

**IDA Ireland Submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee
on Housing, Planning and Local Government**

in relation to the

General Scheme of the Land Development Agency Bill 2019

Introduction

IDA Ireland welcomes the opportunity to input into the Joint Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government's analysis of the General Scheme of the Land Development Agency Bill 2019. As the Committee will be aware, the establishment of the new agency was one of the key objectives of *Project Ireland 2040* and is supported by National Policy Objectives 12 and 66 of the National Planning Framework. It is also consistent with the proposed *National Strategic Outcome* of achieving "Compact Growth".

Importance of Housing and Good Placemaking

The objects and functions of the LDA are of significant relevance to IDA Ireland's ability to continue to attract inward investment. In particular, a sufficient supply of housing in sustainable urban centres, underpinned by the principles of good placemaking, is a key consideration for multinationals when assessing potential locations in which to base operations. The principal objects of the LDA to develop relevant lands for housing, and to establish associated mechanisms and collaborative structures to facilitate this, will enable LDA to make a major contribution to housing supply. It is important that this development adheres to the principles of good placemaking and contributes to the growth of vibrant liveable urban centres which are attractive places in which to both live and work.

Corporate Model

Having examined the General Scheme, it is noted that the LDA is to be established under a company structure and it will operate commercially. In this respect it shares certain similarities with the former *National Building Agency* which was set up under a company model in 1960. This model was also more recently selected in 2018 for the establishment of *Home Building Finance Ireland*. There are several more examples, and as such, the state-owned commercial company model is now firmly established as a successful corporate governance framework. This should enable the LDA with the financial flexibility to operate in a counter cyclical fashion to ensure appropriate housing delivery continues in all cycles. It is exceptionally important that the LDA is appropriately structured to attract investment and operate at an appropriate scale in the market.

Powers and Functions

In order to achieve its goals, LDA should be afforded powers commensurate with the scale and importance of its mission so as to enable the agency to carry out its objectives efficiently and effectively. While its specific powers are a matter for the sponsoring Department, it is noted that the General Scheme does not appear to designate the LDA as a “development agency” for the purposes of developing Strategic Development Zones. This is a power that has previously been successfully utilised by Grangegorman Development Agency. The LDA should also be enabled to play a leading role in facilitating and enabling the development and implementation of such major capital projects.

Collaboration with Relevant Public Bodies

In relation to IDA Ireland’s own property development functions, we understand that IDA would fall under the definition of “Relevant Public Body” under the wording of the General Scheme. Ensuring the Bill provides for the establishment of mechanisms of interaction and collaboration between the LDA and relevant public bodies would be beneficial to the sustainable development of the public land bank and provide for smooth and cohesive relationships.

Functional Scope

Head 8(1)(b) states that it is a principal object of the LDA to “develop land for housing or other related development purposes...”. It is unclear how “other related development” is to be interpreted. “Development” has a broad meaning as per its definition under Section 3 of the *Planning and Development Act 2000*. Accordingly, the term “other related development”, would benefit from a specific definition. This equally applies to the terms “related development projects” and “related developments” as used elsewhere in the General Scheme.

Head 9(2)(a) further requires the LDA to identify relevant public lands and appraise their potential “for development”. Again, this is a broad term and in this instance reference to housing is absent. The Bill may benefit from greater clarity as to the types of development envisaged. In this respect an ability to progress mixed-use development schemes may provide an opportunity to deliver enhancements to the public realm and high-quality placemaking initiatives which would also enhance Ireland’s ability to win Foreign Direct Investment.



Conclusion

IDA Ireland thanks the Committee for considering its input on this important piece of legislation and looks forward to the establishment of the Land Development Agency in primary legislation in the near future.

