

Introduction

Thank you for the invitation to present at today's meeting.

The Irish Green Building Council was founded by organisations operating in the construction and property sector, to accelerate the transition to a sustainable built environment.

We advocate, we educate, but we also develop tools to facilitate this transition. We have for instance developed:

- the [Home Performance Index certification system](#) to improve the environmental quality of new homes.
- [EPD Ireland programme](#) to provide transparent information on the environmental impact of construction products.

In 2017, we worked in close cooperation with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment to develop Ireland's National Renovation strategy. We are now working with our members on the implementation of this strategy. This includes working with all the construction institutes to upskill their members for renovation. We are also working on designing a 'building renovation passport' to enable homeowners to plan cost effective staged renovation over a number of years.

We must get all our homes, both new and existing, to zero carbon by 2050.

Existing Homes – Challenges and Opportunities

For existing homes, we need a step change in both the level of activity and the "depth" of energy efficiency upgrades to transition every home to zero carbon by 2050.

In the process we can eliminate fuel poverty and improve people's health and wellbeing by giving them warm, mould free homes. This will reduce health expenditure by alleviating illness related to damp and cold.

We can also create sustainable construction jobs for the next 30 years in every village and town across the country.

We welcome the recent document from Department of Housing 'Bringing back homes. A Manual for reuse of existing buildings.' By focusing on renovating empty homes and accommodation above shops and businesses in the centres of our villages and towns, we can revitalise existing communities, while reducing carbon emissions from transport and making best use of the existing stock.

New housing – Challenges and Opportunities

The National Planning Framework proposes to build 500,000 houses over the next 21 years, adding 25% to the existing stock. This represents a great opportunity to regenerate and densify existing towns and cities.

The nearly Zero Energy Standard comes into force this year on 1st November for new homes through Part L of the Building Regulations, but we need to go further.

We must move to fossil free energy systems in new homes immediately. We must also consider the wider unregulated carbon impacts of homes such as the water usage, the materials used to build them, and must ensure that all new homes are well located, with walkable access to amenities and

public transport. By moving to energy positive homes, new homes can play a part in decarbonising our electricity.

Our Home Performance Index certification gives developers and local authorities a framework for better built, better quality, healthy homes, in connected, ecologically enhanced communities. It is not enough to have energy efficient homes, they must enable low carbon lifestyles.

Conclusion

We believe that the following actions are needed to ensure all citizens can make low-carbon choices and live in truly sustainable homes and neighbourhoods.

Government must provide long-term certainty that deep energy renovation is and will remain a top priority. This will allow everyone in the industry to invest with confidence in the skills and innovation needed.

Government needs to support the rapid upskilling of the industry so that homeowners can identify which building professionals and tradesmen have the expertise to do quality renovation.

We must ramp up funding for local authorities to renovate all their housing stock.

We need to make finance available to everyone to renovate their homes whether through low interest loans or green mortgages. The Irish Green Building Council has just been provided funding by the European Commission to work on establishing a green mortgage programme in Ireland over the next two years. This will enable homeowners to access cheaper finance for renovation and allow home buyers to benefit from reduced interest rates if they buy the greenest new homes on the market. We already have commitments from home builders to provide greener new homes if the banks support them with such a programme. All banks, credit unions and other financial institutions should now be required to play their part and participate in financing the energy transition.

We would like to thank you once again for the invitation to speak today.

Appendix 1: Additional information on Irish Green Building Council's projects and tools

Build Upon



For 2 years, IGBC worked in close cooperation with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment to build a community of experts and stakeholders to develop Ireland's new National Renovation Strategy.

Close to 200 key stakeholders took part in a process which led to the launch of a final set of recommendations in February 2017. The final set of recommendations can be [downloaded here](#).

This work was completed as part of the [EU funded Build Upon project](#). See <http://buildupon.eu/ireland> for further information.

EPD Ireland



EPD Ireland is a programme run by Irish Green Building Council to enable Irish producers of construction products to measure and declare the Environmental impacts of manufacturing their products. This enables procurers, architects and engineers to specify products with lower embodied carbon and design buildings with a lower environmental impact. www.epdireland.org

Home Performance Index



Home Performance Index is a certification system for new housing to enable home buyers to choose low carbon, healthy quality homes. It is used by both local authorities and private developers as a framework to improve the quality of their homes and to demonstrate it to homebuyers.

www.homeperformanceindex.ie

Making sure we have the right skills: Upskilling the Industry

To develop a network of skilled, trusted and easily identifiable advisors, the IGBC and Limerick Institute of Technology are working on the implementation of a user-friendly holistic energy efficiency accreditation of building professionals, and looking at ways to extend it to construction workers.

As property owners are often discouraged by a lack of understanding of the renovation process, the introduction of this accreditation system along with a register of accredited professionals, should facilitate renovation and ensure Irish citizens are at the centre of the energy transition.

To better incentivise building professionals and construction workers to upskill in the area, a self-assessment tool is being developed to allow them to easily identify the steps they need to take to upskill and achieve accreditation. Read more at <https://www.igbc.ie/policy-and-regulation/renovation-strategies/making-sure-we-have-the-right-skills/>.