Press release

Ireland’s state-owned historic buildings to benefit from research and training for improved energy efficiency

From: Office of Public Works

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Over 350 public sector people gathered at Dublin Castle to attend a professional training programme initiated by the Office of Public Works (OPW). The training falls under the project ‘Support to the Renovation Wave – Deep Energy Renovation of Historic Buildings in Ireland’ supporting the Office of Public Works and Limerick City and County Council and funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument.

The Technical Support Provider, Trinomics, appointed by the European Commission worked alongside Technological University of the Shannon to develop and deliver the training programme. The objective of the programme is to increase the state’s capacity for energy retrofitting of public sector historic and heritage buildings.



The purpose of this training is to upskill public sector personnel which will allow the state to increase its capacity for energy performance improvement works to traditional built and historic buildings. This will better equip the government in meeting its ambitious targets as set out in its National Renovation Strategy and the National Development Plan to reduce energy emissions from buildings. Energy retrofitting of traditional and historic buildings is more complex than modern buildings due to several factors, including the hygrothermal behaviour of traditional building material and the need to preserve heritage value.

Former President of Ireland, Mary Robinson, delivered the keynote address at the launch of the programme. The three-day training event takes place on 17 January, 24 January and 7 February 2025. The training will include presentations by 35 eminent speakers to discuss a range of topics under the themes of policy, practice and wider benefits.

Attendees include architects, engineers, surveyors, specifiers, historic building managers, and architectural conservation officers from the OPW and Local Authorities, as well as representatives from relevant government departmental, bodies, officers and stakeholders from architectural conservation NGOs across Ireland.

Chair of the OPW John Conlon remarked:

> “I am delighted to be here as Chairman for the Office of Public Works (OPW) to witness over 300 civil servants, across numerous government departments, undertake professional training on Deep Energy Renovation of Historic Buildings in Ireland. This invaluable training will better equip our professionals to assist the government in meeting its targets as set out in its National Renovation Strategy and the National Development Plan to reduce energy emissions from buildings.

> This exciting initiative draws upon the OPW guidance ‘Approaches to Improving the Energy Performance of Heritage Properties in State Care', which was launched at the OPW architectural services conference last year. I am very proud that the OPW is delivering this training in collaboration with Limerick City and County Council (LCCC) and Technological University of the Shannon (TUS) through funding received from the European Union.”

President of TUS, Professor Vincent Cunnane commented:

> “On behalf of TUS, it’s great to be here today for the launch of this innovative programme. Collaboration is at the heart of what we do, and this partnership between TUS, the OPW, Limerick City and County Council and private sector bodies enables the State to effectively address the skills gap in the area of retrofitting historical and cultural buildings. We are creating a model of partnership and innovation, as well as leveraging international best practice.

> Initiatives like this are not only going to equip participants of this training event with the skills needed to address energy conservation in our historic buildings, but it also strengthens capacity to collectively meet the demands of heritage conservation.”

Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support, European Commission, Kaspar Richter said:

> “Buildings are the largest energy consumers in Europe, accounting for over 40 percent of our energy usage and a third of greenhouse gas emissions. They present substantial opportunities for enhancing energy efficiency and integrating renewables. The 3-day training programme is part of a project funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument, aiming to tap into this potential for historic buildings. We are pleased to have supported the Irish Office of Public Works and Limerick City and County Council in their efforts to accelerate the renovation of traditionally built historic buildings in Ireland.”

The training covers the rapidly evolving policy and regulatory landscape, technological advancements in practice, from building inspection to risk assessment, design and post-renovation monitoring, including the wider environmental, economic, and social benefits of retaining and renovating the existing historic building stock across the country.”

Notes

About the technical support project “Support to the Renovation Wave: Energy Renovation of Historic Buildings in Ireland”

At the end of 2019, the European Commission introduced the European Green Deal, targeting climate neutrality by 2050. As buildings contribute to 40% of the EU's energy consumption and 35% of its emissions, their decarbonisation is essential. As part of the plan to achieve these ambitions, the European Commission Renovation Wave strategy aims to double the annual energy renovation rate and promote deep renovations to improve energy and resource efficiency over the next decade. The energy renovation of traditional and historic buildings is more complex than modern buildings due to several factors: heritage value must be preserved, hygrothermal risks managed, and suitable low-carbon insulation materials, often unsupported

by grants, should be prioritized. Additionally, there is a shortage of skilled workers, requiring widespread knowledge dissemination and upskilling across the sector.

The project “Support to the Renovation Wave - Deep Energy Renovation of Historic Buildings in Ireland” has the objective to support the Office of Public Works and the Limerick City and County Council develop best practice evidence-based cost-effective approaches to the energy retrofitting of historic building stock, as well as to research a sustainable funding model that captures and embeds environmental impacts of energy retrofitting historic buildings.

The project is funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument and implemented by Trinomics, Technological University of the Shannon, Shaffrey Architects and Passivate Building Energy Consultants, in cooperation with the European Commission.

The OPW requested support to build upon the OPW in-house guidance ‘Approaches to Improving the Energy Performance of Heritage Properties in State Care' to provide1) detailed case study methodologies for the energy renovation of historic buildings; 2) cost-benefit analyses for these case studies; 3) an interactive training programme with additional resources to upskill professionals in this field; and Limerick City and County Council requested support for recommendations to establish and expand sustainable local / regional investment funds for the energy renovation of historical buildings.

As part of this project, the training event held over three days, [17th January 24th January and 7th February 2025] will upskill the OPW & LCCC architects, engineers, surveyors and building works specifiers with capacity for outreach to other appropriate government departments, local authority and public sector personnel officials. Upon completion of the course, the 150 in-person participants and 200 online participants from the architecture, engineering, and surveying professions, will be better equipped to support the government in meeting its ambitious targets as set out in its National Renovation Strategy.

The interactive training event will be technical and comprehensive, covering the rapidly evolving policy and regulatory landscape, technological advancements in practice from building inspection to risk assessment, to design and post-renovation monitoring. Respect for traditional and historic buildings embodied energy and cultural value will be at the core of the training, as will acknowledgement of the wider environmental, economic, and social benefits of retaining and renovating our existing historic building stock.

Partners

The EU European Commission appointed as the technical support provider a consortium combining the expertise of **Trinomics** with that of **Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest, Shaffrey Architects,** and **Passivate Building Energy Consulting.**

About the TSI

The Technical Support Instrument (TSI) is the EU programme that provides tailor-made technical expertise to EU Member States to design and implement reforms. The support is demand driven and does not require co-financing from Member States. It is an important pillar of the EU's initiative to help Member States mitigate the economic and social consequences of the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis.

Smart, sustainable, and socially responsible reforms help to strengthen the resilience of our economies and societies. The TSI offers Member States a unique service to help them tackle reform challenges. The support can take the form of, for example, strategic and legal advice, studies, training, and expert visits on the ground. It can cover any phase in the reform process. From preparation and design to development and implementation of the reforms.

The technical support is provided in a wide range of policy areas, including but not limited to climate action, digital transition and health. Member States can also request support to prepare, amend, implement and revise

their national recovery and resilience plans under the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

By providing on the ground support to overcome reform challenges, the TSI helps Member States to recover from the social and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, to improve the quality of public services and to reinforce sustainable and inclusive economic growth. The TSI is the successor programme of the Structural Reform Support Programme (2017-2020) and builds on its experience in building capacity in Member States. The European Commission's Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM) manages the TSI.

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