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Government Strategy to Increase use of Digital Technology in Key Public Works Projects Launched

Building Information Modelling (BIM) to be required in the design, construction and operation of public buildings and infrastructure over the next 4 years

The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Paschal Donohue, T.D. and the Minister of State with special responsibility for Public Procurement, Open Government and eGovernment, Patrick O'Donovan, T.D. today set out the Government's strategy for the increased use of digital technology in the delivery of key public works projects that are funded through the public capital programme.

The strategy will see public bodies establishing requirements for the use of Building Information Modelling (BIM) in the design, construction and operation of public buildings and infrastructure on a phased basis over the next 4 years, commencing with the larger, more complex projects, where those operating at that scale are already working through BIM. A BIM model comprises a digital dataset of all the information associated with a project's development from the early design stage through to its operation.

Minister O'Donovan said 'BIM is fast becoming an essential requirement for informed consumers of construction services internationally, and many countries have established BIM requirements at a national level. It has already been successfully used on a number of complex building projects completed in Ireland in recent years, primarily in the technology and pharmaceutical sectors. It is also being used on the National Children's Hospital at the St James's Hospital campus, on the Dublin Institute of Technology's Grangegorman Campus and across the Public Private Partnership programme.'

At a European level, the significant efficiencies that BIM brings to project delivery and operation are recognised. The 2014 Procurement Directive makes provision for its use and the European Commission has established the EU BIM Task Group to deliver a common European network aimed at aligning the use of BIM in public works. The publication of the Task Group's Handbook for the Introduction of BIM by Europe's Public Sector Community at the end of June is timely in the context of the Government's strategy.

The Government strategy has a two-fold objective, firstly to manage the adoption of BIM in an orderly fashion across the public capital programme, reducing the disruption that such change processes can bring both within the public sector and to the consultants and contractors that are engaged thereunder. The second objective is to act as a catalyst for its wider adoption across the industry generally. The sustained period of growth in the construction sector affords an opportunity to introduce these requirements in a managed fashion to enable industry to adapt to the new processes and procedures that BIM requires.

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Notes for Editors

A BIM model comprises a digital dataset of all the information associated with a project's development in a manner which can be exploited for a variety of purposes:

In the early feasibility and design stages it provides the information to drive 3-dimensional visual representations of the completed facility, improving the decision-making and consultation processes. This also reduces the potential for changes that often must be made during the construction phase as clients and designers get an accurate spatial representation of the reality. It also allows for analysis of whole life costs; energy and structural performance, and lighting and ventilation strategies.

In the construction stage a BIM model has the capacity to cut down on waste in a number of ways. The information in the model can be used to sequence work to a far greater degree than is currently possible, which facilitates material ordering and allows greater scope for off-site fabrication, thereby reducing waste. This in turn reduces the down time and rework which often arises due to poor information co-ordination. The as-built reality of the can also be more accurately recorded through photographs linked to building elements at key inspection stages before work is covered up.

In the operation phase the information contained in the model can inform the maintenance and operation regime and help pinpoint under-performance from the targets set prior to construction.

The Government has been actively promoting digital uptake in the construction sector for many years, with Enterprise Ireland (EI) being the lead agency in this regard. EI has funded awareness and promotion across the construction industry, through industry bodies such as the Construction Information Technology Alliance. A number of research programmes and reports on the level of BIM uptake and sector readiness across Ireland and globally has been undertaken with the support of EI and they have also supported individual businesses on their digital transition, as part of their mentoring programme to Irish businesses. This has enabled these businesses to compete and win contracts overseas where the BIM requirement is established. In 2016, EI established the National BIM Council whose role is to develop a national road map to optimise the successful implementation of BIM in Ireland. That roadmap is due for publication on the 1st December.

The Government Contracts Committee for Construction (GCCC) undertook a consultation process with public bodies involved in the delivery of the capital programme and an industry-wide consultation on the basis of a position paper that was published in March 2017. The position paper is available to download [here](#). The submissions received as part of the consultation are available [here](#). The submissions were considered before setting out recommendations to Government on the high level strategy.

Development of tools, template documents and contract protocols that will form the backbone of the requirements for BIM on public sector projects will be undertaken over the coming months under the direction of the GCCC and the Office for Government Procurement, before being officially launched. Professionals across the project delivery spectrum of the public service will be involved in developing these requirements.

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