



Goal

11



Sustainable Cities  
and Communities

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## Sustainable Cities and Communities

Urban living must be central to economic policy for the new Government. They need to tackle the congestion that damages our environment, undermines our collective prosperity, and injures our quality of life. Government with Local Authorities must work to create sustainable cities, towns, and communities.

Working, liveable urban centres are fundamental to the National Planning Framework, essential to the Climate Action Plan, and vital to the domestic economy. Unfortunately, as the National Economic and Social Council has observed, “dysfunctional patterns, interactions and outcomes are hard-wired into our system of urban development, land use and housing.”

Ireland has already become an urbanised country. Creating attractive urban spaces that are enjoyable to live in will benefit everyone. For the people living there it means reduced commuting and easier access to community and public services, while clustering offers massive economic opportunities for both employers and employees.

All future development must see mixed-use zoning with dense residential areas and local active travel infrastructure that is integrated with public transport.

We must move from the approach that has resulted in the kind of sprawl that damages productivity, and instead holistically integrate our land management, planning, and public transport strategies to create urban spaces which benefit everyone.

Investing in the public urban realm has direct business benefits, improves quality of life, and enhances both welfare and health. Building healthy, active, living towns and cities creates a complementary alignment in personal, private and public interests.

In addition to investing in our towns, Government must introduce policies which help the conversion of vacant commercial properties into residential units and expand the powers of Local Authorities to put charges on, or compulsory purchase, vacant and derelict properties.

## Urban Living Initiative

### Create A National Urban Living Initiative

- Create an Urban Living Initiative for urban spaces across the country, focusing on the development of healthy streets as in the London model
- What is now the Living City Initiative (LCI) should be expanded to include long term vacant commercial properties built post-1915 in the cities and towns specified in the NPF and reformed to include acquisition costs of LCI qualifying properties

### Empower Local Authorities

- Enact legislation that will empower and resource Local Authorities as one-stop-shops to streamline the regulatory regime for change-of-use construction projects and above-the-shop conversions which expand the availability of housing
- Renew the Derelict Sites Act 1990 to strengthen its elements to incentivise infill and brownfield construction
- Better resource Local Authorities to initiate street improvement and active travel investments
- Introduce new legislation to expand and strengthen the powers of Local Authorities to compulsory purchase vacant sites

### Improve Transport Services

- Develop inter-urban and intra-urban public transport networks, and invest in the urban built environment to promote local active transport networks that extend the utility of public transport
- Amend road traffic legislation to allow Personally Powered Transporters (e-scooters)
- Invest in shared cycling schemes and cycling infrastructure

- Prioritise intercity rail transport infrastructure
- The establishment of, as EU Policy, a TEN-T corridor along the Atlantic Economic Corridor route extending from Donegal through Sligo to Kerry
- Progress the Dublin rail interconnector
- Fast-track the Cork Suburban Rail project
- Implement BusConnects projects in all the cities
- On existing rail routes, introduce high speed sections to reduce the conflict between intercity and commuter services
- Initiate feasibility studies, and cost benefit analyses – including carbon accounting – on upgrading the links between the National Development Plan growth cities through the rail network
- Proceed with the Dart extensions and develop a timeline towards developing an all-electric rail network
- Extend train lines, where suitable, to connect freight to our trading seaports

### Support Urbanism

- Investment in the urban built environment to provide social and community spaces and resources, akin to those in rural areas
- Ensure that our Local Area Plans require the people-friendly pedestrian infrastructure, segregated cycleways, and rest spots that are needed to support active transit while linking our residential areas with our civic and economic centres
- Councils that run large budget surpluses should be encouraged to invest the excess in the local economy through Transport Orientated Development
- With regard to Local Property Tax, continue to implement the Thornhill Report recommendations, and provide greater transparency about where revenue is spent

- Direct Local Authorities to integrate decisions on property taxes into the general budget process, rather than the status quo where it is dealt with as a standalone item

### Remove Regulatory Disincentives

- Ensure regulatory certainty around high-density and apartment planning
- Amend EPA waste licensing rules to facilitate on-site reuse
- Support co-operative property ownership projects
- Reform Fair Deal charges to make these houses available to the rental market
- Introduce a targeted, time-bound, reduction of Construction VAT for affordable high-density apartment new builds in cities

## Housing Supply and Transport Orientated Development

### Integrate Housing Policy with Transport Policy

- Conduct an independent review of all existing housing policies without discontinuing the supports that are currently in place
- The Government must commit to the principles and objectives of the National Planning Framework and integrate it with the Climate Action Plan, applying the revised EU Commission definitions of Green investment, and the 'Green Golden Rule' accounting measures
- Ensure that Transport Orientated Development principles form the core of all new developments, the MetroLink Project offers a great opportunity develop expertise in this area

- Prioritise traffic reduction measures in all our towns and cities while expanding local active travel and public transport options
- Develop a National Active Land Management Policy
- Finalise and enact the legislative framework for the Land Development Agency (LDA) which allows it active land management powers
- Building upon the National Planning Framework and the Climate Action Plan There needs to be co-ordinated efforts at the regional level to integrate development, land management and investment in public transport.
- Ensure that the LDA has compulsory purchase order powers in line with the Kenny report, support this with a referendum if necessary

### Reduce Vacancies

- Modernisation of the land registry to facilitate the creation of a national vacant land registry
- Implement a strengthened vacant land levy which acts as a charge on the land regardless of the ownership
- Reform of the planning system to ensure efficient decision making, in combination with the upskilling of Local Authority planning departments to allow for consistent and integrated decision making across the regions
- Having reviewed the vacancy rates, the Department of housing should set vacancy reduction targets for Local Authorities at the Electoral District level

## Local Authority Reform

### Green Local Government

- Allocate more funding for Local Authority energy agencies to support communities and business to become more sustainable in their energy use
- Modernise waste management systems
- Introduce a recycling deposit system
- Implement training programmes for councillors to help them align Local Economic and Community Plans and Local Area Plans with the “European Green Deal” to ensure access to EU funding
- Introduce both a green and a social sustainability component to the Procurement process to assist Local Authorities to better judge the merits of tenders.

### Plan for the Future

- Strengthen and resource the planning professionals in the Local Authorities and other relevant agencies
- Create guidelines on how Local Authorities apply construction duties and levies to ensure consistency across regions and using rebates of levies and charges to ensure completion of high-density developments
- Introduce targeted reductions in construction duties and levies for developments which are coherent with the National Planning Framework
- Improve information given in the Commercial and Residential Property Price registers to facilitate proper assessment of costs per square metre

### Strengthen the Regions

- Create a Super-Junior Ministry for North-South Cooperation which focuses on the infrastructural, economic, and regulatory impacts of government policy on border counties and Northern Ireland
- Conduct an independent review the Regional Assemblies’ Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy Process with a view towards supporting the regional planning process
- Develop guidelines on transport infrastructure for the Regional Assemblies, while simultaneously reforming transport bodies so that they prioritise the regional impact of transport infrastructure and connection to their cities
- Resource the Regional Assemblies so that they can develop territorial impact assessments on central government policies, and proposed legislation, which can feed into the pre-legislative scrutiny process