

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Rebuilding Ireland is an abject failure, says McVerry

Today is the third anniversary of the launch of Rebuilding Ireland, the government's housing and homelessness action plan. Fr Peter McVerry SJ of the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice (JCFJ) calls the plan "an abject failure" that has exacerbated the Irish housing crisis.

Fr McVerry and the JCFJ team have written a critique of the stated aims of Rebuilding Ireland, and the ways in which each of its five pillars have effectively collapsed. The centre's review highlights the fact that homelessness has been normalised in the time since the plan launched. In the past three years, it has increased by two-thirds and now stands at more than 10,000 people, a figure that does not include many thousands more who make up the 'hidden homeless'. Since 2016, social housing has been redefined, and is now provided privately, due to the HAP scheme, on which the Government spends more than €2 million a day.

"The official figures for those who are homeless has been above 10,000 for most of this year, which is 65% higher than when the plan intended to solve this problem was launched. That the figure is so high it ought to be a cause of national shame to a society as wealthy as contemporary Ireland." Fr Peter McVerry SJ

The responsibility of building more homes has been left almost exclusively to private developers, something which has been catastrophic for market affordability. The rental crisis has reached new heights, and the creation of rental pressure zones, which 65% of the homes available to rent in Ireland are now located within, has added to this. The number of listings on the AirBnB website skyrocketed during the past three years, making profit for those who are homeowners and making properties unavailable to those in need of a home.

The JCFJ urges the Government to adopt a fundamentally different approach to housing policy which does not have the market at its core. It must: vastly increase the construction of publicly owned housing; introduce legislation making it illegal to evict households into homelessness, for at three years; expand the mortgage-to-rent scheme; integrate intergenerational community planning, and; make housing policy the frontline of environmental policy.

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