

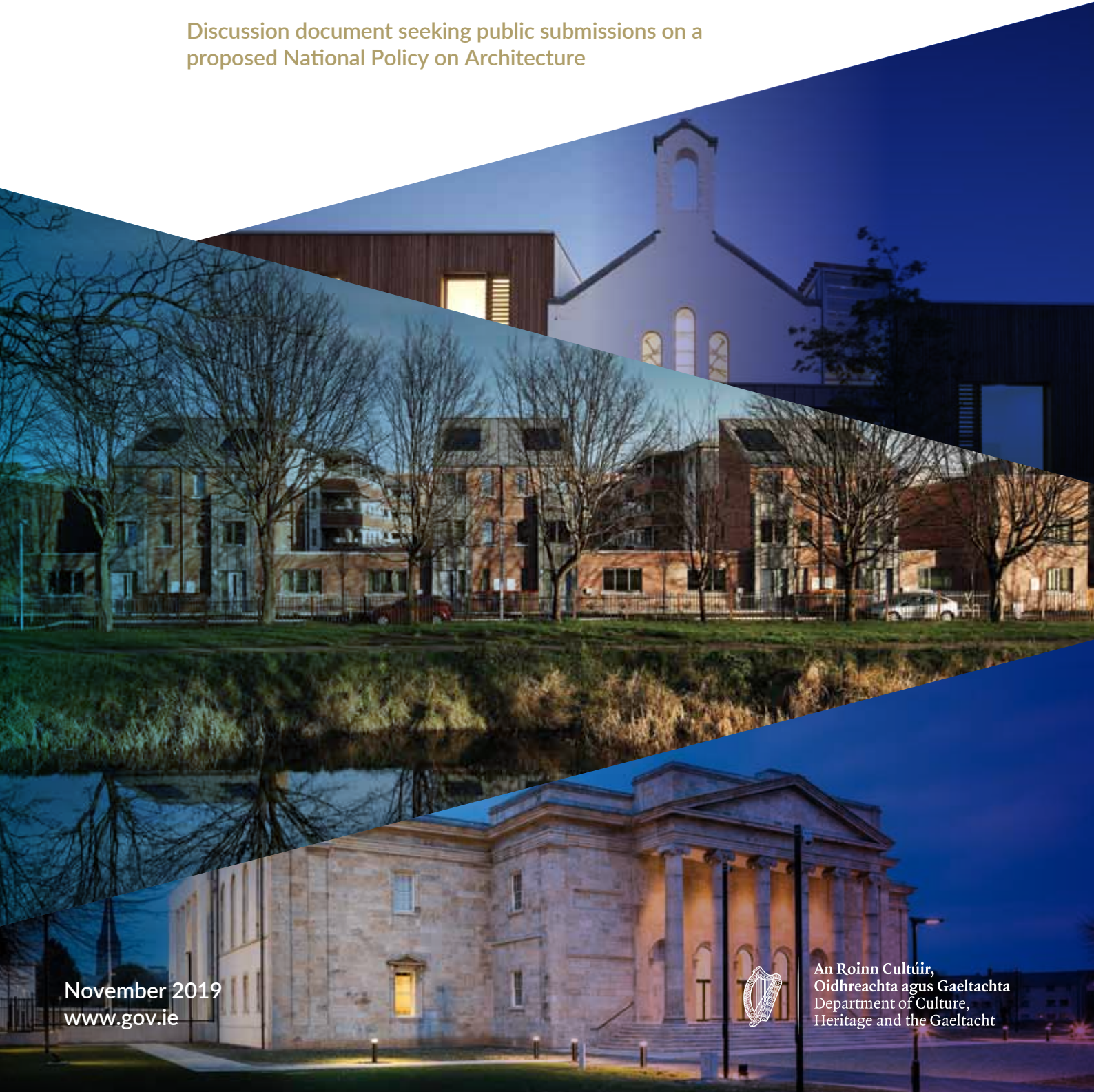


Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

# Places for People

## National Policy on Architecture

Discussion document seeking public submissions on a proposed National Policy on Architecture



November 2019  
[www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie)



An Roinn Cultúir,  
Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta  
Department of Culture,  
Heritage and the Gaeltacht



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We must demand sensitive reuse of our existing built environment resources as well as high quality, sustainable new buildings, places and spaces that reflect our values.

The actions of this policy will place high quality built environment design at the heart of public service to support the ambitious and visionary Project Ireland 2040.



## Message from the Minister

Architecture and our built environment are central to our society. Good quality buildings and places have a positive impact on people, their health and well-being and their ability to prosper. The places we inhabit affect how we live, socialise, create, work and play. They reflect our value systems and give us our cultural identity and sense of place.

This strong sense of place in Ireland anchors people to their roots and links people to building traditions, craftsmanship and local landmarks. But places are dynamic and continuously evolving. The complexity and the speed of development affects our built environment and may alter our relationship with a place. Technological advancements, of course, present many new possibilities for how we imagine and create our built environment.

It is essential that we think clearly about the ways we engage with, reuse and develop our surroundings. Changes to our climate are accelerating, with obvious effects and challenges. Ecological pressures are mounting. Our physical resources are finite and vulnerable to over-exploitation.

Government bodies, architects, planners, the construction sector, researchers, educators and many more have critical roles to play in raising awareness of the need to pursue design solutions that alleviate built environment pressures.

The proposed new **National Policy on Architecture** will set out this Government's ambition for better understanding of the character, qualities, potential and benefits of our built environment. We must provide attractive places for people to enjoy that function well and are durable in this age of climate disruption. To help us build a stronger architectural culture in Ireland we must also look to European initiatives on architectural quality, which are promoted as essential contributions to a sustainable society.

The proposed new **National Policy on Architecture** must motivate and support all relevant stakeholders to collaborate in research and innovation and to make well informed decisions for high quality project outcomes. It must set out ways for the State to lead on delivering high quality, coordinated built environment action, while supporting the objectives of Project Ireland 2040 and the Climate Action Plan 2019.

Most importantly, the policy must put society and people first. Personal involvement with our surroundings and a high quality environment makes for a healthier society for all, now and into the future.

We would like to hear from all interested people and organisations how you believe a new **National Policy on Architecture** can support the country's projected growth and guide its sustainable development over the coming years.

I invite you now to be part of this consultation process and I thank you in advance for taking the time to share your observations.



*Josepha Madigan*

**Josepha Madigan, TD**  
Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht



“A generosity of spirit and a sense of humanity are at the core of architecture’s agenda.”

Grafton Architects





## Introduction

The proposed new **National Policy on Architecture** is an exciting opportunity to create the conditions for a high quality, low carbon and more resilient built environment for future generations. The policy will support high quality architecture which respects our cultural identity and past traditions of building settlement.

The new Policy will support long-term planning strategies and will assist in addressing key issues including societal well-being, climate change and urban regeneration. It will provide tools to help us creatively address challenges such as the need to deliver new homes and neighbourhoods for our growing population, together with the schools, hospitals, workplaces and infrastructure to support the society we aspire to achieve. The adaptation of existing as well as the design of new buildings will be critical to meet the targets set by the Climate Action Plan 2019.

Implementation of the policy will help Ireland to meet the UN Sustainable Development Goals especially the critical need to make cities, towns and all human settlements compact, legible, inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

The European Year of Cultural Heritage (2018) has shown cultural heritage to be vital for inspiring and promoting creativity in place-making, social cohesion and sustainable development. The National Policy on Architecture and Heritage Ireland 2030 will contain actions to promote heritage and architecture, continuing the legacy of the European Year.

It will build on actions completed and knowledge gained through previous policies and programmes, specifically the Government Policy on Architecture 2009-2015. It will be informed by other initiatives of the Department such as Heritage Ireland 2030, the Climate Action Plan, Culture 2025, the Creative Ireland Programme and the National Landscape Strategy for Ireland 2015-2025 and will support the objectives of Project Ireland 2040.

The policy will focus actions on five key themes

- Designing for climate resilience and sustainability
- Designing quality places for public benefit
- Respecting our past, shaping our future
- Leadership
- Knowledge and Innovation

A number of draft objectives have been set out in this consultation document under each theme. Your views on these draft objectives, and the questions raised, are important – they will help shape the new **National Policy on Architecture**.

**We cannot create a low-carbon future unless we can visualise it and imagine our own roles in making it happen.**

# Designing for climate resilience and sustainability

*“Right now, we are facing a man-made disaster of global scale. Our greatest threat in thousands of years. Climate change. If we don’t take action, the collapse of our civilisations and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon.”*

Sir David Attenborough (b.1926)

- The resilience of our historic and modern buildings to future climate change will be determined by their condition and crucially by the effectiveness of their maintenance. The built environment accounted for 12.7% of Ireland’s greenhouse gases in 2017. **Our buildings are 70% reliant on fossil fuels and many have poor building energy ratings.** It is important to improve their energy efficiency by meeting higher energy performance standards and by increasing retrofit activity.
- Buildings should be designed and built for **minimum energy inputs and optimum long-term performance and adaptability** to help reduce emissions to sustainable levels. The policy will support creative ways to adapt, retrofit and reuse existing buildings and structures to optimise the use of renewable energy and resources and incentivise adoption of low-carbon technologies, processes and techniques.
- The policy will contain actions to support the targets set out in the **UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Climate Action Plan 2019.**
- In order to help fulfil Ireland’s climate action goals, we must prioritise sustainable communities with integrated amenities and services, and preserve natural resources and biodiversity. This policy will encourage the creative high-quality and human-scale **consolidation and reuse of existing cities, towns, villages and reusable buildings,** especially underused and brownfield sites.

## Have your say...

- *What initiatives do we need to address the combined challenges of climate action, urban regeneration and sustainable housing?*
- *What key sustainability considerations are essential when decision-makers plan the future built environment?*

This policy will work to ensure that policies across Government prioritise building and public realm design in all actions affecting the built environment.

An tSeirbhís Páirceanna  
Náisiúnta & Fiadhúlra  
National Parks & Wildlife Service

# Designing quality places for public benefit

*“First life, then spaces, then buildings – the other way around never works”*

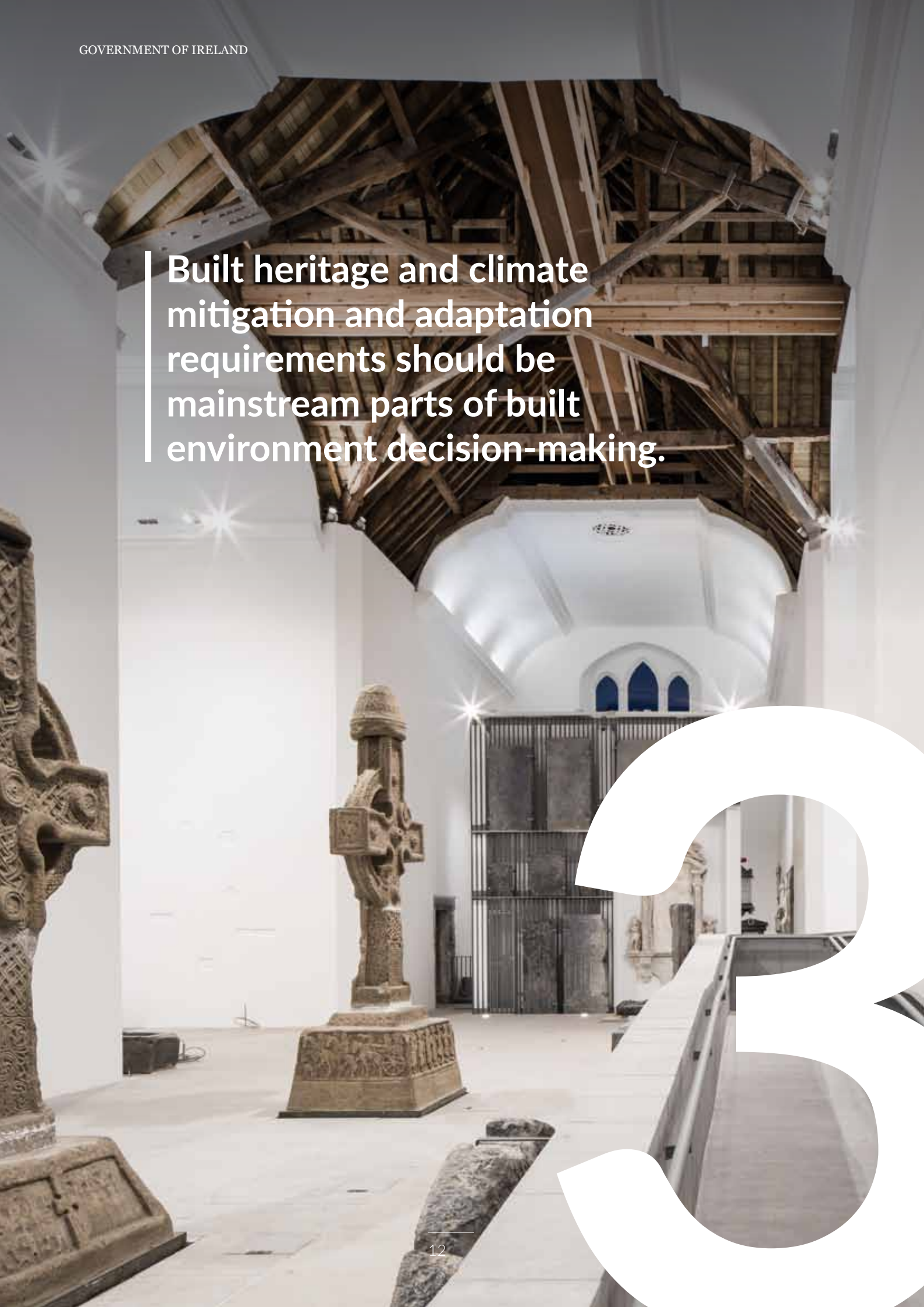
Jan Gehl (b.1936)

- Good architecture is a sound investment that supports health, education, commerce, culture and all human activities in a sustainable way. It is important that all buildings and structures, public spaces and streets have a high quality of design and are long-lasting and fit for purpose. **By prioritising quality in our built environment we enhance quality of life, personal identity and wellbeing for all.**
- Sustainable, high-quality place-making must be a core element of decision-making. Many professions work constructively together to plan, develop and maintain our built environment. Public consultation is important to design forward-looking, sustainable built environment projects that fit all users' requirements. This policy will support cooperation and facilitation methods to promote **integrated thinking** between project promoters, architects and the built environment workforce, regulators and local communities.
- Public and private sectors must **work together to achieve high quality and innovative solutions** to the many requirements and challenges in progressing public housing, built heritage reuse and infrastructure projects. This policy will contain actions to assist in reviewing and reforming the procurement, planning and management processes we currently use to deliver quality built environment construction projects.
- Beauty, functionality, durability, adaptability, accessibility, amenity, liveability and a positive sense of place are physical built environment qualities that give us **enduring social, environmental, cultural and economic benefits**. This policy will promote innovative awareness initiatives promoting the value of good quality architecture and environmental design.

## Have your say...

- *What contributes to the quality of the public spaces and streets in our cities, towns and villages?*
- *How can architecture contribute to the common good - how does it affect society's wellbeing?*

Built heritage and climate mitigation and adaptation requirements should be mainstream parts of built environment decision-making.



# Respecting our past, shaping our future

*“Blue slate and whitewash, shadow-lines, projections  
Things at once apparent and transparent  
Clean-edged, fine-drawn, drawn-out, redrawn, remembered...”*

Seamus Heaney (1939-2013), *An Architect*, 1996

- The present-day practice of Irish architecture is the physical embodiment of design innovation, technological changes and construction skills based on an understanding of the past. Collectively we must **learn from communal experience, innovate and create, research, test and use new ideas** to adapt to the social, material and digital changes that are shaping our lives.
- Irish buildings have well-regarded forms and patterns, long-lasting materials and a human scale which have contributed to social cohesion and well-being. The new policy will articulate the importance of our physical and intangible heritage as the basis of our national identity and wellbeing and will commit the State and public bodies to the **highest standards in historic built environment conservation**, supporting transmission of these specialist skills.
- Our built heritage is a significant resource for local communities, businesses and visitors. As a **key part of sustainable development** under Project Ireland 2040 this policy will support careful consideration of the insertion of new buildings into our historic cities, towns and neighbourhoods so they contribute positively to the existing built fabric layers, giving us vibrant and successful places where people enjoy working, living and socialising.
- By reusing, repairing, adapting and upgrading buildings in a sensitive and holistic way we help Ireland move towards a low-carbon society and circular economy. This policy will **support regeneration and training partnerships**, assisted by EU programmes, to undertake projects of high quality design and conservation, giving learners on such projects traditional and modern design and technical skills.

## Have your say...

- *What social, economic or environmental factors hold us back from reusing our older urban and rural buildings – can you suggest solutions?*
- *How can communities unlock their know-how and innate creativity to visualise and plan ways to regenerate their areas?*

The State demonstrates architectural leadership and acts in the common good when it responds to the needs of citizens for high-quality, sustainable places to live and work, to attract inward investment and encourage communities to live healthy lives.



# Leadership

*“Building art is a synthesis of life in materialised form. We should try to bring in under the same hat not a splintered way of thinking, but all in harmony together”*

Alvar Aalto (1898-1976)

- **A sense of purpose and shared vision are essential** to protect, manage and plan for the finite natural and cultural resources that make up our built environment. To make high-quality decisions requires innovative, multi-disciplinary thinking, accepting challenges and taking risks.
- All decision-makers, including owners, developers, public administrators, built environment professions and the construction industry, must exercise responsible leadership as they all affect the shape and health of our surroundings. This policy will **promote the collective leadership needed to imagine and share solutions** to complex built and natural environment questions.
- The policy will **highlight the role of public sector architects** in delivering exceptional buildings, places and conservation projects, fostering knowledge exchange and operating public engagement programmes.
- The policy will support architectural competitions for publicly procured projects to prioritise design and construction quality for sustainable, well-designed, serviceable and high-performing buildings and infrastructure. It is vital to harness private sector **architectural expertise, creativity, design quality and craftsmanship** to assist the public service to exercise leadership.

## Have your say...

- *How can we motivate public and private sectors to jointly demonstrate built environment leadership?*
- *In what ways should the Government work with stakeholders and communities to improve how places look and function?*

Research creates the vital evidence base for making well-informed decisions about the sustainable design, specification, construction and functioning of our built environment.



**CLOSE  
ENCOUNTER**

**MEETINGS  
WITH  
REMARKABLE  
BUILDINGS**

14 April - 20 June 2019

Irish Architecture Foundation

## Knowledge and Innovation

*“One of the great but often unmentioned causes of both happiness and misery is the quality of our environment: the kinds of walls, chairs, buildings, and streets that surround us.”*

Alain de Botton (b.1969), *The Architecture of Happiness*

- All generations should have the knowledge and skills to help improve and transform their buildings and places. **Curiosity about the built environment should be encouraged from primary to third level and beyond.** Information should circulate through lifelong learning initiatives in educational and cultural institutions and in the workplace to develop a culture of architectural research.
- We must continually innovate to improve resource efficiency in designing low-carbon, climate-resilient, green, blue and grey infrastructure, buildings and places. The policy will support schools of planning, architecture, engineering, surveying and construction to **maintain high standard graduates.** We must foster an expert workforce to implement the long-term ambitions of Project Ireland 2040 and to cement Ireland’s architectural reputation at international level.
- The State requires a **built environment research platform** with continuous feedback to inform high quality project design and construction. The policy will prioritise coordinated research by education and research institutes into the designed environment (cultural heritage layers, materials and techniques as well as current and innovative products and processes) to build technical capacity and the knowledge base for architectural design.
- The policy will set **high standards** for publicly funded built environment research to ensure the quality and integrity of outcomes. Research should build on existing knowledge, be rigorously assessed, be relevant to user needs, be practical to apply and be widely shared. Practice-based experimental research will be encouraged by supporting the development of research platforms for sharing knowledge.

### *Have your say...*

- *In what areas does architectural research need to be undertaken and who should be involved?*
- *How can third level institutions and the construction industry coordinate, share and continually build on their knowledge base about our built environment?*

# Have your say...



## For more information...

If you would like to know more about architectural policy in Ireland and Europe, please look at the supporting detail on [www.chg.gov.ie/heritage/built-heritage/architectural-policy/](http://www.chg.gov.ie/heritage/built-heritage/architectural-policy/).

## Have Your Say

It is really important that we hear your views. They will help shape the new National Policy on Architecture, which will support the country's projected growth and guide its sustainable development over the coming years.

The series of questions in this document are meant to guide the process. However, these questions should in no way limit your response. We welcome your views on all aspects of our built environment.

Please contact us through any of the options below to share your views.

- Online survey at [www.chg.gov.ie/heritage/built-heritage/architectural-policy/](http://www.chg.gov.ie/heritage/built-heritage/architectural-policy/)
- Email [architecture@chg.gov.ie](mailto:architecture@chg.gov.ie) with your comments and suggestions.
- Submit by post to:

***National Policy on Architecture***

***Room 1.08***

***Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht***

***Custom House***

***Dublin D01 W6X0***

We are open for submissions until 31 January 2020.

This discussion document was prepared by the Built Heritage and Architectural Advisory Section of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. We were assisted by the Government Policy on Architecture Advisory Group, which is composed of representatives of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government; the Department of Education and Skills; the Office of Public Works; the Health Service Executive; the City and County Architects Association; the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland; the schools of architecture and the Irish Architecture Foundation. Other sections of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and bodies under its aegis such as the Arts Council also contributed to the development of the text.



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- Page 16** Close Encounter at the Glucksman Gallery, Cork. Photo: Jed Niezgoda; image courtesy of the Glucksman. Close Encounter was funded by the Arts Council at the 16th International Architecture Exhibition Venice 2018. The Arts Council is also funding the 2019 tour which is produced by the Irish Architecture Foundation, in partnership with the Glucksman and VISUAL Carlow.
- Page 18** Bus Shelter Design, Cork City Council – Engaging with Architecture Scheme 2013. Photo: Jed Niezgoda / Cork City Council
- Page 20** Inis Eonáin House, Innishannon, Co Cork; Simply Architecture; winner, RIAI Awards 2019. Photo: Ailbhe Cunningham
- Back cover** Donegal town and castle. Photo: National Monuments Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

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Have your say at

architecture@chg.gov.ie

<https://www.chg.gov.ie/heritage/built-heritage/architectural-policy/>

and by post to Room 1.08, Custom House, Dublin 01, D01 W6X0

