

Department of Education,  
Marlborough Street,  
North City,  
Dublin 1.

Ground Floor  
Fitzwilliam House  
6 Fitzwilliam Street Lower  
Dublin 2  
D02 TX34

T: +353 (0) 1-8788630  
E: [info@ipi.ie](mailto:info@ipi.ie)  
W: [www.ipi.ie](http://www.ipi.ie)

[Sent by email: [esd@education.gov.ie](mailto:esd@education.gov.ie)]

30 June 2021

Dear Sir/ Madam,

The Irish Planning Institute (IPI) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the consultation on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). The Institute represents the majority of spatial planners in the State, and some 900 IPI Members work right across the planning system – in Planning Authorities, Regional Assemblies, semi-state organisations, An Bord Pleanála, and Central Government, as well as planning consultancies, and for developers. The Institute's role is to promote and improve the quality of planning, represent views of the planning profession, and contribute to education and environmental awareness in the wider community.

The Institute propose that planners can support the goals of the Government of Ireland in enhancing ESD at all levels of education. The IPI is an accrediting body to all planning programmes at third level in the Republic of Ireland. We offer membership to planners from around the world based on an assessment of education and experience. Furthermore, the Institute has a key role in shaping planning education particularly in meeting the needs of society at a local and global level. Our submission is structured under the five UNESCO key priority areas below.

### **1. Key Priority Area 1: Policy: Advancing Policy/Policy Coherence**

The IPI wishes to highlight the role of the Department of Education and our educational institutions in the delivery of our sustainability agenda not only with educational curriculums at various levels but also in the development of educational buildings and facilities within our built environment.

The IPI encourages the Department to have greater regard for sustainable development practices and initiatives on new build and new extensions of education buildings and facilities. The Institute believes educational facilities should be exemplars of sustainability in terms of their design and construction. A sustainable development scoring criteria should be introduced in tender assessments for building projects to incorporate sustainable building materials and green infrastructure elements into educational facility development proposals.

The IPI recognises the work of educational institutions at all levels in promoting and facilitating ESD. Green Schools and Active Travel programmes provide good practice examples and clear evidence that

young people care about their future and the kind of world in which they live. These programmes should continue to be supported to facilitate ESD in educational institutions.

The demand for sustainable development and construction is a fundamental premise of our built environment. As pressure increases on the industry to embrace sustainable practices, a radical shift is required in the awareness, understanding and cultural acceptance of its potential benefits. Whilst a shift is slowly being realised at a strategic level, delivering sustainable construction in practice remains a challenge. The IPI considers education as one of the main cornerstones of addressing this pressing matter.

## **2. Key Priority Area 2: Education and Training: Transforming learning and training environments and capacity building**

The purpose of planning education, both in Ireland and around the world, is to support the advancement of the art and science of urban, rural and regional planning to benefit communities. A primary focus is the concern for serving the common good by delivering proper planning and sustainable development and the pursuit of quality, people-centred, place-making with respect for ecosystems, quality in the built environment and diversity in cultures.

The Institute acknowledges the importance of education in creating a better awareness and understanding of our built environment. Planning is an important tool that is based upon a vast array of environmental, economic and social concerns. Therefore, it is a rich and varied discipline wherein there is a considerable scope to incorporate planning and planning related issues in both primary and secondary level education.

Formal planning education is primarily within the third-level undergraduate and postgraduate planning courses accredited by the IPI and delivered by University College Cork, University College Dublin and Technological University Dublin. These planning schools engage with other disciplines at third level, for example, teaching modules in sociology, geography, social sciences. The IPI believe there is scope to enhance the contribution of planning in sustainable development education on a broader level, for instance, through a series of videos about planning that could be shared with further education providers as well as secondary and primary schools as a resource to support ESD.

In addition, planners could visit schools and discuss their job and the benefits of planning and sustainable development. The IPI could also deliver Continuing Professional Development to teachers about planning, its goals and benefits and outline how students can engage in the planning process.

## **3. Key Priority Area 3: Youth: Empowering and Mobilising Youth**

The Institute strongly advocate for geography to be reinstated as a core subject for the Junior Certificate as geography is vitally important in the delivery of ESD at secondary schools and is one of the primary routes for students to continue to study geography, which is one of the main gateways into the profession of planning.

It is important that young people have conversations about the future of the place and environment in school and within the planning system. A key pillar of ESD is citizen engagement, and young people's engagement with planning is central to this. The Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) outlines that children, or groups or associations representing children, are entitled to make submissions or observations on planning policy documents such as Local Area Plans and County

Development Plans. Therefore, the voice of young people and children in plans for future policy making is integral.

There are many innovative ways of empowering young people to engage in the planning process, and one of these is a current (June 2021) project called “Freedom of the City”. A collaboration between Cork City Council, Centre for Planning Education in UCC, Glucksman Gallery UCC and Cork Healthy Cities, where 2,500 children and young people engaged in the Cork City Development Plan 2022 review through in-classroom workshops devised by local artists and delivered by teachers in primary and secondary schools in the City's area. The young participants are also invited to imagine what the city would look like if they were Lord Mayor of Cork. This project sparked many conversations about planning and sustainable development and encouraged more citizens to engage in the planning system. More information can be found at <http://www.glucksman.org/projects/freedomofthecity>.

#### **4. Key Priority Area 4: Communities: Accelerating sustainable solutions at local level and engaging with the wider community.**

The IPI strongly support the emphasis in the consultation document on the recognition of the potential of policy measures to encourage place-based and project-based learning on sustainability issues in the community. Empowering and enabling local government to engage with communities in relation to ESD would be welcomed. This is a role that many local authorities already take through their planning departments, parks departments, community departments, heritage and conservation officers, but these areas are often under-resourced and require greater staffing and resourcing.

The plan making process for local area plans, public realm improvement plans and masterplans for parts of cities, towns and villages, all provide excellent vehicles for community engagement and education for sustainable development. There is a role for Planners who are adept at bringing together communities of place and interest to discuss and invent new ways of developing our built environment more sustainably. Putting in place a more comprehensive set of fine grained local plans is a potential way to engage the whole community at a local level. In addition, funding practical projects as part of these would further engage communities. Planners are well placed to facilitate these processes, but there is a requirement for increasing staff numbers in local authority planning departments to allow this to occur.

#### **5. Key Priority Area 5: Culture: Changing attitudes, values and behaviours/transformational action.**

Planning and planning practitioners are cognizant of the role of culture in sustainable development. There is a longstanding recognition in planning of the importance of the built and natural environment as cultural heritage and more recently there has been a growing understanding of the wider interpretations of culture and the cultural meanings that are attached to place and space.

Planners, through the IPI and in conjunction with other institutions, such as The National Heritage Council and community arts organisations, would be well placed to play a role in changing attitudes, values and behaviours around sustainable futures.

The Department of Education, in conjunction with the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, should consider potential funding schemes which would facilitate such learning in active and participative ways, working with different groups to explore their understanding of space and places and how various elements of cultural identity can be preserved and developed. Groups

from diverse backgrounds could be brought together, to explore what different elements of the environment mean to them.

## **6. Conclusion**

The Irish Planning Institute is willing to engage further on this important initiative to provide its expertise and perspective in relation to the issues raised in this submission. The Institute appreciates the opportunity to provide its views on the Strategy thus far. If the Institute can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,



**Dr Conor Norton MIPI**

**President 2020 - 2021**

**Irish Planning Institute**

Fitzwilliam House,

6 Fitzwilliam Street Lower,

Dublin 2,

Ireland.

Tel: +353 1 878 8630

E: [president@ipi.ie](mailto:president@ipi.ie)