

## **Strategy 2015 - 2020**

### **Vision**

Our vision is of an Ireland where everyone has the option to participate fully in their own and the wider community's social, economic and environmental development through co-operation.

### **Mission**

Our mission is to lead the development of social, economic and environmental sustainability in Ireland through co-operative effort and the provision of co-operative housing in particular.

## Who we are

We are the national organisation representing, promoting and developing co-operative housing in Ireland. Since our foundation in 1973 we have provided over 5,000 homes through home-ownership, shared ownership and social rented co-operatives. With our membership of democratically controlled local co-operatives, we continue to manage 1,800 homes across Ireland as well as providing a network of childcare services in our communities.

As one of the leading national voices for co-operation in Ireland we collaborate with other co-operative organisations to promote our model. We are members of the Community and Voluntary Pillar of Social Partnership and participate in numerous forums on housing and social policy. Internationally, we are members of Housing Europe and the International Co-operative Alliance, including its sector groups; Cooperatives Europe and Co-operative Housing International.

We are an Approved Housing Body and registered charity. We have signed the Voluntary Regulation Code for Approved Housing Bodies, the Governance Code and the Canadian 2020 Vision standard for governance in housing co-operatives. We also hold the Q Mark for quality management systems.

## About this Strategy

This Strategy was developed by our Board, consisting of democratically elected representatives of our affiliated local co-operatives. The Strategy was developed in consultation with staff and members of local co-operatives as well as key external stakeholders in Ireland and the global co-operative community.

The Strategy was considered in the context of the Government of Ireland's Social Housing Strategy 2020, which calls for an enhanced role for Approved Housing Bodies in the provision of new housing supply. The plan is also informed by the *Blueprint for a Cooperative Decade*, a worldwide vision for the co-operative form of business by 2020 to become:

- The acknowledged leader in economic, social and environmental sustainability
- The model preferred by people
- The fastest growing form of enterprise

## Monitoring and Review

The Board retains overall responsibility for the implementation and review of this Strategy. Day-to-day responsibility is delegated to the CEO who reports on progress in the context of regular Board meetings. A review of progress is published each year in the Annual Report. The Board will carry out a comprehensive review of the Strategy in 2017 and will review individual elements of the Strategy as the need arises.

## Our Values & Principles

Our values and principles are reflected in the shared identity of the global co-operative movement.

### Definition

A co-operative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.

### Values

Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity.

In the tradition of their founders, co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others.



## Principles

The co-operative principles are guidelines by which co-operatives put their values into practice.

- **Voluntary and Open Membership**  
Co-operatives are voluntary organisations, open to anyone able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.
- **Democratic Member Control**  
Co-operatives are democratic organisations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions.
- **Member Economic Participation**  
Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative.
- **Autonomy and Independence**  
Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organisations controlled by their members. If they enter to agreements with other organisations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy.
- **Education, Training and Information**  
Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of co-operation.
- **Co-operation among Co-operatives**  
Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.
- **Concern for Community**  
Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies approved by their members.

## Strategic Objectives

We will achieve our mission by:

### 1. Growing co-operative housing

We support people to work together to meet their own housing needs in any tenure. We work with all groups in society, all ages and all geographies to create vibrant communities of homes where people want to live.

#### Goals

- Actively expand the co-operative housing model across Ireland in response to housing need with a particular focus on the midlands, south-east and the western seaboard
- Maintain and develop innovative delivery partnerships with builders, developers, local authorities and other stakeholders to achieve the leasing, construction and acquisition of new co-operative homes.
- Access development finance from the full range of sources to fund the construction and acquisition of new homes. Explore and develop new funding and delivery models
- Support local co-operative groups to develop self-build co-operative ownership projects
- Promote social inclusion by developing mixed tenure co-operatives incorporating social, private rented and ownership homes nationally

### 2. Building sustainable co-operative communities

We promote inclusive communities by providing support in education, training and information, including our quality childcare services. We will assist our members and others to create economic opportunity by facilitating the development of co-operative enterprise. We will lead on sustainable environmental development by building great places to live.

#### Goals

- Provide volunteering, training and employment opportunities in our services wherever possible
- Work with members to identify community development projects and assist them to access the resources they require
- Provide support to members to explore innovative means of forming new co-operative enterprises
- Lead on sustainable environmental development by building attractive places that respond to local need and that provide strong links to local facilities
- Renew and adapt our existing stock to respond to and mitigate the challenges of our changing climate

### **3. Developing co-operative leadership**

We will develop our members' options to participate in exercising democratic control over decisions that matter to them, becoming a leader in governance best practice. We promote board succession planning by supporting strong local organisations.

#### **Goals**

- Support members to run programmes of community development activities that meet their needs, are welcoming, and promote greater levels of member engagement
- Celebrate the diversity of our membership and staff while promoting our values of equality, equity and solidarity
- Review the governance of our organisation to ensure that we are well-placed to achieve our mission and deliver our objectives
- Ensure our voluntary Board has access to the skills, knowledge and training that they need
- Carry out a comprehensive review of the Rules of our organisation while advocating for a supportive legal framework

### **4. Raising our own capacity**

We will review our capacity to deliver the contribution we wish to make. We will develop the right structures and partnerships to make sure that we are ready to act on opportunities that arise. We will support staff to be leaders in their fields.

#### **Goals**

- Increase our organisational capacity to support a greater volume and improved standard of delivery
- Build a learning community where knowledge and experience is shared and where staff and members are supported to try new ways of doing things and are assisted in developing their careers
- Carry out research to provide evidence to support and inform our work
- Find new ways to measure the impact of our work
- Engage the services of other co-operatives and social enterprises wherever possible to maximise the social and economic impact of our investment

## **5. Leading the co-operative movement**

We represent and promote co-operative housing and the model of co-operation. We use our national representative role to demonstrate our distinctive contribution and to advocate for our members.

### **Goals**

- Raise the public profile of our distinctive co-operative identity among the wider community and among young people and opinion leaders in particular
- Work closely with other co-operative groups to raise awareness and take-up of the model
- Advocate for greater local, public and citizen control over the decisions that impact communities
- Participate in local and national public forums to promote the co-operative values of honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others
- Use our international partnerships to learn from others and to promote co-operation as a solution to pressing local and global challenges