

**CORRESPONDENCE**  
**MEETING OF THE METROPOLITAN DISTRICT OF LIMERICK**  
**18<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2024**

- Email dated 16<sup>th</sup> October, 2024 from the Office of the Minister for Housing in reply to Notice of Motion from Members that no large development of apartments or houses be allowed be bought up by Vulture Funds so as to allow first time buyers a chance to purchase.
- Letter dated 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2024 from the Western Regional Manager, Waterways Ireland in reply to Notice of Motion from Members to contact Waterways Ireland and ask them to attend a meeting of the Metropolitan District of Limerick to explain why they have not lodged a promised planning application to put in place a comprehensive maintenance plan for the Guinness Canal.
- Letter dated 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2024 from the Chief Executive, Iarnród Éireann in reply to Notice of Motion from Members in relation to compensation for homes within the Metropolitan District which are currently experiencing rodent infestation due to works completed along the Limerick to Foynes railway line.
- Email dated 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2024 from the Office of the Minister for Education in reply to Notice of Motion from Members to write to the Minister in support of Dyslexia Ireland's call for young people with dyslexia, and other forms of neurodiversity such as stammers, dyspraxia, ADHD and Autism, be given extra time in state exams.

**From:** Minister O'Brien Office <[ministerobrien-housing@corr.cloud.gov.ie](mailto:ministerobrien-housing@corr.cloud.gov.ie)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday 16 October 2024 11:44  
**To:** Customer Services <[customerservices@limerick.ie](mailto:customerservices@limerick.ie)>  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]HPLG-MOBO-03308-2024

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Oifig an Aire  
Office of the Minister

16th October 2024.

RE: HPLG-MOBO-03308-2024

Dear Mr. Leahy,

Thank you for your letter of September 17 2024 detailing your concerns in relation to the commercial institutional bulk purchase of apartment developments in the Metropolitan District of Limerick.

At the outset, it is important to note that the Minister's role in relation to local planning matters is to provide the legislative, policy and financial framework at a national level within which local authorities can perform their functions. In this regard, Section 63(3) of the Local Government Act 2001 provides that a local authority is independent in the performance of its functions.

The Minister is specifically precluded, under section 30 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), from exercising power or control in relation to any particular case with which a planning authority or An Bord Pleanála is or may be concerned. Rather, the Minister's role in relation to local authorities is primarily to provide the policy, financial and legislative framework within which local authorities perform their functions. The day-to-day operation of the planning system is a matter for the planning authorities. On this basis, the response below addresses the matters raised in general terms.

Housing for All published in September 2021 provides a new housing plan for Ireland to 2030 with the overall objective that every citizen in the State should have access to good quality homes through a steady supply of housing in the right locations, with economic, social and environmental sustainably built into the system. This includes an overall objective to increase housing supply and to satisfy demand for housing across all tenures, including affordable, social, private rental and private ownership.

In relation to the issue of bulk purchase, and in response to an increase commercial institutional investor's bulk-purchasing units in traditional lower density housing estates, the Minister issued Section 28 Guidelines for Planning Authorities in 2021 on the "*Regulation of Commercial Institutional Investment in Housing*". The Guidelines are aimed at preventing multiple housing and duplex units being sold to a single buyer. They aim to provide an 'owner-occupier' guarantee by ensuring that new 'own-door' houses and duplex units in lower-density housing developments can no longer be bulk-purchased by institutional investors in a manner that causes the displacement of individual purchasers or social and affordable housing, including cost-rental. Additional

measures to increase home ownership include Housing Policy Objective 1.10 of the Housing for All strategy (now incorporated as a home ownership guarantee) and a 10% stamp duty levy introduced for the cumulative purchase of 10 or more residential houses in a 12-month period. This policy is aimed at ensuring a level playing field for traditional family homebuyers, including but not limited to first-time buyers, while facilitating vital investment in high-density apartments. Since May 2021, a combined total of 49,828 houses and duplex units were estimated to have received planning permission with conditions restricting the bulk buying or multiple sales to a single purchaser. It is the responsibility of the local authority concerned to ensure compliance with these guidelines. A decision was taken not to include apartment developments in the measures covered by the Guidelines, recognising the need to enable delivery of viable long-term residential accommodation for private rental purposes in addition to purchase.

On a related matter, the Sustainable Urban Housing Design Standards for New Apartments Guidelines for Planning Authorities, issued in December 2022, removed the distinction between 'Build to Rent' and other types of apartment developments, such that 'Build to Rent' is no longer a distinct type of apartment development for planning purposes. This allows flexibility to facilitate build-to-sell, while also maintaining the option to sell to commercial investors for rental purposes, recognising that a multi-stranded approach is needed to meet current levels of housing need and to cater for the needs of a diverse and growing population. Greater flexibility is also considered necessary to support investment by the private sector in the delivery of increased housing supply, which remains critical.

In responding to viability and affordability issues within the residential construction sector, this Department has introduced a number of new schemes over the last two years that strongly support home ownership and affordability. The Croí Cónaithe (Cities) Scheme introduced in 2022 supports the building of apartments for sale to owner-occupiers and is targeting supporting the delivery of 5,000 apartments for owner occupier's purchase. This scheme seeks to bridge the "viability gap" between the cost of building apartments and the market sale price to owner-occupiers (where the cost of building is greater). It aims to increase the supply of owner-occupier apartments and provide those who wish to purchase an apartment with greater choice.

The scheme has already seen two calls for proposals from the development sector with a third expected before the end of the year. The LDA, via its Project Tosaigh Scheme, is also accelerating the delivery of houses and apartments on sites with full planning permission that are not being developed by private sector owners due to financing and other constraints. Under this scheme, the LDA steps in to contract with developers and kick-start construction on stalled or unviable developments, ensuring that the homes are made available as either cost rental or for purchase, by eligible first-time buyers or fresh starters, through a shared equity scheme. Delivery of 8,000 affordable, social and cost rental homes is targeted and the LDA is on track to have 5,000 homes delivered by the end of 2026, approximately 1,000 of which have been delivered to date.

Housing for All also commits to increasing the housing options available to older people to facilitate ageing in place with dignity and independence, including the development of a national policy on rightsizing. This Department is advancing work on the development of this policy and exploration of the options to support and incentivise rightsizing on a voluntary basis with the objective of optimising the potential for more efficient use of under occupied existing private and social housing stock. The development of a national rightsizing policy is having regard to a focused stakeholder consultation undertaken in the latter part of 2022 and existing local authority

approaches to rightsizing for social housing. This Department is working on bringing forward a draft national policy.

Yours sincerely,

Eoghan McCarthy  
Private Secretary.

04<sup>th</sup> November 2024

**Re: Guinness Canal Maintenance**

Dear Mark,

Thank you for your correspondence from the Metropolitan District of Limerick meeting.

In response to the question of the Guinness (Park) Canal vegetation maintenance, Waterways Ireland is currently working to progress to planning, six necessary maintenance projects for the River Shannon, including vegetation management for the Limerick Guinness Canal.

As part of the assessment and appraisal process for the works needed in Limerick, and to ensure any potential for cumulative impacts are adequately and properly assessed, it was deemed necessary to incorporate vegetation management for both the Guinness Canal and the Abbey River to the Ardnacrusha Tail Race, into one single planning application and associated Ecological Impact Assessment (EIA) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS). Originally these items were to form two separate planning applications.

Compiling both of these works into one single set of environmental reports has taken longer than hoped and required updated ecological surveys. This has led to a delay on the original timeline.

Waterways Ireland will now have the final Limerick Guinness Canal and Abbey River Vegetation Management ecological reports in the coming fortnight, these will then form part of the full planning application to be lodged in early December.

The delays have been regrettable but necessary to ensure that all environmental and ecological considerations were assessed in the proper manner.

Yours sincerely,



Brian Treacy  
Western Regional Manager  
Waterways Ireland

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Mr Mark Leahy  
Meetings Administrator  
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[mark.leahy@limerick.ie](mailto:mark.leahy@limerick.ie)

5<sup>th</sup> November 2024

Dear Mr Leahy,

Thank you for your letter of 31<sup>st</sup> October.

larnród Éireann has engaged with a very small number of residents adjacent to our works on the Limerick to Foynes line who had reported issues with rodents. In addition to existing bait boxes, we installed further bait boxes on the fence line and liaised with the residents concerned including an on-site meeting to advise and assure them regarding ongoing rodent control measures.

We have found no evidence of rodent infestation issues in the project site and no evidence of discarded rubbish / food which could attract rodents.

We have had no further reports from residents of any issues at this location however we will continue to monitor this.

Yours sincerely,



Jim Meade

**Chief Executive**

## Carroll, Siobhan

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**From:** Correspondence Unit <education-correspondenceunit@corr.cloud.gov.ie>  
**Sent:** Tuesday 5 November 2024 10:35  
**To:** Metro Meeting  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL]DES-CU-06188-2024

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Mr. Mark Leahy

Merchant's Quay Limerick V94 EH90

metromeeting@limerick.ie

PLEASE QUOTE REF NUMBER ON ALL CORRESPONDENCE

Our Ref: DES-CU-06188-2024

5th November 2024

Dear Mr. Leahy,

I refer to your correspondence to the Minister for Education, Ms. Norma Foley TD, in relation to extra time for the state examinations for students with dyslexia, dyscalculia and other learning difficulties

The State Examinations Commission is responsible for the administration, assessment and certification of the Junior Cycle and the Leaving Certificate examinations. Â

You are advised to contact the State Examinations Commission directly regarding this matter, the contact details are as follows:

State Examinations Commission

Cornamaddy

Athlone

Co. Westmeath

Ph: 090-6442700

e-mail: [info@examinations.ie](mailto:info@examinations.ie)

Yours sincerely