

OPENING STATEMENT

To Members of the Joint Committee on Housing, Planning,
Community and Local Government

Jack Keyes, Chairman Designate

Pyrite Resolution Board

13th July 2017

Thank you Chairman.

It is a privilege for me to be invited to appear before you today. I am grateful for the opportunity to speak about myself and the Pyrite Resolution Board which I hope to serve as Chair. I will try to answer your questions as comprehensively as I can.

I have spent most of my career working at senior level in local government including as Cavan County Manager 2004-2014. Prior to that I worked with Offaly County Council and Dublin City Council as Director of Services and Senior Executive Engineer across all service areas including housing. The first decade of my career was in the private sector as a consulting engineer in large practices in Dublin. I hold an honours degree in Civil Engineering from University College Dublin and have post graduate qualifications in accountancy, personnel management, public management and leadership. I am a Chartered Engineer and a Fellow of Engineers Ireland.

For the past 3 years, I have worked in leadership development, strategic planning, organizational development and project management with a variety of public, private and voluntary sector clients. I am currently chair of several boards and committees including The National Rural Water Services Committee and the National Rural Water Expert Group and was recently chair of the Boundary Review Committees for Athlone and Drogheda – all Government appointments. I chair Cavan Sport and Leisure Company Ltd and Cavan Institute. I was Chairman of Cavan County Enterprise Board from 2004 to 2014. I serve on the Board of the National Library and chair its Readers Advisory Committee. My academic work includes lecturing in leadership and strategic planning in the Institute of Public Administration at levels 9 and 10.

As County Manager in Cavan I focused on strengthening governance processes and oversaw the establishment of the Councils first audit committee. I drew up its risk register and achieved high levels of compliance in all Government and EU audits. In addressing challenging societal issues, I achieved a balance between facilitating the voice and catering for the needs of citizens including those in challenging situations on one hand and achieving value for money for the state on the other. By focusing on results and processes successful outcomes were achieved in many areas and Cavan became an award-winning county in many fields. My principal focus at undergraduate and post graduate engineering level was on soil mechanics including dealing with challenging ground conditions. I understand the construction industry and all its facets and diverse players.

The Pyrite Resolution Act 2013 sets out the respective functions of the PRB and the Housing Agency. The Act mandated to the PRB to draw up a Scheme for the

remediation of significant pyritic damage to dwellings, to accept applications from affected homeowners and to direct and oversee the implementation of a pyrite remediation programme. The Pyrite Remediation Scheme sets out the conditions that must be satisfied in order to qualify for remediation under the Scheme.

The Pyrite Resolution Board (PRB) was established by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, following the commencement of the Pyrite Resolution Act 2013 on 10 January 2014. The Pyrite Remediation Scheme was made by the Board on 12 February 2014 and amended on 5 February 2015. This Scheme constitutes the framework for the application of the provisions contained in the Act and first came into operation on 13 February 2014. Its mission statement is : ***To procure the remediation of certain dwellings with damage caused by pyritic heave of hardcore under floor slabs in a fair, efficient, transparent and cost effective manner.***

The PRB needs to be acutely conscious of the need to ensure that the expenditure of public funds is managed carefully, consistent with achieving the Scheme's objectives. To ensure value for money, framework panels have been set up for building professionals and for building contractors following open tendering procedures and contracts for individual projects are subject to further tendering from these panels. Exchequer funding provided for pyrite remediation purposes is routed through the Housing Agency and the audited Financial Statements relating to such funds are contained in the Housing Agency's Annual Report.

The original geographical scope of the scheme was limited to the areas identified

in the Pyrite Panel report of June 2012, i.e. the counties of Meath, Kildare and Offaly and the administrative areas of Fingal County Council and Dublin City Council. However, during 2014, reports were received of pyritic heave in a number of houses in two estates in the administrative areas area of South Dublin and Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Councils. On investigation the Pyrite Resolution Board [PRB] was satisfied that damage attributable to pyritic heave was present in dwellings in those developments and recommended to the Minister an amendment of the Scheme to include those areas.

The process works as follows:

- the Pyrite Resolution Board (PRB) accepts and validates applications under the Scheme and oversees the implementation of the pyrite remediation programme for approved dwellings. The scale of the programme is determined by the availability of funding and other factors.
- the Housing Agency, subject to the direction of PRB, remediates approved dwellings affected by pyrite and implements the pyrite remediation scheme. The Housing Agency also assess and make recommendations to the PRB on applications from homeowners for inclusion in the scheme.

An Audit & Risk Committee assists the Board in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities and operates to the Board's approved Terms of Reference. The Committee meets quarterly, comprises of a Chairman, 5 Board Members and one external member with experience in financial accounting. The boards tasks include overseeing the above process and ensuring that a robust risk management system is in place.

The funding of pyrite remediation works is from voted Exchequer expenditure allocated by the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government. The PRB approves expenditure profiles by the Housing Agency in respect of costs, commitments and expenses.

In 2016 expenditure on the pyrite remediation programme amounted to €26,999,642.

Status of applications at end of June 2017:

Total Applications	1798
Number of dwellings under remediation	127
Included in Scheme	1309
Closed	101

Looking ahead at the next 3 years, the challenge will be to maintain the progress that has been made over the past 2 years and complete the requisite number of repairs. The need to deal with applicants fairly, with empathy, objectively and consistently and in accordance with governing legislation will underpin the work of the board. Comprehensive oversight of the complex processes involved in inviting and initially assessing applications, overseeing the work of expert consultants and contractors, focusing on minimizing disruption to the families involved and delivering value for money will demand that the board performs its functions efficiently and effectively. An ever-increasing emphasis on Corporate Governance will result in ongoing significant focus on this area.

I hope I have demonstrated to you that I have the expertise and Corporate Governance experience to Chair the Pyrite Resolution Board.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.