



**An Ghníomhaireacht  
Tithíochta**  
The Housing Agency

# Annual Conference

**1<sup>st</sup> December 2023**

## Summary Report

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## Programme

On Friday, 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023, The Housing Agency hosted its annual conference in Tangent, Trinity Business School. Michael Carey, Chairman of The Housing Agency, welcomed attendees and noted the collaboration between the LDA, The Housing Agency and the UCD Geary Institute in organising the event. He highlighted the importance of land for affordable housing and learning from best practice. He then introduced the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien TD, who provided a video message to open the conference. In his address, the Minister spoke about the importance of land management in the delivery of social and affordable housing. He talked about the commitments made under *Housing for All* to develop sustainable and affordable housing including the Land Acquisition Fund and the changes being made to the planning system with the Planning and Development Bill 2023.

The conference was delivered as a half-day in-person event and involved discussion from expert speakers under the theme of **Land for Affordable Housing**. Two sessions were held as part of the conference, under the topics of "Talking About Land – what have we learned?" and "Solutions, Implementation and the Way Forward".

The agenda for the conference can be found [on our website](#).



*Michael Carey (Chairman of The Housing Agency), Professor Michelle Norris (UCD Geary Institute for Public Policy), Dr Julie Lawson (RMIT) and Bob Jordan (The Housing Agency)*

## Annual Conference 1st December 2023

There were 98 in-person attendees, including representatives from Local Authorities, Approved Housing Bodies, State Agencies and Government departments and the private sector. Throughout the conference, attendees could ask questions through Slido, an audience interaction tool, which was an innovative way to capture expertise and gauge sentiment during the sessions.

## Session One

### The Importance of Land

#### BOB JORDAN – CEO, THE HOUSING AGENCY

Bob discussed the importance of land as part of the first session of the day. He talked about the role of The Housing Agency as an intermediary and to fill in the implementation gaps when it comes to land and affordable housing. He highlighted the importance of land as it is fundamental to the delivery of social and affordable housing, made even more important when considering increasing demand for affordable housing along with *Housing for All* targets. Bob referred to several measures we have in Ireland including land value capture through development levies, inclusionary zoning through Part V and public land banking through the LDA and local authorities. Bob concluded with some learnings from the “Talking About Land” series, which was jointly run by the LDA, The Housing Agency and the UCD Geary Institute, and noted that the conference was a culmination of the series.



*Bob Jordan - CEO, The Housing Agency*

### Keynote Speaker

#### DR JULIE LAWSON – ROYAL MELBOURNE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Dr Julie Lawson joined as the keynote speaker for the event and discussed “Land Tools to Shape Housing Systems and their Outcomes”. Julie talked about how this space has changed a lot in recent years and highlighted the finite nature of land. She noted that the choice of land policy reflects and builds on past practices, and it can support sustainable growth long term societal interests. Julie references the Housing 2030 report, which provides several useful case studies on land tools and land policy. Julie discussed some land tools which work well in other jurisdictions, including public land leasing in Helsinki, public land



*Dr Julie Lawson*



pooling and readjustment in Seoul and regulatory planning and inclusionary zoning which operate in most U.S. cities. Julie also reminded attendees of the war in Ukraine and the potential consequences on housing demand in Ireland and many other countries in Europe.

## Talking About Land – What have we learned?

### PANELLISTS:

- David Duffy – Director, Property Industry Ireland, IBEC
- Dearbhla Lawson – Head of Strategic Planning & Chief Planner, Land Development Agency (LDA)
- Sean O'Connor – Chief Executive, Tuath Housing
- Jim Baneham – Director of Delivery and Innovation, The Housing Agency



David Duffy (Property Industry Ireland) kicked off the first panel discussion and discussed the importance of having a pipeline of land for construction, businesses and to make the sector more attractive for investors. David talked about the idea of land as a resource and that we should see reframe how we think of it. Land is a raw material for home building, according to David. Looking to the future, he advocated for data sources on zoned land and noted the review of the National Planning Framework will be important.



David Duffy

Dearbhla Lawson (LDA) discussed affordable housing at scale and how we can address the supply and affordability gap. Dearbhla referenced the “Talking About Land” series as a valuable resource which we can all learn from. She talked about the origins of the Land Development Agency in a report by NESC and noted the importance of delivery as well as policy choices in how we use land. She talked about the Land Acquisition Fund as one of the key policy tools in Ireland today, along with Project Tosaigh and the LDA’s role to address the affordability gap currently facing us.



*Dearbhla Lawson*

Sean O'Connor (Tuath Housing) followed by discussing the importance of having a long-term approach to housing and land policy. Sean discussed active land management and the move from speculative to cyclical development. He talked about the critical role of AHB's, including Tuath, in delivering affordable housing, and noted the importance of partnership and collaboration within the sector. Sean agreed there is a need for a secure pipeline to guarantee construction and investment and noted the state intervention by the UK government in Milton Keynes to deliver housing in the 1960's.



*Sean O'Connor*

Jim Baneham (The Housing Agency) talked about the Land Aggregation Scheme and the Land Acquisition Fund. He discussed the challenges associated with the Land Acquisition Fund, including difficulty developing on certain lands due to viability issues. Talking about the Land Acquisition Fund, Jim talked about some of the learnings including ensuring that relevant lands can be turned around quickly for development and are viable. The Housing Agency would like to ensure coordination between themselves and the LDA, Jim noted, and to ensure that land secured through the fund is developed.



*Jim Baneham*



## Session Two

### Introducing Session Two

#### **KEYNOTE SPEAKER MICHELLE NORRIS – UCD, GEARY INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY**

Professor Michelle Norris (UCD) joined as the keynote speaker for the second session of the day and introduced the topic for the final session. Michelle talked about why the Irish government should intervene in land markets and why they should intervene in the supply of land for social and affordable housing. She referenced some useful resources on land policy, including a book by Josh Ryan-Collins and the Kenny Report. Michelle discussed the experiences in other countries and noted how England and the Netherlands were able to use cheap land to enable high social housing building and led to increased levels of people living in social housing. Michelle referenced some of the tools mentioned throughout the “Talking About Land” series, including the Wohnfond Wien in Vienna (public land banking) as well as local authority land banking in France and public land leasing in Helsinki. Michelle noted it is not just an issue of land supply, but our systems must have mechanisms built into them to keep land costs down. Michelle concluded by urging attendees and policymakers to consider whether recent measures introduced are sufficient and sufficiently coordinated.



*Professor Michelle Norris*

## Session Two: Solutions, Implementation and the Way Forward

### PANELLISTS:

- Claragh Mulhern – Acting Principal Advisor, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Margaret Geraghty – Housing Delivery Coordination Office, Local Government Management Agency (LGMA)
- Dr Larry O'Connell – Director, National Economic and Social Council (NESC)
- Niall Cussen – Chief Executive and Planning Regulatory, Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR)



Claragh Mulhern (DHLGH) kicked off the second session of the conference. Claragh noted the importance of having clarity about how relevant infrastructure will be provided at development stage. Claragh gave an overview of the key features of the new Planning and Development Bill as well as the review of the National Planning Framework. Claragh then discussed the recently published commencement figures and noted there are still a lot of units to commence by the end of the year into early 2024. Claragh also discussed useful land policy tools such as land value capture and proposals for land value sharing.

Margaret Geraghty (LGMA) followed and discussed the State's increased involvement in housing and how it is playing an active role in the sector. Margaret talked about using purposeful language when we talk about housing and said that policy measures need to connect, and organisations need to have the resources and expertise required to meet



housing delivery targets. Margaret concluded by saying that the sector will continue to need collaboration with the private development sector and sustainability will continue to be crucial.



Larry O'Connell discussed compact growth and urged the sector to have a conversation about it and look at case studies and best practice. Larry talked about the current skills gaps in local authorities and how it can be addressed. He then discussed what he termed the “legitimacy gap” around uncertainty in the sector, including the trend towards renting over homeownership and whether this is something that the public wants. Larry concluded by saying that housing must remain on the agenda and highlighted the importance of data, feasibility, and legitimacy.

Niall Cussen (OPR) concluded the second session, discussing the Land Development Agency's relevant lands report and questioning whether all sections of our society can afford the housing in the current pipeline. Niall talked about issues around viability, affordability, renting and homeownership. Active land management has an important role to play, he said, and the LDA will be an important player in this. Niall finished by urging actors to work together and highlighted the collaboration between three bodies, the Land Development Agency, The Housing Agency, and the UCD Geary Institute to organise the conference.



*Niall Cussen*

## Conference Close

The conference was closed by Cormac O'Rourke, Chairman of the Land Development Agency. He thanked the three partners involved in organising the conference: The Housing Agency, the Land Development Agency and the UCD Geary Institute for Public Policy. He also thanked the speakers for sharing their insights and knowledge. He talked about the role the LDA is playing relating to affordable housing, including through cost rental and affordable purchase. He provided an update on Project Tosaigh and noted that the LDA wishes to build up their capacity rapidly in the next few years. He said the LDA is continuing to focus on additionality, viability and is focusing on land which already has planning permission. He concluded by encouraging attendees to consider intergenerational solidarity and sharing the costs across wider society.



*Cormac O'Rourke*

## Acknowledgments

The event was organised by the Policy & Practice team in The Housing Agency: Roslyn Molloy, Sarah Walsh, Graeme Fryer, Nicola Turley, Johanna Wiedermann, Vivienne Pringle, and Jessica Hannon.

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