgage-to-Rent scheme has the potential to assist a significant number of people, with serious mortgage difficulties, to remain in their own homes and within their communities.
At the end of 2012 the ICSH Board, in line with the 2011-2014 Strategic Plan ‘Adapting and Leading Housing in A New Era’, undertook a review of the ICSH Governance Structures which were last reviewed in 2003/2004. This most recent review has occurred in a period of significant changes in the sector and in particular changes in the regulatory and funding environments.

To assist in this current ICSH Governance review, a Working Group was established by the ICSH Board.

There were lengthy discussions on the governance structure of the ICSH and the proposals that were agreed on by the Working Group and the ICSH Board are an attempt to update the ICSH governance structure to enhance the operations of the ICSH to oversee and develop its work so that it is fit for purpose in this challenging new environment for all members.

The past year has seen the Government introduce a number of new regulatory measures which were included in the agreed programme for Government. These included a Voluntary Regulatory Code introduced by the Department and launched by the Minister for Housing in July 2013. [See pages 4-5 for full details.]

The proposals from the Working Group which are now recommended by the Board of the ICSH for your agreement include the need to have Board representation from geographical areas along with categories such as for older people, families, the homeless and people with disabilities as well as a range of required skills and expertise for membership of the Management Board.

In order to reflect the structure contained in the Voluntary Regulation Code the proposed new structure would comprise 4 board members elected from each of the following three Tiers, plus 3 board members to be co-opted where there is a skills deficit. This results in a maximum of 15 board members.

The proposed Three Tiers are:

- **Tier 1** Member organisations with less than 50 homes in management
- **Tier 2** Members managing between 50 and 300 homes in management
- **Tier 3** Members managing over 300 homes in management

Tier 1 has four proposed regions with one board member to be elected from each region:

- **West/North West**: Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Galway, Mayo, Roscommon
- **Munster**: Clare, Limerick, Tipperary, Cork, Kerry
- **South East/Leinster**: Wexford, Waterford, Carlow, Kilkenny, Offaly, Longford, Laois, Westmeath

**North East/Greater Dublin**: Monaghan, Cavan, Louth, Wicklow, Meath, Kildare, Cavan, Dublin

Tier 1 is made up of the majority of member organisations but with the lowest number of housing units in management. The main activity of members in Tier 1 is the management of special needs housing such as for older people, people with disabilities and the homeless but with some limited housing for families.

Tier 2 has a spread of an equal number of members providing to all special needs categories and families. It is proposed that 4 board members would be elected from this category.

Tier 3 contains the smallest number of member organisations but they manage the largest number of housing units in the sector. The majority of these members primarily provide housing for families with a small number also providing housing for older people and people with disabilities. Again, it is proposed that 4 board members would be elected from Tier 3.

Full details on this proposal have already been sent to ICSH members. The ICSH also consulted with members at the ICSH social housing conference in Wexford and have received useful feedback to date.

We would welcome any feedback on these proposals and would ask you to send your responses to margaret@icsh.ie

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**Upcoming events**

**ICSH A.G.M. 11am.**

**Wednesday Nov. 20th**

**Ashling Hotel, Parkgate Street, Dublin 8**

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<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Regional Meetings - Date, time and Venue</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SOUTH EAST</strong></td>
<td>Thursday 24th, October, 7.45pm Delta Centre, Strawhill, Co. Carlow</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>WEST</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday, 29th October, 7.45pm McWilliam Park Hotel, Claremorris, Co. Mayo</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MIDWEST</strong></td>
<td>Saturday, 2nd November, 7.45pm Venue Treacys West County Hotel, Ennis, Co. Clare</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DUBLIN/EAST</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday November 5th, 2.30pm Montpelier room, Ashling Hotel</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Large Organisations Constituency</strong></td>
<td>Tuesday November 5th Ashling Hotel, Dublin 8 Round Room Large 1.00pm Dub/East 2.30pm</td>
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Further regional meeting dates will be announced in due course.
CECODHAS Conference, Dublin

Over 150 delegates from 15 Member States came together at the CECODHAS event in the Grand Hotel, Malahide, co-hosted by the ICSH and NABCO to discuss innovative ways of funding to support the energy renovation of social housing.

A key message from the conference was that EU investment in regeneration and retrofitting of social housing can help tackle unemployment in Ireland.

The delegates also heard that such an investment would have the benefit of reducing fuel poverty and improve living conditions for many tenants of older social housing schemes around the country.

ICSH Executive Director, Mr Donal McManus, commented at the conference “For every ten jobs created by expanding the social housing development programme at least a further seven will be sustained elsewhere in the economy”. He added, “It is essential that with the next round of structural funds, the Government takes the opportunity to create a multiplier effect which will not only create much-needed employment but also reduce fuel poverty and improve living conditions for many tenants of older social housing schemes”.

In Memory Of

The Voluntary Housing Sector relies heavily on the on-going commitment of individual voluntary board members around the country who freely give up their time for the benefit of others and their local community.

The ICSH would like to recognise the invaluable contribution and personal dedication of recently deceased members of the sector, they will be sadly missed by all.

Michael J Noonan, Bruff Housing Association, (RIP)

Brendan Kelly, Roscara Housing Association, (RIP)

Sincere condolences from the ICSH, to the family, friends, and colleagues of Mr. Michael J. Noonan, a former board member of Bruff Housing Association, who recently passed away.

The ICSH would like to offer its deepest sympathies to family, friends, and colleagues, on the passing of Mr. Brendan Kelly, who is a former board member of Roscara Housing Association.

Budget 2014

The 2014 Budget was announced on Tuesday October 15th, below is a summary of relevant expenditure related to the Voluntary Housing Sector. Further detail and analysis will be provided in due course, upon publication of the revised estimates.

Social Housing Investment

- An investment of €30m in social housing will see 500 new units made available. These homes will either be built or will be a refurbishment of vacant stock. These units are part of the 4,500 units provided for social housing in 2014 through leasing and existing capital programmes such as transfers under the Rental Accommodation Scheme.

Regeneration

- €79m has been earmarked to continue the national regeneration programme with specific emphasis on areas in Limerick, Ballymun and Tralee in 2014.

Energy Efficiency

- €25m is being provided to improve the energy efficiency of 12,500 local authority houses through retrofitting and improved insulation which will result in warmer homes and lower energy bills for thousands of families.

Budget for Special Needs Groups

- A new social impact investment initiative will also see more than 130 homeless families move out of private emergency accommodation and into sustainable long-term tenancies.
- The budget for homeless services is unchanged at €45m.
- 175 new housing units for people with special needs will be developed and up to 150 new leased units will be delivered to cater specifically for people with disabilities leaving institutional care.

Rental Accommodation Scheme

- Up to 2,500 new transfers will take place under the Rental Accommodation Scheme and approximately 1,200 additional new leased housing units will come on line in 2014 bringing the overall operational number to 5,700 in 2014.

Housing Adaptation Grants

- Some 5,700 housing adaptation grants will assist older people and people with disabilities to remain at home for longer.

Leasing

- €10.0m has been made available for the provision of units through the leasing initiative.
In total, 260 delegates attended the conference over the two days, representing approved housing bodies, local authorities, statutory bodies, service providers, and Government departments.

Government policy has placed Approved Housing Bodies at the forefront of housing provision and against this backdrop the conference examined a variety of issues and themes ranging from the supply of new social housing in the coming years to meet the high demand, to leveraging private finance, as well as regulation and reform, coordinating policy development and collaborative working.

The panel at each conference session was selected to represent a variety of perspectives, and the inclusion of speakers from abroad added an important international dimension to the discussion. The parallel sessions allowed for further debate on more specific topics of current relevance including housing supply for the homeless, collaboration and partnership, housing management and investment solutions, and energy and retrofitting.

**Housing Policy and Housing Stimulus**

The first day of the conference focused on housing policy as well as solutions to stimulate housing supply in the current climate. Speakers from the sector highlighted the current hurdles that exist in current initiatives and what solutions the sector believes should be put in place. These have included amendments to the leasing scheme for shared living for people moving from congregated settings into the community, rent allowance and special needs housing, release of mortgage charges on existing properties to facilitate processes of accessing private finance and streamlining procedures on schemes such as CALF and mortgage to rent. To date there have only been a small number of completions with mortgage to rent. What is common with all these new initiatives is that they require significant co-ordination among a number of different stakeholders to ensure the common goal of delivery. Co-ordination with local authorities and the Housing Agency will be key for a clear pathway for delivery.

Professor Ken Gibb, Housing Economist and advisor to the Scottish Parliament Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee told delegates how a social housing stimulus would make a direct contribution to the near 100,000 people on housing waiting lists around the country. He pointed out that such a stimulus would also support economic activity, especially in the construction trade. In addition, repair and maintenance or improvement
expenditure work on social housing – such as energy efficient retrofitting – would have even greater employment creation potential because of their higher labour intensity.

Prof Gibb said every €1m spent on housing construction could support nearly 20 full-time jobs and considerably more if spent on repairs and improvements.

Reflecting the current policies around housing for special needs groups, the final afternoon discussion, before the break away for the parallel sessions, revolved around community living for older people and people with disabilities. The importance of housing choice and were discussed and debated along with the real gaps between strategy and reality.

Innovations in Housing Supply for the Homeless including Social Rental Agencies
Contributors discussed housing led responses to homelessness and how, in an increasingly competitive market, to increase the number of homes which are available for rent. This included a discussion on the use of social rental agencies (SRAs) in Belgium by Pascal de Decker along with the challenges from both the DECLG and housing provider perspective in the Irish context.

Future Housing Management and Investment Solutions
This parallel session looked at how Arm’s Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) have changed the way social housing is managed in the UK. Speakers also discussed the options for housing management and future investment solutions in the Irish contact with a case example of regeneration from Longford and a local authority perspective.

Energy Efficient Retrofitting – turning policy into practice
The session was sponsored by Electric Ireland and saw a cross sector perspective ranging from government policy and standards, a case study from a housing provider and an agency and its work around retro-fitting and energy efficiency.

Delegates were provided with an overview of local authority retro fit programme by the DECLG as well as the Retrofit Code of Practice, which provides guidance and relevant minimum standards for planning, designing and realising a retrofit refurbishment on an existing building. The learning from Tipperary Local Authorities around their retro fit programme was also discussed along with the possibility of a national housing strategy to retrofit fuel poor homes and the savings this could result in for the state. A case study from NABCO was also presented on the upgrade of NABCO’s Pinewood scheme and the resultant savings from the energy upgrades as well as the future aims of the organisation around improving the energy efficiency of their housing stock.
Collaboration and Partnership – delivering outcomes

This session brought together key stakeholders for a frank discussion on opportunities for the sector to develop partnerships and work better together. Speakers and delegates reflected on their experiences on specific collaboration initiatives, lessons learnt and key issues to overcome for the future in an open forum discussion.

The sessions on Thursday, the final day of the conference, provided a platform for the very current issue of sector regulation and discussions surrounding the voluntary governance code and the amended residential tenancies bill. This session, as chaired by Cian Ó Lionáin DECLG, provided delegates with information and the move to regulate the voluntary housing sector, through the recently published voluntary governance code and the inclusion of the sector under the Residential Tenancies Board. Annemarie Caulfield gave an overview of the operation of the RTB, the impending costs for the sector and the services provided to landlords and tenants. Marina Keane from Kilkee Voluntary Housing Association provided a perspective on the regulation of a smaller housing association, including the need to resource volunteer associations in order to adequately engage with the governance code and the RTB, as well as the experience of being a board member from the inception of a project to the management of the units. Tony Larkin gave an overview of the changing and future role of Local Authorities regarding social housing provision, and called for greater and more meaningful engagement between Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies.

The final session of the conference revolved around the “risks and rewards” related to the use of private finance for the provision of social housing units.

Dr Julie Lawson spoke of ‘two planets in the same orbit’ referencing the parallels between the Australian and Irish provision of housing by housing associations which she felt were confronting the same issues. Many of the proposals in Australia relate to the development of housing supply bonds, government guarantee systems and the development of instruments and intermediaries to channel lower cost and larger volumes of investment.

Mike Owen from Merthyr Valley Homes discussed the experience of regulation and stock transfer in Wales commenting that the structures, strategy, governance training and community benefits should be planned up front.

Michael Raftery, Oaklee Homes Group asked the question ‘is the sector ready’ in terms of other forms of financing social housing including stock transfer options. He discussed lenders requirements and the impact on the housing association, finishing with key questions which need to addressed such as the development of the regulatory framework, financial reporting as well as the scale and capacity of the sector.
Conference Dinner and Awards
The conference dinner was held on the Wednesday evening, where the Board Member Award, Governing Board Award and Community Housing Awards were presented. The awards are now an integral part of the conference programme.

This year marked the inaugural year of the Governing Board Awards, which recognised good governance and best practice by the governing board of housing associations. This year also marked the first time, a current Minister for Housing attended the conference dinner. Minister Jan O Sullivan presented awards to the recipients of the Board Member, Governing Board and the Community Housing Awards.

Closing-Challenges to enable delivery
Donal McManus, ICSH Executive Director, concluded by thanking firstly all the delegates and the speakers for their contributions both from Ireland and overseas.

He added that there were a number of key challenges for the Department and Government, local authorities and the housing association sector to deliver in this new environment.

For the Department, he included the need for internal co-ordination required to lead on resolving current hurdles for delivery of new initiatives. He also indicated how it was essential to have resources in place targeted for implementing regulation otherwise it will not be viewed as a priority.

For local authorities, in understanding the new environment of greater financial and reputational risk for housing associations, there were a number of practical issues such as release of AHB mortgage charges, signing new P & A agreements as well as the issue of stock transfers being addressed consistently by local authorities. He considered that greater co-ordination between local authorities and AHB’s at local level would enable housing associations to deliver and meet local authority needs.

For housing associations, there was a need to ensure more standardisation, such as in the production of accounts for financial bodies, as this would provide greater promotion of the collective capacity of the sector in attracting larger scale finance. In addition, a strong common message on what the sector has to offer was crucial at this time. He concluded there were often mixed messages being attributed to parts of the sector but that demonstrating the outcomes and innovation of the sector will help strengthen confidence in the sector.

He concluded that all stakeholders had to focus on the overall objective of addressing greater housing need.
Spanish type NAMA takes on assets

Sareb, the body similar to NAMA holding real estate assets from Spain’s nationalized banks, has ordered work to stop on about 160 of the 650 partially-completed building projects on its books and will decide which ones are worth completing. Spain is counting the cost of the collapse of a decade-long property boom that’s sent home prices falling about 30% since the start of 2008, driven unemployment to 26% and burdened banks with mounting bad loans that have made them wary of extending new credit. Spain established Sareb last year to absorb the souring real estate assets of eight lenders including the Bankia (BKIA) group that took a combined 41 billion euros of state aid as the government sought European funds to help clean up its banking system.

Sareb has taken on about 200,000 assets. This includes 107,000 properties, 76,000 of which are empty homes, Economy Minister Luis de Guindos told Congress in March. The bank plans to sell assets with a value of 1.5 billion euros this year. Sareb hasn’t identified any building project for demolition yet and has no plans to knock down finished properties. Instead it will focus on projects that are at an early stage and may pose a safety risk or are breaking urban planning laws as it decides which ones to demolish.

New Zealand

State plan stock transfer to community housing to increase their stock

The Housing Minister in New Zealand recently announced that 12,000 state houses could be transferred to community housing associations. There are currently over 85,000 social rented homes comprising 69,000 of state homes owned by Housing NZ, 11,000 council owned and 5,000 owned and managed by community housing associations. It is proposed to have the community housing associations proportion of social housing increased to 20%. It is felt that housing associations in New Zealand are well behind housing association sectors in Europe, North America and Australia who are much more active in the provision and management of social housing. It has been recognised in New Zealand that housing associations provide more than just housing and project important supports to all vulnerable groups into the wider housing market and society.

Netherlands

Dutch housing associations, after the enactment of legislation, in recent years are now having to target more of their social housing allocations to households under certain incomes. This followed rulings by the European Commission that in order to comply with service of general interest a cap of €33,000 for household incomes was to be applied to 90% of allocations. The dutch system over the years was a more a universal system of housing allocations where allocation of social housing was not predicated on income. Housing associations in the Netherlands now comprise over 40% of the total housing stock. With the new allocation of social housing by housing associations for households under €43,000 they will not see their rent increase by more than the rate of inflation. Unlike Ireland in the Netherlands rents are more economic and not differential rents but linked to actual cost of providing the accommodation. With housing associations in the Netherlands, both small and large, using significant levels of private finance with a guarantee system known as WSW, which was established with assistance from the Dutch Housing Federation and upderpins the financing of new social housing.