

A
BUDGET
FOR
CHANGE



DELIVERING PUBLIC HOMES

Sinn Féin Alternative Housing Budget 2022





BUISÉAD AR SON AN ATHRAITHE



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Introduction

The housing system is in a state of crisis. Rents are too high, social housing lists are too long, house prices are rising and too many people do not have access to adequate, affordable, or secure homes.

This crisis has been caused by the failure of successive governments to invest in public homes. This neglect leaves people to the mercy of a dysfunctional market to meet their housing need.

The new government's housing policy is not the change we need. It follows the market-based housing policies of Fine Gael, which have now been enthusiastically adopted by their partners in government Fianna Fáil and the Green Party.

Simply stating you are increasing supply is not the answer. The homes being delivered must be affordable for ordinary people on ordinary incomes.

The new Government plan only provides for the delivery of 90,000 new social homes to 2030. This is 10,000 fewer social homes than what was promised by Fine Gael under Rebuilding Ireland and the National Development Plan.

The target of 33,000 new homes by 2025 includes just 10,000 social homes, 2,000 affordable purchase and 2,000 cost rental homes. This means that social and affordable housing delivery in 2022, 2023 and 2024 will be broadly what was in the pipeline before this government plan was produced.

The political will must exist to make the changes required. A Sinn Féin government would deliver the largest public house building programme in the history of the state. This would signal an enormous change in how homes are delivered and will ensure housing affordability for thousands of people.

A Sinn Féin government would deliver 20,000 social and affordable homes in 2022. This would require a more than doubling of direct capital investment in public housing from the €1.4bn allocated in 2021 to €3bn in 2022.

Sinn Féin priorities include:

- ⚙️ Deliver 20,000 public homes. 12,000 real social homes and 8,000 affordable purchase and rental homes.
- ⚙️ Introduce a refundable tax credit putting one month's rent back into private renters' pockets at a cost of €273m
- ⚙️ Establish a €200m latent defects redress fund that would provide 100% redress for all homeowners who uncover defects in their homes
- ⚙️ Help deliver on our climate change emissions targets by returning 4,200 vacant and derelict properties to use (21% of our total planned output), which is both cheaper for the taxpayer and better for the environment.

Social Housing

Government Social Target 2022	Sinn Féin Additional units	Total delivery by a Sinn Féin Government in 2022
9,000	3,000	12,000

Affordable Housing

Government Affordable Housing Target 2022	Sinn Féin Additional units	Total delivery by a Sinn Féin Government in 2022
2,100	5,900	8,000



Public Housing

For ordinary people to be able to rent or purchase a home they can afford; the government must increase investment in public housing. Public Housing are homes that are not provided by the private market. Public homes are social homes where people pay a differential rent based on their income.

Public homes are cost rental homes, which are the norm across Europe. Under this type of housing people have lifetime leases and pay an affordable rent which covers the cost of providing the housing and for the maintenance of the homes. The rents are unrelated to the market. Sinn Féin believe these cost rental homes should be provided at between €700 and €900 per month, depending on the size of the home.

Affordable purchase homes are public homes. These are homes that ordinary working people can buy, with an affordable mortgage and no hidden charges. Affordable homes for €230,000 or less will be available to buy in Dublin, the commuter belt and other major urban areas. Across the rest of the state, affordable homes for €220,000 or less would be delivered.

Importantly these homes are affordable not just to the first purchaser but to all future purchasers. This is ensured by the Local Authority retaining ownership of the land and the homeowner agreeing to a covenant that they will use the property as a family home. The covenant will prevent to property being rented out on the private market or being sold into the private market. Rather when the owner wishes to sell they sell to another eligible affordable housing applicant at the future affordable purchase price index linked to inflation and taking into account home improvements.

Ireland currently has some of the lowest rates of non-market homes in Europe. This must change or people will continue to struggle to find an affordable home that meets their needs. Sinn Féin has costed proposals as to how we will deliver these homes.

Social Housing

Of the 20,000 new public homes Sinn Féin would deliver in 2022, 12,000 of these would be real social homes. Real social homes are homes owned by local authorities or Approved Housing Bodies that are a permanent addition to the social housing stock. These homes would be built to the highest environmental standards and 2,400 of these would be delivered by returning vacant and derelict homes back into use.

In government Sinn Féin would:

- ⚙️ Deliver 12,000 social homes next year. This is 3,000 more real homes than what this government plan to deliver
- ⚙️ 5,400 of these social homes would be delivered by councils via direct delivery, turnkey and Part V
- ⚙️ 2,400 of these social homes would be vacant or derelict units purchased, refurbished and brought back into active use
- ⚙️ 3,200 would be general needs social housing delivered by Approved Housing Bodies
- ⚙️ 1,000 would be special needs social housing delivered by Approved Housing Bodies
- ⚙️ Provide additional funding to Irish Water for the provision of new water and waste water treatment plants to facilitate new residential developments in areas of constrained water supply

Sinn Féin would also prioritise a number of current expenditure increases to address particularly vulnerable groups including:

- ⚙️ An additional €9m in domestic violence emergency and step-down accommodation and supports taking the total spend in 2022 to €22.9m.
- ⚙️ An additional €12m for housing adaptation grants for people with disabilities and older people taking the total spend to €72m for 2022.
- ⚙️ An additional €7.8m for Traveller Specific Accommodation taking the total spend to €23.3m in 2022.



Affordable Homes to Buy

Out of the 20,000 new public homes Sinn Féin would deliver in 2022, 8,000 of these would be affordable purchase and affordable rental homes. This represents 5,900 additional genuinely affordable homes over and above what the government plans to deliver via its Affordable Housing Fund and its Cost Rental Equity Loan scheme in 2022.

Sinn Féin will deliver 4,000 affordable purchase homes in 2022. 1,800 of these would be delivered through the repurposed Buy and Renew scheme. Buy and Renew is an existing government scheme which assists local authorities in purchasing and returning vacant homes to use. We would repurpose this scheme to focus on the delivery of affordable homes to buy. The remaining 2,200 homes would be delivered via the Affordable Housing Fund through a mixture of new builds and turnkey acquisitions.

Sinn Féin would ensure that our affordable purchase homes would be genuinely affordable, with no hidden charges. Affordable homes for €230,000 or less will be available to purchase in Dublin, the commuter belt and other major urban areas. Across the rest of the state, affordable homes for €220,000 or less would be delivered.

Our affordable purchase housing plan will not just be available for first time buyers. It will also be open to second time buyers who lost their homes through repossession, relationship breakdown or those trapped in negative equity properties who need to trade up due to family size

This affordable purchase housing plan is ambitious and desperately needed. An entire generation is facing the prospect of never owning their own home. It should not be this hard to have a secure, affordable roof over your head.

Affordable Cost Rental Homes

The lack of affordable homes to rent across the state is impacting workers on ordinary incomes, families, students and vulnerable people including former asylum seekers, pensioners and those experiencing homelessness.

It should not be the case that some people are paying more than 40% of their take home pay in rent. It should not be the case that tenants are living in fear of contacting their landlord on maintenance issues in case it results in a notice to quit. And it should definitely not be the case that people are living in unsafe, overcrowded accommodation because of a lack of affordable supply.

Sinn Féin in government would deliver 4,000 affordable cost rental homes in 2022. These homes will be available to rent for between €700 and €900 per month depending on household size and income. The rents would not be linked to the market and the tenancies would be of indefinite duration.

While we increase the supply of affordable cost rental homes at scale, we also need to ensure that those currently in the private rented market are protected from further unsustainable rent hikes. Sinn Féin would also ban rent increases for three years and provide renters with a refundable tax break worth one month's rent during this period. On the basis of current average rents this would cost €273m in 2022.

Sinn Féin’s proposed Public Housing Output in 2022

Scheme	Unit cost	Total units	Total cost
New Build social housing	€242,900	5,400	€1,311,660,000
Buy and renew social housing	€190,000	2400	€456,000,000
AHB CAS	€160,000	1000	€160,000,000
AHB CALF	€75,000	3200	€240,000,000
CREL Affordable	€75,000	3000	€225,000,000
AHF affordable	€75,000	3000	€225,000,000
Buy and renew affordable	€190,000	2000	€380,000,000
Traveller accommodation			€23,000,000
Totals		20,000	€3,020,600,000

In government Sinn Féin would:

- ⚙️ Set a date for a Referendum to enshrine the Right to Housing in the Constitution to be held in 2022.
- ⚙️ Promote Council led mixed income public housing estates with social, cost rental and affordable purchase homes.
- ⚙️ Remove the Part V affordable housing exemption for landowners and developers to ensure all new planning applications include 10% affordable housing as well as 10% social housing.
- ⚙️ Slash the approval, tendering and procurement process for public housing from 18-14 months to 6-9 months and amend the Public Spending Code to speed up the delivery of public homes.
- ⚙️ End the use of high risk and high cost public private partnerships, land initiatives and joint ventures.
- ⚙️ Repeal the power granted to the Minister for Housing in 2015 to introduce mandatory planning guidelines that override the democratically agreed decisions of city and county councils , and repeal the two sets of guidelines introduced by former Minister Eoghan Murphy.
- ⚙️ Provide greater security of tenure by amending S34 of the Residential Tenancies Act to remove grounds 3 (sale) and 4 (use by family member) and provide tenancies of indefinite duration.
- ⚙️ Implement the recommendations of the Report of the Expert Review Group on Traveller Accommodation.

Homelessness

It is unfortunately no surprise that the number of people officially recorded by the Department of Housing as experiencing homelessness has risen over the last three consecutive months. Latest figures show that there are 8,212 people, 6,023 adults and 2,189 children accessing homeless services across the country.

These figures don't include women and children in domestic violence accommodation, families with their leave to remain who are stuck in direct provision and people in emergency accommodation that is not funded by the Department of Housing.

The emergency Covid-19 measures that were in place to protect those in the private rented sector from rent increases and eviction notices were stripped away by this government. The government is failing the most vulnerable and has failed to support opposition proposals aimed at keeping people in their homes.

Sinn Féin would deliver 500 Housing First Tenancies from within the overall provision of social housing to reduce long term homelessness.

We would also ringfence all funding saved as a result of the reduction of the number of adults in emergency accommodation and redirect it into funding homeless prevention services

In government Sinn Féin would:

- ⚙️ Introduce the Focus Ireland Amendment to prevent buy-to-let landlords who benefitted from tax breaks issuing vacant possession Notices to Quit.
- ⚙️ Introduce the Sinn Féin Homeless Prevention Bill requiring Local Authorities to have a 60 day homeless prevention plan for all those at risk of losing their homes or tenancies.
- ⚙️ Phase out the use dormitory style emergency accommodation.
- ⚙️ Introduce Safeguarding Adult Reviews where a person engaging with homeless services or sleeping rough dies to determine what could have been done by relevant agencies to prevent the death.
- ⚙️ Agree with stakeholders a new deadline for ending long term homelessness and the need to sleep rough.
- ⚙️ Roll out an independent emergency accommodation inspection regime for all homeless accommodation providers.
- ⚙️ Ensure the publication of monthly homeless figures include all those in emergency accommodation whether funded by the Department of Housing, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth or the Department of Justice.

Building Defects

Homeowners living in Celtic tiger properties across the state with building defects deserve a redress scheme to cover the costs of remedial work. Sinn Féin believe that homeowners affected by mica and pyrite defective block, pyrite in the foundations, fire safety defects or water ingress must receive 100% redress.

Through no fault of their own families are watching their homes crumble due to Mica, Pyrite and defects including a lack of fire stopping and decaying balconies. Bad building practices and little or no government oversight has led to this situation.

In government Sinn Féin would introduce a redress scheme for all homeowners with defective properties at a cost of €200m.

We would also seek to supplement this with an annual contribution from the construction and quarrying sectors, the non-life insurance sector and in the case of defective block remediation a direct contribution from the banks.

For those home owners who have had to cover the full costs of remediation before the introduction of the remediation scheme Sinn Féin would extend the existing capital relief available to landlords to write off the capital costs of remediation against their future tax liability over a period of four years.

Our redress scheme would include an information and advice service for homeowners. Mediation will be offered to disputing parties to see if a resolution can be found between the developer/builder and the homeowner. If mediation is not an option, the scheme will issue legally binding adjudications on cases.

Where builder/developers are still trading, the original developer should pay for the remediation works. However, in cases where the developer went bust or is no longer trading, the scheme will administer a compensation fund for homeowners that will be paid for by a levy on the construction industry and will be matched on a euro-for-euro basis by the Exchequer.

The scheme will also commence a programme of risk assessments for latent defects including fire safety and water ingress and related structural defects and will conduct a review of the existing sanctions for developers/builders who breach building and fire safety standards.

We would also allocate €1m in funding in 2022 to establish a fire safety inspection regime to ensure that the new homes being delivered are fire safety compliant.

In addition to private homes affected by building defects there are an unknown number of social homes owned by Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies in need of remediation. Neither the number nor the cost is known at this stage.

In Government Sinn Féin would request the Housing Agency engage with social housing landlords to determine the extent and remediation cost of these defects and commence a multi annual funding programme commencing from 2023.

In government Sinn Féin would:

- ⚙️ Amend the Planning act so that a developer's track record can be taken into consideration when planning and public procurement decisions are being made.
- ⚙️ Amend the Planning Act to ensure that the planning regulator is independent as per the Mahon Tribunal recommendations.
- ⚙️ Fully implement the Oireachtas Housing Committee report Safe as Houses.

Housing Adequacy

In addition to ensuring that housing is secure and affordable a Sinn Féin government would pro-actively tackle the issue of poor standards of housing.

The Human Rights and Equality Commission report on adequate housing published in September 2021 found that lone parents, migrants, people with disabilities, Travellers, those experiencing homelessness and younger people all struggle to source and maintain adequate housing. This cohort are at particular risk due to lower levels of homeownership and they are dependent on an expensive rental market to meet their housing needs.

In government Sinn Féin would:

- ⚙️ Ensure that 25% of all private rental tenancies are inspected annually
- ⚙️ Introduce a mandatory NCT style certification for landlords to demonstrate compliance with minimum standards
- ⚙️ Commence social housing stock condition surveys in the Local Authority sector and agree with Councils a multi annual programme of funding from 2023 to bring all social housing stock in line with standards for the private rental sector
- ⚙️ Request the Residential Tenancies Board to provide a timeline and costings for the phased incorporation of all Local Authority social housing tenancies under the remit of the Residential Tenancies Board to ensure full compliance with minimum standards
- ⚙️ We would also increase the budget for the state regeneration of local authority housing stock, focusing particularly on inner city flat complexes from the 1930s to the 1960s, to €100m for 2022. This enhanced fund will help to remedy the poor conditions facing residents in older flat complexes and social homes across the state. This is an increase of €30m on what the government allocated last year.
- ⚙️ Initiate a comprehensive review of the Universal Design guidelines for new home construction with a view to ensuring that new homes are not just wheel accessible, that they are wheelchair liveable.

Climate Change

From 2022 all Government Departments will have legally binding emissions targets. This will require a radical shift in policy if we are to deliver up to 40,000 new public and private homes annually while at the same time meet our decarbonising targets. According to the Irish Green Building Council building and construction are responsible for 39% of all carbon emissions in the world. Demolishing existing buildings and building new homes from scratch involved significant volumes of embedded carbon.

Meeting the challenge of Climate Change means using the buildings we already have, refurbishing vacant stock or increasing the energy rating of our existing homes. This should be a priority for government.

Re-using existing stock

Making permanent additions to our existing social housing stock is vital to get more people off waiting list and into permanent homes. Building and acquiring new units is not the only way to increase the stock. According to the latest Geo Directory's Residential Buildings Report, there were 92,135 vacant residential properties in the State in June 2021.

Through an intensive targeting of vacant and derelict stock, especially across our highstreets in our towns and in our local villages, more homes can be returned to use for affordable purchase and social housing.

2,400 of our social homes will be delivered by refurbishing existing vacant or derelict units.

We would deliver 1,800 affordable homes for first time buyers and others to buy through a repurposed buy and renew scheme.

Retrofitting

Sinn Féin would provide €80m in funding in 2022 to local authorities to continue the retrofitting of social homes. This is an increase of €15m on what was allocated by government in 2021.

Vacant Site Levy

Given the low level of enforcement of the Vacant Site Levy by Local Authorities and the continued hoarding of significant land banks that should be used for public and private residential development. Sinn Féin believes that there is a need for an urgent and time bound review of the operation of the levy with a view to its collection being transferred to Revenue on a self-declaration basis by relevant land owners.

Local Authorities would still have responsibility for the compilation and publication of the Vacant Sites Register which they would share on an ongoing basis with Revenue to assist them with enforcement of the levy.

Vacant Property Levy

Given the unacceptably high volume of vacant homes across the state Sinn Féin believes there is a need to introduce a Vacant Property Levy to disincentivise speculative vacancy, particularly in areas of high housing demand.

Sinn Féin would establish a working group made up of Revenue and officials from the Departments of Housing and Finance to make recommendations within three months of the passing of the budget on the design and operation of such a levy.

The working group would be given a terms of reference that would include exemptions of properties such as those in probate or Fair Deal as well as properties in areas without a significant housing demand. The purpose of the tax would be to disincentivise property owners from speculatively leaving properties vacant.



Appendix 1

Current Expenditure

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	(€M)
Increase funding for domestic violence emergency and step-down accommodation and supports	9
Increase funding to the Local Authority disability adaptation grants by 50%	12
Increase funding for retrofitting of local authority homes by 23%	15
Participative planning pilot scheme	0.25
Community empowerment via Estate Management	2
Fire Safety Regime	1
Enhancing the National Parks and Wildlife service	5
Increase Heritage Council funding	2.2
Total	46.45



Capital Expenditure

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	(€M)
12,000 New Build ¹ , Buy & Renew Local Authority ² & Special Needs ³ & General Needs Approved Housing Bodies Social Housing ⁴	2,167
4,000 Affordable Cost Rental Housing ⁵	300
4,000 Affordable Housing Fund ⁶ & Buy & Renew Affordable Purchase Housing ⁷	530
Traveller Accommodation	23
Total	3,020
Less housing capital spend 2021	(1400)
Additional housing capital 2022	1620
Redress Scheme - Defects	160
Regeneration funding for public housing stock	30
Wastewater infrastructure	25
Total	1,835

1 Cost per unit €242K

2 Cost per unit €190K

3 Cost per unit €160k

4 Cost per unit €75k remainder covered by AHB borrowing

5 Cost per unit €75K remainder covered by loans from HFA, EIB

6 Cost per unit €75k remainder covered by purchaser loans

7 Cost per unit €190K







Published by Sinn Féin
October 2021