



Confirmation of Position: Housing

An Rabharta Glas - Green Left

ARG-GL Confirmation of Position: Response to *Housing for All* Government announcement 2 September 2021

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Introduction

Without adequate housing people's life chances are diminished. Risk of isolation, illness, and alienation from society are increased. It is a basic need, and a basic resource which a humane and just society must provide for all. The failure of the Irish state to provide adequate housing for residents of the State has been catastrophic, both in terms of human and economic cost. What must be recognised firstly, however, is that the housing policy of the state has not been a failure on its own terms. On the contrary, Irish state housing policy has been extraordinarily successful in achieving its chief aim, the preservation of housing as a means of wealth extraction by those who traditionally make up the Irish 'comprador' class: landholders, developers, bank shareholders and speculators. In recent decades, this class has been augmented the increased dominance of international financiers, rentiers and vulture funds in the Irish property market.

This document sets out an eco-socialist analysis of the Irish housing crisis. Following analysis of the fundamental issues in Irish housing policy, we then provide an outline of an alternative national housing programme with An Rabharta Glas – Green Left programmatic proposals provided. This programmatic approach, if introduced as part of an eco-socialist programme of systematic change, can end the Irish housing crisis in five years. Adequate housing, which means housing that is accessible, secure, and sustainable, is a fundamental requirement for life and, therefore, a fundamental human right.

Context

The financialisation of housing and its attendant development patterns in the last thirty years have together created a housing crisis of unparalleled depth, extent and complexity which has remained despite successive house-building booms¹. Not only is access to suitable and affordable housing the defining political issue of a generation, but some basic aspects of civil life such as pensions and care for the elderly are social needs have become entangled in the fate of the Irish property market. This has happened through a process of policy-making from successive governments which has privatised and outsourced what should be basic public services. Increasing property prices are therefore required to make these services available to people. The rendering of these subject to the vagaries of an assetised property market and FDI-based economic model is a ticking timebomb at the heart of Irish policy-making. The centrality of housing to the idea of 'stability' in the Irish political system should not therefore be underestimated. Not only has the home, alongside infrastructure, natural resources, communications and public services been converted from public good into an asset for capital accumulation, but the irrationality of the wider idea of keeping a tax-haven economy solvent through perpetually rising house prices still passes for 'solid economics' in what the Irish ruling class hope in each iteration of policy-making will be the second coming of the Celtic Tiger. Albeit, this time, a greenwashed Celtic Tiger 2.0 that the IDA in sponsored content for the Financial Times have called a "Green Tiger"².

The contradictions and risks inherent to housing being traded globally as an asset are borne by the working class. A transformative shift to change this will not happen by itself. New ideas are needed now to untangle the complex web of problems created through the financialisation of housing and its effects in other parts of the economy.

There are no discrete, apolitical, technocratic 'solutions' to the Irish housing crisis. There is no single policy or package of policies which can adequately address the scale, depth and extent of the crisis of everyday life for renters, mortgage-holders, people with disabilities, migrants,

¹ https://www.ictu.ie/download/pdf/un_on_housing_crisis_march_2019.pdf

² <https://ida.ft.com/article/can-ireland-turn-itself-into-a-green-tiger>

Travellers/Mincéirí or homeless people in Ireland. What is needed is a total reorientation of housing policy. The political questions that must urgently be asked and answered are: who is housing policy for, and how does it relate to the wider economy?

The housing crisis unveils a familiar cleavage within Irish society: those who profit from land and housing, and those in permanent struggle for a home for themselves and their families. As long as 'crisis' for the latter is profitable for the former, the housing market and public policies maintaining it will function exactly as intended by a state that has been captured by vested interests.

For at least the last three decades, the Irish political system had one central housing policy priority: growing and maintaining a buoyant housing market. This housing market exists in sales, rentals and construction for its domestic and international clients. Secondary questions of access, planning, sustainability and quality are functions of, and serve, this primary aim. In this sense, 'housing policy' is something the government largely devolves to market actors such as developers, investors and creditors. In its current form, the Irish 'housing market' is a market where market actors can rely on the state to maintain and protect at any cost.

"There is now a greater level of competition among those households choosing or being forced to choose privately rented housing"

~KPMG report for US housing development firm Hines³

³ <https://www.businesspost.ie/houses/hap-supports-have-steepened-the-cost-of-renting-in-ireland-cef57d0b>

Housing for All's unsustainable focus on supply-side economics

The logic behind the *Housing for All* policy, which follows to a large extent the contours of previous national housing policies, is that housing's place is fundamentally in a market context. The role of government policy then is to bring a certain definition of equilibrium to that market. This assumes expensive housing is a manageable issue politically as long as economic growth remains strong overall and unaffordability remains within 'acceptable' boundaries. If the government facilitates increases in housing supply, then it follows that the price of housing should fall. But the limits of this assumption are being tested as more and more people become victims of the housing crisis, while market-driven developments push ever outward from town and city centres producing unsustainable infrastructural problems, unenviable commutes and sterile suburban spaces.

The boosterism of the *Housing for All* announcement, framed oxymoronically as 'unprecedented' despite promising less public housing than state programmes in the mid-20th century, is unsuccessful in disguising what is a slightly more capitalised version of the status quo rather than a 'radical departure'. Essentially *Housing for All* is a collection of market-based measures which in their totality do not represent the best use of the government's considerable power to end the housing crisis. Where proposals seemingly go the right direction, their effect is neutered by the limited scales and targets applied. Where scale is promised, for example in the number of social homes to be built, it is to be found in further privatised development which in the long-term perpetuates the causes of the housing crisis.

A telling feature of the document is that the word 'crisis' is not mentioned in any section. How can a plan supposed to end the housing crisis possibly be successful if it fails to acknowledge the crisis exists at all?

There is a crisis in the first place because the market has failed to deliver the socially required housing and allowed housing to become a liquid asset for speculation. What is needed then is real state-led development which correctly quantifies overall need social need for housing,

accounts for the expected 1 million growth in population projected for 2040, measures different intersectional requirements, and then takes the provision of these social requirements decisively out of the market setting. This is what various EU countries did in response to the housing crises in the post-war period, using the full resources of the public sector as a priority. Instead in Ireland, the Land Development Agency, or LDA, is tasked with creating development opportunities for market actors. Were the Irish State serious about ending this crisis the LDA could, and should, be a fully resourced Housing Executive Agency. This agency would be tasked with rolling out a public housing programme increasing supply through both building and mandated procurement from NAMA outside of using market pricing.

Interventions in the form of a public housing programme, rent and sales-price controls, active urban planning and development, establishing more equitable and sustainable forms of tenure, housing the homeless, protecting borrowers and tenants or rolling back the global market's reach into Irish real estate do not feature in 'Housing for All' in any meaningful way. The logic of 'the market will provide' prevails, as long as the State opens up development opportunities and alleviates problems such as construction costs, taxation, building regulation, land availability and so on.

Under the neoliberal framework conditions ubiquitous to Ireland's tax-haven economic profile, increasing supply alone and allowing the market to decide where this supply is located, to whom it is available and in what form is actually fuelling the housing crisis further. Supply-side interventions alone will not make housing more affordable or accessible. The supply that needs to be urgently expanded is that of publicly-owned, publicly funded, publicly developed and publicly accessible housing, whether through building or procurement to bring definitively into state ownership.

Ireland's housing problem is much deeper, wider and urgent than the vista the *Housing for All* policy addresses. Housing policy in other EU member states refers to the broad range of levers that national, regional, and local government have to plan for future housing needs. Procuring and building residential properties is done according to social need and occurs in a

regulatory framework that seeks to balance public and private interests through the planning system. In Ireland it is narrowly confined to supply-side neoliberal orthodoxy meted out at the national level. The narcissism of small differences between the housing policies of the main political parties is generally to be found in boosterist projections of the numbers of houses that will be built, a metric that studiously ignores the neoliberal roots of the crisis. Without the capacity and funds to develop and destigmatise local authority housing to meet housing needs, local government is effectively subordinated to the national policy goal of maintaining the housing market, its sole control over housing being zoning as part of local development plans.

Defining Ireland's housing problem

The ubiquitous treatment of the home as a financial asset in a speculative housing market and secured through the myth of an unassailable constitutional right to private property, is at the core of the Irish housing problem. Housing supply, affordability, quality and the planning of communities are devolved to those with purchase in the housing market. Namely, developers and their creditors. National responsibility for ensuring access to appropriate housing for marginalised communities, particularly Travellers/Mincéirí, people in Direct Provision, those on low incomes and the homeless is mediated through NGOs, charities and poorly resourced local government. The public sector's considerable power to address the housing problem is instrumentalised solely to the benefit of housing market actors. There are no mass housing programmes or serious interventions within the housing market. Instead, the welfare state ensures the maintenance of exorbitant rents and sales prices through cash transfers to developers, landlords and creditors in HAP and buyer-subsidy schemes. In recent years there has also been yet another innovation from the state in service of the private market: exorbitant long-term leases where local government doesn't even own assets that they pay for in the end. Ireland's housing problem is therefore not merely the sum of its parts. It is not easily reducible to quantitative expressions of the dysfunctionality and exclusionary logics of the housing market, and it is not solved by technocratic fixes or supply-side stimulus.

Ending Ireland's housing crisis

If there is a 'solution' to the Irish housing problem, it is the reversal of the roles of the State and the market in undoing a housing crisis 30 years in the making. This involves an end to the privileged position of developers, landlords and creditors. The lie that incremental, market-based technical fixes are the limit of the state's competences in this area needs to be addressed with proposals for urgent political changes which bring the housing crisis to an end. Unlike with monetary and competition policy, housing is an area in which Eurozone member-states have full authority to legislate, organise and finance according to their needs and means. Even institutions like the EU have advised the Irish State to address the housing crisis, albeit in ways that do not fundamentally challenge the relations of private capital to the state.

The basic aim of any national housing programme should be to **end the housing crisis within five years** and should have the following objectives:

Rolling back the market

- /// Institutional acceptance that housing is not a sector of the economy but that plentiful, accessible and affordable housing is a basic requirement of a functioning society and economy.
- /// Disbarring for-profit corporate ownership of housing stock and serial property ownership/professional landlordism, for example, buy-to-let.
- /// Nationalising corporate landlord stock and remaining NAMA stock for development as public housing or sale to resident individuals with proceeds going to public housing.
- /// Application of legally viable sales-price and rent controls, including protection measures for the already-mortgaged/lessees.

- /// Establishing the state both nationally and locally as a privileged provider of housing and an aggressive regulator of the housing market against eco-socialist principles.
- /// Creating legislation for housing cooperatives as an alternative to the market providing fairer access and more secure tenure.
- /// The role of the market simply to facilitate exchange and price real estate against public controls, and to provide materials and construction services against public contracts.

Rolling out a public alternative

- /// Fleshing out a comprehensive public housing programme involving not just construction and retrofitting, but a full programme of reorientation of State competences in housing, including expanding role of urban planning and local government in housing with commensurate funding.
- /// Further establishing and widening building standards and regulations so the majority of housing in Ireland is either designed or retrofitted for equality; to provide appropriate accommodation for people with disabilities or who have other requirements such as culturally appropriate accommodation.
- /// Legal changes: any constitutional amendment for a right to housing to be meaningful and consequential otherwise it is merely a useful diversion for the ruling class.
- /// New bills on i) leasing, ii) credit iii) enabling housing cooperatives and other alternative tenures.
- /// Political changes: relevant institutions for developing public capacity on planning, housing and finance.

Specific proposals

Public housing programme

An Rabharta Glas- Green Left proposes a public housing programme which uses the State's established powers at the national level to instigate a planning framework and financial instrument for implementation and use by local authorities. Local authorities may collaborate with each other as necessary to address housing needs in whole city-regions, towns, rural and border areas. At the national level, this involves the creation of a Housing Executive to replace the Land Development Agency and Local Authority Housing. This national level institution will be effectively nested within local government with offices in each local authority's headquarters. The Housing Executive will be a state agency accountable both to the Oireachtas and to local authorities and empowered by statute to develop planning documents which define the housing need in each local authority area. These needs assessments will account for both for home-ownership and permanent rental. This Executive will develop, with local authorities, housing development and procurement plans to meet these defined needs within an agreed timeframe, alongside a programme of a decarbonisation and equality retrofit of all existing housing stock. This both recognises that retrofitting houses to make them warm and energy efficient is an equality issue and also takes account of populations who have additional mobility and cultural requirements which the current housing stock is inadequate in providing.

A basic principle of these local housing plans is that any resident of the state with a current or expected housing requirement in a local authority area can register their housing need. This method will be used to calculate the housing need for each local authority area. The Housing Executive will then have the authority to purchase the required land, sites or buildings either directly from NAMA at a nominal rate, or from the open market using a non-market price calculation based on price and rental targets which are further explained below, and adjusted for liabilities resulting from the purchase impacting individuals and communities locally.

A principle of our public housing programme is that there are only two types of tenure:

Stewardship: the property-holder has a freehold, taxed against income initially and then land value, on the property for residential purposes which can be sold only to another individual, family or other group of residents which are also registered on that local authority's local housing plan against established sales-price calculations.

Permanent tenancy: the local authority provides a permanent lease according to rent-price calculations.

Homeowners in negative equity, mortgage arrears or other situations of housing stress will be given the option of electing their property in which they will be able to remain resident, to become part of the public housing programme in exchange for stewardship tenure. Their liabilities would therefore be transferred to the Housing Executive which will have the power to repackage and restructure credits owed. Where these credits are held by international housing funds such as REITs, the Housing Executive will have the power to terminate these credits at a nominal rate. The housing programme will allow for free exchange of properties between stewardship-holders, subject to sales price controls, and also for rental tenants to become stewards through investment of savings proportional to income over a period of years. Stewardship and rental tenure will be recognised as indicators of creditworthiness for personal banking and certain key consumer markets but not as securities for private credit.

Upon purchase, the local authority is responsible for housing residents according to a set of principles developed by the Housing Executive nationally and based on objective housing need and prioritising marginalised and vulnerable residents. Where new housing developments are planned, these will be based as far as possible on vacant or derelict urban sites and planned according to ecological and egalitarian design principles. The local authority and Housing Executive will conduct the planning process for such developments as a priority development with a specific public consultation methodology which identifies interested residents and privileges the community needs over those of affected land-holders.

The public housing programme should be considered a first-level priority by the government, with historical precedents for such prioritisation including examples such as the Whitaker report or the bailout programmes. These measures would come under a cabinet minister for public housing to whom a minister of state for the housing market is responsible. The target timeline for implementation would be:

Year 1: Housing Executive's offices established in each local authority

Year 2: Local housing plans executed.

Year 3: Purchases, planning and public consultations.

Years 4-5: Construction and settlement.

After this period, the management of the newly established public housing stock would pass to local authorities. In that sense, the Housing Executive's purpose is to establish a public housing programme which would be taken over at the local level. Its remit and role after such a programme has rolled out would be reviewed in light of the outcomes of the public housing programme.

Housing cooperatives and alternative tenures

In addition to the state-led element, an effort must be made to also put owners in direct control of their homes, avoiding the worst trappings of the unequal and financialised housing market which currently exists in Ireland. People should not have to compete in an unfair market in order to obtain something as essential as a home. The cooperative model can work to achieve direct control, while allowing home-owners to work together in order to improve each other's living spaces and neighbourhoods. This offers a collective-ownership model as an alternative to individual ownership via the private market.

Housing cooperatives already exist in Ireland and it is important to acknowledge the role that they play in providing an alternative within the housing market in Ireland. But the current

structure of cooperative housing in Ireland has two main issues; (a) tenure is still based on private corporate ownership, and (b) that the financialisation of housing is allowed and encouraged by the dynamics of the market. Cooperative housing currently has not been endowed with the requisite legal and political footing to act as a countervailing force against the market.

Instead of the current system where a housing cooperative currently purchases an area of land and then constructs houses, requiring membership for anyone who buys one, a better solution to discourage any competitive market practices is for the state to own the land. This way long-term leases of 70-100 years, with an option for an extension for example can be provided to foster generational communities while protecting the land from an institutionalised marketplace.

Additionally, any housing cooperative must also, to stem increasing financialisation of housing and reverse the trend, be legally required to include clauses in membership conditions which state that the house must not at any stage be sold back to anyone but the cooperative itself. In this way, cooperative housing may never be allowed to enter the housing market, and will instead be made available to people directly from the cooperative itself. Ownership of individual homes should also be transferable only through approval from the co-op itself and be limited to non-financial transfers to direct family members only; otherwise, ownership of the home must first return to the co-op, and then be sold to another person at cost-price.

Currently, home-owner co-ops are governed as Approved Housing Bodies, but An Rabharta Glas – Green Left proposes the establishment of cooperatives as a distinct form of tenure, with preferential treatment in order to help balance a profoundly unequal housing marketplace, where renters are currently at the mercy of landlords, and home-owners are currently at the mercy of for-profit private banks.

An alternative model of cooperative housing should also be a key focus of any Irish Government, where the housing co-op collectively manages the area and properties, in exchange for dues, in place of rent, which provide enough money for maintenance and loan

repayments made by the co-op on a strictly non-profit basis. This allows members the flexibility of renting alongside the collective support of a cooperative to manage properties. This sector is essentially non-existent in Ireland currently, and so the government must provide start-up capital to support small-scale rental co-ops as they start off.

A significant issue that many housing cooperatives, and cooperatives more widely face currently is a lack of access to capital. In this, the credit union sector in Ireland, which has the second highest proportion of membership in any country globally, must become a key player. Government must remove the arbitrary limits placed on credit union lending and instead mandate that credit unions must prioritise loans to co-ops over loans to traditional business through preferential conditions.

Sales-price controls

So far, our proposals are aimed at demarketising housing and establishing the provision of homes as a public priority. It is also necessary to propose ways in which the current marketised housing situation could be improved through in-market measures which have hitherto not been regarded as viable options. This is mainly for political reasons rather than being based on public-centred economics. The idea that rent and sales-price controls could not be operationalised in Ireland has been carefully sown by decades of government mantra and powerful economic/financial actors promulgating the myth that a strong housing market for developers and investors is a) a solid basis for the rest of the domestic economy and b) produces a trickle-down effect to individual homeowners and prospective buyers. The reality is the polar opposite. Rising property prices have passed on insurmountable rent burdens to workers for more than two decades, whether in the form of tenancies or mortgages. To be clear, a mortgage is in principle a form of rent which results in ownership, which is then often exchanged back into the financial system to secure care in old age. As an immediate measure, options for intervening in the property market to control prices are an absolute necessity to alleviate the hardship which sees thousands of people routinely pay upwards of 40% of their income on rents alone. This should never have been allowed to become normal.

As a consequence, An Rabharta Glas – Green Left proposes interventions in the form of sales-price and rent controls which are transitional but transformative. These measures are intended as a decisive and controlled intervention while a public housing programme and a roll-out of housing cooperatives is advanced. An Rabharta Glas – Green Left believes the cost of housing should not ideally be a function of a person or household's income, but a reflection of the land prices being used in the exchange of property. However, current conditions point towards price-control calculations based on income as being the most practical way to arrest the extraction inherent to the housing market in its current form. These measures are also already in place in a sense insofar as the Central Bank limits mortgage lending based on income. There are already price controls in place, what is proposed is to change the site of these price controls and leverage them directly on the market. This transitional conclusion is therefore based on assessing existing structures and seeking to surface the most legally and bureaucratically viable way of reducing costs in the short-term for renters and buyer-users.

Our proposals here aim at radically reducing these costs particularly in urban areas where costs and scarcity have overheated the market, but also in suburban and rural areas where even small increases in costs can produce unsustainable living conditions for many. Therefore, our proposal is that these price and sales-controls, based on nobody having to pay more than 20% of their gross income on housing, should be introduced and kept in place until this objective is achieved, and until a public housing programme is rolled out. Thereafter these measures should be replaced with controls based on land prices rather than income. This would also be used for the calculation of costs in the public housing programme. Similarly until the principal objectives are achieved after which these would be replaced by more permanent indices based on land price.

For house prices, we create a median house price per local authority area based on the central bank lending rules. Specifically for this calculation, we will assume a Loan-to-Income ratio of 2 and assume a deposit of 15%, a figure halfway between the first-time buyer deposit of 10% and 20% for others. We will then take the gross household income per local authority area to find the target house price via the following formula:

$$P = I LTI / (1 - D/100)$$

Where *P* = Price, *I* = Median Gross Household Income, *D* = Deposit %, *LTI* = Loan-to-Income Ratio

For example, the estimated median gross household income in 2019 was approximately €50000. This would give an estimate target house price equal to:

$$P = (€50000 * 2) / (1 - 15\% / 100) = €117,647$$

Based on this analysis, there is a serious affordability crisis in every major urban area. This crisis has also quickly spread to the expanding commuter belt of each urban area with inflation pressures clearly evident in those counties.

County	2016 Gross Income	Estimated Current Gross Income	2016 Target House Price	2019 THP (Estimate)	Actual (2020 RPPI)	Change Needed	% Change Needed
State	€45,256	€50,564	€106,485	€118,974	€260,000	-€141,026	-54.24
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	€66,203	€73,968	€155,772	€174,042	€540,000	-€365,958	-67.77
Dublin City	€47,294	€52,841	€111,280	€124,332	€375,000	-€250,668	-66.84
Wicklow	€48,392	€54,068	€113,864	€127,219	€358,000	-€230,781	-64.46
South Dublin	€52,759	€58,947	€124,139	€138,699	€358,000	-€219,301	-61.26
Cork City	€38,935	€43,502	€91,612	€102,358	€253,000	-€150,642	-59.54
Galway City	€44,492	€49,711	€104,687	€116,967	€280,000	-€163,033	-58.23
Fingal	€58,795	€65,691	€138,341	€154,567	€360,000	-€205,433	-57.06
Kildare	€54,472	€60,861	€128,169	€143,202	€325,000	-€181,798	-55.94
Meath	€52,156	€58,274	€122,720	€137,115	€285,000	-€147,885	-51.89
Louth	€41,033	€45,846	€96,548	€107,873	€217,000	-€109,127	-50.29

Figure 1 Target House Prices in the 10 least affordable local authority areas.

These values should be seen as upper bounds on what could be assumed to be affordable as these are at the upper limit of the central bank rules and since we are dealing with household

income, it can be assumed that these targets may be inaccessible to single people who constitute a growing segment of our society.

Given the objectives of the National Development Plan where 50% of population growth is planned for our cities, and Ireland's prior experience with urban sprawl and suburbanisation, there is a strong imperative to quickly introduce policies designed to solve the supply and affordability constraints in these urban areas.

Note that during Covid-19 era, there has been increased inflation pressures in areas currently within these "affordability" limits. Early intervention is needed to ensure sustainable development, particularly in areas which have previously faced inflation pressures from ever increasing commuter distances.

Rent Controls

For rents, we take median net earnings for workers and assume an upper limit of 20% of income being spent on a 1-bedroom home. Given many of the construction costs are fixed conditional on a property of being of any size, we have used a simple rule of thumb that each additional room would lead to a 20% increase in the target rental cost. This 20% rule is roughly consistent with the current increase seen per-room at present.

Based on this analysis, rents in the capital and its commuter belt are at highly unsustainable levels with average rents in Dublin equal ~50% of median earnings. A similar pattern exists for other cities, particularly Cork and Galway. Note that this is based on median earnings with the assumption that those without earnings would be subsidised by the state. If this analysis were for median net income then the required rent reductions would be even more significant.

20% of net earning being the ceiling on rent should be considered a minimum level of ambition in terms of rent reductions to ensure that renting is a viable choice for all people regardless of factors such as marital status or socio-economic class.

County	Net Income Per Capita	1 Bed Target	1 Bed Median	Difference (%)	3 Bed Target	3 Bed Median	Difference (%)	Rent as % Earnings
Dublin	€31,345	€522	€1,294	-59.7	€751	€1,791	-58.1	49.5
Wicklow	€29,861	€498	€958	-48	€718	€1,306	-45	38.5
Louth	€27,975	€466	€831	-43.9	€671	€1,073	-37.5	35.6
Kildare	€30,958	€516	€897	-42.5	€743	€1,302	-42.9	34.8
Meath	€30,212	€504	€861	-41.5	€726	€1,207	-39.9	34.2
Cork	€29,943	€499	€850	-41.3	€719	€1,096	-34.4	34.1
Galway	€29,355	€489	€765	-36.1	€704	€1,078	-34.7	31.3
Limerick	€29,817	€497	€723	-31.3	€715	€974	-26.6	29.1
Carlow	€27,414	€457	€637	-28.3	€658	€844	-22	27.9
Westmeath	€28,857	€481	€635	-24.3	€692	€857	-19.3	26.4

Figure 2 Rent targets based on Rents of 20% of net earnings in ten least- affordable areas.

In general, rents should ideally be as low as feasibly possible and more pertinently, should in fact be cheaper than purchasing a property given the current disparity in security of tenure between renting and purchasing. Over time and with a sustainable level of public housing available as well as more stringent pro-tenant laws this disparity we would envision would change over time, in which case property prices and therefore rental prices can be benchmarked on land rather than income.

Given that the variability in median earnings across Ireland is relatively low at ~€125 per week between highest and lowest counties, this also provides a basis to minimize the socially distorting effects of regional rent divergence.

Note that this analysis underestimates the extent of the problem as RTB data is based on existing tenancies. Based on current asking prices from sources such as the Daft Rental Report, new rental contracts would be expected to be 10-20% higher than the values of pre-existing rental contracts, another aspect which must be corrected urgently.

Conclusion

It is difficult to see how an altered future of housing at the scale needed could flow from *Housing for All* because it expressly does not aim at ending the housing crisis. While the limited measures proposed may provide stimulus to an overheated market, they will not radically alter anything for the users of housing—workers and carers in Ireland.

Any one of these three proposals would do more to address the housing crisis than *Housing for All* in its totality, but these are only topical examples to illustrate the key argument that it is only politics and not finance, law or technocracy that obscures the end of the housing crisis. These proposals aim to create the conditions for a new politics which comes from people living in housing security and free from debt and the ravages of market actors in this very private part of their lives. We should not be surprised at the failure of government proposals to adequately address the housing crisis 48 years after the Kenny report—they are carefully crafted so as to maintain the key aspects of the status quo. How we advance these proposals is to develop them into a wider programmatic strategy and generate support for it which forces the political system to accept the premise that housing is not a sector of the economy but a basic requirement for life and that the State must intervene in the social interest against the market. To recapitulate, there is no ‘solution’ to the housing crisis; we must come up with a plan to end it.

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