

Minister John Gormley delivers keynote address at BRE Ireland's inaugural conference, 'Planning and Building for Sustainability'

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"..the way we plan and construct our homes and plan our communities is the biggest priority and why this conference is so essential."

Speaking on the opening day of BRE Ireland's Planning and Building for Sustainability conference, Ireland's Minister John Gormley illustrated the context in which Ireland's built environment needs to improve in order to meet the challenges presented by global warming.

With Ireland's building stock accounting for 40% of its total energy consumption – how that stock is designed, built and managed is key to addressing CO² reduction and to combating global warming.

The Irish Government's Housing policy 'Delivering homes - Sustaining communities' focuses on sustainable communities from all dimensions - social, environmental and economic. It sets out a vision to guide the transformation of the housing sector over the next 10 years by delivering more and better quality housing and to do this in a strategic way focused through sustainable communities - places where people want to live and work now and in the future – safe, inclusive, well planned, built and run.

"We want homes that will meet the needs of families throughout their lifetime - affordable to acquire and maintain into the future," said Minister Gormley, *"The need for an innovative approach to design, materials, higher density housing, shared communal spaces and well co-ordinated delivery of services and infrastructure in strategic locations is an intrinsic part of the planning for sustainable communities."*

The 'Developing Areas' initiative created by Michael Finneran, Minister for Housing, Urban Renewal and Developing Areas is the Irish Government's response to integrated delivery through the various government departments, agencies and local government. New developments are not just houses but a mix of homes, schools, employment, transport and community services delivered in a timely cost effective and sustainable manner.

UPDATE 1st August 2008

An example of this is the approach to new schools - a code of best practise was being finalised at the time of BRE Ireland's conference and has today, 1st August 2008, been announced.

The code - drawn up by the Departments of Education and Science, and the Environment, Heritage and Local Government - sets out the roles and actions to be taken when forecasting future demand for school places and planning for schools.

The document is built around three objectives:

- β Schools provision should form part of sustainable urban development and sustainable communities;
- β New schools should come from an integrated approach between the planning authorities and the Department of Education and Science;
- β Planning bodies will work with the Department to ensure timely school delivery.

Welcoming the code, John Gormley, Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, highlighted the co-operative nature of the document - which he said will help to ensure best practice approaches are followed.

Batt O’Keeffe, Minister for Education and Science, said: “It’s principally about ensuring that planning authorities engage at the earliest opportunity and co-ordinate with the Department of Education and Science in relation to schools requirements and their future provision before land is zoned or rezoned for substantial residential development.”

The guidelines were announced today by Mr Gormley Mr O’Keeffe, and Michael Finneran, Minister for Housing, Urban Renewal and Developing Areas.

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