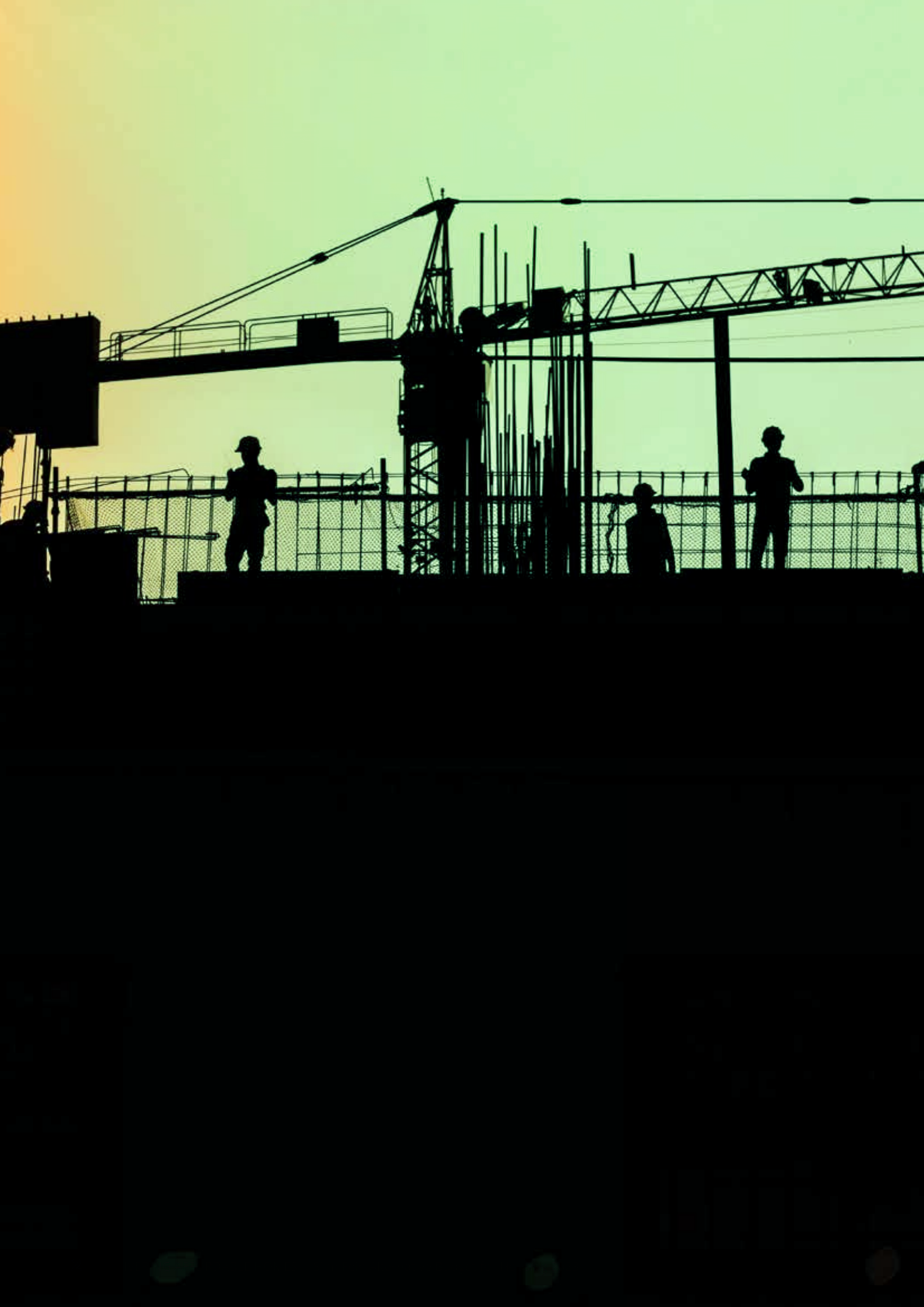




DELIVERING AFFORDABLE HOMES



Sinn Féin Alternative Budget for Housing 2023



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www.sinnfein.ie



Eoin Ó Broin TD
Sinn Féin spokesperson on Housing

1. Introduction

Sinn Féin will fix our broken housing system and deliver affordable homes. Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael have caused the housing crisis. Their support for vested interests and their bad policy choices are making it even worse.

A change of government is needed to reverse decades of bad housing policy.

A Sinn Féin government is needed to deliver 20,000 public homes next year to meet social and affordable housing need, to ban rent increases for all existing and new tenancies, and to put a month's rent back in every private renter's pocket via a refundable tax credit.

Since the current government was formed, rents have increased by 15% and house prices by 20%. A new rental property in Dublin is now more than €2,000 per month.

An entire generation is locked out of home ownership. The number of young people forced to live with their parents because of the high cost of housing continues to rise and is now at an all-time high of 41%.

Since the government ended the ban on evictions in April 2021, homelessness has increased by 30%, pensioner homelessness has increased by 27%, and shockingly child homelessness has jumped by 43%.

Meanwhile, despite the reality that Ireland is a wealthy country and the existence of tens of thousands of vacant properties, delivery of social and affordable housing continues to lag way behind demand as the government continue to miss their targets, which are too low in the first place.

Sinn Féin would increase the 2023 targets for social and affordable housing beyond those in the current government's housing plan and allocate the funding necessary to deliver an additional 2,900 social homes, 2,250 affordable cost rental homes, and 2,250 affordable homes for purchase above the government's targets.

We would deliver on our target of 20,000 public homes, 7,400 more than the government's plan, through a combination of greater use of vacant and derelict properties, accelerating existing public housing delivery, reform of public procurement opening it up to SME builders, use of turnkey developments bought from developers for affordable housing, the use of new low carbon building technologies, and redirecting the construction labour force from certain categories of building (aparthotels, high-end build to rent etc) to much needed affordable housing through changes to the tax reliefs for investment funds.

We know that it takes time to build homes, but renters can't wait for relief any longer. Action to reduce rents is needed now and only a Sinn Féin government would deliver this.

Sinn Féin's priority measures include:

- Delivery of 20,000 public homes to meet social and affordable housing need
- Putting one month's rent back into renters' pockets and introducing a ban on rent increases for three years
- An emergency package of measures to reduce homelessness
- Increased funding for Traveller accommodation and implementation of the recommendations of the Expert Group on Traveller Accommodation
- A package of measures to improve housing standards
- A greater focus on reducing carbon emissions in the built environment
- 100% redress for those living with defective block and in defective buildings
- A more participative and efficient planning system



Réamhrá

Réiteoidh Sinn Féin an córas tithíochta atá briste. Fianna Fáil agus Fine Gael is cúis leis an ngéarchéim tithíochta agus tá a leasanna agus a roghanna dílsithe á déanamh níos measa. Tá athrú rialtais ag teastáil chun drochbheartas tithíochta a réiteach agus a fhreaschur.

Tá rialtas Shinn Féin ag teastáil chun 20,000 teach poiblí a chur ar fáil an bhliain seo chugainn chun freastal ar riachtanas tithíochta sóisialta agus inacmhainne, chun cosc a chur ar ardú cíosa do gach tionóntacht reatha agus nua agus chun cíos míosa a chur ar ais i bpóca gach duine a íocann cíos go príobháideach chomh maith le creidmheas cánach inaisíochta.

Le dhá bhliain anuas tháinig ardú 15% ar chíosanna agus praghsanna tithe 20%. Tá teach cíos i mBaile Átha Cliath anois níos mó ná €2,000 in aghaidh na míosa.

Tá bac ar ghlúin iomlán ó úinéireacht tí. Tá líon na ndaoine óga arbh éigean dóibh cónaí lena dtu-ismitheoirí mar gheall ar chostas ard na tithíochta níos airde ná riamh agus é anois ag 41%.

Ó chuir an rialtas deireadh leis an gcosc ar dhíshealbhú i mí Aibreáin 2021, tá méadú 30% tagtha ar an líon daoine atá gan dídean, tá méadú 27% tagtha ar líon na bpinsinéirí gan dídean agus is mór an t-ardú 43% a tháinig ar easpa dídine ag leanaí

Idir an dá linn, in ainneoin gur tír shuibhir í Éire agus na mílte réadmhaoín fholamh ann, tá soláthar na tithíochta sóisialta agus inacmhainne fós taobh thiar den éileamh agus tá spriocanna an rialtais ró-íseal i gcónaí.

Mhéadódh Sinn Féin na spriocanna 2023 do thithíocht shóisialta agus inacmhainne a bhfuil soláthar déanta dóibh agus dhéanfaí an maoiniú riachtanach a leithdháileadh chun 2,900 teach sóisialta breise, 2,250 teach inacmhainne ar cíos agus 2,250 teach inacmhainne le ceannach os cionn spriocanna an rialtais a sholáthar.

Dhéanfaimis ár sprioc de 20,000 teach poiblí a bhaint amach trí mheascán d'úsáid níos mó a bhaint as réadmhaoine folmha agus tréigthe, dlús a chur leis an soláthar tithíochta poiblí atá ann cheana féin, úsáid a bhaint as forbairtí lándéanta ceannaithe ó fhorbróirí do thithíocht inacmhainne agus teicneolaíochtaí nua tógála ísealcharbóin a úsáid.

Tá a fhios againn go dtógann sé am chun tithe a thógáil ach ní féidir le cíósóirí fanacht ar fhaoi-seamh a thuilleadh. Tá gá le gníomh chun cíosanna a laghdú anois agus ní dhéanfadh ach rialtas Shinn Féin é seo a chur i gcrích.

2. Public Housing

Sinn Féin is committed to delivering 20,000 public homes to meet social, affordable cost rental, and affordable purchase need in 2023.

This involves funding and delivering 7,400 additional public homes to the 12,600 committed to in the government’s housing plan.

Based on costings provided by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Department of Housing this would require an additional €1.08 billion in direct exchequer funding above the government’s expected voted capital expenditure on social and affordable housing in 2023.

This additional funding would provide for 2,900 social, 2,250 affordable cost rental, and 2,250 affordable purchase homes in addition to the 12,600 social and affordable homes committed to in the government’s housing plan.

Table 1 below sets out the government’s targets, Sinn Féin’s additional committed delivery and the additional cost.

Table 1: Overall public housing provision

Housing type	Government targets	Sinn Féin additional targets	Total output	Cost of additional targets
Social	9,100	2,900	12,000	€659,100,000
Affordable	3,500	4,500	8,000	€424,730,000
Total	12,600	7,400	20,000	€1,083,830,000*

* cost additional €1.08 billion voted capital expenditure but €1.48 billion general government expenditure. Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) are classified in the General Government sector by Eurostat therefore all AHB expenditure including monies from their own borrowings or revenue is classified as general government expenditure and we factor this expenditure into the calculation of our general government balance. 2,250 of our proposed additional affordable cost rental homes would be 30% funded by Voted Capital and 70% funded by AHBs.



Social Homes

The 2,900 additional social homes contained in Sinn Féin's plan will be delivered via four separate schemes. These are Buy and Renew, Turnkey New Build, Acquisitions and Traveller Specific Accommodation.

Buy and Renew funds the purchase and renovation by Local Authorities of vacant and derelict properties to be added to the social housing stock.

Turnkey New Build involves the forward purchasing of private sector developments at an early stage in the development process in cases where development would otherwise be unlikely.

Acquisitions are the purchase of second-hand homes either with a HAP/RAS/RS tenant in-situ with a notice to quit, or vacant homes not on the market, to include one bed, four bed and medically adapted properties.

Traveller Accommodation is a dedicated budget for the provision of new culturally appropriate Traveller Accommodation.

The Table 2 below sets out the scheme, number, average unit cost and total cost of each measure.

Table 2: Social housing provision

Scheme	Number	Unit Cost	Total Cost
Buy and Renew Social	1,000	€197,000	€197,000,000
Turnkey New Build	1,000	€256,262	€256,000,000
Acquisition	900	€229,000	€206,100,000
Sub total	2900		€659,100,000
Traveller Accommodation	N/A	N/A	€10,000,000
Total	2,900		€669,100,000

Affordable homes

The government's housing plan includes a target for 'affordable' homes of 5,500 for 2023 (P32 HFA). However, this includes 2,000 unaffordable private sector homes purchased with the controversial Shared Equity Loan scheme. In Sinn Féin's view these are not affordable homes.

The target for genuinely affordable homes in the government's plan to be delivered by Local Authorities, Approved Housing Bodies and the Land Development Agency via the Affordable Housing Fund, the Cost Rental Equity Loan Scheme and Project Tosaigh is 3,500.

To date, the government has not provided a breakdown of these targets by scheme or by year for the duration of their plan.

Sinn Féin believes that at least 8,000 genuinely affordable homes must be delivered in order to start dealing with the pent-up demand for affordable cost rental and affordable purchase homes.

Cost rental homes would be delivered with the Cost Rental Equity Loan to Approved Housing Bodies covering 30% of the delivery costs. Approved Housing Bodies would raise the remainder of the finance from the Housing Finance Agency, the European Investment Bank or low interest private finance.

The Buy and Renew affordable purchase scheme funds the purchase and renovation by Local Authorities of vacant and derelict properties. These would then be sold on to affordable purchasers under the terms of the affordable purchase scheme.

The Affordable Housing Fund provides Local Authorities with 30% of the development costs of new build affordable homes. The remainder of the finance is provided by the building contractor from finance provided by Home Building Finance Ireland or commercial banks. The properties are then sold on to affordable purchasers under the terms of the affordable purchase scheme.

Sinn Féin's affordable purchase scheme differs from the government's in one crucial respect. The government schemes sells the property at a discount of the all-in development cost while retaining the difference as an equity share in the property. This equity is redeemable by the State on sale by the owner.

Sinn Féin's scheme retains ownership of the land under a no-charge indefinite leasehold. The sale price of the property does not include the land costs or the cost of servicing the site. The property is owned by the purchaser and can be passed on to subsequent generations of the same family.

The indefinite leasehold is subject to a legal covenant prohibiting the use of the property for private rental. At the point of future sale, the covenant also obliges the homeowner to sell to another affordable purchaser at the future affordable purchase price, which would be the initial price paid index linked for inflation and home improvements.

The benefit of this scheme is that there is no hidden shared equity charge on the purchaser and year on year we build up a stock of privately owned, privately traded but permanently affordable homes in the housing system.

Table 3 below sets out the scheme, number, average unit cost and total direct exchequer cost of each measure.

Table 3

Scheme	Number	Unit Cost	Total Cost
Cost Rental	2,250	€75,000	€168,750,000
Buy and Renew Affordable purchase	715	€197,000	€140,855,000
Affordable Housing Fund	1,535	€75,000	€115,125,000
Total	4,500		€424,730,000

Delivering the targets

Delivering 20,000 public homes in a single year is incredibly ambitious. In 2020, 2021 and to date in 2022 the government has missed their social and affordable housing targets.

While this was in part due to Covid-19 disruption of building sites, other factors were at play. These include micro-management of the public housing development process by the Department of Housing and bureaucratic procurement rules set by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform which slow down development, reduce competition and increase costs.

In order to ensure delivery of Sinn Féin's ambitious public housing targets we would combine the increase of capital investment outlined above with six key policy initiatives.

- 20% of our public housing delivery in 2023 would be from existing vacant and derelict housing stock. 4,000 of the 20,000 public homes would be from reused buildings. Delivering units in this way is quicker, cheaper, requires less labour and has a lower carbon footprint.
- Reform the Department of Housing's Four Stage Approval Process to accelerate the delivery of public housing already in the pipeline. At present this process can add up to two years to the development process which under Sinn Féin's proposals would be reduced to between 6 and 12 months.
- Reform the public procurement process through the use of regional and tiered framework agreements. This would end the need for individual procurement processes for every new build project. It would also encourage greater competition, help manage cost inflation and ensure greater stability of labour supply as contractors would be guaranteed a pipeline of work over a 3 to 5 year period.

- Create a specific framework agreement for the delivery of new homes through the use of low carbon, off site manufactured new building technologies. Significant advances have been made by Irish companies in the development of high-quality timber-based products that meet the building control, fire safety and life span requirements for public housing. When delivered at scale these products can be quicker to assemble, result in lower costs and lower carbon than traditional building methodologies.
- Expand the use of turnkey new builds to include mixed developments with social, affordable cost rental and affordable purchase homes. With private sector commencements falling significantly in the last quarter and expectations of a further slowdown due to uncertainty around future construction sector inflation there is significant volume and value to be secured by Local Authorities and Approved Housing bodies in acquiring turnkey projects at an advanced stage in the development process that are otherwise unlikely to be built.
- Redirect existing construction sector labour supply away from projects with limited social value such as co-living, aparthotels and high-end build to rent through the ending of tax reliefs for institutional investment funds. This would free up additional capacity to focus on what would be a Sinn Féin government's key priority of delivering 20,000 public homes to meet social and affordable housing need.

Sinn Féin is also making provision of an additional €25 million to Irish Water's capital programme with a specific focus on increasing water and wastewater capacity for the delivery of the social and affordable housing programme.





3. Protecting Renters

Rents continue to spiral out of control. Both existing tenants in and outside Rent Pressure Zones and those in new rental stock have faced years of unprecedented rental increases.

Renters need a break. They were not able to absorb further rent increases before the current cost of living crisis. Now the need for some form of relief is urgent.

Sinn Féin's approach to the private rental sector combines both short term emergency measures to protect renters combined with medium to long term reforms to stabilise the rental sector providing security and affordability to tenants while allowing legally compliant landlords to make a fair return on the service they provide.

Ban on rent increases

Sinn Féin would introduce emergency legislation to ban rent increases for all tenants in the private rental sector for three years. This would apply to existing tenants, new tenants in existing rental stock and new tenancies in new rental stock.

Rents would be capped at their current level of existing tenants and rental properties and at a Residential Tenancies Board standard equivalised rent index price for the property size and location.

The ban on rent increases would be in place for three years and then be replaced by an index linking of rent reviews for all existing and new tenancies. The index would be based on wages and landlords' real costs as determined by way of regulation by the Minister for Housing.

Cutting rents

Banning rent increases does nothing to reduce the cost of renting for tens of thousands of tenants who are paying 40% and in some cases 50% of their net disposable income on rent.

In Budget 2023, Sinn Féin is proposing a refundable tax credit to put a month's rent back into renters' pockets every year for three years.

Based on the most recent tenancy registration figures and rent index rates from the Residential Tenancies Board the full year cost of the tax credit would be €302.9 million.

As an additional element of our emergency cost of living package we would make the refundable tax credit available in 2022 for the final three months of the year at a cost of €75.7 million.

4. Homelessness

Since the Minister for Housing Darragh O'Brien ended the Covid-19 ban on evictions in April 2021, the rate of homeless presentations and the number of households in emergency accommodation has increased dramatically.

In July of this year the number of adults and children officially categorised as homeless reached the highest number on record.

The primary cause of homelessness is the failure of the state to provide an adequate supply of social and affordable homes.

With house prices now above their Celtic Tiger peak a significant number of single property landlords are exiting the market. Accidental and pension pot landlords are driving this exit.

A third of all private rental tenancies, almost 100,000 households, are social housing tenants in receipt of HAP, RAS and Rent Supplement.

With the private rental sector now shrinking, the government's over reliance on that sector to meet social and affordable housing demand is no longer viable.

There is a need to introduce an emergency package of measures to slow down the flow of households into homelessness and increase the availability of long term social and affordable housing.

In addition to the measures outlined in the section above Sinn Féin's Alternative Budget for 2023 proposes:

Tenants in Situ

An increase in and acceleration of the tenant in-situ scheme. This is where a Local Authority purchases a private rental property with a HAP/RAS/RS tenant in situ who has received a notice to quit and is at risk of homelessness.

The Minister for Housing Darragh O'Brien has recently reopened this scheme but the guidance to Local Authorities is vague and no extra funding has been provided.



The Minister for Housing must issue a circular instructing Local Authorities to purchase all available properties with a HAP/RAS/RS tenant in situ subject to appropriate value for money checks and assessments of the property.

Our Alternative Budget makes provision for up to 900 tenant-in-situ acquisitions in our social housing programme at a cost of €206.1 million.

These tenant in-situ acquisitions will not only help reduce homelessness. They will also remove social housing applicants from the social housing list and add to the overall social housing stock.

Housing First

Housing First has been government policy since 2008. It is a proven solution to long-term homelessness for both single people and families. It provides people experiencing homelessness with a home and the necessary wrap around supports required to sustain their tenancy.

To date the programme has been chronically underfunded. As a result, the number of Housing First tenancies created has been low and has focused on those with the highest level of need, particularly amongst the single homeless population.

The government's housing plan has increased the target number of Housing First Tenancies to an average of 240 per year (Page 52, H4A).

In order to accelerate the number of households exiting long term emergency accommodation Sinn Féin would increase this target further to 500 Housing First Tenancies in 2023. We would also widen the eligibility criteria to ensure all households in need of this scheme could access it.

The funding for these additional tenancies would come from within the main social housing capital budget.

Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence continues to be a major driver of homelessness. During the Covid-19 pandemic, a significant increase in levels of domestic violence was reported by all domestic violence support organisations.

Despite this, the provision of dedicated domestic violence refuge places for women and children fleeing physical and sexual violence and coercive control remains wholly inadequate.

Figures provided by Tusla indicate that on any given night up to 599 adults and children are sleeping in domestic violence refuges funded by the State. As many as 10 counties have no refuge provision and support organisations estimate that current provision meets barely a quarter of need.

Sinn Féin's Alternative Budget proposes a €15 million increase in capital funding for domestic violence refuge provision in the form of ringfenced Capital Assistance Funding provided by the Department of Housing. This represents almost a 50% increase in the total funding provided by government for domestic violence and gender-based violence services on the €31.5 million allocated in 2022.



5. Housing Adequacy

Housing policy is not only about the number of homes delivered in a given year. It is also about the standard and quality of existing and new homes. Homes must not only be secure and affordable they must also be adequate to meet people's needs.

In our Alternative Budget for 2023 Sinn Féin has included a range of measures aimed at addressing some of the worst examples of inadequate housing in our housing system. We have also included measures aimed at ensuring new housing meets key standards such as fire safety and habitability for people with disabilities including wheelchair users.

Inner City Flat Regeneration

Dublin City Council and Cork City Council have in their social housing stock a significant number of flat complexes built from the 1930s to the 1960s. Many of these, while well built, have not been adequately maintained over the years.

Overcrowding, structural disrepair, damp and weak estate management have a very significant negative impact on tenant's quality of life.

Sinn Féin's Alternative Budget includes an increase in the Estate Regeneration fund of €20 million representing a 40% increase on the €50 million allocated by government in 2022. This additional funding will be focused on upgrading and improving flat complexes.

Social Housing response maintenance

The day-to-day maintenance of social housing stock is funded through the rents paid by tenants.

Figures from the National Oversight and Audit Commission indicate that Councils rents cover approximately half of the cost of response maintenance.

In recent years a number of Councils have experienced shortfalls in their response maintenance budgets. In our Alternative Budget for 2023 Sinn Féin has included a new provision of a €15 million Response Maintenance fund to which Local Authorities can apply on a once off basis to supplement their own maintenance budgets.

This is a new budget head and is in addition to the cyclical maintenance grants that Councils can apply for from the Department for works such as heating, windows and electrical upgrades.

Traveller specific accommodation

The failure of successive governments and Local Authorities to address the Dickensian conditions in which large numbers of the Travelling community live is a stain on Irish housing policy and society more generally.

There is an urgent need to implement the 32 recommendations of the 2019 report of the Expert Group on Traveller Accommodation. Central to this is an annual increase in capital funding for the provision of new culturally appropriate Traveller accommodation.

Sinn Féin's Alternative Budget includes an allocation of an additional €10 million of capital funding, representing an increase of 55% on the capital allocation by government in 2022. This funding would be specifically ringfenced for new accommodation provision.

Fire Safety

Local Authority Building Control sections do not have to inspect all new developments. While a protocol agreed in 2014 has set a target inspection rate of 15% inspections of new developments, the actual rate of inspections varies across Local Authorities. Some, such as Dublin City Council, have a very high rate of inspections. According to the National Building Control Office and the National Oversight and Audit Commission other Councils do not even meet the 15% target.

In light of the very serious fire safety defects issues reported in the recent government report of the Independent Working Group on Building Defects it is incumbent that the level of independent inspections of new developments increases.

Priority should be given to reaching 100% inspection of all multi-unit residential and non-resi-



dential developments including apartment complexes, hospitals, nursing homes and similar type buildings.

Sinn Féin has budgeted €1 million to increase funding for additional building control staff in Local Authorities operating on a regional basis.

Universal Design

There is an urgent need to review Part M (Access and Use) of the Building Control regulations. Currently Part M only provides access for visitation by people with disabilities including wheelchair users.

Part M must comply with the highest possible standard of universal design to ensure both our public and private housing stock is not only visitable but habitable by people with disabilities including wheelchair users.

The review and reform of Part M has no immediate cost to the Department of Housing and must be prioritised to ensure people with disabilities have access to appropriate homes.

Tenant Empowerment and Participation

Sinn Féin is committed to ensuring that tenants in Local Authority and Approved Housing Bodies estates are provided with the opportunity to become active participants in the decisions about the management and development of the communities in which they live.

For too long social housing landlords have adopted a top-down attitude to tenants, viewing them merely as receivers of state services or as consumers.

Tenants are best placed to understand the needs and requirements of the built environment in which they live.

In our Alternative Budget for 2023, Sinn Féin has included a budget line provision of €2 million to fund pilot schemes in which tenants are supported to become active participants in local decision making. These pilots should take a human rights-based approach to allow for meaningful tenant participation on issues such as but not exclusive to estate regeneration, environmental management, estate management, estate enhancement.

The schemes would be designed on a location-by-location basis with the support of housing rights and tenants' rights advocacy groups.

Table 4: Housing Adequacy Measures

Measure	2022 allocation by Government	Sinn Féin additional allocation for 2023	% increase
Inner city flat regeneration	€50,000,000	€20,000,000	40%
Social housing response maintenance	N/A	€15,000,000	N/A
Traveller Specific Accommodation	€18,000,000	€10,000,000	55%
Fire safety inspections	N/A	€1,000,000	N/A
Universal design	N/A	Cost neutral	N/A
Tenant empowerment and participation	N/A	€2,000,000	N/A
		€48,000,000	

6. Climate Change

Thirty percent of the States greenhouse gas emissions are from the built environment. Twenty percent come from the energy used in the buildings in which we live, work, study and socialise.

Ten percent comes from the embodied carbon generated in new building developments.

Reducing the carbon emissions from our built environment is the responsibility of a number of Departments.

In light of the new legally binding carbon reduction targets agreed by the Oireachtas and the government, each Department has a responsibility to set out year on year what policy changes it intends to use to meet those targets.

Sinn Féin's Alternative Budget sets out three key budgetary measures aimed at reducing the overall emissions of the public housing sector.

Vacant Homes

As stated earlier 20% of Sinn Féin's public housing build programme in 2023 will come from vacant and derelict buildings. The lowest carbon building is the one already in existence.

Reusing existing buildings not only involves a dramatically reduced carbon footprint it also contributes to the revitalisation of city, town and village centres where most of the vacancy exists.

The re-use of existing dwellings in country-side areas will also assist in addressing population decline while at the same time reducing the negative impact of unrestricted new ribbon development.

The delivery of 4,000 social, affordable rental and affordable purchase homes from vacant and derelict stock in urban and rural Ireland is a key plank for Sinn Féin's emission reduction strategy in public housing.

As part of the financing of this component of our public housing policy Sinn Féin would redirect the small amount of funding in the Croí Cónaithe Towns fund into the capital funding for Local Authorities.

Added to the overall increase in capital funding for public housing provision and the ability of Local Authorities to take a proactive approach to vacancy and dereliction this will result in a greater number of vacant and derelicts being brought back into use and made available to a wider number of households in urban, town, village and countryside locations.

Social housing retrofitting

Primary responsibility for the government's retrofitting programme lies with the Department of Energy, Climate and Communications. However, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage has responsibility for the financing of the social housing retrofitting programme.

Social housing tenants are amongst the lowest income households in the State and are at greater risk of fuel poverty. Inadequate financing of the maintenance and upgrading of social housing stock has resulted in very low levels of energy efficiency in the social housing stock.

Sinn Féin is committed to accelerating the pace of retrofitting of the social housing stock and in our Alternative Budget for 2023 have included an additional €42.5 million to the Department of Housing which represents a 50% increase on the government's allocation of €85 million for 2022.

New Building Technologies

Reusing existing buildings and retrofitting older homes is only one part of reducing the carbon emissions in our built environment. It is not possible to meet our legally binding emissions reduction targets in the built environment without changing the way in which we build and what we build with.



While traditional building technologies such as steel, cement and bricks will continue to be used into the future, the government must facilitate the growth of new building technologies including low carbon timber-based construction products and low carbon cement.

While this transition from high carbon to low and in some cases zero carbon technologies will take some time, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government must take the lead and ensure a dedicated pipeline of new build public housing contracts using low carbon new building technologies.

Sinn Féin's public housing programme for 2023 aims to secure at least 1,000 new public housing units using these new low carbon building technologies through the use of a specific framework agreement open to manufacturers providing such technologies.

This would be accompanied by the phased introduction into the wider public housing framework agreements of criteria to promote the use of lower carbon materials including timber frame, low carbon cement and timber-based products.

Sinn Féin is also committed to a reform of the building regulations to permit timber based residential developments above 10 meters subject to the highest fire safety and building control regulations.

Beyond these immediate measures the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage must work with stakeholders including the Irish Green Building Council, the Construction Industry Federation, The Irish Homebuilders Association and the City and County Managers Association to set out a clear and ambitious pathway ensuring that the construction industry plays its part in meeting our legally binding 2030 and 2050 emission reduction targets.

7. Building Defects

Light touch regulation, negligence and greed during the Celtic Tiger era has left tens of thousands of homeowners, private rental tenants and social housing tenants living in homes with significant building defects.

Pyrite in the foundations in Leinster, deleterious materials including mica, pyrite and pyrrhotite in block and foundations across at least 13 counties, and fire safety, water ingress and other structural defects in apartments, duplexes and houses has been widely documented in three separate Government commissioned independent reports.

Homeowners who bought their homes in good faith and tenants paying rent in the private and public housing sectors did not cause these defects. They should not have to pay to remediate them, nor should they be forced to live in defective buildings.

Sinn Féin is committed to delivering 100% redress for all those living in defective homes. We believe that the responsibility for funding the necessary redress schemes must be borne by both by the State and industry including the construction, quarry, block manufacturing, non-life insurance and banking sectors.

Given the scale of the defects that have been discovered, full redress is going to take many years and billions of euro.

Sinn Féin is committed in our Alternative Budget for 2023 to ensuring at least €200 million of exchequer funding is provided next year for those affected by pyrite, defective block and Celtic Tiger era building defects.

We have made provision for an additional €140 million in addition to the €60 million provided by the government in core funding for 2023.

Sinn Féin would also pursue the creation of an industry fund, either through agreement or legislation with the relevant sectors. We note that the Minister for Finance Paschal Donoghue indicated





in July that he was exploring the establishment of a fund with a potential annual contribution of up to €80 million.

Any funds raised through an industry contribution would be additional to committed Government expenditure and both contributions would be multi annual.

With respect to the defective block scheme, Sinn Féin is committed to bringing forward legislation later this year to address the inadequacies of the Government's Remediation of Buildings Affected by the Use of Defective Concrete Block Act 2022.

Our amending legislation would address the significant concerns of homeowners in the affected counties and provide for 100% redress.

With respect to the recently published report from the Independent Group on Building Defects Sinn Féin believes the most effective way to create a redress scheme for those affected by these building defects is to widen the terms of reference of the existing Pyrite Resolution Board to include Celtic Tiger era defects.

This would provide Owners Management Companies and other homeowners with a ready to go end-to-end scheme operating on the same basis as the existing pyrite scheme in Leinster. The scheme must also include provision for retrospective redress.

Sinn Féin remains committed to the full implementation of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing report Safe As Houses. Ensuring a comprehensive reform of our building control and consumer protection regime to ensure that the scandal of Celtic Tiger era building defects is never repeated.

8. Planning Reform

Our planning system has both strengths and weaknesses. Sinn Féin is committed to a participative, democratic and efficient planning system.

We believe that planning works best when communities and stakeholders are actively involved at the earliest stages of the process. We support the increasing focus on plan led development and the greater use of County Development Plans, Local Area Plans, Strategic Development Zones and Urban Development Zones.

In our Alternative Budget for 2023 we are proposing three initiatives which we believe will greatly enhance our planning system making it more inclusive while reducing risks for communities and developers alike.

Resourcing An Bord Pleanála

In addition to a broader reform of An Bord Pleanála there is a need to ensure that the planning authority has adequate staff, particularly to deal with its new remit under the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021.

If the state is to meet its renewable energy targets, then An Board Pleanála must have a sufficient number of appropriately skilled staff to fulfil its functions under the act.

Our Alternative Budget makes a provision of an additional €1.3 million to facilitate the recruitment of additional staff for the new maritime and climate unit of the Bord.

Planning and Environmental Court

Bad planning legislation and policy introduced by the previous Government, including the Strategic Housing Development process and controversial Mandatory Ministerial Guidelines on apartment design standards, and building heights, have resulted in a significant increase in Judicial Reviews of residential developments.

In turn this had led to calls from some in Government and industry to restrict access to Judicial





Review on controversial planning developments which in many instances have significant environmental considerations.

Such calls ignore the real cause of Judicial Reviews, namely bad planning policy and poor implementation of Irish and EU environmental law.

The state has clear legal obligations under the Aarhus Convention to ensure people have access to justice in environmental matters.

Reducing the number of Judicial Reviews of planning applications is best achieved by addressing the causes of the legal challenges, including the repeal of the Mandatory Ministerial Guidelines and ensuring appropriate transposition and adherence to environmental law.

In addition to that, our planning system would benefit from the creation of a stand alone Planning and Environmental Court, with specialist judges and research staff, ensuring timely, consistent and informed decisions in cases where Judicial Reviews are sought and granted.

Sinn Féin's Alternative Budget for 2023 includes a provision of €1.6 million to establish such a court modelled on the Commercial Court and the Labour Relations Court. The full year cost of the court would exceed €3 million.

Participative planning

As part of our commitment to increasing constructive and informed participation by communities and stakeholders in the planning process Sinn Féin's Alternative Budget includes a new provision of €500,000 for a number of participative planning pilot projects.

The aim of these projects would be to empower communities and stakeholders to engage effectively and early in order to make the overall planning process more efficient. The aim of the pilot projects would be to assess the viability of making such funding a mainstream part of the planning process.

The details of the pilots would be launched following consultation with the Local Government Sector, the Irish Planning Institute and community-based planning advocacy groups such as the Dublin Democratic Planning Alliance.



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DELIVERING AFFORDABLE HOMES



SINN FÉIN ALTERNATIVE BUDGET FOR HOUSING 2023



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