

4th October 2017

**Statement to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on
Housing, Planning & Local Government**

**General Scheme of the
Building Control (Construction Industry Register Ireland) Bill 2017**

By Alan Baldwin, Chair of the SCSI's Building Surveying Professional Group

Chairperson, Deputies and Senators,

As Chair of the Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland's Professional Group on Building Surveying, I would like to firstly thank you and the committee for the invitation to address the group on the proposed CIRI Bill.

The SCSI has and continues to be very active in relation to the publication of authoritative data for policymakers and government officials. For example, given the current housing and homelessness crises, the SCSI has published numerous reports on the property market and construction costs for housing so that this issue can be measured and addressed in a targeted and systematic way. The SCSI is also currently finalising our Apartment Delivery Cost Report 2017, following on our Real Cost of New House Delivery report in 2016. In addition to this, the SCSI continues to raise awareness of building defect concerns within our current building stock, particularly those within our multi-unit developments, as outlined in our recent submission to the Department and which was presented to this committee earlier this year.

During that committee meeting, we provided our views on the Building Control (Amendment) Regulations, which we affirmed is a substantial improvement on the previous self-compliance regime. The SCSI believes greater consumer protection can be best achieved through on-going review and improvement of the current regulations, for example - improvements in the provision of latent defects insurance measures in residential development. The certification process under BCAR is making significant grounds and with greater support of industry standards, further gains can be made. Therefore, we welcome an increase in construction industry standards and we fully support the introduction of CIRI on a mandatory basis for all those working within the construction sector impacted by the Building Regulations. With the advancements made in terms of building materials and new building products, we feel that industry practices and installation training was and still is, slow to keep

pace with the new ways of installing innovative products and materials and this can be assisted by mandatory training and continuing professional development across the industry.

The purpose of CIRI is to provide a transparent regulatory environment to improve quality within our building stock and to ensure high quality construction practices and products for the future in the public interest. The construction industry has suffered reputational damage prior to the introduction of BCAR. CIRI aims to address this by raising standards and practices so that we avoid mistakes of the past. Commitment to mandatory registration demonstrates a desire to stamp out non-compliant construction activities and expose and eliminate non competent 'builders' from the industry.

As an industry, the construction industry must meet the demands of more rigorous building regulations; more complex and competitive procurement processes; the use of innovative and diverse technologies in design and construction processes; and increasingly demanding building contracts.

Regular education, training and upskilling for all those in the construction sector is vital to ensure high standards are applied and maintained. This is important in high risk areas such as fire safety. With new products and building methods coming on stream annually, our current workforce must upskill regularly to maintain skills appropriate to new product installation requirements. We welcome the requirement for CIRI Registrants to plan, record and verify the CPD activities of its personnel, with the principal focus on management and supervisory staff whose input is essential to achieving legislative and regulatory compliance. We believe through CIRI other policy directions can be supported such as Professional Indemnity Insurance.

The establishment of a mandatory Register should be regarded as a positive step forward in the Irish construction industry. It has been regarded as an integral component of encouraging public confidence in the construction industry and protecting consumers. A consumer who engages a Builder from the Register should have the assurance that the latter possesses a minimum level of commitment to best practice, competency and qualifications.



We in the SCSI would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our support and overriding requirements that it provides a “fit for purpose” process by providing flexible access to competent entities ,without sacrificing standards, in the interest of consumer protection.

From a consumer protection point of view, with the improvements made with the introduction of BCAR and the proposed implementation of CIRI, SCSI is concerned that the level of latent defects insurance currently available falls short of what is required. While there have been improvements in recently introduced products, we feel that this area requires significant improvements.

In conclusion, as the Registration Body for Building Surveyors and Quantity Surveyors under the Building Control Act, the SCSI would welcome the introduction of the CIRI scheme to ensure a competent workforce throughout the construction process, which benefit the other professions and consumers.

Thank you.