

Build With Wood – The Pathway To Net Zero Conference

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Conference in Beyond the Trees Avondale, hosted by Coillte and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, brings stakeholders together to explore ways to increase wood in construction

Issued Wednesday, 23 November 2022: Coillte and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine brought national and international experts together from the construction industry, scientific community and regulators to Beyond the Trees Avondale, Co. Wicklow today to explore how to increase the use of timber in construction. As part of Coillte’s strategic vision ambition to capture approx. 28m tonnes of carbon from the environment by 2050, a goal for Coillte is to increase the level of timber frame homes from 20% to 80% by 2050, and to produce a sustainable supply of 25 million m³ of Irish certified timber that can help Ireland achieve its housing ambition of 300,000 new homes by 2030. Timber products have the lowest embodied carbon of any mainstream building material, meaning they take less energy to produce and are better for the environment.

Globally, construction and the building sector represents 38% of world’s energy related carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂eq) emissions and reducing the carbon footprint of our future building stock is key to tackling climate change and to achieving our net zero ambitions. The Climate Action Plan for Ireland has a target of a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and to have a climate neutral economy by 2050.

Speaking at the Build with Wood conference, Minister of State for Forestry, Senator Pippa Hackett, said “Building with wood reduces our dependency on materials made using fossil fuels at a time when we need to do everything we can to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. This Government’s commitment to forestry is clear, and

we are providing over €1.3 billion for our next Forestry Programme to support new and existing forest owners to manage and grow more wood. Today's event provides a timely opportunity to engage with the stakeholders who can bring about the widespread use of wood as a construction material, and I look forward to seeing the industry grow and deliver on its enormous potential."

Imelda Hurley, CEO, Coillte, said "In the face of the climate emergency, there is an urgent need for Ireland to meet stretching climate action targets and we recognise the critical role which Coillte can play in the achievement of these targets. The new EU Forest Strategy for 2030 highlights that promoting the use of wood products requires actions including combating misconceptions about fire risk and lack of durability and acknowledging the multiple advantages of wood products in terms of reducing pollution and energy consumption. The purpose of bringing stakeholders together today is to discuss how Ireland can overcome barriers and make recommendations to accelerate the increased use of timber in construction. We cannot achieve our net zero goal unless we reduce the building and construction sector's climate impact. Innovation, partnership and collaboration will be necessary to achieve this much needed change."

"The World Bank forecasts a quadrupling of global wood fibre demand by 2050. It is critical that Ireland is self-sufficient in meeting its timber needs from well-managed forests which takes pressure off 'old growth' forests elsewhere in the world. Growing Ireland's capacity to build more with timber through the greater use of off-site timber frame, glulam and cross laminated timber buildings could significantly increase the overall capacity to build homes in the State while also supporting our local indigenous forestry and forest products industry."

Major themes from today's Build with Wood conference included:

- Meeting Ireland's climate change targets
- Decarbonisation of our built environment with wood
- Creating new markets for Ireland's growing timber resource
- The role of prefabrication and off-site in addressing the housing crisis
- Fire standards and Insurance
- Investment and job creation

The event also saw the launch of www.timberspec.ie – a free CPD series for Architects and Specifiers.

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