



Tithe an
Oireachtais
Houses of the
Oireachtas

**An Comhchoiste um Thithíocht,
Rialtas Áitiúil agus Oidhreacht
Modhanna Nua-Aimseartha Foirgníochta**

Deireadh Fómhair 2023

**Joint Committee on Housing,
Local Government and Heritage
Modern Methods of Construction**

October 2023

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1. CATHAOIRLEACH'S PREFACE



Housing for All identified the adoption of Modern Methods of Construction as central to the delivery of housing targets. Such modern methods have the potential to dramatically improve construction sector productivity, innovation, speed of delivery, sustainability, and costs. Under the Government's Climate Action Plan 2023, there must be a 40% reduction in carbon emissions within residential construction sector by 2030. Utilising modern construction methods also has the effect of contributing to carbon neutrality. As we move towards a more sustainable future, it is essential that we embrace innovative construction techniques that are not only efficient, but also deliver advantages of sustainability, consistent quality, flexibility, and freedom of design.

Considering the wide-ranging benefits of accelerating the use of modern construction methods, including the increase in housing supply, the Committee met with witnesses to identify challenges and barriers to adopting these approaches on a meaningful scale. Modern methods of construction will be the future of the industry, using technology and innovation to deliver badly needed homes quickly and at scale.

The Committee gained valuable and detailed insights into this topic from several witnesses, and as a result has made practical recommendations which aim to progress the use of these efficient building technologies. On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank all representatives for their engagement and valuable submissions to the Committee. I would particularly like to thank those Committee Members who did not fully endorse all the recommendations but worked in a spirit of collegiality to allow the Committee to complete its work.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Steven Matthews'.

Steven Matthews T.D.,
Cathaoirleach,
Joint Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage
3 October 2023

2. INTRODUCTION

Housing for All identified the adoption of Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) as central to the delivery of housing targets. Utilising new methods of construction, including timber, can contribute towards our collective goal of carbon neutrality. Under the Government's Climate Action Plan 2023, there must be a 40% reduction in carbon emissions within the residential construction sector by 2030. Ireland's built environment currently represents 37% of Ireland's annual greenhouse gas emissions, with embodied carbon representing 14% of our annual emissions, that is, the carbon required to construct buildings. The Committee understands the necessity to achieve our climate goals, and the innovative tool low-carbon technologies, such as MMC, pose to contribute to a more sustainable built environment.

In exploring the topic of Modern Methods of Construction, the Committee held three sessions, with two sessions focusing on modern construction methods, and one session involving discussion on the Review of Fire Safety Building Regulations. The Committee heard from a wide variety of stakeholders, including National Standards Authority of Ireland, Construction Industry Federation and Dublin Fire Brigade, among others.

The list of witnesses who attended before the Committee can be found below, with links to the Meeting Transcripts accessible in [Appendix 3](#), and Opening Statements available in [Appendix 4](#).

Tuesday 2 May 2023

Modern Construction Methods: Discussion

Coillte

- Mr. Des O'Toole, Marketing & Communications
- Mr. Mark Carlin, Managing Director, Coillte Forest

National Standards Authority of Ireland

- Mr. Enda McDonnell, Director of Standards and Metrology
- Ms. Geraldine Larkin, CEO
- Mr. Seán Balfe, Head of Sustainability and Built Environment
- Ms. Yvonne Wylde, Head of Standards Technical

Office of Public Works

- Mr. Ciarán O'Connor, State/Principal Architect and Commissioner
- Mr. Gerard Harvey, Assistant Principal Architect

SOLAS

- Mr. Andrew Brownlee, CEO
- Mr. Tony Dalton, Director of Further Education and Training at Laois Offaly ETB

Tuesday 9 May 2023

Modern Construction Methods: Discussion (Resumed)

Construction Industry Federation

- Mr. Martin Searson, Quality Positive/CJK Engineering
- Mr. Sean Downey, CIF Director, Specialist Contracting
- Mr. Tom Parlon, CIF Director General

Dominic Stevens – JFOC Architects

- Ms. Claire McManus, Co-Director JFOC Architects
- Mr. Dominic Stevens, Director JFOC Architects

Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland

- Mr. David Browne, Architect
- Mr. Pat Kirwan, Director of C&W Architects

Tuesday 23 May 2023

Review of Part B (Fire Safety) of Building Regulations: Dublin Fire Brigade

Dublin Fire Brigade

- Mr. Denis Keeley, Chief Fire Officer
- Ms. Mary O'Brien, Assistant Chief Fire Officer

3. CAPACITY BUILDING FOR MMC

Witnesses highlighted to the Committee that the current approaches to building design and construction will not sufficiently address the urgent challenges of climate change, Ireland's growing population and consequent housing crisis, as well as the added difficulties of labour shortages and gender imbalance in the construction sector. However, low-carbon building technologies, such as MMC and timber, have the potential to address these issues. MMC was described as ranging from simple on-site innovative processes which employ new techniques, equipment, or materials, as well as off-site manufacturing, such as 2D and 3D volumetric units, and building information modelling (BIM) tools. Although MMC implies modern or new approaches to construction, the use of industrialised construction methods, such as timber, in Irish housing dates back to the 1960s. Witnesses discussed the potential of MMC to dramatically improve construction sector productivity, innovation, speed of delivery, sustainability, and costs.

In presenting to the Committee, Office of Public Works (OPW) reported it is in the process of delivering 700 prefabricated units, that is, high-quality rapid-build homes built either completely or partially in a factory environment and lifted or assembled on-site. In terms of this off-site factory construction, OPW illustrated that 2D panelised and 3D volumetric units will be delivered. OPW distinguished the two, describing 3D volumetric as involving the speedy delivery of complete factory finished homes. There is little on-site work required for 3D volumetric, as the units are simply physically lifted and fitted onto the site. In this way, 3D volumetric units allow a high standard of quality control, reduced wastage and improved health and safety. Comparatively, 2D panelised units are slower to deliver but quicker than traditional masonry methods. This approach requires flat-pack panels to be lifted into

position and bolted together on-site, which requires full scaffolding (See Figures 1 and 2 below).



Figure 1 - 2D Panelised Units. Source: Office of Public Works, Presentation to Joint Committee on Housing, Local Government & Heritage, 2nd May 2023



Figure 2 - 3D Volumetric Units. Source: Office of Public Works, Presentation to Joint Committee on Housing, Local Government & Heritage, 2nd May 2023

It was discussed at the Committee that off-site fabrication allows for better quality control and use of labour, improved health and safety and cost-effective asset management. Construction Industry Federation (CIF) illustrated to the Committee:

“Using offsite manufacturing supply chains can offer certainty of delivery in terms of time and cost and bring major advantages in the onsite programme duration.” – Mr. Tom Parlon, CIF Director General

Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland (RIAI) echoed this, stating that the smaller the number of components that must be assembled on-site, the more productive and predictable the project will be. Carbon emissions are also reduced by lowering material transport cycles and increasing rates of material recycling.

Notwithstanding these benefits, OPW reported to the Committee that the delivery of these units has been slower than anticipated, as there have been challenges with getting sites fully serviced. Capacity has ramped up and processes have been streamlined for the production of units, therefore the primary obstacle of the OPW is obtaining serviced sites. However, it indicated that units being delivered in Cork have taken 6 months from initiation to delivery, which is significantly shorter than a traditional build. OPW stated that, it is typically a 12-week process to assemble the units and 16 weeks to build on-site, which it believes is achievable.

There was discussion regarding attitudes towards modular building, including preconceptions of modular homes as cheap and substandard. Witnesses asserted that these units are of excellent quality and there is compliance with all building and design standards required by the Department. CIF illustrated that the design of these units is standardised, thereby improving the quality of design. In this way, the exact same two-bedroom apartment or three-bedroom house will be delivered in two different areas of the country (see figures 3 and 4 below).

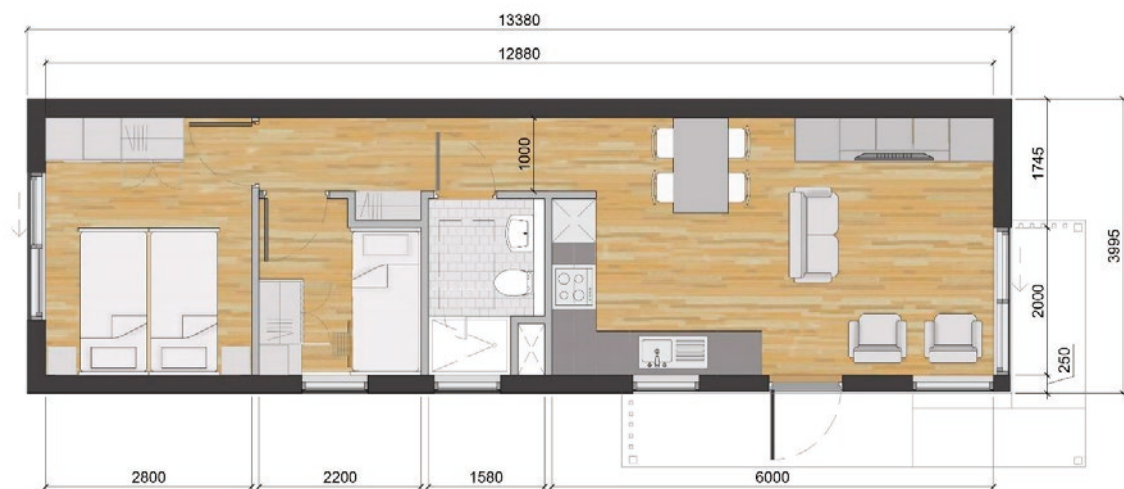


Figure 3 – Single Module, own door access, independent living homes to accommodate family of 4 people (45m²). High-quality rapid build home, built completely in a factory environment and lifted onto site. Centralised standard and fixed design. Source: Office of Public Works, Presentation to Joint Committee on Housing, Local Government & Heritage, 2nd May 2023.



Figure 4 – Interior, kitchen, and lounge areas. Source: Office of Public Works, Presentation to Joint Committee on Housing, Local Government & Heritage, 2nd May 2023.

Regarding costs, OPW indicated that the unit cost of a two-bedroom unit with a dining room area (45 m²) is €165,000, that is, approximately €3,700 per square

metre. Although this figure is similar to the cost of homes built via traditional methods, costs associated with a new construction method or technology would typically be much higher than the cost of building with traditional methods, at least until after a market adjustment period. As such, witnesses agreed that the current cost is significant, as capacity is in the early stages of development in the construction sector. This indicates that if the industry is to deploy MMC at a meaningful scale, these homes built with new technologies may be purchased for much less in the future than they are now. It was discussed that, in recent years in London, medium-rise high-density affordable housing developments using cross-laminated timber cost €1,000 per square metre. In this way, the Committee understands that if capacity is ramped up and demand is created, there will be a multitude of benefits. Such units will be cheaper, of a high standard, quick to produce, and have a lower embodied carbon, when compared with traditional builds. Regarding cost, hard costs, which makes up 48% of the price of housing, would be significantly reduced where these units are built at scale. OPW emphasised the importance of creating demand, stating that, for the units to be economical, the size of the sites is important. It illustrated that any site would need 100 sites at least going up to 300 sites to be economical, bringing major benefits in the context of time, speed, and quantum.

Unfortunately, there is currently a low level of MMC manufacturing capacity in Ireland, especially for volumetric modular construction. To build up capacity effectively, witnesses emphasised the need for surety of pipeline, as well as secure and substantial upfront funding to develop modular factories. Considering the traditional nature of the construction industry, pipeline surety is needed to guarantee demand prior to significant investment in MMC. CIF called attention to the very fragmented network of sub-supply chains in the Irish construction sector, with about 50,000 registered enterprises but 90% of these have less than ten employees, yet these enterprises will be required to respond to demand.

“Unless there is a clear signal from construction clients that there will be a sustained demand for particular services, companies don’t have the luxury of being able to reposition their business to build that

capacity and take advantage of it.” – Mr. Tom Parlon, CIF Director General, Construction Industry Federation

RIAI contended that the Department are in a very strong position to set policy as the biggest client in the state, highlighting that, in the UK, the initial mandate is for 25% of public sector new builds to be built by MMC, giving manufacturers the incentive to set up and produce at scale. The Committee takes the view that setting mandated targets for public sector new builds to be built through low-carbon building technologies will demonstrate the advantages of such approaches in public buildings and social housing projects, which will help drive demand, grow skills, and increase confidence with these new tools, while also building capacity and increasing investment. It was suggested that multi-annual framework agreements could also help drive demand, CIF noting that strategic funding is needed to support the very significant fixed capital cost associated with building a factory and providing permanent on-site jobs. CIF also reiterated that the creation of a pipeline through mandated targets will allow companies to seek investment. A cross-departmental group is needed to progress the adoption of low-carbon building technologies further.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends that:

1. Mandated targets are set to allow a minimum of public sector new builds to be built through low-carbon building technologies;
2. Multi-annual framework agreements are created for companies' building capacity for low-carbon building technologies including MMC and 3D volumetric building technologies, including the provision of seed capital, to create a pipeline and assist capacity for low-carbon building technologies including MMC and 3D volumetric building technologies in the construction industry;
3. A cross-departmental working group with industry participation is established on progressing the adoption of low-carbon building technologies including MMC and 3D volumetric building technologies. The working group should appoint an independent chair, include public and private industry,

adopt clear and specific terms of reference, and complete its work within an appropriate timeframe;

4. REGULATORY CHALLENGES TO ADOPTING TIMBER-BASED BUILDING TECHNOLOGIES

Witnesses highlighted the importance of our forests in addressing challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss, by providing materials that will drive sustainable living. In its attendance at the Committee, Coillte illustrated that, when building a timber-frame home over a traditional one, there is a net carbon saving of eight metric tonnes of carbon, equating to a 2.5 times net carbon saving for each new home built, and 3.5 times saving for apartment units. Timber-based technologies benefit from all the advantages of prefabrication, including speed of delivery, meaning a typical timber-frame home is over six times quicker to build on-site, taking just one week to construct the main structure. The Committee believes there is great opportunity to embrace timber-based low-carbon technologies on a meaningful scale, which would contribute significantly to the essential reduction of our carbon emissions in the built environment by 40% by 2030. There is a growing softwood resource in Ireland that can be harnessed without the need to import materials, therefore Ireland has a self-sufficient supply which has great potential to underpin the decarbonisation of our built environment.

Although there is great opportunity in Ireland to be at the cutting edge of this low-carbon technology, Irish raw materials for cross-laminated timber (CLT), which is a structural graded timber, are being exported to the UK in large quantities. Coillte informed the Committee that, last year, Ireland produced approximately 700,000 m³ of construction grade-timber, but 265,000 m³ (or 35%) was exported. Currently, only 25% of housing units are built with timber-frames in Ireland, while in Scotland this rate is at 80% and it is even higher in Scandinavian countries. However, in 2022, half of scheme homes (totalling just under 8,000 out of 30,000 homes delivered in 2022) were delivered using timber frame as a form of 2D MMC. CIF expressed its view that there is great opportunity for the industry to double its production scale, which would significantly contribute towards *Housing for All* targets. Coillte highlighted that, to increase the number of housing units built with timber frames in Ireland to 80%, an

additional 200,000 m³ of construction-grade swan wood would be required to service that market. As such, there is huge potential to increase the use of homegrown timber. Regarding the transition from cement, CIF stated that the industry is already assessing alternatives, therefore there will be a move toward hybrid systems before cement and concrete are phased out, with little disruption to jobs and economic activity.

However, witnesses highlighted that there is currently no incentive to grow the industry due to regulatory barriers on building with timber. Coillte detailed:

“Our climate policies, building regulations and technical guidance documents do not necessarily fully align.” – Mr. Des O’Toole, Marketing & Communications, Coillte

Clause 3.2.5.2 of Technical Guidance Document B on Fire Safety (TGD B), which requires non-combustible construction materials in buildings taller than 10 metres, has been in various iterations of the TGD B since its inception in 2007. As such, the use of timber-based technologies is limited to a maximum height of 3 storeys, while mass timber buildings are being constructed elsewhere at 24 storeys and even up to 100 storeys, as was the case in Switzerland. Similarly, in London, a ten-storey apartment block was constructed, comprising 121 apartments built with CLT. The Committee notes that Clause 3.2.5.2 TGD B does not take into account that timber can be as fire resistant as conventional materials and the clause has generally not kept pace with timber MMC.

Dublin Fire Brigade (DFB) explained that there is much reliance on TGD B for building design, as it provides *prima facie* compliance with building regulations. Although building regulations are performance-based, Ireland’s technical guidance documents are prescriptive, meaning they are an outlier in Europe, as many European jurisdictions use performance-based Eurocodes. CIF stated:

“One of the challenges is Part B of the building regulations, which relates to fire regulations and the restrictions on the height at which combustible materials can be used. We need a more technical approach to provide a technical solution, whether an active or passive means of fire suppression. If they can do it in other countries with similar codes to

ours, there is no reason we cannot be using a lot more timber. That will go a long way to solving a lot of the issues of embodied carbon.” – Mr. Sean Downey, CIF Director, Specialist Contracting, Construction Industry Federation

The Committee notes that, to enable building with timber at greater heights in this jurisdiction, the technical guidance, rather than the building regulations, requires amendment, as the latter ensure the safe functioning of buildings, while the guidance sets out the means to achieve this. Despite the current limitation in TGD B, as the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) pointed out, there is nothing to stop a standard being developed to allow timber buildings at greater heights, as there are structural design codes which offer ways of designing buildings to meet safety and fire standards. Action 13.11 of the *Housing for All* action plan focuses on the continued enhancement of the NSAI's Agrément system for MMC in residential construction. Agrément certification is a process for certifying innovative construction products and systems where no standard exists. It is a voluntary certification scheme operated by NSAI which allows manufacturers to show that the product is a 'proper material', thereby complying with Irish building regulations. NSAI stated further that TGD B is just a guidance document, but there are other means of showing compliance, for example through this Agrément certification.

The Committee is of the view that higher density and increased timber-based construction are completely possible, rather the issue is with developing proper standards, building control and enforcement as well as maintaining the highest possible fire safety standards. In its attendance at the Committee, DFB acknowledged the role MMC plays in achieving national housing targets, however, it asserted that fire safety should be integral to the adoption of such methods. It stated that, while traditional construction systems, such as concrete structures, are slower to deliver and are not as environmentally suitable, these methods have undergone a vast amount of large-scale testing which provides confidence and resilience in this type of construction system. In light of new and innovative designs brought forward through low-carbon building technologies, DFB is meeting with designers, seeking test data, reviewing advanced analysis and increasing its understanding of MMC to understand its use and performance in the event of fire. DFB recommended that, to

ensure the appropriate guidance is in place, there are more frequent amendments or updates to TGD B to ensure there is clear guidance in relation to existing and emerging MMCs, to guarantee the safe design and construction of buildings. This will allow policy to develop alongside new research while keeping pace of changing technologies and innovative construction methods, thereby keeping Ireland's building standards in line with international best practice. The Committee is of the opinion that this is an important suggestion, and that the Department concludes its work in a timely manner so new technical guidance documents are published.

DFB informed the Committee that it is party to the Department's review group which will work on assessing evolving strategies and technologies quickly and issue guidance notes to accompany TGD B, rather than completing a full review of the TGD B. It expects that MMC is likely to be addressed in a subsequent guidance note, rather than in the review of TGD B itself once it is published. The Committee notes that if changes allow building with timber over 10 metres, standards must reflect this. For example, RIAI detailed that CLT requires careful consideration from an engineering point of view, as additional fire barriers will be needed, such as sprinklers (over 20 metres) and concrete escape core staircases. Similarly, CIF maintained that a technically led approach must be employed to allow the development of fire-engineering solutions.

All witnesses stressed the importance of maintaining the utmost level of fire safety. In particular, a concern was raised that the UK and Ireland are the only countries in Europe without regulations on smoke toxicity levels in building materials. It was discussed that a contributing factor to the Grenfell Tower tragedy was that the smoke toxicity levels in some of the insulation materials produced a vast quantity of lethal smoke. DFB agreed that it would be beneficial to regulate smoke toxicity levels in building materials. OPW illustrated that in certain states in Germany, planning applications require information on what the building's embodied carbon will be and what its use of carbon will be over fifty years, which has transformed applications. RIAI made the point that introducing this assessment as a requirement on planning applications would contribute to a drive towards MMC.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends that:

1. TGD B be amended to reflect modern developments in construction and to support the decarbonisation of the built environment, with the aim of removing barriers to adopting timber-based building technologies on a larger scale, while continuing to ensure the highest fire safety standards;
2. TGD B is reviewed every two to three years to keep pace with changing technologies and to allow itself to be informed by evidence-based and innovative construction methods;
3. A whole-life carbon assessment is introduced as a requirement on all planning applications;
4. Building regulations are amended to regulate smoke toxicity levels in building materials;
5. Ministerial guidelines are provided to local authority fire officers to allow for construction of demonstrator buildings;
6. The development and publication of an appendix to TGD B on mass timber;
7. The introduction of a system for approval of FSCs for mass timber.

5. UPSKILLING AND TRAINING

Witnesses emphasised the need to bring new entrants into the sector, promote a better understanding of the benefits of building with low-carbon building technologies, and provide the necessary guidance and support to design professionals to allow them to build with these new technologies. SOLAS commissioned research on the skills required to support residential construction and retrofitting in the coming years, finding that 50,831 new entrants to the sector will be required up to 2030. Coillte indicated that attracting foresters, ecologists, and engineers, in particular, is a challenge. Even among those already in the sector, there is a skills deficit in understanding embodied carbon, OPW highlighting the need for those undergoing training to be trained in the circular economy with an emphasis on timber and other low-carbon technologies. Similarly, SOLAS indicated that it is a challenge to demystify the digitisation of construction and the construction sector and bring awareness to the role of digitisation in adopting MMC. To aid in solving this

issue, Ireland's first MMC Demonstration Park will be developed at the National Construction Campus at Mount Lucas to offer industry a centralised location to collaborate and examine new building methodologies, offering an opportunity for industry to share best practice. It stated that, in addition to showcasing new technologies, it is essential that this is linked to the available training and education alongside it. In developing such training, SOLAS identified that, over the next 12 to 18 months, its biggest challenge will be the need to develop accessible training programmes, ensuring such programmes are appropriate for the developing industry, while also presenting as valuable for learners. Similarly, CIF highlighted that skills development is vital, as there is an opportunity for local employment for high-value skills and good working conditions, but new trades and traineeships must be developed with the education and training boards which are regionally focused.

Although forestry can offer well-paid green tech jobs in the rural sector, Coillte noted that it must work extensively on promoting career opportunities and diversity in the sector. SOLAS stated that the challenge is making construction careers more appealing to young people, therefore it is actively developing offerings as part of transition year programmes in partnership with its education and training boards. However, over time, it hopes to engage with reforming senior cycle so integrated credited modules may be offered in construction and bring further education, training, and apprenticeship options onto the landing page of the CAO website. The Committee recognises the efforts being made by these organisations to prepare the workforce for the introduction of new building technologies and bring new entrants into the sector. However, it is apparent that support is needed to promote opportunities arising from the introduction of new technologies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends that:

1. The development of further third level education and construction training and of public awareness of the opportunities that exist for low-carbon building technologies including MMC and 3D volumetric building technologies.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee recommends that:

1. Mandated targets are set to allow a minimum of public sector new builds to be built through low-carbon building technologies;
2. Multi-annual framework agreements are created for companies' building capacity for low-carbon building technologies including MMC and 3D volumetric building technologies, including the provision of seed capital, to create a pipeline and assist capacity for low-carbon building technologies including MMC and 3D volumetric building technologies in the construction industry;
3. A cross-departmental working group with industry participation is established on progressing the adoption of low-carbon building technologies including MMC and 3D volumetric building technologies. The working group should appoint an independent chair, include public and private industry, adopt clear and specific terms of reference, and complete its work within an appropriate timeframe;
4. TGD B be amended to reflect modern developments in construction and to support the decarbonisation of the built environment, with the aim of removing barriers to adopting timber-based building technologies on a larger scale, while continuing to ensure the highest fire safety standards;
5. TGD B is reviewed every two to three years to keep pace with changing technologies and to allow itself to be informed by evidence-based and innovative construction methods;
6. A whole-life carbon assessment is introduced as a requirement on all planning applications;
7. Building regulations are amended to regulate smoke toxicity levels in building materials;
8. Ministerial guidelines are provided to local authority fire officers to allow for construction of demonstrator buildings;
9. The development and publication of an appendix to TGD B on mass timber;

10. The introduction of a system for approval of FSCs for mass timber;
11. The development of further third level education and construction training and of public awareness of the opportunities that exist for low-carbon building technologies including MMC and 3D volumetric building technologies.

7. APPENDIX 1: ORDERS OF REFERENCE

a. FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE – DERIVED FROM STANDING ORDERS [DSO 95; SSO 71]

1) The Dáil may appoint a Departmental Select Committee to consider and, unless otherwise provided for in these Standing Orders or by order, to report to the Dáil on any matter relating to—

- (a) legislation, policy, governance, expenditure and administration of—
 - (i) a Government Department, and
 - (ii) State bodies within the responsibility of such Department, and
- (b) the performance of a non-State body in relation to an agreement for the provision of services that it has entered into with any such Government Department or State body.

(2) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall also consider such other matters which—

- (a) stand referred to the Committee by virtue of these Standing Orders or statute law, or
- (b) shall be referred to the Committee by order of the Dáil.

(3) The principal purpose of Committee consideration of matters of policy, governance, expenditure and administration under paragraph (1) shall be—

- (a) for the accountability of the relevant Minister or Minister of State, and
- (b) to assess the performance of the relevant Government Department or of a State body within the responsibility of the relevant Department, in delivering public services while achieving intended outcomes, including value for money.

(4) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall not consider any matter relating to accounts audited by, or reports of, the Comptroller and Auditor General unless the Committee of Public Accounts—

- (a) consents to such consideration, or
- (b) has reported on such accounts or reports.

(5) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order may be joined with a Select Committee appointed by Seanad Éireann to be and act as a Joint Committee for the purposes of paragraph (1) and such other purposes as may be specified in these Standing Orders or by order of the Dáil: provided that the Joint Committee shall not consider—

- (a) the Committee Stage of a Bill,
- (b) Estimates for Public Services, or
- (c) a proposal contained in a motion for the approval of an international agreement involving a charge upon public funds referred to the Committee by order of the Dáil.

(6) Any report that the Joint Committee proposes to make shall, on adoption by the Joint Committee, be made to both Houses of the Oireachtas.

(7) The Chairman of the Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall also be Chairman of the Joint Committee.

(8) Where a Select Committee proposes to consider—

- (a) EU draft legislative acts standing referred to the Select Committee under Standing Order 133, including the compliance of such acts with the principle of subsidiarity,
- (b) other proposals for EU legislation and related policy issues, including programmes and guidelines prepared by the European Commission as a basis of possible legislative action,
- (c) non-legislative documents published by any EU institution in relation to EU policy matters, or
- (d) matters listed for consideration on the agenda for meetings of the relevant Council (of Ministers) of the European Union and the outcome of such meetings,

the following may be notified accordingly and shall have the right to attend and take part in such consideration without having a right to move motions or amendments or the right to vote:

- (i) members of the European Parliament elected from constituencies in Ireland,
- (ii) members of the Irish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and
- (iii) at the invitation of the Committee, other members of the European Parliament.

(9) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order may, in respect of any Ombudsman charged with oversight of public services within the policy remit of the relevant Department consider—

- (a) such motions relating to the appointment of an Ombudsman as may be referred to the Committee, and
- (b) such Ombudsman reports laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas as the Committee may select: Provided that the provisions of Standing Order 130 apply where the Select Committee has not considered the Ombudsman report, or a portion or portions thereof, within two months (excluding Christmas, Easter or summer recess periods) of the report being laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas.

b. SCOPE AND CONTEXT OF ACTIVITIES OF COMMITTEES (AS DERIVED FROM STANDING ORDERS) [DSO 94; SSO 70]

(1) The Joint Committee may only consider such matters, engage in such activities, exercise such powers and discharge such functions as are specifically authorised under its orders of reference and under Standing Orders;

(2) such matters, activities, powers and functions shall be relevant to, and shall arise only in the context of, the preparation of a report to the Dáil/Seanad;

(3) it shall not consider any matter which is being considered, or of which notice has been given of a proposal to consider, by the Joint Committee on Public Petitions in the exercise of its functions under DSO 125(1) and SSO 108(1); and

(4) it shall refrain from inquiring into in public session or publishing confidential information regarding any matter if so requested, for stated reasons given in writing, by—

- (a) a member of the Government or a Minister of State, or
- (b) the principal office-holder of a State body within the responsibility of a Government Department or
- (c) the principal office-holder of a non-State body which is partly funded by the State,

Provided that the Committee may appeal any such request made to the Ceann Comhairle, whose decision shall be final.

(5) It shall be an instruction to all Select Committees to which Bills are referred that they shall ensure that not more than two Select Committees shall meet to consider a

Bill on any given day, unless the Dáil, after due notice to the Business Committee by a Chairman of one of the Select Committees concerned, waives this instruction.

c. POWERS OF COMMITTEES (AS DERIVED FROM STANDING ORDERS) [DSO 96; SSO 72]

Unless the Dáil/Seanad shall otherwise order, a Committee appointed pursuant to these Standing Orders shall have the following powers:

(1) power to invite and receive oral and written evidence and to print and publish from time to time—

- (a) minutes of such evidence as was heard in public, and
- (b) such evidence in writing as the Committee thinks fit;

(2) power to appoint sub-Committees and to refer to such sub-Committees any matter comprehended by its orders of reference and to delegate any of its powers to such sub-Committees, including power to report directly to the Dáil/Seanad;

(3) power to draft recommendations for legislative change and for new legislation;

(4) in relation to any statutory instrument, including those laid or laid in draft before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas, power to—

(a) require any Government Department or other instrument-making authority concerned to—

- (i) submit a memorandum to the Joint Committee explaining the statutory instrument, or
- (ii) attend a meeting of the Joint Committee to explain any such statutory instrument: Provided that the authority concerned may decline to attend for reasons given in writing to the Joint Committee, which may report thereon to the Dáil, and

(b) recommend, where it considers that such action is warranted, that the instrument should be annulled or amended;

(5) power to require that a member of the Government or Minister of State shall attend before the Joint Committee to discuss—

- (a) policy, or
- (b) proposed primary or secondary legislation (prior to such legislation being published),

for which he or she is officially responsible: Provided that a member of the Government or Minister of State may decline to attend for stated reasons given in writing to the Joint Committee, which may report thereon to the Dáil: and provided further that a member of the Government or Minister of State may request to attend a meeting of the Joint Committee to enable him or her to discuss such policy or proposed legislation;

(6) power to require that a member of the Government or Minister of State shall attend before the Joint Committee and provide, in private session if so requested by the attendee, oral briefings in advance of meetings of the relevant EC Council (of Ministers) of the European Union to enable the Joint Committee to make known its views: Provided that the Committee may also require such attendance following such meetings;

(7) power to require that the Chairperson designate of a body or agency under the aegis of a Department shall, prior to his or her appointment, attend before the Select Committee to discuss his or her strategic priorities for the role;

(8) power to require that a member of the Government or Minister of State who is officially responsible for the implementation of an Act shall attend before a Joint Committee in relation to the consideration of a report under DSO 197/SSO 168;

(9) subject to any constraints otherwise prescribed by law, power to require that principal office-holders of a—

(a) State body within the responsibility of a Government Department or

(b) non-State body which is partly funded by the State,

shall attend meetings of the Joint Committee, as appropriate, to discuss issues for which they are officially responsible: Provided that such an office-holder may decline to attend for stated reasons given in writing to the Joint Committee, which may report thereon to the Dáil/Seanad; and

(10) power to—

(a) engage the services of persons with specialist or technical knowledge, to assist it or any of its sub-Committees in considering particular matters; and

(b) undertake travel;

Provided that the powers under this paragraph are subject to such recommendations as may be made by the Working Group of Committee Chairmen under DSO 120(4)(a)/SSO 107(4)(a).

8. APPENDIX 2: COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

8.1 DEPUTIES



Francis Noel Duffy
Green Party



Joe Flaherty
Fianna Fáil



Thomas Gould
Sinn Féin



Emer Higgins
Fine Gael



Steven Matthews
Cathaoirleach
Green Party



Paul McAuliffe
Leas-Cathaoirleach
Fianna Fáil



Cian O'Callaghan
Social Democrats



Richard O'Donoghue
Independent



Eoin Ó Broin
Sinn Féin

8.2 SENATORS



Victor Boyhan
Independent



John Cummins
Fine Gael



Mary Fitzpatrick
Fianna Fáil



Rebecca Moynihan
Labour



Mary Seery Kearney
Fine Gael

Notes:

1. Deputies nominated by the Dáil Committee of Selection and appointed by Order of the Dáil of 30 July 2020.
2. Senators nominated by the Seanad Committee of Selection and appointed by Order of the Seanad on 18 September 2020.
3. The Dáil Committee of Selection nominated Deputy Joe Flaherty to replace Deputy Jennifer Murnane O'Connor on 2 February 2021.

9. APPENDIX 3: LINKS TO MEETING TRANSCRIPTS

- [Tuesday 2 May 2023](#)
- [Tuesday 9 May 2023](#)
- [Tuesday 23 May 2023](#)

10. APPENDIX 4: LINKS TO OPENING STATEMENTS

- [Mr. Mark Carlin, Managing Director, Coillte Forest, Coillte](#)
- [Mr. Andrew Brownlee, CEO, SOLAS](#)
- [Ms. Geraldine Larkin, CEO, National Standards Authority of Ireland](#)
- [Mr. Ciarán O'Connor, State/Principal Architect and Commissioner, Office of Public Works](#)
- [Mr. Tom Parlon, Director General, Construction Industry Federation](#)
- [Mr. Dominic Stevens, Director of JFOC Architects and Lecturer in TU Dublin](#)
- [Mr. David Browne and Mr. Pat Kirwan, Architects, RIAI](#)
- [Mr. Denis Keeley, Chief Fire Officer, Dublin Fire Brigade](#)

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