



**National Built Asset Register
Public Asset Management**

POLICY PAPER

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In April 2011, the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure produced a report (The McCarthy Report) which, amongst other things, recommended that there should be one state property management agency and a consolidated register of all state property howsoever owned (Recommendation 51). The Report also recommended that an annual target should be set for the sale of state property over each of the next five years (Recommendation 52), and that a study should be completed on the means and feasibility of privatising the operations of such bodies as the Property Registration Authority. The Society wholly endorses these recommendations.

The State, through its various institutions, gathers an enormous amount of datasets on property in Ireland, including its type and age, location, ownership, last transaction price and current use. Much of this data is collected at point-of-sale and accumulates with each transaction. The movement towards geo-tagging data has meant that it is now possible to link all of this disparate and historical data and record it centrally, linked to the location of each individual property. The State, which itself is the largest owner and tenant of property in Ireland, does not yet own a map of all buildings under its control.

Built Asset Management

Two key efficiencies can be made through strategic management of built assets

- Improve efficiency and effectiveness in the management of public land and property assets, and
- Use the value in surplus, under-utilised and non-core Government assets to transform areas and to accelerate delivery of much needed infrastructure.

The Strategic Investment Board in Northern Ireland adopted such a strategy which has subsequently been expanded to cover the following potentials which can come from undertaking an audit of existing State-owned property:

- Rationalisation of accommodation portfolios
- Redevelopment/refurbishment of assets
- Re-gearing/renegotiation of leases
- Master planning of sites
- Development of service commercialisation opportunities, and
- Disposal of assets, where appropriate.

International Practice in Built Asset Management

In the UK in August 2011, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Eric Pickles launched an interactive online map which shows the location and details of all buildings owned by central and local government in England, on a pilot basis.

This public property map, which is accessible by the public - shows the location and type of the 18,000 buildings owned by 600 public sector bodies, including central government, but also 87 councils and many other semi-state organisations. It is believed that through cataloguing and auditing the scale, location, quality and variety of buildings in public ownership, efficiencies can be achieved. Indeed, according to the UK Government, buildings and other

assets in public ownership could be worth up to £385 billion, and by investing in better property management techniques, some £35 billion in running costs could be saved over the next ten years. Through the adoption of a similar strategy in Ireland, there are undoubtedly savings to be achieved.

The State as Tenant of Property

In addition to owners of property, the State and its agencies are also tenants. In some cases, renting property makes better commercial sense than purchasing it outright, but without a map of all the property in public ownership, full efficiencies between a suite of rented properties and owned properties cannot be found. Renting property cost central government departments " 129 million in 2010, mostly for office space in Dublin city centre. A list of property which is rented by the State from private individuals and companies has been produced by the OPW and is available for scrutiny, but without a similar list of owned properties, this only tells half a story.

Indeed, the excellent work of the Property Registration Authority in creating digital maps of property and land in private ownership provides a starting point for an expansion to cover all property in public ownership, and as a central agency to co-ordinate a consolidated register of all property in public ownership and rented by public agencies.

The Society therefore recommends that all of the recommendations of the McCarthy report should be implemented. Furthermore the Society believes that the Property Registration Authority should be mandated with the task of collecting information from each central and local government authority and agency of all property and land in their ownership, and property leased by them. The same Authority should publish an online map of each county showing all of this information, and make it available to all.

The Authority should publish an Irish version of an annual ~~The~~ ~~Size of the~~ Estate+ report to show the annual running costs of publicly-owned buildings and property leased by the State, and the extent to which State agencies and departments are fulfilling their responsibilities for the sale of state property and assets. This report should also publish information on the energy efficiency of buildings in public ownership.

The Government should explore initiatives such as the Community Right to Reclaim Land initiative which allows local communities to take over unused publicly owned land or property for their own use.

Recommendation

- Audit of all public buildings owned by all local, regional, national authorities.
- Creation of a ~~public~~ ~~property map~~ . hold information on buildings, owned, leased, controlled by government departments or bodies.
- Identification of surplus property/land
- Departmental Asset Management Plans
- Develop regional Management Strategy, including the disposal of property

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Renting property cost central government departments " 129 million in 2010, mostly for office space in Dublin city centre. This can be reduced through:

- lease restructuring
- improved use of owned/freehold buildings
- improve space utilisation
- exit leases and exercise breaks