

Response to Queries from Public Accounts Committee

Total amount of funding approved and provided to the Irish Council for Social Housing (ICSH).

Annual Grant

Since its establishment in 1982, the membership of the Irish Council for Social Housing (ICSH) has grown significantly and today the ICSH functions as the national representative federation for non-profit, voluntary and other social housing organisations, providing guidance and practical support for its members.

Rebuilding Ireland sets out a significant role for Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) in terms of future social housing provision. In order for the sector to step up to this role, it needs to develop in terms of increased scale and capacity and an ability to operate within a more regulated environment.

The ICSH is a key partner of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Housing Agency in relation to development of regulation and financial capacity of the AHB sector. Its services include education and training courses, a legal registration service to assist newly formed associations and an advisory service on all aspects of social housing development and management.

As a representative organisation, the ICSH works with statutory and other voluntary organisations to identify and streamline mechanisms to promote social housing delivery and provides co-ordinated information on behalf of the AHBs on their development activity, capacity and ambitions, as well as a co-ordinated policy input from the sector. It also has a role in assisting and assessing proposed new housing associations that wish to become approved housing bodies.

Grant funding of €410,000 was provided to the ICSH in 2017 and the same amount has been allocated in 2018 to assist the Council in providing increased support services to its member organisations to enable them to deliver on the level of ambition envisaged for the AHB sector under *Rebuilding Ireland*. This funding is provided on the basis of a formal agreement entered into regarding a defined programme of activities to be undertaken by the ICSH each year.

Innovation Fund

Rebuilding Ireland committed the Government to a range of structural, funding and policy supports to increase delivery by Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs). In 2016, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government established an Innovation Fund to support Tier 3 AHBs in their development of innovative financial models that would assist in improving the capacity of the sector.

Four proposals were deemed eligible for funding under this Fund, including a proposal by the ICSH in relation to the establishment of a sector-led financial vehicle to allow AHBs to expand and to facilitate the delivery of additional housing units. Funding of some €48,900 was approved for this project, payable on the basis of vouched expenditure and matching funding from the ICSH.

Considerable work has been ongoing between the ICSH, a number of larger Tier 3 AHBs and their financial advisor on the development of a vehicle or mechanism for delivering

private financing for AHBs providing social housing in line with commitments under *Rebuilding Ireland*. This project involves a number of phases, including engagement with a range of financial institutions. Part of this also involved the AHBs examining models that will facilitate private financing, now having regard also to the recent reclassification decision by Eurostat of the larger Tier 3 AHBs in 2018.

Two phases of the work have been completed. The first stage was to produce up to date market testing for social housing financing from financial bodies and investors, including credit unions, which was completed in mid-2017. The second stage included the demand and terms from AHBs for such off balance sheet financing to inform heads of terms for financial investors. The third phase of work involves the development of an appropriate structure for a vehicle to facilitate private off balance sheet finance. Considerable and complex work is ongoing on this phase of the project.

Provide financing details in relation to local authority housing lands to include whether owned outright or a summary of financing arrangements

The following table summarises the position in relation to the over 700 local authority sites for housing included on the Rebuilding Ireland Housing Land Map.

Number of sites that are unencumbered	Number of sites that have loans attached	Total of Land Acquisition Loans Outstanding At End June 2018
582	128	€434,774,788*

*This total includes €45 million relating to Land Aggregation Scheme loans, the repayments on which are recouped to the local authorities concerned on a biannual basis.

**DHPLG,
22 October 2018.**