

# Environmental, Social and Governance



## Promoting sustainability within the housing sector<sup>21</sup>

**The Housing Finance Agency (HFA) is dedicated to embedding Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles into its services and operations.**

### ENVIRONMENTAL

Acknowledging the global environmental challenges, the HFA understands its significant role in promoting sustainability within the housing sector. By collaborating with stakeholders such as employees, clients and suppliers, the HFA aims to enhance sustainability, better serve the community and deliver a strong performance under this goal.

We engage on a regular basis with all of our stakeholders to enable the growth of the HFA as a sustainable company. The HFA is committed to reducing its energy consumption, water usage, waste disposal and carbon footprint in a practical and cost-effective manner. Our Green Team, established in 2022, continues to drive the HFA's efforts to meet the targets set in the Government's Climate Action Mandate and our own Climate Action Roadmap.



#### Energy efficiency

A Staff Communications Initiative "Last Out, Lights Out" was introduced in 2024, to encourage staff to switch off electronic equipment, devices and systems in the HFA office at the end of the day.

The HFA's office greenhouse gas emissions for 2024 were 4,987 Co2/Kg, a decrease from the 5,863 Co2/Kg reported in 2023. This is a significant reduction from the 10,922 Co2/Kg reported in 2019, despite

an increase in staff numbers from 19 to 28 during that period. Indeed, it is a 62% reduction on the baseline figure 2016-18 of 13,046 Co2/Kg.

This puts our current FTE (Full-Time Equivalent) output per employee at 676.46 kWh, compared to 1080.52 kWh in 2023, when there were 21 employees.

These figures were achieved despite the purchase in 2024 of additional computers and other electronic equipment for the office, in order to accommodate the expansion of the workforce.



#### Paper-based processes

The HFA is committed to reducing its use of paper and the HFA's Annual Report is, for the first time, digital only. Plans to reduce reliance on paper will be further supported by the implementation of a number of new IT processes or systems, including a move to Cloud-based storage.



#### Waste management

The team and staff as a whole are committed to a waste action plan that increases recycling and minimises waste generation by focusing on minimising packaging, promoting eco-design, and managing our segregation of waste.

In 2024 the HFA chose suppliers for office and catering services who use recyclable packing materials wherever possible. Packaging and food from the canteen can be disposed of in our segregated waste bins.



### Transport

The HFA office is located in Dublin City Centre and staff are encouraged to use public transport, to cycle or to walk to work. The Taxsaver Commuter and Bike to Work schemes are available to staff and secure bike storage and lockers are located in the building's car park. The HFA did not have any air travel in 2024.



### Sustainable homes

HFA financing in 2024 facilitated the delivery of thousands of energy efficient homes, employing sustainable delivery and construction methods. 99% of HFA-financed homes in 2024 were A-rated and we continue to encourage customers to consider green initiatives and sustainable methods in their housing delivery.



### Sustainable communities

The HFA also supports the development of sustainable programmes and facilities within communities through our Social Investment Fund. In 2024, the HFA awarded funding to Tuath Housing for the creation of a natural play space for children in Clarehall, Dublin, integrated within a grove of trees featuring eco-friendly materials and equipment designed to harmonise with the natural landscape.

## SOCIAL

The HFA is committed to putting social responsibility at the heart of who we are as a company, both in how we treat our staff, our key stakeholders and for the benefit of communities at large.

Our Employment Assistance Programme is a 24/7 mental wellbeing programme which offers benefits to our employees, such as support and counselling services, legal assistance and mediation information.

We operate a hybrid and flexible-hours working environment which contributes to our staff's work-life balance.

Our business model of supporting the delivery of social and affordable housing means we are building healthy and sustainable communities together with our stakeholders and customers in the sector.

Our Social Investment Fund awards a total of €250,000 for the delivery of community-enhancing initiatives and facilities. Twelve projects across eight different counties in total were chosen in 2024, including play spaces and community gardens, wellbeing and biodiversity programmes and the refurbishment of community hubs.

### Human Rights & Equality

Since 2014, the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty has been integrated into Ireland's legislative framework for human rights and equality. Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 mandates public bodies in performing their functions to have regard for the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and treatment for staff and persons to whom it provides services and protect the human rights of staff and services users.

As part of this duty, the HFA has placed equality and human rights at the heart of how a public body fulfils its purpose and delivers on its strategic plan. An Equality and Human Rights Working Group comprised of staff members from each department plays an important role in how the HFA progresses this duty and incorporates the principles into its policies and processes.

The HFA Corporate Plan outlines the following commitments:

- Develop and improve customer policies and processes to provide the best possible service to everyone, ensuring that there is no discrimination on grounds of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race or membership of the Traveller community.
- Support and facilitate government housing policy and other initiatives that promote equality and social inclusion.
- Continue to include principles of equality and non-discrimination in our staff and recruitment policies to provide equality of opportunity for all.
- Ensure that equal access is considered and accommodated in each area of the HFA's work and that information provided to stakeholders and customers is comprehensive, clear, accurate and accessible.

The HFA Customer Charter highlights how equality is valued within our organisation, as we strive to ensure that customers' rights to equal treatment, established by equality legislation, are upheld in the delivery of our services.

Through its financing to Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies, the HFA endeavours to eliminate barriers to accessing secure and high-quality housing for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion.

The HFA wants to reflect the diversity of its customers and of Irish society by ensuring equal opportunities within the HFA workforce, without any form of discrimination.

As of 31 December 2024, the HFA team consisted of 43% female staff and 57% male staff. The Board included 5 females (42%) and 7 males (58%). This gender distribution reflects our ongoing commitment to fostering diversity and promoting gender equality within our organisation.

When recruiting new staff, the HFA looks to advertise positions in a way which reaches the broadest range of candidates and most diverse talent pools. Accessibility is considered throughout the process, from the provision of job descriptions in an accessible format, to offering required supports or services during the interview process, such as Irish Sign Language interpreters.

In respect of 2024, no disclosures were made to the Agency under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act, 2014.

### Irish language

The Housing Finance Agency recognises the importance of using the Irish language in communications by public bodies. We strive to ensure that customers who wish to conduct their business in Irish can do so and that all relevant documents are available in Irish. Our annual report, five-year strategy and other key corporate documents are accessible to the public in Irish through our website.

Section 10A of the Amended Official Languages Act, which pertains to advertising by public bodies, mandates that 20% of all advertising be in the Irish language and that 5% of the entire public body's advertising budget be spent on media platforms where more than 50% of the content is in Irish.

To fully comply with these regulations, public bodies must monitor all advertising and report to the Coimisinéir na Teanga's office at the designated time.

In 2024 the HFA reported full compliance with the regulations.

### Social Investment Fund

As part of a Social Investment Fund award in 2024, the HFA supported a Tuath Housing collaboration with Hair Together. Young people living in Tuath developments were offered an opportunity to learn barbering and hair-dressing skills as a positive outlet and to stimulate creativity.



## GOVERNANCE

The HFA has a strong governance structure around decision-making, with an effective and highly skilled Board of Directors and three supporting committees: Audit and Risk Committee, Credit Committee and Organisational Performance and Development Committee.

We follow the Corporate Governance guidelines as outlined in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. This guide outlines key principles and rules to help our Board of Directors exercise its responsibilities and serve the interests of the company and its stakeholders. Our directors and all employees, including senior management, conduct themselves in accordance with the highest ethical standards, informed by a robust Code of Conduct for Directors and an Employees Code of Conduct.

The HFA has an Oversight and Performance Delivery Agreement with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, as required by the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

The purpose of the agreement is to define the terms of the relationship between the HFA and its key stakeholders. The agreement provides details of the legal framework of the HFA, the roles and responsibilities of the HFA, compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, monitoring arrangements, and the duration of, and signatories to the agreement. The most recent Oversight and Performance Delivery Agreement has covered the period from 2022 to 2024.

### Protected Disclosures

Under Section 22 of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 each public body is required to publish an annual report setting out the number of protected disclosures received in the preceding year and the action taken (if any). This report must not result in persons making disclosures being identifiable.

No Protected Disclosures were made under the terms of the legislation in 2024.

### Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information Act (FOI), 2014, gives you the right to access records held by the Housing Finance Agency and other state organisations. The HFA continues to meet its obligations in relation to responding to Freedom of Information requests. There were four Freedom of Information Requests to the HFA in 2024.

