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Yearbook 2021

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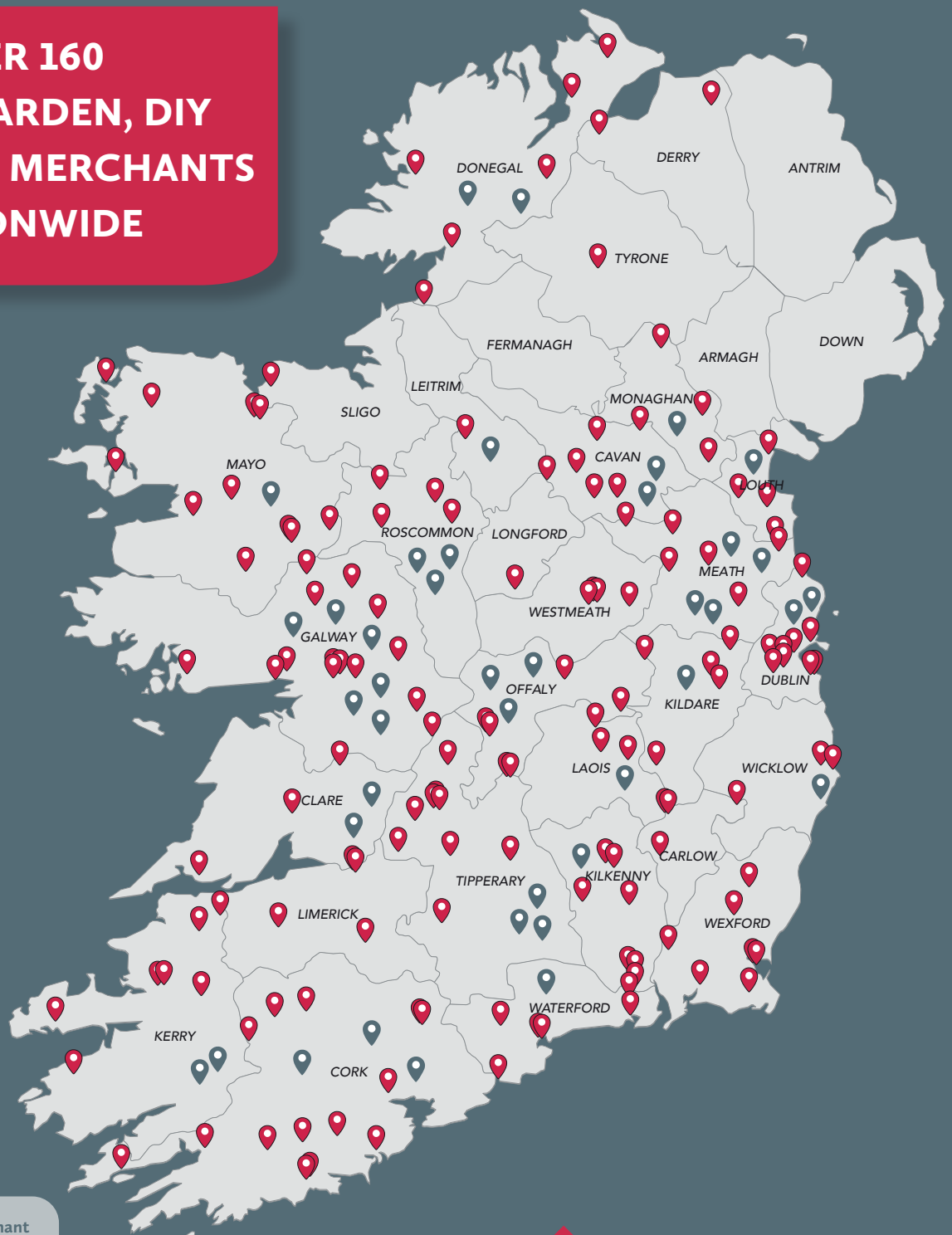
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Welcome



Welcome to the first edition of the Homevalue Lifestyle Yearbook 2021.

Through our network of over 160 Homevalue and affiliate independent stores nationwide, Homevalue is 100% Irish owned and a true local partner that you can trust and rely on for all of your building and DIY needs, large and small. Our reputation in the Home, Garden, DIY and Builders Merchants industry has been built on providing the best possible products to our customers at the most competitive price point, while providing unparalleled expertise to help professional tradespeople and homeowners make the best decisions.

As summer approaches and we leave a challenging period behind, we can now rethink our lives, and how we want to live them. Life as we know it has changed in many ways, often for the better, and especially in our homes. Space and what we do with it has become the focus and has prompted a DIY explosion. The home has become truly multi-functional, meeting the demands of home-schooling, zoom rooms, a study or workspace, as well as a haven of tranquillity for rest and relaxation.

For those starting from scratch, the notion of self-build has never been so relevant, allowing as it does the flexibility to build all of this and more into the design. In our extensive self-build guide, Homevalue Lifestyle Yearbook 2021 provides a detailed step-by-step account of the self-build process, from securing finance to assembling a suitable team, choosing the most effective build method and managing the construction process.

Meanwhile, we showcase a stunning new self-build recently completed by Andrew Rothwell and Julie Watchorn in their native Wexford. Many of the key products selected were sourced from Homevalue who are proud to have assisted the couple through their self-build journey. In an account that will inspire and inform aspiring self-builders, Andrew and Julie highlight the highs and lows of building your own home and stress the importance of detailed planning for a successful outcome.

For those of us who need to repurpose an existing space, design guru Garry Cohn tells us how colour can make a dramatic difference to the mood and tone of the home while award winning architect Hugh Wallace tells us how to transform the humble bungalow into a spacious sanctuary.

Garden sanctuaries are equally important, and as summer approaches, Homevalue have everything you need to embrace outdoor living. Taking a leaf out of Diarmuid Gavin's book, we look at the importance of what to plant and why, keeping an eye on the importance of pollinators in our gardens and in the overall food chain. So, from the simplicity of garden dining to the sophistication of fire pits and repurposed garden sheds, we show you how to create an outdoor oasis even in the smallest of spaces.

Last but not least, as we all become more ecologically aware, the materials we use in building and retrofitting are a fundamental factor in ensuring our homes are more energy efficient. All homeowners can play their part by taking steps to improve their homes Building Energy Rating (BER). By applying a number of key energy-saving modifications to your home, you can achieve significant reductions in heating and running costs which in most cases will outweigh the investment involved over time.

All of this and more are covered over the following pages and needless to say, everything you need, including advice and one to one service is available at your local Homevalue store. Always remember that professional tradespeople and DIY enthusiasts alike know that Homevalue means real value and real expertise.

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Bungalow Bliss

Acclaimed architect and TV personality Hugh Wallace has a passion for our architectural heritage. In his latest project, he brings this passion to house restoration of a different kind, the humble bungalow.

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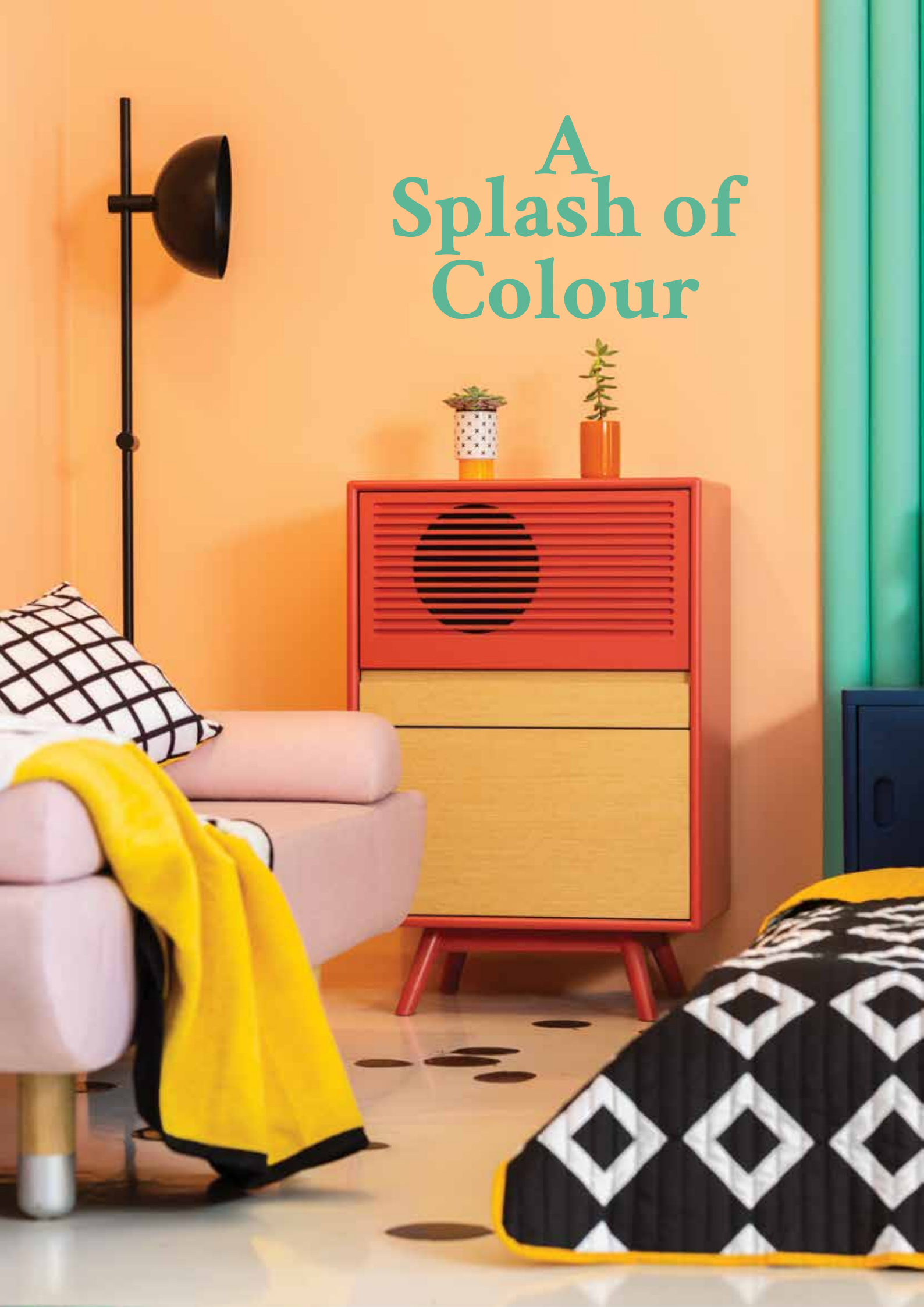
Two-thirds of homes aren't energy efficient, but government-assisted grants for eco-friendly changes can save money and help save the planet.

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A Splash of Colour





Paint is the number one tool in the home decorator's arsenal. It's inexpensive, easy to use, and the possibilities of what can be achieved with it are endless.

Painting the walls is one of the easiest ways to give a room a dramatic transformation without spending a lot of money. You can also try painting patterns like stripes, chevrons or other geometric designs. Or you can try techniques like colour blocking; there's no end to the possibilities. But where to start? Interior design guru Garry Cohn has all the answers.

"Any interior designer will tell you that colour has the power to transform a room, whether it's a bold accent wall or an unexpected painted ceiling. Most people know that they want a cool, glamorous look but are afraid to make such bold choices.

"My first piece of advice is that you go along to your local Homevalue store and pick up the paint brochures," Garry says. "All of the main brands have fabulous room shots showing how colour can be used to make a statement in any room.

Take home the brochures, look at them in the context of your room and if you love a colour, get

sample pots from the store and take them home to try out in your own environment."

A good piece of advice is to choose the paint colour of your room last, and consider the existing architecture and finishes first. This is because there is such an extensive range of colours for paint, whereas in other design elements like furniture and flooring, the options are more limited. So, start with what you already have and what you need to keep in the room. Look at the upholstery of your furnishings, the flooring and accessories. Big ticket items like furniture may have to stay, so work with what you've already got, and think about the tones of flooring material, cabinetry and existing furniture that needs to stay before you select a colour palette. That said, it is very easy to upcycle furniture with a fresh dab of paint, so you are not necessarily bolted into what you already have, just consider how the existing features of your interior will work in harmony with your chosen colour palette.





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Tints, Tones & Shade

When choosing colours for your interior, there are a few terms that you need to get familiar with – tint, tone and shade.

Tint refers to how light a colour is: adding white to a colour will change the tint. Tone refers to the depth of a colour; mixing grey to the colour will affect its tone. Shade refers to the darkness of a colour. The term is also used when referring to similar colours such as 'shades of green' or a 'darker shade of blue'. Mixing black to a colour will alter the shade.

"By using all three elements you can create a look that is exciting and interesting," Garry says. "Here is the trick, just use one colour and apply variations of that colour." Here are some examples.

If you want to keep the colour light and neutral add depth and interest by painting an accent to doors in a contrasting colour and/or apply colour to the window and door edge or around the threshold (archway).

Choose one base colour but use more saturation to the colour and you will see how the mood of the room can change. You achieve this by choosing different tones of the same colour. This will feel designed and considered. Alternatively, block areas of your space and leave the rest neutral. By offsetting the blocks of colour, they add an element of surprise and a wonderful conversation piece.

Paint Finish

Before you begin you have to think about the finish. Choosing a paint finish for interior walls depends on the desired amount of shine and durability. In kitchens, for example, avoid flat or other types of matte paints, as they can be difficult to wipe down. Satin or eggshell sheens work well here or even a semi-gloss for ease of maintenance. Likewise in bathrooms, due to moisture, you need a wall surface that you can easily wipe down. Paints with glossier sheens have a tighter molecular structure than flat paints, making it more difficult for moisture to penetrate. By contrast, living rooms and bedrooms are low-impact areas. Since these tend to be forgiving spaces in terms of impact, you can use flat or matte paint which has a more sophisticated finish.



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+ Create a look that is exciting and interesting by using one main colour and apply different shades and variations of that colour for warmth and depth.

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If you are painting a small space that doesn't get much natural light, you might think that opting for a lighter colour is best, however, if the room lacks natural light, darker colours can push the boundaries of the wall out and create a more defined feel.



Again, Garry's advice is to ask the experts. There is an entire army of people at your disposal in your local Homevalue store who know all about tints and finishes. They are there to help, so don't be afraid to ask.

Room Size

Not every home is blessed with expansive room sizes, in fact, the three bedroomed semi is the most common house in Irish cities, so room sizes are not overtly generous.

"There are some cool tricks you can use to making a room seem bigger," Garry says. "Choosing a ceiling colour that is in the same range of hues to the colour of the walls tricks the eye into seeing a more expansive space as you are less aware of where the wall ends and the ceiling begins. It also looks pretty cool and cozy. Another trick is to use the same colour to paint woodwork (like cabinets, trims and crown molding) as you used on the walls. This creates great visual interest and can make walls appear taller."

If you are painting a small space that doesn't get much natural light, you might think that opting for a lighter colour is best, however, if the room lacks natural light, darker colours can push the boundaries of the wall out and create a more defined feel.

Choosing your Shades

We are all guilty of playing it safe. Yes, you want to paint a room, but the line of least resistance is often the safe scheme in cream or beige. For this reason, many people opt for a monochromatic palate.

Monochromatic spaces are those that are decorated with shades of one main colour and are one of the most popular trends in interior design. Following this pattern, you use the same colour scheme with different hues throughout all the elements in the room. This theme is often one that is used unconsciously, for example using cream or beige and adding elements like furniture and accessories in contrasting shades.

The monochromatic interior is relatively easy to achieve and can be visually effective, however, it can also be monotonous if you simply just stick to the same shade. Playing it too safe can result in a bland, unfinished look. If you are leaning towards a monochromatic scheme, use a selection of different tones and tints of the

same colour throughout the space. For example, instead of painting all the trim in white (skirtings, sills, cornice etc) try painting the trim the same colour as the walls. This is an old trick to make a room look larger, by not defining edges with white trim.

Bear in mind that a monochromatic scheme does not have to be pale. Try going a tone darker to add more depth and elegance.

Two Tone Shades

Why paint a room's walls just one colour when you can use two? Two-tone painting creates visual interest by using two colours on one wall, divided horizontally. This technique allows you to be creative in your rooms' colour scheme and can even make neutral colours more interesting by using different shades of the same hue.

Garry suggests leaving the bottom of the walls neutral and the top with the accent colours. "I love going to the next level and painting the



If you are painting a small space that doesn't get much natural light, you might think opting for a lighter colour is best, however, if the room lacks natural light, darker colours can push the boundaries of the wall out and create a more defined feel. Add accents of brass gold for a dash of luxury.



Crown teal walls with mustard jar accent



split on the furniture as well, this really creates a space that is fun and artistic,” he says.

“One of my favourites with a split room is to either paint or match the colours in the furniture to match the colour on the wall. What it does is actually make a room look bigger by having the furniture blend in with the wall.”

Earthy Tones

Grey is a go-to colour, a timeless shade that is subtle, luxurious and long lasting in any interior space. It is one of those versatile colours that can take on a range of personalities. It’s also said to stir a feeling of calm and composure – a quality that’s ideal for family homes. Shades of grey contrast beautifully with a white ceiling and skirting board and the colour lends itself to pops of colour in accessories such as sunny yellow.

Earthy sandstone is the perfect colour touch for the “less is more” approach. Pair it

with other tonal shades to give a calm and rustic vibe to a room or incorporate more saturated opponents such as a golden finish for a dab of glamour.

Green is an extremely positive hue as it stimulates thoughts of balance, growth and restoration in colour psychology. It brings the natural world to mind and it is a way to bring a refreshing sense of nature indoors, especially in city homes with little surrounding greenery. It’s also a shade that works well when connecting the outdoors to indoors, taking the eye from an internal wall colour to greenery of the garden.

Classic blue is still very much at the top of the style stakes and is without doubt one of the strongest hues of the colour psychology spectrum. Lighter shades instil a feeling of calm and tranquillity which makes them great for bedrooms, bathrooms and living spaces where you want to relax.

Accessorise

Whether you’re choosing colours for your walls or for your furnishings, reinforcing your palette through other items in the room can help create a stronger aesthetic. For example, if you’ve chosen various shades of blue as your scheme, look for other colours that work well to enhance it. This may mean adding more neutrals, blacks or greys in the form of cushions, fabrics, throws or accessories to strengthen the overall appearance of your interior. Accessorising in this way doesn’t break the bank but adds little touches of colour and elegance.

Black & White

Now for the ultimate harmonious contrasting, black and white. A contrasting design is very appealing to the observer, it creates a foreground and background. It also gives a flat surface a three-dimensional quality which tricks the eye into thinking that they are either floating or that the room is bigger than it really is.



Play with shade by splitting the room between a colour and a neutral. Garry suggests leaving one section of the walls neutral and the other in accent colours. “I love going to the next level and painting the split on the furniture as well, this really creates a space that is fun and artistic,” he says.



Normally, a ceiling is white and that is for two major reasons. One, it makes the ceiling seem taller than it is, and secondly, to make the room reflect more light into the space to make it brighter. That said, it is not always the best application for everyone. A dark ceiling can also make a ceiling by giving the illusion of an endless night sky, and when you place lighter colours against a dark, they are brighter and more vibrant.

A Brighter Future

2020 doesn't have much to recommend it but it was the start of a new decade, and a whole new way of working and living. We have all had to step out of our comfort zone, so embrace change and push the boundaries with your use of colour. As we look to a brighter future start with your home. Embrace a world full of colours, neutrals, shades, tints and tones - and there is no need to be afraid to use them all - because they all work together. Finally, if I can leave you with one word of advice, if you paint a colour that doesn't work, relax, its only paint, just paint it another colour.



Garry Cohn

A leading figure in the creative industry, Garry Cohn is a native New Yorker whose 30-year career spans many disciplines and continents. His style has been described as the “haute couture” of the interior design world and one that exhibits an intelligent use of style, form and function.

Garry loves to shape, surprise and evolve human experience. His passion and commitment to colour invites people into a fully dimensional and multi-sensory world. He plays at the edge while tempting us to step closer to enjoy the view.

Garry's portfolio includes award-winning interiors for retail, fashion, luxury hotel and residential projects. He now resides in Dublin and brings a fresh New York state of mind to the Irish design scene. His company COHN Architecture & Interior Design is at the very cutting edge of design in Ireland. He has also starred as a presenter on the RTE television series Design Doctors.

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GET THE LOOK

Whether you're looking to make a bold statement or simply add some interest to a blank wall, a decorative painted effect is a real head turner and surprisingly easy to achieve.

Sponge painting, rag rolling and stencilling were popular in the '80s, but today, marking out a pattern on the wall and painting within the lines is a cheap and effective way to achieve a super stylish look.

Design guru Garry Cohn says: "painted wall designs give us a chance to playfully break the rules, allowing us to incorporate several colours and embrace asymmetry. The result can amplify furnishings or add a fun twist to modern design." You can buy this effect ready-made with expensive wallpaper, or, do it yourself with some masking tape and a few pots of colour. There are hundreds of YouTube videos online to guide you through creating your very own wall art and your local Homevalue store is armed and ready to help you become the Picasso of home decor.



Painted wall designs give us a chance to playfully break rules, allowing us to incorporate several colours and embrace asymmetry. The result can amplify furnishings or add a fun twist to an otherwise bland design.





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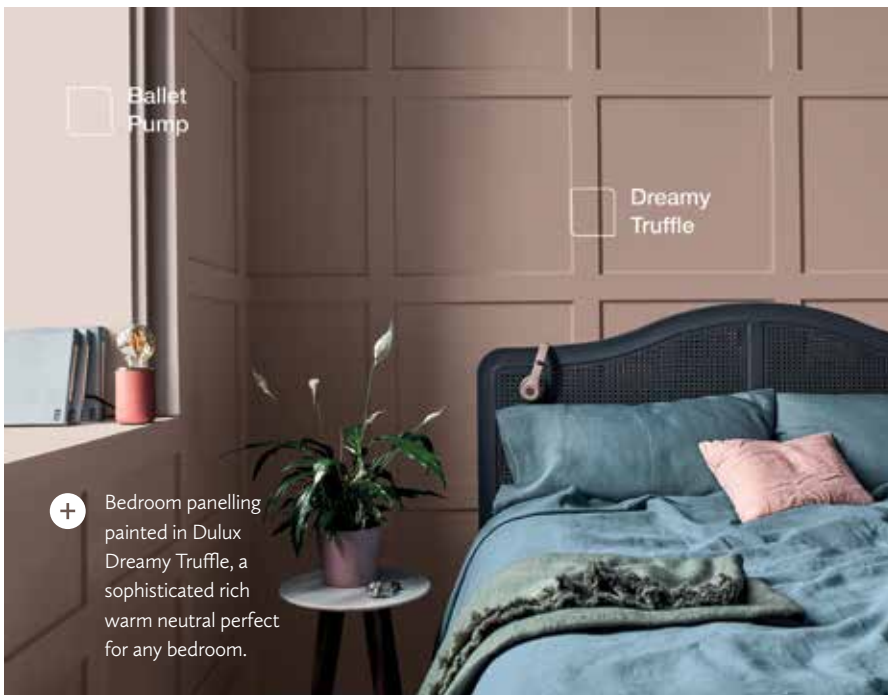
LET'S COLOUR

Colour plays a crucial role in bringing changes to life and giving them real purpose. It has a surprising impact on how we feel and how we react to a space. It evokes positive feelings and incites emotion, so room colour is not just about choosing a favourite shade, it's about finding colours that will positively impact on your space.

Starting with the most relaxing room in the house, the living room should be a cosy, tranquil space, so play with tone and contrast to make each area do something visually different. Warm and darker colours leap forward, whereas cool or pale hues take a step back, so you can use variations of your favourite shades to make the space come to life. Draw the eye with darker shades against a paler backdrop and consider clever, simple things like a deep band of colour just above the floor level.



+ In this living room a vertical colour block adds depth and interest. The painted ledged wall is almost like a piece of furniture. Dulux Brave Ground is used to act as a backdrop behind the cool tones of the grey sofa. The two-toned paint effect with Dulux Brume to the top adds another dimension to this neutral palette.



+ Bedroom panelling painted in Dulux Dreamy Truffle, a sophisticated rich warm neutral perfect for any bedroom.

Perfect Panelling

Reminiscent of days gone by, wall panelling is a classic decorative feature that adds character to any room and contrary to what you might think, wood panelling does not need to be expensive. Using simple MDF (available from Homevalue stores), panels are glued to the wall with no-nail glue, then after applying primer, they are ready to paint.

Panelling and painting a feature wall has a striking effect, adding a touch of luxury reminiscent of older period properties. It's a simple trick to make a statement in an otherwise featureless room. Set behind key items of furniture, this traditional look delivers a chic contemporary vibe.

Hidden Gems

We tend to focus on the big moves when we look at renovation like knocking walls and creating communal spaces. The reality is, however, that better use of existing space opens up neglected corners creating useable spaces and interesting focal points in a room.

Take a typical alcove for example. Often decorated with a lamp and table, its function is limited, and it lacks appeal. Make a feature of the space rather than simply filling it, by creating a flexible workspace or a comfy crash out zone.

The restful hue of Dulux Cuspian and Sweet Cashew on the walls with a dropped pendant light and built-in seating redefines a boring alcove into a crash out zone perfect to curl up with a book and a cup of tea.



Define a workspace by framing it in colour. Here the delicate yet rich shades of Dreamy Truffle, Delicate Willow, Femme and the Dulux 2021 Colour of the Year, Brave Ground create a real feature space.



Flexible Workspace

Not everybody has room for a home office but in 2020, most homes had to find room for one. Lockdown living saw every nook, wall or kitchen corner transformed into a work zone for homework, home schooling and the home office. The Dulux colour experts suggest making this space fun to be in and inspirational with clever colour choice.

Some simple geometric wall art can work wonders. There are plenty of 'How To' videos online to show you how to do this confidently.

GET THE LOOK



- + Keep things simple and clean with a neutral green like Tranquil Dawn, balanced with the earthy tones of Brave Ground. This calm green is the perfect workspace colour as it will keep you focused and stress free during the day.

The 5th Wall

Just like the four walls around it, a painted ceiling can do a lot to transform a room. Considered the fifth wall by interior designers, ceilings shouldn't just be an afterthought.

A bright, white ceiling can create the illusion of more space and light, and makes a room look bigger. On the other hand, using a bold ceiling colour, or the same colour as the walls allow the ceiling to blend with the rest of the room. For the bedroom in particular, there is a greater feeling of comfort and intimacy.

Create a stylish visual effect by bringing the ceiling colour down the wall in a thick border. Shown across, a simple bedroom is transformed with the warm tones of Dulux Spiced Honey contrasting perfectly with Dulux Grey Steel walls below.



All of these ideas and many more can be viewed on the Dulux YouTube channel www.youtube.com/duluxireland with a full range of paints, tester pots, brushes and rollers available in your local Homevalue store.

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After all the turbulence of 2020, we're looking forward to a fresh start and ways to add colour to our lives. For 2021 brighter days and brighter shades are coming, and Crown's new colours are joyful, comforting and hopeful. Colour Consultant for Crown Paints, Justyna Korczynska says, "This year, more than ever, we all need a good dose of optimism and cheering up - and that's what this trend is about."

There's no escaping trends; we are all bombarded with them daily either consciously or subconsciously. One of these trends is towards more sustainable living and backing away from a 'throw away' lifestyle. With this in mind, painting an old piece of furniture

is a great way to revamp and repurpose it. Upcycling gives a whole new lease of life to something that is otherwise overlooked or even discarded. So, breathe new life into old with a simple lick of paint to transform old cabinets, sideboards and tables.

A simple three step process will take your furniture to a whole new level. Start with sandpaper to even out wooden surfaces, or if the piece you're upcycling is varnished, use a solvent to strip it. When the surface is prepared, apply primer. This is important, as primer provides a stable surface that subsequent layers can lock onto. Finally, once you have finished, apply wax or varnish on heavy use surfaces to give the piece longevity.

+

An old sideboard is given a facelift by painting two panels in deep blue with contrasting cushion and throw on a well-worn armchair. Set against the two-toned walls, the effect is chic and contemporary, making a feature of the older furnishings with a cool new look.

GET THE LOOK



+

The budget may not stretch to a new kitchen but painting units makes for a dramatic transformation. Here Crown's Key Lime Pie walls work wonderfully well with Milk Bottle Jet Black cupboards. Blackboard paint on an adjoining wall is fun and handy for the shopping list.

Gloss works best on sills, skirting and ceilings as well as accessories like radiator covers with its high shine finish. It adds a bright contrast to mellow shades such as Crown's Grey Putty or Blue Gravel.

+



GET THE LOOK



✚ Elegant and relatively effortless, graduated paint effects can add a real wow factor. Crown's Clay White with accents of Teal, Duck Egg and Moonlight Bay add interest and depth to this simple space.

In terms of the paint to use, chalk paint gives a rustic, 'shabby chic' effect; silk paint offers a subtle sheen, and eggshell a semi-matte effect. Gloss works best on sills and ceilings as well as accessories like radiator covers with its high shine finish.

A particularly good application of paint on cupboards is in the kitchen. If you have solid cabinets, look at painting rather than replacing them as paint effects work really well on solid wood cabinetry and revamping in this way is considerably less expensive than installing a whole new kitchen. Crown's multi-surface matt emulsion with an anti-bacterial+ formulation kills 99% of household germs on paint surfaces for a cleaner kitchen environment.

Make an Entrance

First impressions count. As the old saying goes, you never get a second chance to make a first impression, so the hallway should be a place that is bright and welcoming.

Carpet can be a dust trap and expensive to replace, so consider painting instead. With a nod to Spanish style, painting or tiling stair risers (the vertical element) in a different shade to the step and spindles is highly effective. Graduating paint in varying shades on the risers is particularly striking, creating interest and a sense of infinity to a purely functional space.

Finally, don't neglect exterior walls, windows and doors from an aesthetic perspective as well as for preservation. With 15 years protection on masonry and 10-year protection for wood and metal, Crown Sandtex guarantees long-lasting good looks for exterior walls. For wood surfaces, Sadolin Extra is a durable finishing wood stain for windows, doors and other exterior joinery. It is extremely hard-wearing and it protects and enhances the beauty of wood all year round.

A handy set of painting advice videos can be found at <https://www.crownpaints.ie/advice> with all of the necessary paints, brushes, rollers and equipment readily available at your local Homevalue store.

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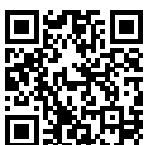
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"My greatest passion is our architectural heritage. Seeing it re-envisioned and reimagined as homes, offices, restaurants, coffee shops etc. It's about keeping the fabric of our buildings so important to our social history, intact."

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DUBLINER Hugh Wallace is an award-winning architect and founding partner of Douglas Wallace Consultants. He has a passion for creative design believing that good architecture is essential to enhance enjoyment of our landscape and living environment whether in the city or countryside.



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“It’s the excitement of amazing design that I just love,” he says. “Also, encouraging people and designers to think outside the box; encouraging them to not stick to what they’re comfortable with, but to explore and push the boundaries.”

Hugh’s enthusiasm for his craft is palpable. His absolute passion is restoration - everything from humble farm buildings to the great houses of Ireland.

“My greatest passion is our architectural heritage. Seeing it re-envisioned and reimagined as homes, offices, restaurants, coffee shops etc., bringing the past into the present is very special. It’s about keeping the fabric of our buildings so important to our social history, intact.”

Hugh says that great architecture is not limited to grand stately homes; you can make a statement even in the plainest of places, which

brings us to Hugh’s latest project. Hugh Wallace has a genuine affection for a type of house that few of his fellow architects share – bungalows. And with 2021 being the 50th anniversary of the publication of *Bungalow Bliss*, it’s time to reimagine the humble bungalow.

Bungalow Bliss

Jack Fitzsimons self-published, self-sold ‘Bungalow Bliss’ booklet of 20 bungalow plans changed the face of rural Ireland in the 1970’s. Up until then many rural dwellers lived in homes with tin or thatched roofs and outdoor toilets. “With Bungalow Bliss, they could buy bungalow plans that provided step by step instructions on how to self-build a warm, functional house with a bathroom cheaply,” Hugh explains.

Using the specifications set out in council guidelines, including a maximum size of 1200 square feet required for grant aid, Fitzsimons

+ Always wanted an open-plan layout? The good news is that bungalows naturally lend themselves to this type of floorplan. If your bungalow is made up of lots of small rooms, converting the layout to open-plan can transform the way you use the space.



Just as it was years ago, the bungalow today is a great starting point for a reasonable amount of money. It gives people the opportunity to afford the dream. You might be able to afford only half the dream today, but you can design the other half over time and add elements as time and money allows.

changed his life and that of his fellow rural dwellers. His layman's bible provided a comprehensive blueprint of bungalows that covered everything from the foundation right up to the chimney pot. It made home building a viable DIY project for the first time in Ireland, and included sourcing of materials and construction costs.

"It's hard to imagine nowadays, but in the 1970's it seemed nigh on impossible to plan your own brand-new, ultra-modern home," Hugh adds. "And back then 30% of houses did not have inside toilets."

Hugh is adamant that bungalows can be upcycled and retrofitted to meet today's needs. His latest project, set to hit our screens later this year, is *My Bungalow Bliss*. Instead of dealing with grand country houses, this series looks at how to revitalise Ireland's most common rural home type. It follows the radical reworking of four jaded 1970s, 80s and 90s bungalows with the help of four young architects, each endeavouring to transform them into slick modern homes on a realistic budget.

Hugh's own practice is familiar with bungalow conversions and he points to the recent

example of a jaded Sutton home transformed by fellow architect Ken Furlong. While a bungalow can be bought for €80,000 to €250,000, the budgets on the show to gut, reconfigure, insulate and extend the properties run from €140,000 to €250,000. "It means that you could buy one and renovate it for less than the cost of a similar modern property." To bungalow owners looking for a change on a reasonable budget, the news is bliss.

Bungalows on a Budget

For those that do not have the budget for a complete overhaul there are several upgrades that deliver real bang for your buck.

Most 50-year-old houses need replacement windows but Hugh suggests thinking outside the box when replacing them. "A neat trick is to change the shape of the window by dropping the sills. It has an instant aesthetic effect, as does changing the roof tiles to make the house look crisper and more modern. If you can put a narrow vertical glass panel that's frosted into the internal corridor, it's a nice Scandinavian touch."

Always wanted an open-plan layout? The good news is that bungalows naturally lend themselves to this type of floorplan. If your bungalow is made up of lots of small



rooms, converting the layout to open-plan can transform the way you use the space. Many 1970s bungalows were designed with a separate dining room, kitchen and living space. By combining one or all of these you could open up the main living area and bring a more practical, contemporary feel to the space.

The Great Outdoors

Perhaps more than any other style of property, bungalows lend themselves to indoor/outdoor living. With every room at ground level, there is potential for any room to be accessed from the outside.

Since they have fewer supporting walls and are usually built on larger plots, bungalows are easy to adapt as your needs change.

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GREAT HOUSE REVIVAL

A single-level house can lend itself to an external courtyard or a garden design that connects the outside with the main social spaces of the house. These transition spaces between inside and outside are often some of the most popular spaces, especially when designed with external living in mind.

Hugh says that the most important thing is to understand the orientation of your bungalow. “Aspect is hugely important to the siting of a home. South-west facing gardens suit us best because, at the end of a working day, they still offer us light and heat,” he adds.

Sliding open a patio door and stepping outside first thing in the morning for a breath of fresh air or an early morning cup of tea has to be one of life’s simple, but very great pleasures. “We are sunlight-deficient in this country so it is important to maximise aspect and light,” continues Hugh.

If you live in a two-storey house, it’s unlikely that you can access the garden from your bedroom. But in a bungalow, it’s easy. Whether you install bifold doors, or just a large picture window, think about ways to maximise garden views and make the most of your close proximity to the outdoors.

That’s another great thing about bungalows Hugh professes, “you are often buying a well-established site with mature trees, good privacy and places for kids to play. Often you even have room to put in an office pod which is great separation for the home office or for older kids as a study space.”

Future Proofing

It’s worth bearing in mind that bungalows have a lot to offer homeowners of all ages. They’re great for young families as you don’t need to worry about toddlers falling down stairs. And an open-plan layout can make it easier to keep an eye on children in the living room while you are in the kitchen, for example. But they are also perfectly future-proofed for the older generation. Bungalows offer access for all and inclusive design. With a bungalow, there’s no need to worry about stairs for older people, or people with physical disabilities or mobility problems.

“Just as it was years ago, the bungalow today is a great starting point for building a house





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Perhaps more than any other style of property, bungalows lend themselves to indoor/outdoor living. With every room at ground level, there is potential for any room to be accessed from the outside. A single-level house can lend itself to an external courtyard or a garden room that connects the outside with the main social spaces of the house. These transition spaces between inside and outside are often some of the most popular spaces, especially when designed with external living in mind.

for a reasonable amount of money,” Hugh says. “They give people, particularly young couples, the opportunity to afford the dream. You might be able to afford only half the dream today, but you can design the other half over time, and get your kitchen in, or knock through to put in a main bedroom suite.”

Expert Advice

Asking the experts is always a good idea but people are often scared off by the potential cost.

Not so here. Hugh’s practice offers a consultation on WhatsApp or Zoom to homeowners for €350. It’s amazing what an hour long one on one consultation can achieve. “You can at least dip your toe in the water with proper renovation advice. We do it because people are often scared of the cost of calling in an architect.”

For more information check out www.douglaswallace.com or email: info@douglaswallace.com



**SOAKED
IN STYLE**

SOAKED IN STYLE



+ Charm
Gloss Blue
45cm Floor
Standing
Vanity Unit

Initially intended as purely functional in nature, the bathroom is enjoying something of an architectural renaissance. These days the smallest room in the house has taken on a whole new significance, becoming an oasis of wellbeing and a key living area.

“It’s all about colour for 2021 to bring the bathroom to life!” explains Richard Sloan, Managing Director of SONAS Bathrooms. “Being clever with colour choices can create an ambience of zen and tranquillity,” he says. There are lots of ways to do this, either through your choice of furniture, taps, or accessories. New for 2021 is a beautifully crafted ceramics range, offering more coloured options, such as charcoal grey and carbon black for basins and WC’s. While clean white will never go out of style, carbon black is a slick new trend.

Also in high demand now are eco-friendly products, as we look towards our carbon footprint and our impact on the planet – not to mention the impact on our pockets if we make wise choices.

“While aesthetics are always key, there is an emphasis now towards sustainability, as customers are actively seeking products that make a difference to the environment,” adds Richard. In response, SONAS have introduced the ECO range of basin mixers to help integrate sustainability into everyday life. This patented technology helps reduce water consumption without compromising on performance and the mixers also include a temperature limiter, saving further on energy costs.

Wellbeing

Richard says that there is no doubt that bathrooms are no longer just a functional space, they are now a place to retreat to, to feel peaceful, relaxed and rejuvenated. “We have noticed an

SOAKED IN STYLE



Characterised by simplicity and minimalism, the SONAS Scandinavian range combines design and functionality to create a luxurious ambient space. There are 5 ranges in the Scandinavian Collection, which are each designed with a palette of contemporary matt finishes, and a range of black, gold and chrome coloured handles, complemented with a collection of black, brushed gold or classic chrome mixers.

The Malmo range is pictured (to the right) in Ocean Blue and finished with black handles and coordinated matt black tap mixers to complete the look.



Space saving products like the Stockholm Cloakroom vanity units are a great way to save on space and add a pop of colour, creating a pleasing focal point.

increased demand for freestanding baths and extra deep baths, such as the Pacific Endura which help create a feeling of spa-like zen. Or for the ultimate spa environment, Whirlpool baths add a touch of glamour to the bathroom space.”

A real space saver that has a wow effect is a sunken bath. Provided you have the space for it below the floorboards, a sunken bath will streamline the bathroom giving it a sophisticated, hotel-style feel. As a space-saving alternative, curved or oval shaped baths look ultra-modern and as their corners are cut, the footprint is smaller than standard-sized tubs, yet the visual effect is modern and luxurious.

In smaller bathrooms, space saving products like the Charm and Stockholm cloakroom vanity units from SONAS are a great way to save on space and also add a pop of colour, creating a pleasing focal point. Choosing taps with brushed gold or matt black, like the Norfolk and Contour range, also adds a splash of luxury.

Scandinavian Style

Scandinavian design is a popular aesthetic that emerged in the early 20th century. It has flourished ever since in Nordic countries and has spread throughout the rest of the world. By focusing on quality and clean, clutter-free spaces, the philosophy behind this look helps

create calm, focused spaces that provide relief from the hectic realities of modern-day life.

The SONAS Scandinavian Collection is characterised by simplicity and minimalism. The range combines design and functionality to create a luxurious ambient space. There are 5 ranges in the Scandinavian Collection, each designed with a palette of contemporary matt finishes. The Collection offers a choice of black, brushed gold or chrome coloured handles, which can complement your SONAS basin mixer to complete your look.

Get Soaked

A Wetroom is a bathroom solution that does exactly what it says on the tin; it is a room that can get wet. It is typically waterproofed ('tanked') instead of having a conventional shower tray. If the entire room is tanked there is no need for a glass screen or a shower tray as the room itself becomes the shower enclosure. That said, a growing trend is to add a shower panel to contain water within the footprint of the shower space.

SONAS Managing Director Richard Sloan says that wetrooms are hugely popular and the beauty of this style is that it works in all spaces, however large or small. “We have noted that wetroom style bathrooms are ever popular with consumers, with the introduction of a glass

screen adding a more practical alternative to the traditional open wetroom,” he says. “Wetroom panels create a sleek, modern look that can open up the bathroom, making it appear bigger and working well in most spaces.” Installing wetroom panels such as the Aspect range, will not only create a wow factor he says but will reduce cleaning and maintenance compared to standard shower enclosures.



SONAS BATHROOMS

Ceramic **SATIN WHITE** square basin and back-to-wall wc | **FJORD** Ocean Blue countertop unit
SANSA Round illuminated mirror | **CONTOUR** Chrome wall mounted mixer

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WETROOM WOW FACTOR



AYO WETROOM with floor to ceiling stabilising bar (matte black)

Ireland's longest established shower company see no sign of the wetroom going out of fashion.

"Homeowners value both the aesthetics and practicality of wetroom shower designs. They are minimalist in design, offer efficient use of space and their visual appeal will enhance a bathroom of any size."

In addition, the simplicity of a wetroom panel makes them easy to clean and they have the added bonus of easy access for family members both young and old.

SOAKED IN STYLE



Harmony & Flexibility

Flair's recently launched AYO collection was developed in response to customer demand for a quality wetroom range that offers choice through flexibility. AYO empowers homeowners to create their own individual shower sanctuary, allowing them to build their own unique wetroom configuration precisely to their measurements and requirements. All AYO sub-assemblies such as glass size, seals, wall profiles and stabilising bars can be selected in accordance with customer preference with a suite of mounting fixtures and minimalist stabilizing bars designed to accentuate the glass structure, whilst also ensuring a robust wetroom that will stand the test of time.

AYO wetroom panels stand at an impressive height of two metres. Each screen is available in 10mm toughened safety glass treated with a hydrophobic coating to resist the build-up of lime and grime.

+ AYO matte black wetroom and fixed return panel from the Flair Gemstone range.

+ Gemstone flint grey shower tray with linear drain



SOAKED IN STYLE



Available in black or silver profile colour finish, this ensures flawless integration into any bathroom environment with exciting new surface finishes such as brushed brass, brushed nickel, polished gold and matte white being launched this spring.

Step into Luxury

With a focus on versatility, contemporary glass walk-in showers are available in many different layout options to the precise dimensions of the customer.

For some real glamour add style and sophistication with a slate shower tray. Commenting on the hottest new bathroom trend, Rebecca Larkin from Flair Showers says “we are seeing a move towards slate effect trays that make a style statement in the bathroom. People are looking to avoid hard to clean mosaic floor grout lines by opting for a slate shower tray instead. As details really do matter, homeowners are choosing to colour match their shower trays to fit in with the overall bathroom aesthetic too.”



A Real Gem

Flair's Gemstone range of shower trays are ultra-luxurious being made from a natural stone resin with a smooth gel coat finish. The trays are suitable for recessing into the floor, giving level access to the shower sanctuary. Designed with safety in mind,

Gemstone comes with a grade 3 anti-slip rating, a factor that should be considered with any shower tray purchase. Available in three colours, Graphite Black, Flint Grey and White, there is also a choice of shower drain styles. At a maximum height of 30mm, these trays are ultra-minimal.

AYO

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unwind from the pressures
of life



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SMALL BUT PERFECTLY FORMED



Whilst we all love oversized bathrooms the reality is that many of us have bathrooms that are a tad on the teeny side. Big may be beautiful, but small can be perfectly formed if you know how to shape the space.

First look at the space you have – all of it – including the walls. Not to be overlooked, walls can accommodate towel rings and rails, shelving, hanging hooks and wall-mounted units. Next look at functionality and storage. A small bathroom should lack clutter, so look at options to hide away toiletries whilst also keeping them easily accessible.

A common mistake in décor is to install fixtures that are oversized for the space.

What looks great in a warehouse-sized showroom may be disproportionately large when you get it home, so, it's important to measure out your room and work with what you've got before making a purchase.

Space Savers

Smaller bathrooms call for smaller fixtures, which results in a perfectly proportioned space. Bathroom furnishings come in a wide variety of sizes and you may be pleasantly surprised at

SOAKED IN STYLE



+ Sophisticated and stylish, the black and white bathroom is a design classic that always feels fresh. Minimalist and timeless, this neutral backdrop offers great flexibility for adding a dash of style with well-chosen accessories.

how functional can become fabulous.

A great way to add some contemporary style even in the smallest of bathrooms is with a vanity basin. This can form part of a storage unit or it can be mounted on top in a standalone fashion. The Homevalue Minimalist white vanity unit is super stylish and perfect for compact spaces. This little dab of style transforms the purely functional into a statement piece.

Another stylish statement is the floating vanity unit. This wall-mounted option creates the illusion of space as it 'floats' above the floor. It may provide less storage than a freestanding unit but is super stylish. The same applies to a wall hung toilet. With the cistern concealed in the wall, a sense of space prevails. There are other funky options for the humble throne such as 'hatbox' and rimless toilets as well as compact close-coupled units, all now with the option of soft close seats.

In terms of heating, floor-standing radiators can be replaced with up to the minute vertical

radiators for a true designer look. Choose from a range of colours from cool white to trendy anthracite, vertical radiators are a hot new trend. Add a shiny chrome towel rail to keep things toasty and you have the benefit of warm, cosy towels. Available in flat or curved shapes, heated towel rails are usually wall-mounted, so floor space is kept free.

If you are re-tiling the bathroom floor, consider adding luxurious underfloor heating. This does not need to be the extensive piping and pouring process associated with new builds. Electric heating mats can be installed during a renovation and with a separate thermostat, you can control the time settings for the bathroom independent of your overall heating system.

And last, but not least, a great space saver for the small bathroom is the shower bath. These too come in a variety of styles, for example, L-shaped and P-shaped shower baths are designed to accommodate regular showers while still providing a spacious bathing experience – important for young families.

SOAKED IN STYLE



Homevalue Bathroom Range



Floor to Ceiling Style

Tile is by far the most practical covering for a bathroom and using the same plain coloured tile on the wall and floor will create the illusion of space as the eye is not drawn to where one area ends and the other begins. Surprisingly enough, medium to larger tiles work best in small spaces as they reduce the 'busy' factor.

Shelving is important too and floating vertical shelving is highly effective. Again, limit the 'busy' factor by adding storage baskets to keep shelves clutter-free. In uniform colours and design, small storage baskets give shelves a touch of character and texture. Wicker baskets work well when paired with wooden shelves or small colourful baskets can be used to blend in with the colour scheme of the room.

Accessorise

Well thought out accessories can complement your décor while also taking care of the practicalities. With everything from wall mounted tumblers, soap dispensers, shelving, towel rails and toilet roll holders, the Homevalue Wenko Bosio range has it all, with

Bosio offering options in contemporary black as well as traditional chrome.

A practical and necessary addition to any bathroom, a mirror is a must. It reflects light and creates the impression of space. In the small bathroom a wall mounted mirror cabinet offers the added functionality of a cabinet, an absolute bonus where space is at a premium.

Super modern backlit mirrors are slick and on-trend, while ambient waterproof under cabinet lighting adds practicality and style.

If you have no surface space for storage on your sink, mount a slender floating glass shelf above it to store cosmetics, perfume bottles and other small bathroom necessities. In addition, a wicker basket works well for toilet roll storage, available in a wide range of colours and styles at Homevalue.

A bathroom doesn't have to be big to have great style and function. The small bathroom's charm lies in maximising on space and minimising on clutter. It all comes down to size and scale, using smart storage solutions and size appropriate fittings.

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Turning up the Heat

Who doesn't love a roaring fire? It's one of the hottest amenities in the home with a recent study showing that the crackling sounds of fire is second only to the sound of ocean waves when it comes to feelings of contentment and pleasure.




Scientists have equally noted that just sitting by a fire can lower blood pressure, so the allure of the hearth is a way to feeling mentally and physically refreshed.

There's no doubt that a roaring fire is a hark back to days gone by and many households still favour the allure of an open fire.

Faultless in terms of heat output, Homefire Smokeless Fuel can be used in open fires and multi-fuel stoves. Available at selected Homevalue stores, the Homefire range from CPL Fuels includes Supertherm - a fuel that is easy to light and creates little ash, and

Phurnacite, which provides a long-lasting, steady release of heat. Mindful of the trend towards green energy, CPL's revolutionary Supertherm30 range is produced with up to 30% renewable material while their kiln-dried logs are sourced from sustainable forests in Latvia.

No strangers to the Irish fuel industry, Stafford Fuels have been importing coal into Ireland since the early 1900s. Now, generations on, the company is still in existence importing coal through a dedicated coal packing facility in New Ross Port.

 Settling yourself in front of soothing embers is the perfect way to unwind after a long day.

Stafford Fuels €3m investment in a new smokeless coal manufacturing facility at New Ross during 2017 has been a great success. With the nationwide smoky coal ban due in the next few years, Stafford Fuels is perfectly placed to service this expanded smokeless coal marketplace. Their high-quality fuel range is available at selected Homevalue stores offering everything from bituminous and smokeless



Three times more efficient than an open fire, research has shown that while as much as 70% of the heat from an open fire goes straight up the chimney, stoves retain as much as 80% of the heat in the room, saving you fuel and money.

coal to their anthracite and convenience fuel range. In addition, their eco-friendly CO² neutral wood range includes kiln dried Irish hardwood, kiln dried Irish kindling, air-dried Irish timber and Irish produced wood pellets.

A traditional part of Irish heritage, Bord na Móna was established in 1933 by the Turf Development Board to develop the peatlands of Ireland and supply fuel in the recently formed Irish Republic. They produce amongst other things, the peat briquette, which consists of shredded peat compressed to form a slow-burning fuel. Popular to this day, Bord na

Móna peat briquettes hold a moisture content of around 10%, giving a hot and slow burn, and a genuine Irish peat fuel aroma. Their firelighters are odourless and easy to light, while firelogs are mess and hassle-free. All of these fuels and more are readily available in Homevalue stores.

Solid Fuel Stoves

Three times more efficient than an open fire, research has shown that while as much as 70% of the heat from an open fire goes straight up the chimney, stoves retain as much as 80% of the heat in the room, saving you fuel and money.

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Available at Homevalue, the Stanley Oisín stove is a bestseller due to its compact size and stylish design. Its good looks enhance any room, while its 21st-century fuel efficiency provides a cosy fireside glow and lower energy bills. Now it is eco-friendly too, with key modifications that are not only better for efficiency, but better for the environment. Following a massive undertaking by Waterford Stanley, the Oisín has been re-engineered as an Ecodesign model, fully approved and compliant with Ecodesign 2022 (the stove industry's response to the DEFRA Clean Air Strategy to improve air quality and reduce emissions/pollution). The Oisín is one of the few compact cast iron stoves that are Ecodesign 2022 compliant, securing your investment and delivering higher efficiency, cleaner combustion and it is smoke exempt.

For the finishing touch don't forget about fireside accessories, for practical purposes but also to draw the eye to the focal point of the room. A huge range of coal bunkers, fire screens, companion sets and log baskets from Homevalue will set you up nicely for years of comfort and pleasure.

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Great Outdoors

We all know that spending time outdoors is good for the soul, which is why sales of everything from outdoor seating to fire pits and patio heaters have seen a surge in recent weeks.

The advent of the home office has spurred a whole new interest in the great outdoors with office pods, wood cabins and even glammed up garden sheds getting a whole new lease of life.

The humble garden has always provided a safe setting for gatherings with friends and family. So, as Summer approaches and lockdowns lift, now is the time to look at what you can achieve outdoors.

Blurred Lines

Top designers have long since seen the benefit of indoor-outdoor living, blurring the boundaries between the built and the natural environment. This can be achieved in the humblest of homes by using a few simple tricks.

Continuity: If the living area has a wooden floor, continue the wood effect outdoors with a decking area to visually connect the two spaces.

In addition, continue the paint colour from the living area through to the outdoors (using suitable outdoor paint in the same colour for the garden area).

Function: To make the outdoor space cohesive with your indoors, add functional elements. Garden seating, dining areas, a barbeque, fire pit or patio heater, all draw interest to your outdoor room.

GREAT OUTDOORS



Form: Decorate the outside with planting, decorative stones, a water feature or birdbath, solar lighting, an eye-catching swing seat, hanging baskets, wind chimes, bird feeders and even mirrors to reflect light.

Set the Scene

Even in a small area, a deck or patio seamlessly increase square footage since they increase useable space. Patios once laid are easy maintenance. They are flush with the ground and generally made from decorative stone. Being at the same level as the garden creates a

connection between outdoor living space and the landscape with shrubs, trees and flowers blending with the stone elements. This layout lends itself well to introducing seating areas, fire pits or water features making it the perfect place for socialisation.

Decks, on the other hand, are typically made of wood and are raised off the ground. Their elevation creates a separation from the rest of the garden, but also provides a vantage point from which to enjoy it. To ensure safety, decks usually have a rail or fence or sometimes a



built-in bench to provide additional seating. Decks generally have a softer surface and as such, are more child friendly, but they do require maintenance and annual painting to keep them in tip-top condition.

Whatever you choose, an outdoor entertainment area must have a comfy seating and dining zone. Homevalue stock a huge variety of options, with everything from garden benches, luxurious rattan sets, zero gravity and relaxer chairs, romantic hanging moon seats and egg chairs, gazebos and patio benches. There are even options for kids to give them their own picnic area. Add a sandpit, a splash pool, a basketball set or a playhouse to really keep the little ones happy.

No garden big or small would be complete without a barbeque. Homevalue have everything from simple kettle grills to sophisticated dual cook stations.

Handy fold-up tables are useful for outdoor entertainment as are stackable Brights Chairs. Taking a leaf out of Diarmuid Gavin's book, colourful garden chairs enhance the colour palette of the garden. Ideal for purpose, Brights Chairs come in taupe, green, pink, blue and anthracite. Generously sized with comfort in mind, the deep seat and long arms of these chairs ensures relaxation and the tough UV resistant plastic guarantees durability.

Embrace the Elements

When we think of garden design, the first thing that comes to mind are the most obvious components; plants, paving, decking and some sort of green area. These are the most obvious and visual aspects of the garden, however,

GREAT OUTDOORS



+ BB Grill Matanzas Firepit Plancha with wood storage

including elements that evoke an emotion makes for a harmonious space.

Fire and water play an important role in the balance of nature. According to the ancient practice of feng shui, these elements have powerful energy and balancing them results in a balanced garden space.

The soothing sound of water has long since been used in meditation with research showing that the rhythmic sound can affect the rhythm of the neuronal waves in our brain, encouraging peaceful thoughts.

High maintenance (and not so child friendly) garden ponds are no longer fashionable. Now there are easy-care, self-contained water features that bubble or gently flow with little intervention needed.

Whether it's the sound of running water, or the overall appearance and design, a water feature can create a big splash in your landscape. As

soon as you install it, you'll almost certainly notice more wildlife as birds and butterflies are attracted to the running water.

Water fountains run from the hugely exotic to compact, discreet units easy to place in any garden. Available at Homevalue, the Congo Rock Fountain sits neatly into planted areas or patios adding interest night and day with a gentle glow from its inbuilt LED light in the evening.

Fire elements can be introduced with candles, solar lights and outdoor fire features - a fabulous focal point that extends the use of outdoor space well into the night. Just like an indoor fireplace attracts attention, an eye-catching outdoor fire feature is a real winner.

Available at Homevalue, the RedFire range of fireplaces and fire baskets are well priced and extensive. For smaller spaces, the Fire Pit Blazer is a winner as it can also be used as a barbeque, ideal for apartment living. Equally as



+ RedFire Fireplace Jersey Black



"Gardening is a very humbling thing. you go out, you dig and mulch. you are occupied with something repetitive. you're dreaming about what will be. you're preparing something that will come up next Spring," Diarmuid says.



To promote the International Year of Plant Health, the Food & Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations has appointed Irish garden designer, writer and broadcaster, Diarmuid Gavin as official champion of the cause.



practical, the BBGrill Matanzas firepit plancha is compact and stylish and it comes with wood storage as well as the top 'plancha' grill.

Go Eco

Diarmuid Gavin is no stranger to Irish audiences with his recent Gardening Together programme inviting viewers into his stunning garden in Wicklow and encouraging everyone to get 'gardening together'.

Diarmuid is also this year's United Nations Food & Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) official champion alongside his British counterpart, Monty Don.

In the FAO video 'Talking Plant Health' Diarmuid and Monty muse on the evolution of gardens from a style that was passed down for generations to a newer more ecologically aware concept.

"Gardening is a very humbling thing; you go out, you dig and mulch; you are occupied with something repetitive; you're dreaming about

what will be; you're preparing something that will come up next Spring," Diarmuid says.

"We love colour, we love shrubs. We live in a temperate environment that allows us to grow plants that have originated in places right the way around the globe."

These days, however, there is a growing awareness of how we need to garden for the environment. Plants have a positive impact on the environment, and all plants have a role in sequestering carbon. Be generous with the areas allocated to planting in your garden. In doing so, you will create a habitat for wildlife as well as an outdoor oasis.

With sustainability being the theme of the UN's Year of Plant Health, Diarmuid encourages everybody to do their bit for the planet by thinking about what we are planting and why?

"Why do we have this notion of daisies in the

lawn being the enemy when they are the only thing in the lawn that will produce pollen," Diarmuid asks. "And why do we have the notion of lawns everywhere when we could be rolling in clover?"

Once considered an annoying weed, clover is surprisingly beneficial. It creates nitrogen, enriches the soil and helps other plants to grow stronger. Grown in a lawn, the added nitrogen keeps the grass green, even in dry weather. So, it's worth investigating clover lawns and species-rich lawns that contain wildflowers as well as a blend of grasses. They need less mowing, less water and they stay green year-round as well as being beneficial to insects and pollinators.

Diarmuid says that there is no such thing as perfection, so while we are inclined to reach for it with extravagant and exotic planting, we should look at the ease and beauty of native Irish species. Wildflowers have been growing in the most inhospitable of places since the Ice



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+ Pretty and practical wheelbarrow from a selection at Homevalue

Age (the barren Burren is home to over 1,000 plant species), so native Irish flowers are fully adapted to the vagrancies of the Irish climate.

“It is quite possible to have a beautiful garden with a small number of selective plants,” he says. “We should be looking at not only the beauty of plants but asking questions like what good does it do in the garden, and why are we using fungicides and chemicals when there are alternatives.”

Protecting Pollinators

Despite all of our technological advancement we rely heavily on the humble bee to keep our planet healthy and productive.

Bees are vital to the food chain. They ensure the continuity of many plants that provide food and habitats for plants and animals. The honeybee in particular, is responsible for 80% of all insect pollination. Without this we would see massive decreases in crop yields worldwide.

What is deeply worrying is the tidal wave of reports and opinion which suggest that the bee population is declining worldwide. “I know enough to realise there’s a balance that needs to be struck with how we live with nature,” Diarmuid says.

So, what are bee-friendly plants? Ideally, our gardens should provide them with flowers from February to November. So early spring bulbs like crocus, chionodoxa, grape hyacinth and snowdrops will provide the first pollen. Bees love native flowers like bluebells, poppies, foxgloves, honeysuckle and lilac, flowers that are seen in many a garden, and many of our favourite annuals taste sweet to the honeybees such as sunflowers, forget-me-nots and Californian poppies. Easy to grow rock roses, heathers and lavender are simple, beautiful plants that gift us with a glorious garden for ourselves and for bees.



“Why do we have this notion of daisies in the lawn being the enemy when they are the only thing in the lawn that will produce pollen, and why do we have the notion of lawns everywhere when we could be rolling in clover?”



+ **Pol-li-na-tion:** The transfer of pollen from a male part of a plant to a female part of a plant, later enabling fertilization and the production of seeds and fruit most often by an animal or by wind.



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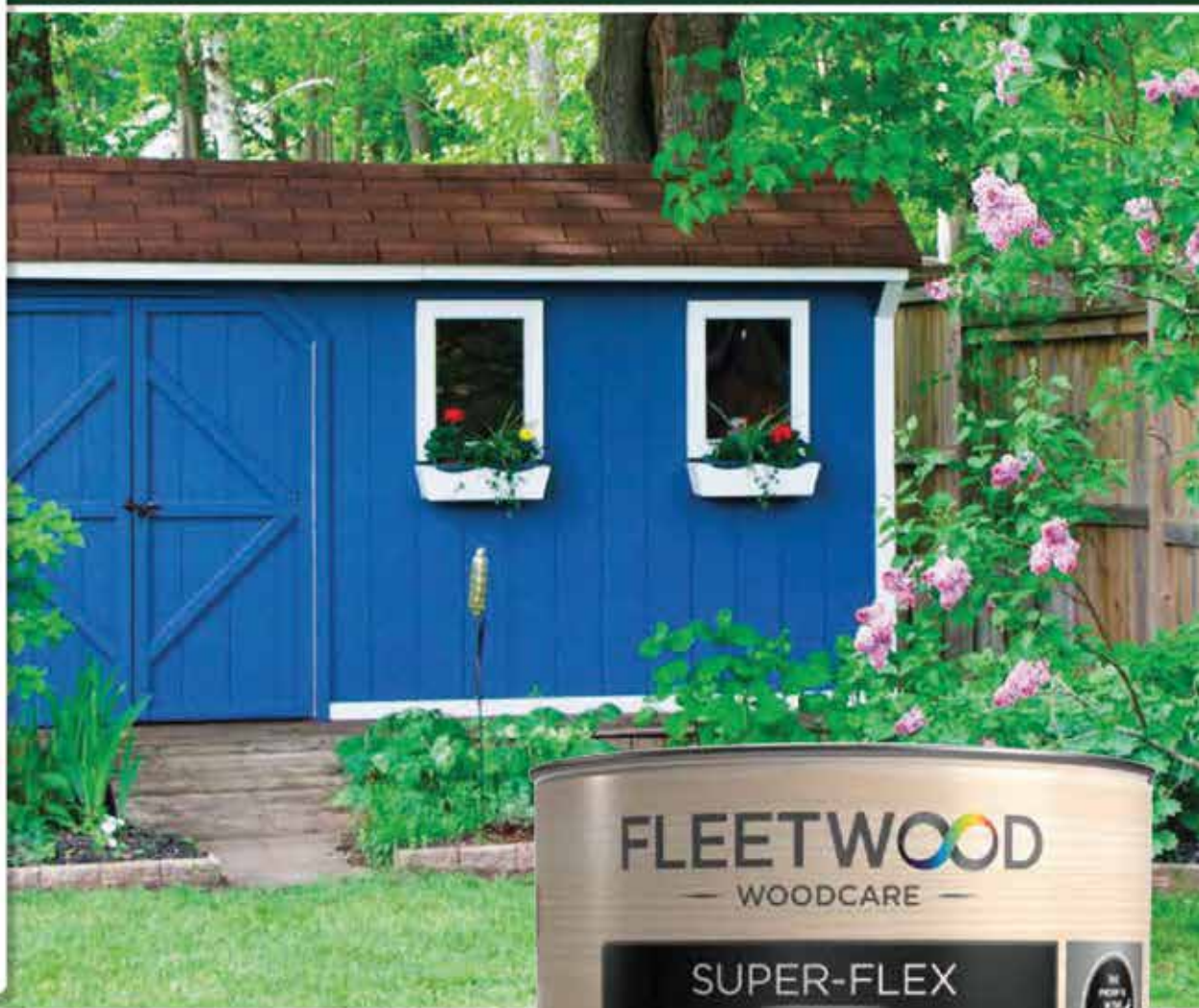
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GREAT OUTDOORS



Outdoor decking, rugs, planted railway sleepers and simple furnishing make for a spectacular space.

Good Bugs, Bad Bugs

Taking a leaf out of Diarmuid's book, how can you embrace sustainable living in the average urban garden?

Fresh herbs are remarkably easy to grow and the scent is wonderful. An indoor or outdoor herb garden is low maintenance and besides the obvious kitchen benefits, herbs act as a natural insect repellent.

The enemy of many a gardener, slugs and snails love to munch on your prize petunias. They are a common garden pest, but pesticides can be harmful to wildlife and household pets, so try planting some fennel, a perennial herb with yellow flowers and feathery leaves that slugs have little appetite for. Slugs also hate garlic, as do aphids, who also love to munch through leaves at an alarming pace.

The common housefly can be kept at bay with basil or coriander, both delicious additions to salads but annoying to flies. And the pungent

aroma of mint repels flies, moths and fleas.

In addition, its flowers attract butterflies and pollinating bees.

Flowers pay their part too. Chrysanthemums contain a chemical that is toxic to many insects, which make them a popular way to repel roaches, ants, beetles, ticks, fleas, spider mites and silverfish. A natural compound found in the flower, pyrethrum, make chrysanthemums a relatively safe and natural insecticide.

Brightly coloured Nasturtiums are easy to grow and attract black bean aphids or cabbage moths to their leaves that might otherwise nibble on your roses. They have other uses too, for decorating dessert plates or used for a dab of colour in salads.

For apartment living or small terrace gardens, herbs can be planted on a 'living wall' using vertical wall space or the side of a balcony for planting. Horizontal fence panels serve the same purpose, as do wall hooks with hanging pots.



GIVEAWAY

WIN A DELUXE DOUBLE EGG CHAIR



Homevalue is giving readers the chance to win one of four deluxe Double Egg Chairs from The Garden Collection range worth €400. Perfect for relaxing at home or in your garden during the Summer months ahead, this deluxe Double Egg Chair is made from hand woven effect rattan and comes complete with a large double cushion and two mini head cushions.

To be in with a chance to win, simply visit www.homevalue.ie/double-egg-chair-competition-.html or scan the QR code to bring you to the competition page. The closing date is Wednesday 1st September 2021.

Full terms & conditions can be found at www.homevalue.ie/double-egg-chair-competition-terms-and-conditions.html



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Not just for indoors, create extra space for colourful pots and accessories with outdoor shelving. The Toulouse plant stand from Homevalue is a beautiful addition to any outdoor space or conservatory and a matching bistro set completes the look. If you want to get really inventive, seal and paint an old ladder and use the rungs to place herb and plant pots for a rustic, quirky effect.

Health & Wellbeing

Gardening for mental health is more than a passing trend. Monty Don defines the term in two ways. Firstly, the biggest mistake that gardeners make he says, is to force a plant to grow where it doesn't want to. The second definition involves the ways that plants boost human health. Covid-19 has highlighted the importance of mental health and the positive role that gardens can play. Tens of thousands of people around the world have reported that

the retreat of the outdoors has given them a close connection with nature, with the seasons, with the weather and with their own internal mindset. We might be living in the midst of an unpredictable, scary, chaotic world right now, but gardening and plants remain constant in a fragile world.

A report in the Mental Health Journal cited gardening as being able to reduce stress and improve mood, with a reduction in symptoms of depression and anxiety. Gardens can be relaxing, and they can also be places where our efforts result in a real sense of achievement, boosting confidence and self-esteem. There's also good evidence that just looking at a green space has positive effects on people's mental health, helping them relax and de-stress.

A garden grows people as well as plants. The scents, sights and textures of gardens, as well

A garden grows people as well as plants. The scents, sights and textures of gardens, as well as the act of gardening itself can re-awaken memories and reignite stifled energies and abilities.

GREAT OUTDOORS



as the act of gardening itself can re-awaken memories and reignite stifled energies and abilities.

Getting busy in the garden is an escape valve from the pressures and stress of everyday life, but there are other important benefits you won't want to miss out on. Whether by necessity or design, the more time we spend at home, the more our gardens have become extended living spaces.

Inviting lounge sofas or relaxer chairs are the perfect way to chillax in the open air. Sometimes however, the Irish air can be a tad too chilly, which is where patio heaters come into their own. As a species we are drawn to heat and light, so on cooler evenings what better way to warm the hands and the heart than to press a button for instant heat and light. From the aptly named Sahara table-top heater to the Sunred Elektra or Indus standalone options, you can warm the cockles of your heart with ease with the Homevalue range of patio heaters.

Stargazing in the comfort of our own homes is aspirational, yet totally attainable. Crank up the patio heater then crash back in the comfort of Homevalue's gorgeous L shaped sofa complete with footrest and coffee table. A slick, sophisticated, stylish piece of furniture, this set is a draw day or night. For teens or the 'moon child' amongst us, the hanging moon



+ Outdoor furniture, rugs, deck paint and accessories from Homevalue.



chair is cosmic. Connect with the outdoor elements in sublime comfort, then bring it inside for winter as a go-to curl-up space. A cracking alternative is the hanging egg chair. All-encompassing and hugging every side, this stylish cocoon is soothing to the body and soul.

Finishing Touches

A dash of paint outdoors makes a huge difference and will take an old garden shed from drab to fab in no time. Fleetwood Super-Flex Wood Paint is a durable water-based paint with an opaque colour for cladding and exterior joinery garden furniture and all exterior wood. This self-priming product is touch dry in thirty minutes with up to ten years of protection that resists cracking, peeling and flaking. It is available in a range of eight colours as well as a tintable base range

with over 30,000 colours on the Fleetwood Colour Systems.

The ideal accessories to use with Super-flex Wood Paint are the Fleetwood Oval brush range along with a Fleetwood Handy 4" set which includes two sleeves. Alternatively, you can use the new Fleetwood Roll-Rite 4" Paint Pot which comes with a built-in brush holder and a convenient handle to use while on your feet.

Keeping with the colour theme, outdoor rugs are a great way to define space. They offer style as well as functionality to decks and patios, immediately warming up the area with pretty tones. Coming in a wide range of colours, Homevalue outdoor rugs are made from recycled polypropylene so they are easy to maintain and clean.

GIVEAWAY

WIN A MAGNUS BBQ DUAL COOK STATION



Homevalue is giving readers the chance to win a Magnus BBQ Dual Cook Station from The Garden Collection range worth €660. Combining the convenience of gas cooking with the classic taste of charcoal, this superior dual fuel BBQ gives you the best of both worlds. It also comes with a side table, tool holder and side burner which is great for side cooking.

To be in with a chance to win, simply log onto www.homevalue.ie/dual-cook-bbq-competition.html or scan the QR code to bring you to the competition page. The closing date is Wednesday 1st September 2021.

Full terms & conditions can be found at www.homevalue.ie/dual-cook-bbq-competition-terms-and-conditions.html

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HIT THE DECK



They've been at the forefront of decking care for decades and now Ronseal is offering its most extensive range yet to help customers 'do decking right' in 2021 and beyond.

The DIY giant has just announced the relaunch of the Ultimate Decking range - including amazing colour choices, improved formulas and brand new products.

Available throughout Ireland, the range includes everything customers and tradespeople need to keep decking looking great and protected from the elements. Ronseal's new Ultimate Protection Decking Paint offers brilliant performance and coverage, allowing it to be used on new decks as well as old.

Available in 13 colours, including new vibrant Sage, Willow and Blackcurrant shades, it's a workhorse for anyone looking to make their outdoor space summer-ready. The strengthened formulation can be used on old or new wood and after two coats, will not only lock down splinters, but it will fill cracks too.

The launch is supported by a series of handy 'How To' guides, designed to help customers make the most of their products and homes. Including hints, tips and step

by step videos, they will make application easier than ever.

Speaking about the launch, Jane Ryder, Ronseal's Marketing Director said: "We have a long and proud history of providing the best specialist decking products - developing a range that helps householders show their outdoor spaces the love they deserve. We're delighted to be extending the range to include even better-performing products and even more great colours."



Metal Makeover

Following a long history protecting metal substrates in Ireland, the makers of Triflow Total Metal Care have developed a formula that gives 15 years protection to metal substrates and joins Ronseal's popular performance paints range.

Finding products that are easy to use and offer long-lasting protection against rust and the elements can be a challenge but Ronseal's new Direct to Metal paint promises to do just that. Water-based and easy to use - even without a primer - it can be applied to a massive range of surfaces, including those already affected by rust.

The DIY brand Ronseal is expanding its popular Performance Paint range to launch the versatile new Direct to Metal Paint this spring. The hard-wearing, high-performance coating offers 15 years of protection, without the need for fiddly and messy primers. It can also be used directly on a wide range of surfaces, including aluminium, cast iron, galvanised and stainless steel, bare metal, wood and even PVC.

Customers in Ireland may have used the product before when it was sold as the popular Triflow Total Metal Care. Now it's improved formulation sees it form part of the Ronseal family, sitting alongside the rest of Ronseal's Performance Paint range, available nationwide.

Ronseal's Performance Paint offers reliable products across five categories, exterior paints, primers, renovation paints, problem solvers and interior paints, all designed to make previously tricky jobs, easy.

As well as being hard-wearing, it comes in a varied and versatile colour palette – featuring everything from bold Storm Grey to classic Rural Green and three tough finishes – gloss, satin and matt.

Touch-dry and showerproof in 30 minutes, it is low-odour, water-based and has a quick re-coat time of two to four hours. It will be sold in 250ml, 750ml and 2.5L - making it perfect for jobs of all sizes.

Finding products that are easy to use and offer long-lasting protection against rust and the elements can be a challenge, but Ronseal's Direct to Metal paint promises to do just that.



At Homevalue, our Irishness is just as important to us as it is to our customers across the country. For us, Irishness extends beyond “where we’re born”, and instead, should be viewed as “where we contribute” and add real value. This is more important now than ever before as our stores and local teams work to support their respective communities as best that they can during these difficult times.

Our teams up and down the country deserve a huge amount of credit for the service they have provided to their communities over the last year in what were unprecedented circumstances, showing what can only be described as Irish spirit.

At Homevalue, our sense of commitment to the community is what Irishness is all about and it is a true testament to our heritage and our determination to prevail. These unique values brought on by community spirit should be celebrated and championed as part of the fabric of being Irish, and we in Homevalue are determined to play our part.

You're Guaranteed Irish at Homevalue

As Ireland's leading indigenous and family-owned Home, Garden, DIY and Builders Merchants, it is fitting that Homevalue recently received official “Guaranteed Irish” status. This will now see all across our network of 100% Irish owned stores adorn the famous “Big G” of Guaranteed Irish with immense pride. A renowned badge of provenance in Ireland and an important accolade, our new Guaranteed Irish status underpins our commitment to the communities in which we operate.

For those who are not as familiar with the “Big G”, Guaranteed Irish are a not-for-profit business membership organisation representing businesses in Ireland since 1974. Guaranteed Irish is the original symbol of provenance in business in Ireland and is awarded to businesses which provide quality jobs, support local communities, and are committed to Irish provenance.

At Homevalue, *our sense of commitment* to the community *is what Irishness is all about* and it is a true testament to our heritage and our determination to prevail.

Why Not Build And Decorate Your Home The *Guaranteed Irish Way?*



Supporting Local

Numerous pieces of emerging research highlight the importance of buying Irish as well as the appetite among consumers to buy Irish and support Irish businesses. The “Big G” from Guaranteed Irish, which will now be visible on our websites and throughout all our stores, will allow customers to shop at Homevalue stores safe in the knowledge that they are not only supporting their local business but also a local business that provides local employment.

To coincide with our new Guaranteed Irish status, we have launched several unique initiatives that underpin our commitment to supporting Irish. This includes the new “Build an Irish Home” campaign, a first-of-its-kind initiative, which will see our stores promote Irish suppliers in each product category. Our aim, as part of this campaign, will be to help builders and homeowners to identify the best Irish products they need to build or renovate homes using Irish products.

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A man and a woman are smiling and holding a yellow measuring tape in a square frame. The man is in the background, and the woman is in the foreground. They are both wearing white shirts. The measuring tape is yellow with black markings and is held in a square shape around their faces.

Self-Build Guide

A self-build home is the perfect way to create a one-off house, tailored to your specific lifestyle and requirements while also providing significant cost savings. Our Homevalue self-build guide takes you through the key stages involved in building your own dream home.

DECIDING TO SELF-BUILD

Self-build is not for the faint-hearted. Building your own home takes time and it requires endless planning, deep reservoirs of patience and a capacity to withstand the stress and mishaps which are part and parcel of the self-build process.



Before deciding to embark on a self-build, you should familiarise yourself with the process involved and assess whether you will have the time and energy necessary to devote yourself to the project. The time you need to dedicate will depend to a large extent on your personal circumstances and the project team you assemble to carry out the build. Self-build projects typically involve a hands-on approach, where you buy a plot, prepare it and organise the design and construction of the home yourself.

There are a couple of ways to manage a building project and this may be influenced by the type or scope of the build. You can employ a building contractor or project manager to coordinate the project, or you can choose to take on this role yourself. Taking on the role will save you money but will require you to devote significantly more time and energy to the project.

Building your own home allows you not only to design it yourself but to ensure that the quality

of materials and workmanship is first class. It offers a huge degree of flexibility and allows you to choose a design that precisely suits your needs now and into the future. You can decide on the layout, room sizes and design features that suit your budget and you can install the latest energy-efficient systems which will significantly reduce the running costs of your future home.

It is hard to overstate the sense of satisfaction and achievement that is derived



from completing a successful self-build. In addition, if you have managed to keep to within 10% of your original budget and have not over-specified, you will already have accumulated substantial equity in your home by the time you move in.

Given the myriad of benefits, it is not hard to see why increasing numbers of aspiring homeowners are opting for the self-build route.

“If you have managed to keep to within 10% of your original budget and have not over-specified you will already have accumulated substantial equity in your home by the time you move in.”

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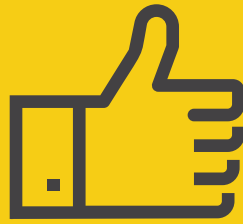
Self-Build Pros & Cons

Weighing up the pros and cons of building your own home

Purchasing a home is the single largest investment that a person is likely to make in their lifetime. Implementing the correct process and abiding rigidly by a carefully prepared strategy will save money, time and energy and help to maximise your investment.

THE PROS

- ✔ Self-build is usually considerably cheaper than purchasing a property from a developer and provided the correct process is followed, significant costs savings can be achieved. If you budget correctly, your finished home could be worth up to 30% more than its combined land and build cost.
- ✔ Self-build provides the opportunity to create a home that is ideally suited to your lifestyle.
- ✔ Designing and building your own home gives you greater flexibility. You can choose your own design, fixtures and fittings and you can also modify the floor plan, alter the materials selected, or add additional upgrades as the project progresses. You are effectively your own boss and responsible for key decisions concerning where to spend and where to save.
- ✔ Careful planning at the design stage in relation to your family's requirements now and into the future will help to future proof your home and avoid expensive upgrades at a later date. For example, you might want to consider a ground floor or an attic room that could be converted into a bedroom at a later date.
- ✔ You can create a more energy-efficient home and select durable, long-lasting and sustainable materials as well energy-efficient heating and power generation. It is significantly more cost-effective to invest in these items upfront rather than paying for them later in the form of an expensive energy retrofit and higher energy bills, maintenance, repairs and replacement costs.
- ✔ Building a new home from scratch will net you savings on stamp duty which is charged on the cost of the land rather than the value of the finished home.



Purchasing a home is the single largest investment that a person is likely to make in their lifetime and implementing the correct process and abiding rigidly to a carefully prepared strategy will save you a lot of money, time and energy and help to maximise your investment.



THE CONS

- ✘ The price of land has escalated sharply in recent years due largely to the critical shortage of housing so finding a suitable plot can be difficult.
- ✘ Longer wait time: It takes an average of eight to ten months to construct a new house—not counting the planning and approval stages. This means that you will likely have a gap in living arrangements between the time you sell your old house and build your new one and will likely need somewhere to live while building the property - which will add to your costs.
- ✘ Managing a self-build project is stressful and time-consuming and requires exhaustive planning. You will be working with various contractors at the same time and managing all the details that go along with building a home which takes time and effort. Don't underestimate the degree of stamina required to make sure it's all done the right way.
- ✘ Hidden/Unexpected costs can mount up rapidly. For example, the land price usually doesn't include site works which can be expensive and must be done first before anything else.
- ✘ Lead times: It can be difficult to plan for the lead time on key items. If you order something make sure to document when it is available in the quantity you need and what the arrival date is. Your contractors need to be made aware of timeline and shipment dates to meet their own schedules.
- ✘ Weather: Bad or even inconsistent weather can delay the project being completed so make sure your contractors have contingency plans in place in the event of incremental weather threatening to derail your schedule.
- ✘ With mortgage funds being released in stages, cashflow can be an issue if you don't have significant savings to draw upon.



FINDING A PLOT

Finding the right plot is key to the success of your new build.

Finding a suitable plot is the first challenge facing any aspiring self-builder. The housing shortage has resulted in a sharp rise in land costs in recent years, particularly in larger towns and cities, and there is also strong competition for prime plots in desirable areas.

However, there remains considerable price variations between different locations and reasonably priced sites are still available. Research is key, and you should adopt the same due diligence and care when buying land as you would when buying a standard home.

The leading Irish property websites (including Daft and Myhome.ie) offer search facilities that enable you to access a large database of land for sale throughout the country. You should also contact estate agents in your desired area who may have plots of land with derelict building available. It is a good idea to also register with any local auction houses and request a catalogue for upcoming auctions.

Taking some personal initiative can often pay off. Scour the area and look for pockets of land and derelict properties for sale that could be used for a self-build. Get in touch

with your local council who may be aware of plots for sale or be able to point you in the right direction.

Land can represent up to half the cost of building a home, so it is important to acquire a site that meets your needs now and into the future. Consider carefully where you want to build. Look for access to services like waste collection, broadband and amenities such as shops, parks, public transport and schools.

Things to consider include the incline of the land (building on a sloped site can be expensive), site elevation and proximity to water. Ensure that the site is not prone to the risk of flooding and consider hiring a professional before you commit to buying the plot or developing a building design.

Some plots are unsuitable for building as they're too steep or require prohibitively expensive foundations. Additionally, check that there aren't any obstructions such as high-tension electricity lines, water pipes or rights of way which may restrict building. Bear in mind that the cost of providing services to a property in a remote rural area can be prohibitive and it must have a reliable water supply. It's also worth checking whether the plot is in an area where there are high concentrations of radon gas.

Think carefully about your needs, how you will use your space and whether the site is suitable to meet all your requirements. You need to ensure that the land has been approved for building and that the plot is suitable for the house you plan to build. Check with the planning authority of the local county that's responsible for preparing and updating the development plan for the area and ensure your proposals comply with local rules. Your plans could conflict with the authority's guidelines or limit a neighbour's privacy and any such issues that arise need to be resolved before proceeding any further.

The authorities development plans are updated every five years, and typically contain information on zoning areas and acceptable standards and finishes for buildings. They also feature information on any other restrictions in the areas and you should consult with the planning officer to check whether any such restrictions exist which might impact your plans, particularly if you are planning to build in a scenic area where there are frequently limits imposed on the height of any new buildings.

Before buying land for building, you should obtain a land registry map to certify that the plot has been properly registered. You should also ensure that any plot you purchase is contingent upon planning permission being approved.



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Counting the Costs

It is all too easy for costs to spiral out of control and self-builders should thoroughly map out all the cost projections before commencing the project and ensure that they stick resolutely to the budget.

Building your own home is generally considerably more cost-effective than buying an existing house and if you have the skills to carry out the work yourself you can lower costs by up to 40%. Hiring builders to carry out the majority of the work while putting on a project manager's hat and managing the build yourself will also yield substantial cost savings.

The cost of building your home in Ireland will depend upon the location and complexity of the project as well as the materials selected. The cost of land varies sharply according to the area and in some cases can account for up to 40% of the cost of building a home.

Last year the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland (RIAI) published The Building and Construction Cost Guidelines which advise on construction costs for domestic construction and provide a reliable indicator of the costs that self-builders can expect to incur.

In the case of an individually designed single or two-storey house using traditional materials and construction methods and a reasonable level of finishes and fittings, it will cost

from €2,500 to €2,800 per m^2 . Where the construction methods are non-traditional and/or the level of finishes and/or fittings is high, you should budget for a cost in the order of €2,800 to €3,500 per m^2 .

The RIAI guidelines are based on standard site conditions and specifications, and deviations from the norm with respect to these are likely to increase the cost ranges stipulated. For example, a lack of suitable access to the site for plant, machinery and materials and the absence of suitable on-site storage space for material and waste will add to costs while adverse site or ground conditions or a need to relocate existing services will do likewise.

The rates shown are for average construction build costs only and do not take account of professional fees, VAT, levies, planning charges, or inflation. Unique designs or challenging sites will also entail higher costs than those stipulated in the guidelines.

The items listed across are among the additional features that you should take into account when devising preparatory budgets for your self-build:

Preparatory Budget

The Site: Depending on its location, you can expect to pay a third or more of your entire budget on the site including legal and registration fees.

Professional Fees: Costs for your mortgage, accountant, architect, builders and planning permission.

Fixed Costs: Structural warranties, site insurance, furniture storage, the cost of renting while you build, selling costs of your current home, purchasing furniture for the house.

Infrastructure Charges: The cost of connecting to mains water, electricity, sewerage.

Borrowing Costs: How much interest will you be charged on any loans you take out to carry out the self-build?

Reports: There may be several reports you need to conduct on the land before purchase including a structural survey, soil survey, etc.



Preparation is Everything

The importance of assiduously planning every detail of a self-build project cannot be overstated.

Preparation is key and anyone building their own home needs to adopt a hands-on approach from the outset and remain fully committed and engaged throughout the entire process.

A successful self-build means taking the time to carry out all the necessary research and preparation in advance of the project and making sure that you have a clear understanding of your expectations and requirements. Establishing a clear picture of the project will reduce the number of problems likely to arise as the build progresses.

One of the benefits of building your own home is the degree of flexibility it offers. Self-build provides the opportunity to create a home tailored to your specific needs and lifestyle, now and into the future. However, a blank canvas should not be taken as an invite to assemble an ill-conceived wish-list of items that are not strictly necessary or within budget, or to just simply plan out the largest home the site can accommodate.

Unless money is no object, some element of compromise is inevitable and it is preferable to

discard any unrealistic ambitions at the outset of the project. Focus on developing a picture of what can be achieved within the constraints of planning restrictions, your budget and the particular characteristics of the site. Be realistic and decide on what you actually need and can afford to build. Keep in mind that the bigger the house, the more labour and material that is required - so don't be tempted into being too ambitious when mapping out your floor plan.

It is advisable to decide the key elements of the design and the budget available before applying



queries on costs and budgeting.

Other costs which should be factored into your equations include professional fees charged by architects, engineers, quantity surveyors, assigned certifiers and other expenses such as council development levies, stamp duty, legal fees, valuation fees and the costs of connecting to services. In addition, you will need to take account of any costs associated with the mortgage including mortgage protection cover and building insurance.

Project Management

The build option you choose will also have a significant bearing on the budget, and your decision is likely to be influenced by the nature and scope of the project. If it is a reasonably straightforward, traditional-style home and you have sufficient time and the required know-how and organisation skills, you may decide on the direct build option. This simply entails hiring an architect to draw up plans for your contractors while you manage the project yourself. This route will save you money, but you will be required to devote a significant amount of time and energy to the project and it can be extremely stressful, particularly if you are also working full-time. You should also consider whether you have sufficient expertise in costing and project management.

Alternatively, you can employ an architect, building contractor or structural engineer to coordinate the project, or you can choose to enter a fixed-price contract with a single building contractor who takes charge of the site and assumes responsibility for the entire construction process. The contractors will be responsible for dealing with subcontractors, buying materials and certifying each stage of the building as it is completed. They are also responsible for ensuring all the proper requirements are in place in relation to issues such as insurance and health & safety. With a fixed-price contract, the contractor will commit to completing the project for a set cost.

Regardless of the build option you choose, it is advisable to add an extra 10% to 20% to cover cost overruns arising from unforeseen circumstances. You should also ensure that you have a written contract with all your contractors, detailing what is required and the quality of the materials that are to be used.

'Preparation is key and anyone building their own home needs to adopt a hands-on approach from the outset and remain fully committed and engaged throughout the entire process.'

for planning permission to avoid any potentially stressful and expensive adjustments after the builders have arrived on site. Any alterations made once the plan has entered the construction phase will add significantly to the cost and if your changes result in a team of builders staying on-site for an extra week or two - it may add thousands of euro to your bill. Focus on your lifestyle requirements and family size when determining the general layout and the number of rooms you need, and keep a folder with notes and idea on room sizes, layout and design features which suit your budget.

When calculating your budget keep in mind that the chief factors that influence the square meter costs of your build are primarily the size of the house and the complexity of the design. The house specification and quality of materials used will also have a significant bearing on costs while the scope of work and phasing of some finished items as well as the position of the house on your site, the prevailing ground conditions, length of the driveway and the extent of external landscaping are other factors that can drive costs upwards.

The price of the site and the construction and fit-out costs make up the principal items to factor into budget calculations and will account for the majority of the project costs. The budget should include estimates for all of the elements of your build, including site preparation and foundation costs, the self-build, insulation and airtightness, heating and ventilation systems as well as fixtures and fittings, the kitchen and bathroom and any additional expenses incurred during the construction phase, such as any spend on health and safety measures.

Pay particular attention to the materials being used and weigh up the material costs against quality and long-term durability and efficiency when deciding on the best options within your budget. It may be worthwhile to consult a Quantity Surveyor who can assist you with any



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The Self-Builders Mortgage

A self-build mortgage is a mortgage tailored to customers who are looking to build their own home and are not in a position to take immediate possession of the property. They are typically more complicated than a standard home loan and applicants should be prepared to meet some obstacles.

Unlike a normal home loan, there is no clear single identifiable figure for the cost of a self-build and the amount is a combination of the cost of the site and the predicted building costs. In addition, a self-build mortgage is usually drawn down in stage payments, spread out over the length of the build period.

All the principal Irish lenders offer self-build mortgage options. Generally, the maximum funds available at the outset is 70% of the site purchase while most lenders will also fund the majority of the building costs. Mortgage rates are the same, regardless of the construction format.

Bear in mind that banks will not typically fund the cost of obtaining planning permission or any costs associated with connecting to services - water, mains, etc., and they will not fund more than 100% of the construction cost irrespective of the value on completion.

Rules & Regulations

The same lending rules apply to a self-build as they do with a standard house purchase. Essentially, any lender needs to satisfy themselves that you are in a position to comfortably afford the mortgage repayments. Applicants need to be in permanent and secure employments and maximum mortgages are generally 3.5 times

gross annual income and 80% of the property value (90% of the property value up to €220,000 for first-time buyers).

In the case of a self-build, the property value is typically calculated as either the site purchase cost (if applicable) plus build costs or the final valuation upon completion. Typically, the lower of these two figures applies. It is also sensible to have a contingency fund amounting to approximately 10% of the total cost to cover unforeseen expenses, contingencies, cost overruns and furnishings, etc.

In addition to the standard documents relating to your savings, employment and income,

SELF-BUILD GUIDE



there are several other key documents that self-builders are required to provide as part of their mortgage application. Your mortgage advisor will be able to tell you what's required but the main items of additional information required are the building cost details - either a fixed contract quotation or detailed costings for each element of the build provided by an architect or building professional. Additionally, you will require details of your planning permission, and in order to borrow money to buy a plot of land, it must have at least outline planning permission. You then need to have the full plans for your house drawn up and obtained detailed planning permission and building regulations approval before the lender will release any more money. You will also need to provide an initial valuation report, and you'll need an initial report completed by your 'assigned certifier' who must be a certified architect, engineer or building surveyor.

Draw Down

Funds are drawn down in stages by your

solicitor so that money is available to the builder or in respect of direct labour, during the construction phase. As the work progresses, the architect or builder will complete stage Payment Certificates confirming the amount of work that has been completed and your solicitor then requests the funds required from the bank.

No funds will be advanced by a lender unless the stage of development has been certified by a suitably qualified professional. At the outset, the lender will satisfy himself regarding the qualifications of your appointed architect or engineer. This process involves the lender requiring the architect to issue a letter setting out their qualifications and professional indemnity insurances arrangements.

When the build is complete, the bank will require a final valuation report from the same valuer who completed the initial valuation report, together with a certificate of compliance. The bank will then issue the final stage payment.

NOTE: Self-builds qualify for the Help to Buy scheme as long as they meet all the conditions. So first time buyers building a new house with a mortgage that's a minimum of 70% of the house valuation can qualify. The first step is to apply for a tax rebate on revenue.ie to establish your maximum relief.

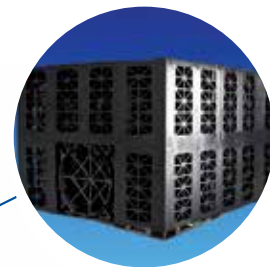
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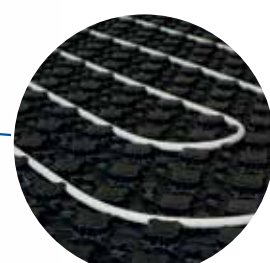
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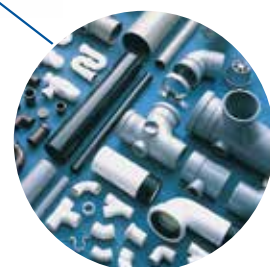
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Get the Go-Ahead

Everything you need to know about planning permission for a self-build

Planning permission is required in order to inform the relevant local authority and residents in the area about your plans and enable them to raise any objections they might have in relation to the potential impact of your proposed property.

Having found a suitable plot, you will first need to ensure that the purchase contract is dependent on obtaining the necessary planning permission. If planning permission is flawed, you may have to pay extra to improve the local infrastructure or in the worst-case scenario, the property may even need to be demolished.

There are three types of planning permission: permission, outline permission and permission consequent on outline permission. Permission, often referred to as full permission is the most common type of application.

However, if you want to see if the planning authority agrees in principle to you building a house on a particular site you can apply for

outline permission. This is a sort of agreement in principle, a way of 'testing the water' if you're unsure whether permission will be granted. It will require you to produce only the plans and particulars that are necessary to enable the planning authority to make a decision in relation to the siting, layout or other proposals for development.

While the costs associated with applying for outline permission are less, you will have to submit detailed drawings and receive consequent permission before you start building work. Generally, outline permissions have a 3-year duration.

Alternatively, you can make a full application for planning permission from the start which will save you time but if it's refused, you'll have wasted money on producing plans and drawings.

There's a set procedure for making a planning application. Before you start you are required to give public notice of your proposals. This

must be done by placing a notice in a local newspaper and erecting a site notice that can be clearly read. You will find details of information that must be contained in the notices in the planning application form.

The Planning Department of your local authority will also be able to give you advice about how to apply and whether your proposals are likely to comply with the development plan as well as information on fees and any other documentation and requirements that you will need. The application forms and a complete checklist are also available from your local county council.

The application must include 2 copies of the newspaper advertisement as well as a site location map (4 copies), detailed drawings/elevations (4 copies), a site layout plan (4 copies), a site notice (2 copies) and the application fee.

The current fee for an application to build a



house is €65. Obviously, the cost of preparing drawings and plans will be far greater than the application fee itself and in the event of an application for full planning permission, it can be worthwhile to consult a qualified architect to advise you on your application before you submit it. This helps ensure that there are no obvious mistakes or issues which have been overlooked.

The application must be received by the local authority within two weeks of the notice appearing in the local newspaper and the erection of the site notice. The site notice must remain in place for at least 5 weeks from the date of receipt of the planning application. Again, this gives everyone the chance to express any views or concerns they might have.

Anyone can see a copy of your application and upon payment of a €20 fee can make a written submission or observation in relation to it. The decision on your planning permission will be notified to you and anyone who commented in writing on it.

Once you've submitted your application for planning permission, the local authority has 2 months in which to make a decision, although they may ask for more details. There are 3 possible outcomes: permission is granted, permission is refused or permission is granted

under certain conditions. Normally, planning permission is subject to conditions, some of which may require changes to your proposals which effectively means you may have to compromise on some design features in order to obtain planning permission for your build.

If the local authority decides to give you planning permission, you will get a notice of intention to grant planning permission. If no one appeals the decision to An Bord Pleanála within 4 weeks of the date of this decision, you will be granted full permission and can commence your build.

If the local authority refuses your application, they will inform you of the reasons for their decision. If planning permission is refused or you're dissatisfied with the authority's decision, you can lodge an appeal to An Bord Pleanála, within one month of the planning authority's decision. Any decision made by An Bord Pleanála is final and binding.

It is an offence to carry out any work that requires planning permission, without planning permission and the offence can carry very heavy fines and a prison sentence of up to two years. However, if a genuine mistake has been made, it is possible to apply for planning permission to retain an unauthorised

“It is an offence to carry out any work that requires planning permission without planning permission and the offence can carry very heavy fines. However, if a genuine mistake has been made, it is possible to apply for planning permission to retain an unauthorised development.”

development. This permission may be refused, in which case, the unauthorised development will have to be demolished.

If permission is granted, you normally have 5 years in which to complete the construction and you may be required to make a financial contribution towards the construction of any road, water supply or sewerage that may be necessary. Bear in mind that the planning authorities are under no obligation to renew the permission after the 5 years has elapsed.

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Team Players

Which professionals do you need to consider hiring for a self-build?

Every self-build requires a professional team to be assembled to assist with different elements of the project. Every build differs in terms of size, complexity and design but they all require professional assistance of some description. Assembling the correct professional team to fit your specific project will alleviate any costly errors and can save a lot of anxiety, time and money in the long run.

Ultimately, the extent of the professional team required will depend on the level of involvement you intend to have in the management and building of your project. If you are simply hiring an architect to draft plans for a contractor that you have hired to undertake a turnkey self-build, then you are likely to require minimal professional input.

To assist you in assessing the professional team needed to progress a self-build, we present a brief description of the key professionals involved in a typical self-build project:

Planning Consultant:

One of the safest ways of overcoming any potential obstacles with a planning application is to secure the services of a planning consultant at an early stage. A planning consultant has expert knowledge of planning laws and procedures and will help ensure a scheme has been designed to match the self-builders vision, while also fulfilling local planning guidelines to the satisfaction of the relevant local authority. A planning consultant will advise the architect at an early stage of any local requirements or design issues that may hinder the prospects of the project receiving the green light and they will identify strategies to overcome potential planning difficulties. In many cases, they will have strong relationships with the local authorities and will be aware of previous planning decisions and case law that have set precedents - enabling them to present a convincing case as to why your proposal should be accepted. A planning consultant is frequently able to navigate the planning system in a way that can make the difference between a development being granted planning permission or not.

Land Surveyor:

Paying a land surveyor to assess a plot you are potentially buying ensures that it is suitable for construction and has all of the necessary services connected such as drainage, water and electricity. It also confirms the boundary measurements of the land that you plan to buy. The surveyor essentially lays out the fundamental correctness of a property from the ground up. They will carry out a comprehensive investigation of the plot and ensure that the structure is built in the correct location and to the correct size.

Architect:

In addition to designing your self-build, an architect is also ideally suited to take on the role of a project manager. They can help set a realistic budget, steer you through the planning process, source suppliers, contractors and other professionals and manage the construction contract. Having a thorough design brief for your selected architect is crucial. You should seek recommendations and interview a minimum of three suitable candidates with a track record in self-build, experience in designing energy-efficient home and the ability to match your design style within the budget available.



Project Manager:

A project manager will be required to oversee and co-ordinate all aspects of the project. It is a role frequently assumed by the client or an architect and in cost terms, it represents around 5% of the total project outlay. The project manager is responsible for the logistics and careful administration of the operation, including planning the construction of the project, employing contractors and scheduling what will happen and when.

Engineer:

Structural engineers are involved at every stage of a structure's realisation and play a key role in the design and construction team. Working closely with the architect or contractor, an engineer's expertise lies in the design of the structural elements of the project and they analyse the effects of loads and stresses caused by gravity, the users of the building and the climatic conditions. Your engineer will also check the ground conditions of your proposed site, which will define the foundation design. While some self-builders also hire engineers to design their self-build, an engineer designed house tends to be more basic and simplistic in design terms than an architecturally designed home.

Quantity Surveyor:

A professional expert in building costing, a quantity surveyor manages the cost of construction projects and helps the self-build to stay within budget. A quantity surveyor is generally used by builders to estimate the costs, draw up quotations, monitor costs throughout the project and prepare the final account. The job is meticulous and involves cost planning, scheduling, value engineering, feasibility studies and valuation of works and work packages. Essentially the role of the quantity surveyor will protect the financial aspect of a building project.

BER Assessment:

If you are pursuing an energy-efficient self-build, hiring an energy consultant to help achieve an 'A' rating can be a cost-effective option. A BER is a measure of the energy rating of a building which is largely determined by the insulation quality and air tightness as well as other factors. 'A' is the optimum ranking while 'F' is the lowest rating. An energy consultant works with the architect to score the energy performance of the proposed home. They take all of the construction elements, from the wall build-up to floor make-up, add this to the location and heating sources, and work out the building's overall performance. This information is used to

estimate the heating demand and costs for the proposed building and is included in the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC). The EPC is required by law and must be completed in draft format before construction, as well as upon completion.

Interior Designer:

Once the self-build has been designed you can choose a specialist to help you to achieve the perfect interior. An interior designer will design the soft furnishings and select the curtains, furniture, carpets, wallpaper, wall colour, lighting, etc., and put the vital finishing touches to the home. With the use of modern technology, interior designers can produce computer-aided visuals that allow you to walk around your fully furnished house and approve the details before construction and furnishing. While desirable, for many self-builders, interior design is a luxury, however, hiring an interior decorator can be a wise decision if you've invested a large sum in your home and want to showcase it at its best.

Landscaper:

The design of the garden is usually the first thing to be cut from the budget as it's the last thing to be done. While it's sometimes an afterthought, landscaping can make a striking first impression and can also add value to your home.

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Construction Methods

Choosing the most suitable construction system for a self-build

From traditional brick-and-block build to the increasingly popular frame construction and the rapid build speeds and airtightness of structural insulated panels, self-builders have an extensive array of construction methods to choose from. Each system has its own particular advantages with some better suited to self-builders who want to play a key role in the project, while others are a better fit for those who want to take a more hands-off approach.

Choosing a structural system for your new home is a major decision. Each building method has different implications and the system used to build your dream home will influence virtually every aspect of the project from the speed and cost of construction to the energy efficiency of your new home.

With so many methods to choose from, the decision generally rests on a range of factors, including the available budget, the accessibility of the plot and the design criteria of the build. Construction speed and the desired energy performance of the property are also important considerations.

The structural system being used rarely raises any eyebrows at planning level as local authorities are generally more concerned with the external appearance of the property, rather than the method used to build it. Every new home must meet the same building regulations and all the common construction methods can do so.

To assist you in choosing your method of construction, Homevalue Lifestyle presents a guide to the most common build methods,

their key advantages and the main factors to bear in mind before you make your decision:

Traditional Masonry Construction

Providing durable, robust buildings, traditional masonry construction refers to the brick-and-block method of building which has been in existence for centuries and remains the most common method of home construction in Ireland. The system consists of a traditional-looking outer layer of brick together with an inner structure of concrete blocks. The cavity between the two layers is filled with your choice of insulation.

Bricks and blocks are constructed in courses, with each unit laid in cement-based mortar. It is an efficient and flexible form of construction that offers ample design flexibility. The dense



materials result in good thermal mass which means the building fabric absorbs and stores heat throughout the day and releases it back into the house when needed.

In the past, wall cavities were restricted to around 100mm which was sufficient to satisfy building regulations but limited in terms of the depth of insulation that could be accommodated. However, innovation in wall tie manufacturing has led to dramatic improvements in this regard.

Masonry houses are built entirely on-site. It is a labour-intensive method and site work progresses more slowly than with timber frame alternatives. In addition, bad weather can create costly delays as each course of bricks and mortar needs time to dry out. You can expect a build speed of approximately five months for a standard 180 m² home.

Timber Frame Homes

Prefabricated off-site in your choice of style, the timber frame construction method has a quicker on-site build time than masonry construction. With this system, the frame acts as a superstructure that supports the entire

building, resulting in little need for internal load-bearing walls and freeing up space to accommodate appealing open-plan layouts.

Timber-framed homes are built using either Open or Closed Panel Systems. 'Open Panels' consist of a softwood stud frame which is backed with a layer of sheeted timber. The panels are manufactured following the house design specifications, before being delivered to the site and fixed together to form the structure of the house. The insulation is then applied on site.

'Closed Panels' are similar but are taken a step further in the factory prefabrication process. Insulation and vapour barriers are added, with plasterboard fixed to the frame to 'close' the panel. Windows, doors and even wall finishes can be applied before the superstructure arrives on site.

A great choice if you're keen to create a thermally-efficient home, timber frame homes are star performers when it comes to providing high thermal insulation, airtightness and soundproofing. In addition, the lightweight frame means foundation specification can be reduced.

The frame is prefabricated off-site, giving you the reassurance of a factory guarantee that the high-quality finished house shell will deliver the performance you are expecting. It offers flexible design options and the outer skin can be finished in your choice of cladding.

Structural Insulated Panels (SIP)

The Structural Insulated Panels system is one of the most cost-effective and energy-efficient construction methods for a self-build. Very similar to timber frame, they are typically made up of two layers of oriented strand board bonded around an inner core of expanded polystyrene.

First developed in the USA in the 1930s, SIPs are precision made in a factory and offer a fast build, high thermal performance and impressive sustainability credentials. Offsite construction reduces the amount of waste produced on the building site and allows unused materials to be recycled.

SIPs can be used to make walls, floors, ceilings and roof, and they also offer plenty of design scope. The structural components have inherent structural strength which allows the architect

to create large spans without the need for roof trusses and enables vaulted ceiling features to be added into designs at little extra cost.

These highly insulated wall and roof panels are now typically 217mm thick, offering a U-Value of 0.13, making this method of construction among the best in terms of thermal efficiency.

However, like other timber frame systems, the major design work is carried out before the frame is created and it is difficult to make further adjustments once the system has been delivered to the site. In addition, the SIP method is slightly more costly than other timber systems, although its enhanced energy-saving performance ensures that the home will benefit from significantly reduced energy bills in the future.

Insulated Concrete Formwork (ICF)

Originally developed in Germany in the 1950s, Insulated Concrete Formwork (ICF) is a structure of interlocking hollow blocks that stack to create cavities. Used as an alternative to cement blocks and mortar, the majority of the ICF blocks are made from expanded polystyrene but bonded wood fibre options and panel versions are also available.

On-site, they are joined together to establish an inner and outer layer that is reinforced with steel rods and this insulated formwork is pumped full of concrete which creates a robust structure with high insulation values. Once the concrete pour is set and the structure is built up to full height, it can be finished in your choice of cladding, whether a sleek coat of render or timber cladding.

This rapid build system is increasingly popular among self-builders, particularly those looking for high levels of thermal performance. While providing all the strength, durability and waterproofing of concrete, ICF offers increased insulation, airtightness and soundproofing. It also improves heat retention, which means it costs less to keep the home warm.

One of the key benefits of this route is that the building components are extremely light, so you won't need any heavy machinery to crane them into place on site. In terms of cost, developing an ICF home is likely to be 5%



more expensive than a standard timber frame or masonry building, but it is far quicker to construct which can reduce labour costs.

Oak Frame Construction

Oak frame is a historic and versatile building structural system that can be used to create homes in either a traditional or contemporary style. Like timber frame construction, the design is completed in advance of the superstructure, being manufactured on the factory floor.

Oak is a premium material and this method of construction is generally around 10% more



expensive than softwood framing options although developing a simple design with rectangular floor plans and affordable materials can help to contain budget. For the frame to meet modern performance standards, it is usually encapsulated with SIPs or an alternative pre-insulated panel system to create a highly efficient thermal envelope.

Oak is a renewable resource and planted widely in order to be harvested for building. The robust oak structure will last for hundreds of years and it also boasts impressive sustainability credentials with very high carbon lock-in due to the length of time it takes to grow.

Thin Joint Blockwork

A variation on conventional brick-and-block, thin-joint blockwork is a specialist construction method that uses just 3mm of mortar. Rather than standard blocks, thin joint masonry uses larger, aerated concrete units which are lightweight and easier to handle, resulting in a significantly quicker build than standard masonry allows.

Because a special thinly applied adhesive is used rather than the conventional 10mm mortar beds, build accuracy is crucial, so it is advisable to use a contractor with experience of this method. Building with thin joint blockwork also requires high levels of precision, and if the blocks are not laid perfectly level, gaps can emerge in the higher sections of the structure.

Overall, the thin joint system is highly accurate and of consistently high quality while it also saves on labour and time spent on-site. Using an adhesive rather than mortar provides greater wall strength and standard designs can reach the weathertight shell stage in around a week.

The thin joint blockwork system costs around 10% more than a standard masonry build as a result of increased material costs but the future energy costs of the home are reduced considerably.

Passive Homes

A passive home is designed to retain heat and keep the cold out. It uses airtight construction, insulation, energy-efficient windows and ventilation systems to turn the home into a self-regulating living environment. Free heating is delivered by solar energy.

Passive homes typically have mechanical heating and ventilation systems that circulate air throughout the house, reusing heat rather than venting it outside, and because of this, they need to be extremely airtight. And yes, although the initial costs may be higher than a normal build, thereafter you can then reap the benefits at your leisure.

Natural Build Materials

The serious eco-builder keen on constructing a home using healthy, natural materials also has plenty of structural options to choose from. Some of the alternative construction methods with famed green credentials include hempcrete, cob, steel frame, straw bales, rammed earth and log building. The majority are still niche areas but every year growing numbers of self-builders use at least some of these methods and materials.

Straw Bale Homes: Eco-conscious self-builders can opt for straw bales which can be stacked like bricks to create loadbearing walls or used to infill a timber, steel or concrete frame. They offer impressive levels of insulation and airtightness, and because this system utilises a waste product that would otherwise be destroyed, straw bale homes have an extremely low carbon footprint.

Log Homes: Timber logs have been a popular method of building homes in Canada, America and Scandinavia for decades but remain relatively scarce in Ireland. However, as a construction method log homes have many practical advantages which can be of benefit to self-builders.

Construction progresses rapidly and the groundworks and foundations can be finished while the log house is being crafted in the workshop. Handcrafted and milled timber is low-carbon and naturally thermally efficient, while the system's durability is evident in log homes built hundreds of years ago in Scandinavia which remain in use today.

Suppliers generally offer a range of sizes and profiles and self-builders have a range of choices to suit their specific energy efficiency goals, budget and design preferences.

Cob: Building with mud dates back to 8,000BC. The structure is built from clay, water, aggregate and straw, and leaves virtually no carbon footprint, although considerable ongoing maintenance is required.



Premium Fencing

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All our fencing timber is pressure treated using green coloured wood preservative known as Tanalith E. Our fencing timber is also available on request in a brown coloured wood preservative known as Tanatone.



Bevelled Rail

75 mm x 44 mm



D-Rail

100 mm x 35 mm
100 mm x 44 mm



Square Rail

100 mm x 35 mm
100 mm x 44 mm



Square Board

95 mm x 18 mm
100 mm x 22 mm
150 mm x 22 mm



Weathered Board

150 mm x 22 mm



Round Top Board

100 mm x 22 mm
150 mm x 22 mm



Lengths: 1m; 1.2m; 1.5m; 1.6m; 1.8m;
2m; 2.1m; 2.4m; 3m; 3.6m; 4.2m; 4.8m.

Lengths: 1m; 1.2m; 1.5m;
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Lengths: 1m; 1.2m; 1.5m;
1.6m; 1.8m; 2m; 2.1m; 2.4m; 3m.

Picket Fence

95 mm x 18 mm
100 mm x 22 mm
150 mm x 22 mm



Lengths: 1m; 1.2m; 1.5m;
1.6m; 1.8m; 2m; 2.1m; 2.4m; 3m.

Posts

95 mm x 95 mm
125 mm x 95 mm
150 mm x 95 mm
150 mm x 75 mm
125 mm x 75 mm
95 mm x 75 mm
75 mm x 75 mm

Lengths: 1.2m; 1.5m; 1.8m;
2m; 2.1m; 2.4m; 3m.

Square



Eased Edge



Weathered



Pointed

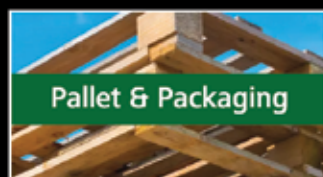


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Project Management

Appointing a professional team and managing your self-build

One temptation facing many self-builders is to assume the role of project manager to save on costs. However, this option is rarely suitable unless you possess the requisite skills and experience and have sufficient time available to carry out what is a demanding and time-consuming role.

The majority of people who build their own home don't get involved in the physical construction of the house. For most, it entails the co-ordination of the different stages of the self-build process although the extent of involvement you have with your self-build is entirely your own decision and you can participate in the actual construction provided

you have the necessary skills and the time required. Your financial position and budget is also likely to dictate the extent of your involvement in the project.

Construction of any description, even a basic roof repair or small extension is demanding but managing an entire self-build from start to finish is fraught with complications and stress. Taking on the role of project manager without sufficient preparation, time or competence will likely impede progress and can actually escalate the cost of the project if mistakes are made and key provisions overlooked.

Avoiding such risk is the key reason why the

majority of self-builders in Ireland opt for the traditional approach of appointing an architect or suitably qualified professional to carry out the design and approval work before hiring a builder to undertake the building work. If funds are tight and the self-builder has the necessary confidence and management skills, they can take a more active role in the design, planning and approvals process or get involved in recruiting the contractor and trade professionals as well as administering and overseeing the onsite construction.

Knowing what's involved in constructing a house is essential if you plan on acting as your own project manager. You need to have a



Many self-builders report that hiring a professionally qualified and registered architect was the best investment they made and architects are frequently credited with helping to drive down the overall costs of a self-build.

detailed understanding of the stages involved to ensure you have the correct trades and materials on-site at the appropriate times and to make sure that everyone is sticking to the agreed schedule. Self-builders who choose to save on professional fees associated with the project management aspects of the build have to be certain they have the time necessary to devote to the task. Strict time management and maintaining the works programme to a tight schedule throughout the process can deliver hefty cost savings, but it can also derail the project if not administered correctly.

Cutting Costs

Assuming responsibility for hiring suitable sub-contractors to carry out different phases of the build, for example, the foundations, the building envelope, the roof, doors and windows and the joinery, plumbing and electrical works will drive down costs considerably. By separating the various disciplines associated with different aspects of the build, programming the works schedules and managing the progress and co-ordination of the different build elements, the self-builder can eat further into the builder's margins.

Savings can also be achieved by dividing the different trade elements of the project into the constituent labour and material costs and purchasing the materials directly. Self-builders frequently come across lower-cost materials by researching hardware stores online and discovering sales or discounted/discontinued lines and materials. However, sourcing good quality materials at competitive prices requires extensive research and a substantial investment of time and energy.

The overall m² costs can be reduced yet

further by taking on some relatively minor building tasks such as the joinery work, the erection of plasterboard or timber cladding or the finishing works. These savings will be magnified if you are capable of carrying out some of the first-fix electrical and plumbing works but it is generally advised to leave the second fix stages to the professionals.

The more work the self-builder can take on, the greater the savings, and self-builders prepared to immerse themselves in the project to the fullest possible extent can reduce costs by up to 40%. Establishing a structured programme of works and adhering rigidly to a fixed schedule is essential in any successful self-build. Losing control of the project and straying from the timetable is the surest way of escalating the cost of your build.

The key element in establishing a works programme is an awareness of the separate trades required as well as an understanding of the nature and scope of the work that each element entails. Commencement dates and a timeframe for completion of each of the trades needs to be established and all the separate trades need to be carefully co-ordinated onsite. All



A detailed works programme is vital in ensuring proper co-ordination of all the separate tasks involved and to make sure the necessary materials needed are ordered in a timely and delivered to site when required.

the main trades should be appointed before the commencement of construction and fully briefed on their particular responsibilities, including the completion schedule and who they should hand over to once their task has been completed.

Works Programme

A detailed works programme is vital in ensuring proper co-ordination of all the separate tasks involved and to make sure that the necessary materials needed are ordered in a timely fashion (taking account of all lead times) and delivered to site when required. Devising a works schedule and agreeing on suitable dates for each of the tradespeople involved is no easy task and a meeting (or zoom call!) with the entire professional team will most likely be required to try to work out and co-ordinate the schedules and availability of the respective team members. Cost conscious self-builders should also resist the temptation to drive too hard a bargain with contractors on price as your project is likely to slip down their list of priorities and their level of commitment may diminish.

A programme of works is usually divided into two principal sections with the first

focusing on the overall project planning from the purchase of the site, consultation with design professionals and submission of the planning application, right through to the date scheduled for completion of the on-site works. The second section involves onsite management of the construction itself. Bear in mind that the average self-build takes around fourteen months from inception to completion and even longer if there are complications with the planning process. The actual build usually takes around eight months.

There are a variety of cost-effective and user-friendly programmes available from Microsoft and other software developers that can assist self-builders to create a dependable works programme. They allow users to enter the various phases of the project and the timeline for completion of the various tasks associated with each stage of the self-build. Many self-builders find these tools invaluable in helping to plan and maintain control over a project. A standard document is also available from the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland (RIAI) which helps self-builders to map out the whole process and the duration of each stage of the build.

Hiring an Architect

Self-builders daunted by the time commitment and scale of responsibility involved in taking on the project management entirely by themselves should hire professionals or assign an architect to assume all or part of the project management role. This still allows a self-builder to contribute to the design and planning of their home while reducing the stress and headaches associated with project managing the entire process. It also allows the self-builder to benefit from the expertise of tried and tested professionals.

Many self-builders report that hiring a professionally qualified and registered architect was the best investment they made and architects are frequently credited with helping to drive down the overall costs of a self-build. Firstly, you need to determine the extent of the role you want the architect to fulfil and whether they are being hired to run the entire project right through to completion or whether they are simply required to produce a set of drawings.

While architects are known for their design skill, knowledge of materials, and their



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ability to interpret your vision creatively and imaginatively, they also offer project management expertise and can assist in establishing a viable brief and a budget for the project. In addition, they can guide you through the planning process, appoint suitable contractor and sub-contractors, liaise and manage other consultants and professionals hired on the project as well as establishing a suitable programme of works, monitoring the budget and managing/overseeing the construction contract.

It is advisable to obtain recommendations from friends, neighbours, work colleagues and other contacts whom you can trust when hiring an architect or any other construction professional for that matter. You should inspect their prior work, ask for references and make sure your architect has the necessary experience in all aspects of the project they are being employed to undertake. It is also recommended that you employ an architect that is registered with the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland (RIAI). This provides additional security as it certifies that the practice complies with strict criteria in terms of quality standards and professional conduct

and will also have the necessary insurance and health & safety provisions in place. The RIAI will also be able to arbitrate in the event of a dispute between you and your architect.

The majority of architects are open to participating in an initial consultation without any obligation or fee. You should treat this as a first interview and the exercise will provide a good indication of their design expertise, experience and suitability for the role. It will also be beneficial in helping you decide whether you will be able to establish a good working relationship with your prospective architect – a critical ingredient in any self-build. To make the most of this initial meeting, it helps to create a design brief and see how the architect responds to your ideas and vision. The brief for the initial consultations does not have to be complicated and basic information such as the number of rooms, the layout and your preferred architectural styles ought to be sufficient. The general rule of thumb is that if you are impressed by their portfolio, the likelihood that the architect will be capable of matching your expectations are high.

When you have hired the architect, they should

be briefed as extensively as possible about the project and made aware of key factors, including the budget available, your preferred design style and whether you have any special requirements for the build. The architect will take your initial project brief (ideas, requirements and budget) and the site information and develop various design options for you to consider. It is therefore essential that the brief provided to the architect is as detailed and comprehensive as possible. The architect will need to understand your lifestyle to better reflect your vision and principal requirements.

Architects' fees are usually calculated as a percentage of the total cost of the work and fees range from around 8% to 15% depending on the scale of the job. Write down details of stage payments to the architect and never agree to pay the full fee up front.

Appointing a Contractor

Your architect will generally be able to recommend a choice of dependable builders, but you should also carry out your own research and apply the same broad rules as were used when selecting the architect, namely inspect prior work and look for references.

Make sure to acquire confirmation of the builder's credentials and reputation and ensure that they are of strong financial standing. Bear in mind that building standards vary and you shouldn't necessarily assume that the lowest quotation represents the best value.

It is particularly important to ensure that any builder you employ possesses liability insurance for their work in case something does go wrong and also that they are covered by their own insurance for Health & Safety on the site. They should be registered with HomeBond, the scheme set up by the Construction Industry Federation and operated by the National House Building Guarantee Company. If a builder is a member of the Irish Home Builders' Association (IHBA), they will automatically be HomeBond registered and the self-builder is therefore protected by three vital guarantees: namely against the loss of a deposit in the event of the builder going bust; against water and smoke damage for two years after completion; and against major structural defects for ten years after completion.

All Irish lenders now require HomeBond registration on new houses, which is certified by HomeBond Certificate HB47. When you enter into an agreement with a builder, you should immediately receive the HomeBond Form HB10 incorporating the guarantee, and you should ensure that your solicitor receives this document at the earliest possible stage.

Binding Contract

It is important that you have a written contract prepared for all your contractors which details what is required and the quality of the materials that are to be used. In addition to specifying the precise requirements and expectations, it should stipulate the agreed fee and establish payment schedules. Spend extra time going diligently through all your requirements to ensure you do not face unexpected hitches further down the road when you discover costly items that need to be added which were not part of the original agreement. The contract should also specify the timetable for completing the job, but it should also allow for reasonable delays which might arise due to severe bad weather or unforeseen circumstances. Always ensure that contractors are paid on time as per the agreement.

Self-builders are usually expected to pay a deposit of up to 10% of the agreed price and subsequently instalment payments are made at fixed stages of the construction process, e.g. on completion of the external walls, the roof and the wiring. The architect will value the work as it progresses and advise you, by way of 'architect's certificates of payment due', how much is owed to the builder. Ensure you have all work inspected by your architect (or suitably qualified professional) before making any payments. In any event, HomeBond's own inspectors will be required to see the work at certain stages, generally after when the foundations have been opened, when the drains are available and also upon final completion of the project.

Before the project is completed and signed off, the architect "snags" the building, which is essentially a detailed inspection to check that the building work has been completed properly and that everything is working as it should be. At that stage, you are free to complete final payments to your builder and architect and take possession of your new home.



The Builders Contract

You should obtain written quotations from several builders before signing a contract. Once you have chosen a builder, your architect will prepare the contract documents, which will include a 'form of contract' and a set of drawings and specifications. These will be sent to the builder for completion. The builder will then provide you with a programme for the job, indicating the projected start and finish dates and evidence that he holds the insurance required under the contract.

The contract should include a detailed building description and a list of the materials to be used (with references to the architect's plans), the exact location of the building on the plot, the building and payment schedule (which must be made in stages according to building progress), a penalty clause for late completion, the retention of a percentage -typically 10% of the building costs - for up to 12 months as a guarantee against defects, and an explanation of how any disputes will be settled.

Ensure that the contract includes all costs, including the architect's fees (unless contracted separately), landscaping (if applicable), all permits and licences, and the connection of utilities (electricity, gas, etc.) to the house, not just to the building site. The only extra is usually the cost of the mains water connection.

Before accepting a quotation, you should have it checked by a consultant, quantity surveyor or architect to confirm that it is a fair deal. Check whether the quotation is an estimate or a fixed price, as sometimes the cost can escalate wildly as a result of contract clauses and changes made during building work. A fixed-price contract isn't usual in one-off projects, because the scope of the work required frequently changes during the project. It is, however, possible to have a fixed-rate contract whereby the unit cost of each element in the project is fixed against inflation. Finally, it is vital to have a contract checked by a solicitor, as they're often heavily biased in the builder's favour.

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Let the Build Begin

To help aspiring self-builders understand the construction process involved in a masonry or timber-frame home, Homevalue Lifestyle presents a step-by-step guide which details ten different stages of a typical self-build.

Site Clearance and Preparation

Once all of your planning and preparatory work is in place, you can finally start to get your hands dirty and begin the building process. The first task is to erect signs indicating that construction activity is scheduled to commence on the site and informing anyone entering the site of the potential hazards and the health and safety procedures which should be adhered to. It is advisable to request that hard hats are worn on-site at all times.

During this first stage of construction, a surveyor or engineer will typically set out the site. Boundary fencing is erected and entrances and exits to and from the site are clearly demarcated and sign-posted for passing traffic. Secure on-site storage needs to be put in place together with all the necessary facilities and services for your tradespeople. You also need to ensure that you have all the machinery on-site for the job ahead.

First, the site where the house is going to be erected is prepared and cleared of debris and vegetation and the topsoil stripped entirely. This soil can be set aside and used later for landscaping. The site will need to be marked properly and the levels checked by the architect or engineer.

You will most likely need to hire a digger as well as a skip to dispose of rubble or rubbish from the site and electricity will also be needed.



Consideration of the building's orientation at the design stage of the build enables natural heat and light to be directed towards specific rooms of the house throughout the day. The quality of the glazing and the size of the windows are also key factors to consider.

Hiring a generator is often the best option to avoid any lengthy delays waiting for an ESB connection, particularly if you're in a rural area.

Foundations & Substructure

Once the site has been fully prepared and set, work can begin on the substructure of the house. Also known as the foundations, the substructure is the lower portion of the house that transmits the load of the superstructure onto the supporting soil. This is a crucial element of the build and it can cause severe problems further down the line if not carried out correctly. Make sure that the foundations are laid down by qualified professionals and that a certified engineer or architect is on hand to ensure the job is done correctly.

Before digging any trenches, you should first identify the locations of all the necessary service pipes, including drainpipes, electrics, gas and phone pipes. You also need to make sure that the walls of the trenches have not collapsed and that there is no water or loose material present. If necessary, reinforce the sides to prevent them from collapsing onto the poured concrete later on.

The site is marked out using wooden pegs and string to indicate the level for the concrete foundation. Marking out the foundation levels and correct wall lengths is a key element of the build because it sets the base upon which the entire structure sits. Once the site is accurately marked out, the ground-workers begin excavating the foundations and placing reinforcement bars, mesh or cages required in the trenches. Any compressible material or slip membranes being used are also positioned within the trenches and the ducts are laid to enable access for services through the foundations.

Excavation for the foundation must be carried out according to the building regulations and needs to be inspected by the architect or builder's engineer before further work can continue. The time required to complete this phase varies depending on the plot you are dealing with and the technique you are using. The majority of self builders will start with the trench fill technique which works best with stable ground such as clay and chalk soils. Trench fill foundations also avoid the need for bricklaying below ground, which saves time and expense.



The volume of concrete needed for the foundations is calculated before the commencement of the construction phase but it is generally recommended that the concrete poured should have a strength of at least 25 N/mm² for house foundations reinforced with RSB's (Reinforced Steel Bars).

The volume of concrete needed for the foundations is calculated before the commencement of the construction phase but it is generally recommended that the concrete poured should have a strength of at least 25 N/mm² for house foundations reinforced with RSB's (Reinforced Steel Bars). Make sure that the engineer or architect has specified the precise level needed and check the strength on paperwork before the concrete is poured.

After the concrete foundation is poured, it is time to install the damp proof course and radon barrier. The damp protection course is to prevent any moisture from rising into the walls and damaging the house. This is done by positioning a layer of damp proof course (DPC) in the wall, usually between 150 to 225mm above the ground on the outside of the cavity wall. Make sure that the DPC is positioned correctly in the cavity wall to stop any damp rising in the walls. DPC is available in a variety of sizes and it is also used for protection against damp around lintels, cills, windows, doors and anywhere else that is needed.

Otherwise, if you have an unusual plot shape or are planning to build on less stable ground, strip foundations may be the better option. Popularly used in Ireland, this method entails the foundations being poured into strips that cover the base for all external and internal

walls, chimneys or any other load-bearing structure. Strip foundations essentially spread the load of the build over a greater area and provide stability to a more complicated plot. A sloping site, for example, can benefit from stepping the foundation to maintain the level.

The placement of a radon membrane covering the whole area of the floor of the house and wrapped around the foundation is now mandatory in Ireland. It prevents the penetration of radon, a radioactive gas that can cause lung cancer, into the building and it is

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required on all new homes under the building regulations. Radon is prevalent in some parts of the country and if you build a house on top of radon-rich soil there is a possibility of dangerous levels building up within the structure. For an average house, the cost of fitting the barrier is between €800 to €1500.

Next comes the concrete slab which can be poured on precast using either beam and block or hollow core slabs - a more expensive option - as they have to be craned in.

Finally, the foundation blockwork is completed, and foundation cavities are backfilled up to ground level before the concrete slab oversite is poured to seal it all and create the ground floor structure. The foundation works will have to be signed off by an architect or engineer before any work above ground can continue.

This is also the ideal time to lay down pipes and await connection on the dates due. ESB and Eir can advise in this regard but generally, any outside pipes are made of PVC although concrete pipes to the correct measurement can

also be used if greater strength and durability is required. A heavy-gauge black pipe with either brass or plastic connections is recommended for water connections. They are very easy to connect and leak-proof if installed properly. If you are installing underfloor heating, bear in mind that the pipes must be placed in the floor before the final floor finishes are completed.

Starting the Superstructure

It's now time to begin work on the superstructure and first-floor structure. Effectively the frame that will support the house, the superstructure is that part of the building which lies entirely above ground level. Scaffolding will be required during this phase of construction and with efficient time management and scheduling, the hire period can be kept to a minimum and unnecessary expense avoided. The weather will also be a factor in determining the length of time that the scaffolding will be required.

In timber frame construction, the exterior and interior walls are delivered in the form of large pre-manufactured sections ready to be assembled on site. In a cavity wall construction,

The superstructure and first-floor structure is effectively the frame that will support the house. Scaffolding will be required during this phase and with efficient time management and scheduling, the hire period can be kept to a minimum to avoid unnecessary cost. The weather will also be a factor in determining the length of time that scaffolding will be required.

SELF-BUILD GUIDE



both the exterior and interior walls are built up simultaneously with the insulation and wall ties are placed as the height progresses. The external walls of the lower storey are built up to the first-floor level first before placing timber beams, spanned across the inner walls to form a frame for the floor. Insulation is placed inside the floor frame which is covered on top by chipboard or plywood, making it easier for tradespeople to cut their pipes and wires into the timber.

Another option is beam and block floors which are increasingly popular and offer all the advantages of a concrete floor with the ease of construction of a timber floor. The floor is made of beams that are spanned across the inner walls, similar to the timber beams, but they are then filled with concrete blocks that sit in position

within the beam providing a solid and even floor.

The walls of the house of a cavity wall construction require a gap of at least four inches between the outer and the inner walls. The exterior walls for most construction types are generally the same and there is little discernible difference in appearance between a concrete and a timber-framed construction from the outside. For concrete homes, the inner wall is typically made of concrete blocks while for timber frame homes, it is usually made of a timber frame structure.

Insulation is added to the cavity wall to stop the cold air from passing through to the inside and the building regulations have a minimum requirement for the level of insulation to be

placed in the walls. There are different forms of insulation used, ranging from panels to injected full fill beads and the more you place in the walls, the less heat loss and the less it will cost you for heating.

As construction progresses up to roof level, lintels are placed across the top of the structural openings that have been reserved for the doors and windows to support the weight of the masonry above and ensure that there is no weight load on doors and windows. There are two main types of lintels generally used in Irish self builds, namely precast concrete lintels and pressed metal lintels.

The sills, the sections which the windows sit on and which channel the water away from the bottom of the window, are also added as the shell is built and self-builders have the option of traditional concrete sills or the more recent PVC varieties which are now available from most window suppliers. It is also advisable to apply a waterproofing material such as damp proof course to the sills for added protection.

When the superstructure reaches roof height, a timber wall plate is installed at the top of the masonry wall and bedded down with proprietary wall plate straps, ready for the roof to be fitted into place.

Meanwhile, work on the load-bearing walls downstairs should be gathering pace. In block-built homes, the most common method of constructing the internal walls is to use blockwork for the load-bearing walls, and timber stud work for walls that are not bearing any weight. This generally means blockwork for the walls downstairs and timber stud work upstairs, although roof trusses generally transfer all the weight to the external walls. The downside of using blockwork for internal walls is that it is much heavier and usually requires extra support at floor level. You may need to add foundations or beams or use a reinforced flooring system strong enough to support blockwork walls.

One of the main reasons people use blockwork for internal walls is that it offers better soundproofing between rooms. Stud walls simply comprise a frame of timber or metal studs secured to the floor, ceiling and walls,



The second fix stage is all about making sure that items fixed to the walls or floor are properly installed. Outstanding tasks typically include hanging doors and fitting balustrades and handrails to stairs and landing. Locks will be cut and handles added. Appliances will be fitted, plumbed and connected and smoke detectors installed. The electricians will also be completed and all light fittings, switches and sockets fitted.

which is then covered with plasterboard. There should be some sort of insulation placed in the gaps to retain heat and help with the soundproofing. It is also advisable to place a waterproof membrane in front of the insulation on both sides to stop any form of dampness from penetrating the walls.

Raising the Roof, Chimney and Gables

After the first-floor structure has been completed and the wall plate anchored, it's time to finish the roof, the chimney (if applicable) and the gable ends which are the two sloping sides that meet at the top of the roof to form a triangle. The first task is the installation of the roof trusses, a popular choice of framing in self-builds due to its cost-effectiveness and design flexibility.

During the design phase, you will have decided whether to opt for a cut roof - which requires every length of wood required for the frame of the roof to be measured, cut and placed on-site, or whether to choose prefabricated roof trusses, designed to a self builder's exact specifications

and delivered directly to your site, thus saving time, reducing waste and providing greater cost certainty. There are a variety of roof trusses to choose from depending on your plans for the roof space. Attic trusses, for example, enable you to extend your living space with a room-in-the-roof while raised tie trusses will provide a higher ceiling.

The plumber will install the water tank in the attic and any carcassing required for the dormer window will be applied before the roof if necessary before the trussed rafters or roof trusses are spaced and secured. A waterproof membrane is placed and secured over the roof frame and fixed into place with battens, long thin pieces of wood which are nailed into the truss below. Until recently, this was usually a felt material but improved products are now more commonly used, including breathable membranes which allow the roof to breathe and negate the need for traditional ventilation.

Battens are the support system for the tiles or slates and they must all be nailed to the wood and clipped on to the one next to it. The top of



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From the hands-on familiarity of brick-and-block to the ultra-fast build speeds and airtightness of structural insulated panels, there are different advantages to every system.

the roof is finished off with ridge tiles which cover both sides of the roof's top row of tiles. If you have different levels or joining roofs, you will need to place lead between the levels or between the wall and the last tile on each row to help with the joint. This forms an extra layer of waterproofing.

Next up, the fascia, soffits and bargeboards are affixed and the gutters and downpipes are added. The fascia covers the end of the wood at the bottom of the roof and allows the air to flow safely through the membrane for ventilation. They are now generally made of uPVC although wooded fascia can also be purchased.

PVC, aluminum or copper guttering is then attached to the fascia so that the water is directed away from the building and flashing is applied around vents, chimneys, dormers and skylights.

Sealing your Self-Build

This next phase incorporates all the steps required to complete the house envelope and make it watertight and airtight. The windows

and external doors are put in place and soffits and fascias are affixed over porch roofs or bay windows. External render is also applied during this phase.

Windows are a crucial feature and provide ventilation, insulation, and natural light, all of which are important features in a high quality, energy-efficient self build. Consideration of the building's orientation at the design stage of the build enables natural heat and light to be directed towards specific rooms of the house throughout the day. The quality of the glazing and the size of the windows are also key factors to consider.

Triple glazing retains more heat than double glazing and improves the thermal efficiency of a building. It also improves the homes acoustic performance, reducing noise from outside of the home, and it reduces the risk of condensation.

PVC windows and doors are used most commonly in Irish self-builds. A robust and durable option that can last a lifetime, they feature a PVC coating that protects them against any rust, rot or cracking. uPVC windows and doors are engineered and

contain multiple chambers within the frame to prevent heat transfer.

However, despite being the more modern building material, uPVC doesn't necessarily have the edge over wooden windows when it comes to energy efficiency. Timber is a naturally insulating material and will keep out the cold during the winter extremely well. Hardwood windows remain popular in Ireland and the technology and the quality of the hardwood used by manufacturers today has greatly enhanced their strength and durability.

Wood is a natural heat conductor. It is 400 times more effective as insulation than steel and 1800 times more effective than aluminium. Wood is also naturally sound absorbent, as well as being the most environmentally friendly of the major materials used in today's building industry.

Provided you check the certifications of the windows and doors you are using there should be no appreciable difference in performance between uPVC and timber. As long as the windows are fitted to a high standard and



the frames are properly sealed to the walls of your property — and the glazing units within — they are broadly on par in relation to the performance of their key functions.

The energy efficiency of a window has much more to do with the specification of the glazing unit inside the frame than the frame itself. Well-designed windows will have similar ratings for thermal efficiency regardless of frame material.

Otherwise, if uPVC or wood is not to your liking, you can opt for aluminium which is available in a variety of colour choices including traditional silver as well as white and bronze anodized. Aluminum is still used in some Irish self-builds but not as frequently as wood or PVC.

The external wall finish provides a further line of defense against the elements. You can keep it simple with a plaster finish consisting of sand and cement mixed with a waterproofer or you can choose from a wide range of new cladding options. Alternatively, you can opt for render or paint in the latest finishes to create a vibrant, modern home with the added benefit of a practical weatherproofing guard.

Cladding is a skin of material added to a structure for protection and decoration. Both manmade and natural materials are used as cladding and

there is also an increasing number of timber cladding options that require little to no aftercare. While most cladding materials are dry and fixed to the home with screws or fittings, render is a wet coat applied much like plaster. Similar to render are roughcast and pebbledash, where the render is reinforced with pebbles or gravel, to create a hardwearing layer over the home. This is often seen on coastal homes where weather resistance is a high priority.

Natural stone finishes have become popular in recent years and are achieved by placing a layer of natural stone in front of the external block wall. Real stone cladding must be cut into shapes and placed by a professional stonemason and many self-builders prefer to use ready cut stones which are easier and faster to erect.

Durability should be a key consideration in deciding what finish to use and a little bit extra spent on better quality materials at the outset could save you a lot of money in the future.

Time for the First Fix

Once your build is watertight, work can commence on the first fixes, a series of structural and foundational work carried out by your carpenter, plumber and electrician. Generally, the first fix is all the work required to be undertaken before plastering and other internal wall work is done and it includes the installation of electrical wiring, pipework for water, gas and any air-conditioning (HVAC) distribution required.

Before any of the first fixes are done, you need to make sure that all the chasing in the building has been done for all your electric wires and plumbing pipes and you need to decide exactly where you want all your light switches, sockets, wall lights, plumbing pipes, phone lines, computer networking, tv/satellite and any other wire or pipe that must go into the walls. You also have to decide on how high or how low you wish the access points to be on them and all the locations have to be marked clearly.

The electrician will position all the relevant power points and insert back boxes for the sockets and switches while the external wiring for lighting and security features will also be put in place and cables will be extended out to external areas, such as the garage, patio or decking areas, as required.



The plumber will position the pipework for water supply and wastewater drainage and lay the hot and cold feeds for taps and outlets. Underfloor heating is also put into place at this stage as is the ducting for the radiators and the mechanical ventilation and heat recovery unit (if applicable) are added.

Make sure that pipes are laid flat and not twisted and that every pipe is lagged. Refuse to accept any substandard workmanship and check that there are no gaps in the lagging on the pipes which can cool the water down before it gets to its destination and cost you more money in heating bills in the future. If you are having radiators, now is the time to add any extras before your top floor is put down. All of the kitchen, bathroom and utility pipes and drains should also be put into place.

The carpenter will also be required at this stage to complete a variety of structures including the skirting, timber flooring, staircases, integrated storage and others. Other carpentry tasks undertaken at this point typically include the addition of door frames, attaching the battens for plasterboard ceiling as well as the studwork and other carpentry required for partition walls.

Although laminate floors can be laid by almost anyone, wooden floors, ceilings and wall panels should be laid by professionals. If the floor is to be screeded, a plasterer will most likely be required. Screed's that are bonded directly on to an oversite or concrete base can be as thin as 50 mm. Those that are on top of insulation have to have a minimum thickness of 65 mm.

Meanwhile, bricklayers can work on building the fireplace if it's required or any decorative brickwork can be completed.

Once the first fix has been completed and checked, any work required on the external plumbing and electrical work can commence and elements such as gutters, wastewater system, and any electrical inputs or outputs that might need attention are completed.

Fit-out & Finishes

The internal fit-outs generally take place at the same time that the plastering occurs and immediately before the second fix stage which is when all the internal fittings such as light switches and sanitary ware are fitted. During this phase, the kitchen and the bathrooms, including the-suites are installed and attic insulation is laid down.

Triple glazing retains more heat than double glazing and improves the thermal efficiency of a building. It also improves the homes acoustic performance, reducing noise from outside of the home, and it reduces the risk of condensation.

Next on the to-do list is plastering the walls and adding plasterboard to the ceiling, which is generally an arduous task. After plastering the skirting boards, architrave and doors all need to be placed and built-in units like kitchens, wardrobes, storage shelves, bathroom cupboards and should be finished.

Don't skimp on the joinery inside your new home and ensure that all the carpentry work is completed to a high standard. This phase of construction is frequently underestimated in self-build budgets but it can also be a stage where hidden extras mount



up which throw your budget off-kilter. So, prepare your costings accordingly.

You are now ready for the second fix stage which is about making sure all the items that are fixed to the walls or floor, including items such as sockets, light fixtures, security alarms etc., are properly installed. Outstanding tasks typically include hanging doors onto doorframes and fitting balustrades and handrails to stairs and landing. Locks will need to be cut and handles need to be added. The appliances will be fitted, plumbed and connected and

smoke detectors are installed.

The electrics will also be completed and all light fittings, switches and sockets fitted while the fuse board and alarm system are also installed. By the end of this fix, you should have running water, flushing toilets and working sinks and the heating system should be ready to switch on.

There's Always a Snag List

When the project is finished, you need to go around the house and make a list of all the things that have not been completed properly or

to your satisfaction. Go from room to room and write down every snag you find. Things to look out for include water leaks, uneven plasterwork, crooked sockets, poor loft insulation or cracked tiles. This is a standard element of the process so don't be afraid to include even the smallest item or gripe on your list.

Depending on the quality of the fit and finish, the snagging stage could either be quick or slow, but it is equally important to any other stage of the build, particularly if you note any faults that could have health and safety repercussions. After the snag list is complete



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it is passed to the building contractor or project manager who have to make sure that everything is rectified to your satisfaction. Do not make the final payment until all the jobs have been completed to the standards required.

At this stage, you will also need to have a SEAI registered assessor carry out a Building Energy Rating (BER) to assess your new home's energy performance.

Completion and Post-Contract Work

Once the items identified in the snag list have

been resolved to your satisfaction it's time for a final building inspection. Your builder will send you copies of all the warranties and certificates outlined in your contract together with a written declaration confirming that your new home is safe to move into.

Your contract should have acknowledged a six month "defects period" during which you can fully test the heating and plumbing systems and get any problems rectified. Once the defects period is over you can arrange the final certification.

Moving In

You will need to advise your local authority of completion to arrange a council tax evaluation, and don't forget to change your insurance to a homeowner's policy to protect your finished home.

Congratulations, you have your keys in hand and all that remains is to begin decorating and start packing to move into your new home.



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THE WAVIN WAY

You may think you know Wavin but even then you may not have the complete picture.

Wavin has been part of the fabric of Ireland since 1958 providing pioneering plastic pipe solutions for above and below ground building applications. Today the company is the clear market leader in their field.

Wavin is well known as a manufacturer of quality, certified, below ground drainage solutions covering sewer applications. This includes pipework and fittings and access junctions and larger inspection chambers. The Wavin Access Junction, or WAJ, is still the product of choice in the trade and amongst contractors due to its ease of installation and reliability – install it and walk away and importantly as a homeowner it's design prevents blockages. When you walk around your house and see the PVC covers in the ground, you can rest assured when you see it's Wavin. The company's sewer portfolio meets the requirement of both the Irish Building Regulations and Irish Water's Code of Practice and all products are independently certified.

Staying below the ground, modern design requirements stipulate that buildings manage excess water to prevent flooding. Wavin's rainwater systems (StormLine, SquareLine, RoundLine, DeepLine)) add aesthetically to the outside of a home and function efficiently to channel water into the sewer system. When wider management is



required for stormwater, Wavin offer their AquaCell range for use where excess water needs to be stored and gradually released or attenuated if a soakaway is not possible. Sustainability is important, not just for the application of these products but also their materials of construction, and as a consequence, the AquaCell range is made from recycled PVC, designed to achieve a cleaner and safer environment.

If you are building a house, don't just stop outside or out of sight when it comes to the Wavin portfolio. When you move inside the house Wavin provides soil and waste systems in either push-fit or solvent weld. If noise might be an issue, there is an acoustic range (Wavin AS+) and if space is tight, there is a compact range (Wavin Compact Soil & Waste).

Whatever the requirement, Wavin should be your first port of call. For plumbing around the house, the popular Hep2O flexible push-fit plumbing system enables quick and easy installation and comes with a 50-year guarantee. Alternatively, the press-fit system Tigris K1 is available where larger sizes (up to 75mm) are required. In either case, don't overlook combining with the HepVO Trap for sinks and baths which is waterless so won't fail due to leakage or evaporation and prevents foul odours from entering the home.



When it comes to home heating, many homes today are increasingly using underfloor heating. Wavin has a portfolio of UFH solutions incorporating Hep2O flexible plumbing pipe or Tigris K1, complete with all accessories and controls, even with the option of an app to manage everything from your phone with their Sentio System. Wavin: building healthy, sustainable environments.



Self-Build Tips

What are the secrets to a successful self-build and how do you avoid the typical pitfalls? Homevalue Lifestyle shares some tips to help make building your home as smooth as possible.

Site Knowledge

Get as much information about the site as possible from the beginning. Familiarise yourself with the local council planning requirements and any restrictions that may apply in your area. Deal with your planning conditions and resolve any problems as quickly as possible. If necessary, consider employing the services of a planning consultant. You should delay purchasing any materials until all the planning is finalised. Once planning permission is granted make sure you have adequate insurance cover in place for the site and the build.

Planning is Everything

Many self-builders make the mistake of setting unrealistic schedules and an unattainable completion target when they set out to build their dream home. There is sufficient stress involved without adding to your anxiety by setting impossible goals and objectives. Every self-build has its highs and lows and you should prepare yourself for a rollercoaster of emotions. However, you can minimize problems by careful and strategic planning throughout the entire process.

An important element of this is establishing a reasonable timeframe or you run the risk of disrupting the works schedule which will affect your borrowing requirements and potentially undermine the entire project. Allow sufficient time for possible delays in the planning process as well as contingencies for unanticipated problems.

Develop your works schedule carefully, keep records of each step of the process and take minutes of meetings, list every phone call and keep a daily diary of all events relevant to your



“While getting your home a top BER rating might require an immediate upfront investment, it will more than pay for itself over the longer term. In addition to a substantial reduction in future energy bills, it will also help to avoid the expense of a costly retrofit further down the line.”

self-build. Pay attention when creating the list of materials necessary and have it checked by the architect. Plan your delivery dates and make sure they are adhered to. Make regular progress reports noting any delays and the reasons why. Take remedial action where possible to get the project back on schedule.

Brief & Budget

Do your homework before speaking to an architect and take the time to prepare a thorough and comprehensive brief for your self-build. The architects brief is crucial to the success of the project and will save you time in the long run. The more time spent planning, researching and designing your home, the less time spent on site.

It is important to be realistic and self-builders should be rigorous when assessing the budget available. It is far better to be aware of any limitations from the outset so you can avoid disappointment further down the track and begin considering the compromises you are prepared to make.

Your architect requires the budget in order to develop a design that meets your criteria to the best extent possible at a price you can afford. In the early stages, a good architect will be able

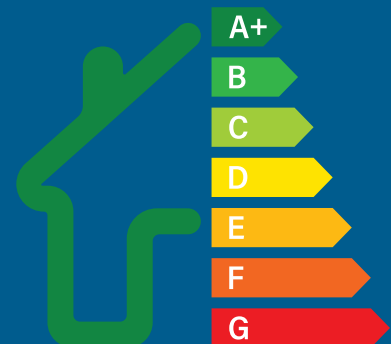
to estimate whether your budget is sufficient to match your expectations and they will not be shy about telling you if certain elements of your plan are beyond your price bracket.

Going Greener

New regulations introduced last November require new houses to comply to near-zero energy efficiency of A2 under the Building Energy Rating (BER) scheme. A2 is close to passive house standards and uses a quarter of the 100 kWh of a B2 building. It is some 70% more energy efficient than a typical house built in 2005.

Unsurprisingly, the heating costs incurred for heating an A2 home are a quarter of the costs of heating a conventional three-bed semi-detached house, according to the Department of Housing. The Department estimates that the new requirement will add 1.9% to the overall cost of building a new home.

While getting your home a top BER rating might require an immediate upfront investment, it will more than pay for itself over the longer term. In addition to a substantial reduction in future energy bills, it will also help to avoid the expense of a costly retrofit further down the line, a virtual certainty as





Governments continue to expand carbon reduction measures in the home and beyond.

A consultation with an energy expert to assist you to calculate the best options for an energy-efficient self-build can often be money well spent. They will help you to plan out the best strategy for achieving optimum energy efficiency for your specific design and budget. An A+ BER rating is not about any one single measure and it doesn't necessarily oblige you to purchase the latest array of energy renewable gadgets.

A great deal can be done at the design stage in terms of reducing air leakage, increasing insulation levels and making good use of glazing. Placing smaller windows on the north-facing portion of the house which receives less sun will reduce costs and heat loss while larger windows on the south-facing elevation will maximize solar intake. Simple decisions such as increasing the volume of insulation rather than purchasing a large solar installation might deliver more energy-saving at a lower cost.

Materials Matter

Try to aim for the best quality materials that you can afford and take the time to get as good a deal as possible on your materials. Make sure your architect's specifications provide sufficient information to quantify the precise amount of materials needed and don't settle for the first quote you receive.

Make a checklist of the materials that need to be organized before you get on-site and throughout the different stages of the build. Establish an account with reliable and trustworthy builder providers and arrange appropriate delivery schedules. Check your principal suppliers' credentials online and be aware of the long lead times on certain products like windows, which take up to six weeks to be delivered to the site. If you order them too late it will have significant consequences for your build.

Professional Team

The better the team, the better the build so you need to focus on assembling the best professional team possible. Ask for recommendations and make sure that contracted tradespeople are members of the relevant association and have appropriate certification. Check that their work is guaranteed and insured and ask to see a public liability insurance certificate. A list of licensed builders, contractors, specialist sub-contractors and tradespersons is available from the Construction Industry Register Ireland (www.ciri.ie).

You should get three quotes for everything and you need to provide contractor and tradespeople with as much information about your build as possible so that they can give you an accurate quote. Ensure that each quote includes detailed plans and costings for each aspect of your build

The better the team, the better the build so you need to focus on assembling the best professional team possible. Ask for recommendations and make sure that contracted tradespeople are members of the relevant association and have appropriate certification. Check that their work is guaranteed and insured and ask to see a public liability insurance certificate.

and compare them against your budget. Make sure to distinguish between an estimate and an accurate and precise written quotation.

Problem Solving

Keep calm and don't put problems on the long finger. You need to deal with issues as they arise and avoid allowing them to build up through the course of the project. Regardless of how trivial a problem appears you should try not to ignore any issue that arises. Small problems can quickly become bigger problems.



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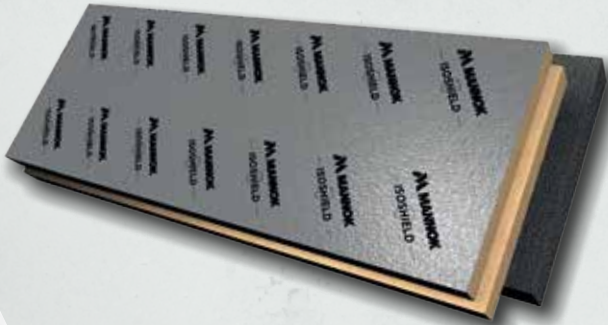
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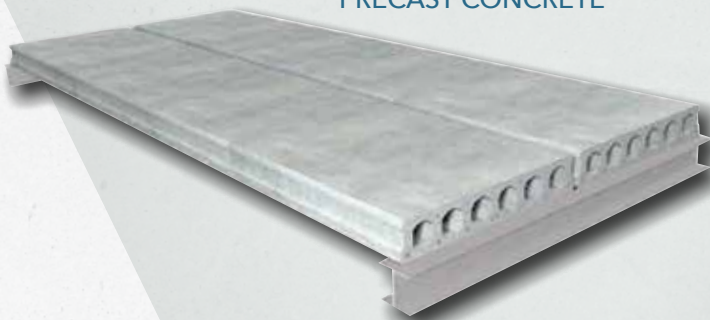
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SPOTLIGHT ON AIRCRETE

The construction landscape in Ireland has changed, and Aircrete Blocks could be the solution that's been here all along.

Mannok Aircrete Blocks (formerly Quinn Lite blocks) have become a staple fixture on building sites across Ireland, seen as a 'must-have' in key junctions by many, as the simplest means to achieving regulatory standards. Until more recently, they have almost solely been used to address thermal bridging issues at key junctions, except by those who have come to realise the full potential of thermal blocks as a much more significant part of the build.

From Germany to the UK, France to Finland and beyond, Aircrete Blocks are well established throughout Europe and the UK and have been for years, so it is hardly surprising to see the application of the same methodologies on the rise in Ireland too.

The increasing popularity of two construction methods commonplace in other such countries has put Mannok Aircrete Blocks firmly in the spotlight as a means of not only ticking a regulatory requirement, but significantly elevating the standard of build by improving the energy performance and ultimately, the comfort factor and long-term energy savings for the inhabitants.

SIMS by Mannok

SIMS (Super Insulated Masonry Solution) is the favoured methodology throughout

Europe in particular, firmly established as the construction method of choice across countries such as Germany, Belgium, France, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands and more.

SIMS is now becoming more prominent in Ireland with architects, specifiers, developers and self-builders beginning to view this as a construction method that ticks all the boxes. It's proven to be faster than cavity wall construction, cheaper than timber frame and ultimately delivers a high-performance building with relative ease, making more stringent regulatory requirements such as nZEB easily achievable and allowing us to look beyond the regulations with passive house, with net-zero standards becoming a more attainable target.

It was SIMS methodology that was used in the wall construction of Ireland's first Passive House Plus, an impressive energy-efficient build recently dubbed "a new vision of the future of housing in Ireland" by the Irish Times, which boasts energy costs of just €300 a year.

The Methodology

Single leaf masonry with external insulation SIMS by Mannok is a straightforward construction method that utilises the simplicity of single leaf masonry construction

whilst enhancing the thermal performance and weather tightness of the building.

The wall consists of a 215mm wide Mannok Aircrete Block built using either traditional sand and cement mortar or thin joint mortar externally finished with an approved external insulation system and internally finished with plasterboard on dabs or wet plaster.

Aircrete Cavity Walls

Cavity wall construction is the most common method used in building homes in Ireland and whilst other methods are increasing in popularity, cavity walls will remain the method of choice for many in the industry for some time to come.

Not all cavity walls are made equal, however. The simplest change in how we build can elevate the performance of cavity walls and result in superior comfort levels for the homeowner. The difference is a straightforward block switch in the cavity's inner leaf. With up to 35% of a building's heat loss occurring through the walls, the inclusion of Aircrete Blocks in the inner leaf of the cavity as a direct replacement of dense concrete blocks can make a significant difference.

For years they've been building the inner leaf of the cavity with Aircrete Blocks in the UK,

and it has become the standard cavity wall method for both one-off builds and housing developments alike.

Aside from the superior thermal properties the blocks offer, there is another reason dense concrete blocks in the cavity's inner leaf have been replaced in the UK: quite simply, it's easier. Their lightweight properties and ease of cutting make life much easier for the on-site crew, an added benefit often overlooked. This is perhaps the easiest win for developers and specifiers seeking to meet or exceed regulatory requirements, improving the energy efficiency of a building, but who aren't ready to move away from cavity walls just yet.

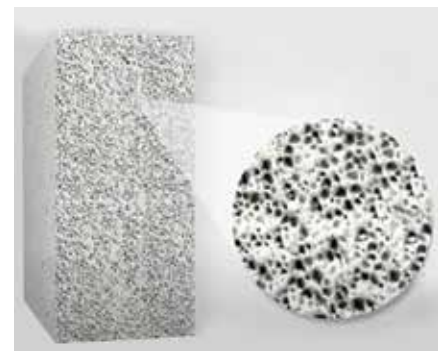
Something in the Air

The common denominator in these wall construction methods is of course the use of Aircrete Blocks. Mannok Aircrete Blocks are the only block of their kind manufactured here in Ireland, with no equivalent product on the Irish market. Their unique micro-cellular structure gives Aircrete Blocks their superior properties. Rather than a mix of heavy or lightweight aggregates used in other blocks, Aircrete Blocks get their name from the millions of tiny air pockets found within each block which are formed during the highly technical production process.

A block filled with air pockets is understandably physically much lighter, but it's far from lightweight when it comes to thermal and structural performance, on the contrary, these Aircrete blocks are the true heavyweight of thermal blocks in Ireland, insulating ten times better than standard dense concrete blocks and available in strengths up to 7.5N/mm².

Including Aircrete Blocks in the walls addresses heat loss through thermal bridging almost by default and improves the overall U-Value of the wall. The optimal thermal mass of the blocks improves heating response, so a home will heat up quicker as less heat is absorbed by the blocks.

The construction landscape in Ireland has changed, and Aircrete Blocks could be the solution that's been here all along.



The pressure to provide more housing faster is combined with the need to build better for the longer term. Tougher regulatory standards such as nZEB and a greater focus on environmental considerations mean everyone in Irish construction must take a new approach to building standards and long-term performance. And this is where Aircrete will excel.

The block itself is made with up to 80% recycled materials and was one of the very first products in Ireland to have a published

EPD by the Irish Green Building Council. It delivers superior performance in terms of long-term energy efficiency, reducing heat loss through thermal breaks by as much as 80%, all whilst meeting or exceeding strength, durability and fire performance requirements.

Decision-makers in Irish construction, from the developer to the local authority, the specifier to the self-builder, can no longer kick the can down the road. Now is the time to make a change, and based on all the evidence, Aircrete is a must-consider for us all.

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A Labour of Love

When Wexford couple Andrew Rothwell and Julie Watchorn decided to build their dream home in the sunny South-East, Andrew's previous experience in the business proved useful. With the Covid crisis looming, the couple completed the final elements of their dream home and the burden of the lockdown has been made easier with their sumptuous new property and surroundings.



PROJECT PROFILE



“Before we started, the main thing we were told was to ensure that we paid particular attention, to the foundations and the floor and wall insulation and the windows, things that you don’t immediately think about when imagining your house at the outset, but which can be difficult and extremely costly if alterations are needed.”

To claim the Irish have a penchant for owning property is a cliché bordering on a truism. Indeed, few other nations have taken the words of the great American humourist Mark Twain more to heart when he talked up the value of buying land and advised all and sundry to, “buy land, they’re not making it anymore.”

This was just part of the logic guiding Wexford couple Andrew and Julie, who shared a one-bedroomed apartment in Dublin in late 2017 when they eyed a plot of land in their native Wexford.

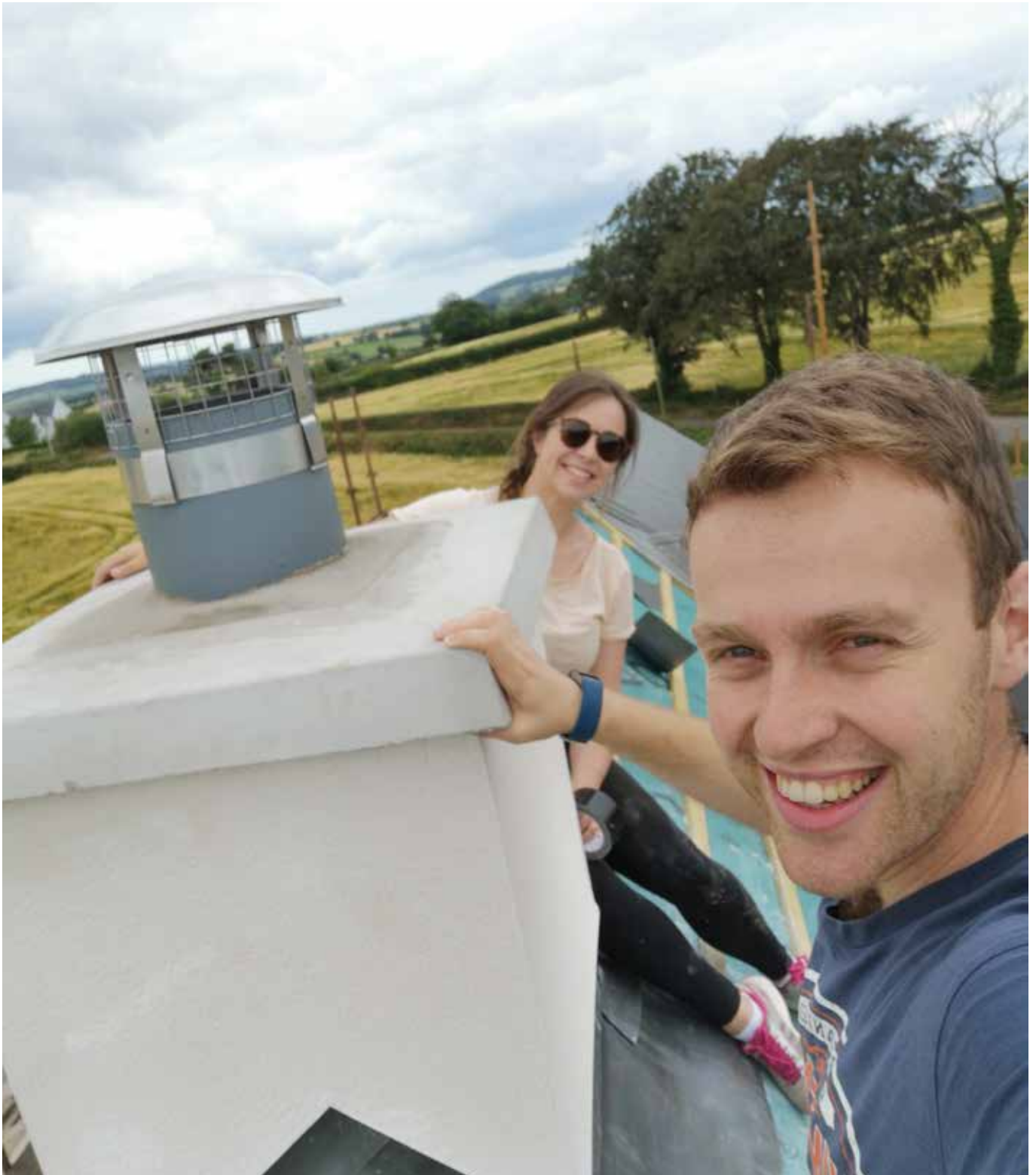
Home is where the heart is, of course, and the emotional connection of their home county, the sunny South-East, tugged at their heartstrings. “My family home, where I grew up is just a kilometre from the site we looked at in December 2017 and Julie’s house is just a 15-minute drive away. It was curiosity as much as anything else that first persuaded us to go visit it. It was essentially just a bare field,” Andrew explains.

“We did absolutely nothing about it though for about seven or eight months because at that stage we both had good jobs in Dublin, but as the months rolled by, the site remained for sale and gradually we fell in love with the place. There were plans already made out for the house and we loved the design, the size and space. We decided that we couldn’t let the opportunity pass. The location was perfect; it was ideal for both of our families so we went to see it.”

With a background in gardening plus an interest in construction from his secondary school studies in construction and technical drawing, Andrew quickly got his teeth into the project. After the couple’s offer on the site was accepted, they set about getting approved for a bank loan.

“Luckily, we had no problems with the bank,” Andrew says. “We never came up against any stumbling blocks, although I know of other people who have had more issues. I think banks are more accustomed to people coming

PROJECT PROFILE



to them and buying newly constructed or second-hand houses and the way they work in terms of the drawdowns is obviously different for someone engaging in a self-build. In other words, they will only give out a certain amount of the funding depending on what work you've completed as opposed to handing out a lump sum. So, in that sense, the roll-out of our

mortgage by the bank differed from someone engaged in a traditional house purchase."

With their own savings and the monies from their bank in place, the couple set about putting a team in place and preparing a schedule of works as well as a list of sources for their fittings and materials.

Andrew's background in construction really kicked in here, as he knows that there are huge differences in quality as well as price depending on where you source products. While it wasn't strictly necessary to find a local supplier, Andrew felt that this helped, since he could have a more one-to-one relationship with a local store. That said, he was equally

PROJECT PROFILE



+ Floor insulation from Xtratherm, high-performance insulation with certified thermal conductivity.



aware that there may be more choice in Dublin than locally in Wexford. Happily, the perfect solution was Homevalue, with stores nearby Andrew's new home and a huge network throughout the country that could easily be tapped into.

Family & Friends

For a lot of Andrew and Julie's journey, 'family' was the operative word and their respective fathers and brothers all chipped into the project. Their experience in various tiers of the construction trade proving invaluable in getting the project up and running.

By calling on the assistance of one brother-in-law who is a structural engineer and another who works as a quantity surveyor, Andrew was quickly into his stride. By the time Julie's father, a painter and decorator, applied his extensive hands-on skills and tapped into his huge list of contacts, the Rothwell's project was galloping down the straight.



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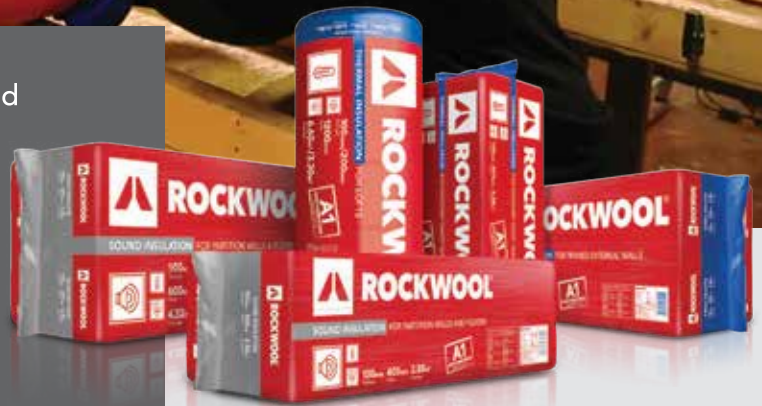
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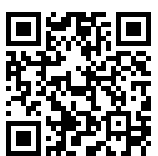
To learn more about how you can create a cosy home with ROCKWOOL stone wool insulation, visit <https://www.rockwool.com/uk/cosy-home-guide/>



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PROJECT PROFILE



+ “We wanted to get an energy-efficient property with a high BER Rating, and it is more cost-effective to make all the necessary provisions in this regard right from the start, rather than having to undertake an expensive energy retrofit at a later date. We knew it would be worth spending the money.”

The team also made great connections with various contacts at Homevalue and they are generous in their praise for the service, expertise and value they received.

From the Ground Up

“We hired someone to do the groundworks and someone else came in for the blockwork and then we had a carpenter who put up the roof and did our floors. We hired the plumbers and the electricians too. By going down that road and getting as many quotes for the work as possible, we were able to make considerable savings,” Andrew says.

“Having family on board was a big plus for us, especially because Julie and I were still working in Dublin. We were very fortunate that Des, Julie’s dad, was on-site a lot of the time, confirming things were in hand and dealing with questions that had to be answered.

“When a decision had to be made there and then, things could become stressful because we were in Dublin but having Des on hand, especially at the early stages, every morning, it was a huge help.”





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+ “Did we enjoy getting our hands dirty, of course we did! We both took a hands-on approach and got stuck in wherever we could, though the lion’s share has to be credited to Julie’s dad.”

They set out to build a “good, warm, energy-efficient house” and one in which they wouldn’t have to worry about having to pay for oil”. Due diligence was carried out by Andrew and Julie and the pair opted for an air-to-water heating system. “Using aluminium radiators with air-to-water is more efficient as they heat up quicker and at a lower temperature level,” explains Andrew. PV solar panels were also given the go-ahead.

“We consulted with a BER consultant who advised us on this area,” Andrew reveals. “We wanted to get an energy-efficient property with a high BER rating and it is more cost-effective to make all the necessary provisions in this regard right from the start rather than having to undertake an expensive energy retrofit at a later date. We knew it would be worth spending the money.

“By going with the air-to-water and the solar panels, we felt we were doing our little bit to generate our own electricity,” Andrew adds. “The air to water system is efficient because you’re not burning gas or oil. You are essentially relying on the air outside to create your heat inside. So, it’s not purely electricity that’s powering it.

“So far, we have found it very good and it keeps a lovely, even and consistent



+ Intello Air Tightness membrane used in double-height entrance hall.

PROJECT PROFILE



“Just before the outbreak of Covid, we had all the inside woodwork completed and the plastering. At that stage too, the electricians and plumbers would have done their first fix, which was carried out as we came into December.”

temperature. It was widely recommended to us but neither of us knew a great deal about it and we are just getting used to it. We wanted the house to be as comfortable as possible, for the best price possible and air to water fitted in with our overall vision. We had to aim for an ‘A’ rating which is required under the building regulations and air to water ticks the box as far as the BER rating is concerned.

“We were mindful of how we could cut our heating costs throughout the build. We spoke to our block layer and we agreed to purchase thermal blocks to cut down on the amount of heat you can lose through the floor.” We also went for solar PV panels which weren’t strictly necessary from a BER rating perspective. It’s just for electricity generation and at the moment it’s generating about 4kw per day. Obviously, we won’t feel the full benefits until the Spring and summer, which is when solar really begins to pay back.

“When it came to windows, we didn’t want chunky frames, so we had to try to strike

a balance in terms of having as much glass as possible and as little frame as possible. A lot of people now just go for triple-glazing everywhere and assume that this is best but as our window company said it’s not, you need to get the balance. When there is so much glass you need to get the balance of solar gain. So, we went with a mixture throughout the house, of double and triple glazing, depending on the location of the windows.”

Gaining Momentum

One month after turning the first sod on their site, Rothwell’s embryonic building was up to the first floor. Andrew remembers feeling particularly buoyant by the time September came around and all the windows were in place, which meant the building was watertight and ready to face the winter.

“If you take out the lockdown due to Covid 19, it took just over 12 months to build the house but, to be honest, it feels like it was a long 12 months. I couldn’t imagine having to wait five or six years to put it up. I’m glad we went for

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- + Feature staircase leading to first landing complete with Homevalue Light Oak flooring. In the loft a pull-down Oman ladder makes for easy access.

the idea of a self-build. The shell was up by September and then we started on the internal fit-out. Just before the outbreak of Covid, we had all the inside woodwork completed and the plastering. At that stage too, the electricians and plumbers would have done their first fix at that stage, which was carried out as we came into December. At that stage, we had set a date to move in but then lockdown came in and messed that up for us."

Andrew and Julie are so thankful for the the hands-on work carried out by their 'team' and they are particularly thankful to their families. "We were lucky that everything went well for us," Andrew beams. "Nothing went against us other than lockdown because the tradesman always came in pretty much when they said they would and Homevalue were totally dependable with supply and delivery dates. Again, I think that was

down to the benefit of the contacts that Des (Julie's father) had. The lads knew him on a personal basis in a lot of cases and Des has been sourcing paints from Homevalue for longer than he cares to remember!

"I've seen people who wait months on tradesmen to come back and finish bits and pieces. I think knowing who you are employing helps. To employ somebody with whom you have some contact or knowledge of invariably means they will take a little more interest in you it comes to meeting certain criteria or deadlines.

"Good friends of ours started building shortly after we did and a lot of the tradesmen we engaged were taken on by them because they could see that these guys were very good. They also sourced materials from Homevalue and were very impressed."

Home Sweet Home

The finished house occupies a floor area of 2,700 square feet and there is also a spacious two-car garage which Andrew is currently using as a workshop. At the start of the lockdown, he set up a workshop where he has placed his growing assortment of tools and equipment and he continues to do "bits and pieces around the house at the weekend". "A lot of it is still full of old timber cuts and stuff that we will eventually use to burn the fire and the stove. At this stage, I'm not sure it's ever going to see a car," he laments.

One thing is for certain, they will not be lacking for space. Upstairs, there are four bedrooms, one of which has an en-suite and there is also a family bathroom upstairs and a further bathroom at ground floor level. Downstairs, the living room, kitchen and dining area is designed in a spacious open plan

PROJECT PROFILE



+ Doors, door handles, radiators and flooring (light oak and walnut) sourced at Homevalue.



layout infused with natural light and there is a separate utility room and pantry adjoining the kitchen. A large sitting room completes the downstairs floor plan.

While many aspiring homeowners may romanticise the idea of building their dream home, for the majority, the prospect remains in the realms of fantasy. All but the hardiest and resolute are dissuaded by the perceived complexity and the sheer scale of the challenge. Were Andrew and Julie ever tempted to change course or have cause to reconsider their decision?

“No, not at all,” Andrew remarks without hesitation. “We were enthusiastic about it from the outset, and we made our minds up quite early that this was the way to go. Both of our

family homes are quite spacious, more or less a similar size to this property, so we both had the same ideas in terms of what we were looking for. We both wanted space, and this has all the rooms we wanted and they are all good sizes, so anything we were going to buy was probably going to be in and around the size of this property. I’m not saying we couldn’t have got away with something smaller, but we were happy with our decision from the start and there was never really any debate about it.”

One of the most significant deciding factors for the couple was the fact they were confident that by opting for the self-build route, they could acquire a bigger and better house and one which was more to their taste for the available budget. They kept a routine eye on Daft and MyHome,

consistently monitoring what was available in their preferred area and it reaffirmed their conviction that for the location and the kind of house they had set their mind on, there was nothing available on the market within their budget.

“We are located South of Enniscorthy and the only houses that we saw that were in any way similar were North of Enniscorthy, in and around Gorey. On the private market, we would have easily paid an extra €25,000-€30,000 beyond what it has cost us to build the same kind of property in this area, however it is very likely that it wouldn’t have the same level of specifications and finish that we chose, and it wouldn’t match the energy performance either,” he adds.

PROJECT PROFILE



**Bathroom sanitaryware
from Homevalue**



Preparation is Everything

Looking back, Andrew believes that careful and methodical preparation, assembling a good project team, preparing a detailed schedule of works and selecting the best materials from the best supplier are the vital ingredients for a successful self-build. He also advises prospective self-builders to pay attention to those items which are difficult and expensive to alter as the project progresses.

“Before we started, the main thing we were told was to ensure that we paid particular attention to the foundations, the floor and wall insulation and the windows, things that you don’t immediately think about when imagining your house at the outset, but that can be difficult and costly to remedy later.”

Andrew was mindful of the need to seek expert help and in this regard, he is full of praise for Homevalue. “The guys in Homevalue were a wealth of knowledge. They helped me to make informed decisions on which products were best suited to our needs and how to make savings while maintaining quality. As a result, Andrew sourced the bulk of his supplies from Homevalue including insulation, paint, doors, floors, bathroom sanitaryware, timber sheeting, radiators, blocks & building aggregates as well as fixtures and fittings.

“We used quite a lot of Homevalue suppliers and providers. We used Xtratherm for floor insulation, a popular,



PROJECT PROFILE



high-performance brand that we sourced from Homevalue.

For attic insulation, which is particularly important in terms of heat retention, Andrew used industry leader Rockwool. As its name suggests, Rockwool insulation is stone-based. It is sourced from lava deposits of volcanic rocks, melted in a cupola furnace like a controlled man-made volcano. As the re-melted lava comes out of the furnace, it is spun, given water repellency treatment and bound together in a wool-like fleece. Described as a “rock solid” option by Andrew, Rockwool fit the bill perfectly. “It is a breathable material allowing moisture to escape from the construction which reduces the risk of mould and bacterial growth inside,” he adds.

For pipework there was only one contender. Andrew’s knowledge of construction pointed him in the direction of Wavin, Ireland’s leading manufacturer of plastic pipes for plumbing, waste and sewer systems, roof drainage, stormwater management and underfloor heating.

Devil in the Detail

A selection of Homevalue’s own brand items were used throughout the house and Andrew is hugely impressed with the quality for the price. Wood floors are popular and for good

reason. In Andrew’s home he used Homevalue own brand laminate flooring extensively.

“Our Homevalue own brand flooring is Trend Oak which runs throughout the entirety of the upstairs. In the sitting room we chose Kinsale Walnut from Whiteriver, also sourced at Homevalue.”

Bathrooms these days have become mini-sanctuaries and Andrew was keen to combine practicality with luxury. In this regard, all sanitaryware was sourced from Homevalue with a selection of products from the Homevalue Bathroom Collection as well as items from luxury Irish brand Sonas.

“Almost all of our bathroom ware is from Homevalue’s own Bathroom Collection with some items sourced via Homevalue from Sonas. Our toilets are ‘Asselby’ from the Homevalue Bathroom Collection while vanity units are from the Sonas Otto range using Corby & Bingley Black taps.”

Showers are from Homevalue, and Andrew was particularly impressed with the quality available at very competitive prices. “The thermostatic shower kit is luxurious, aspirational and bang on trend. It works beautifully with our Sonas shower doors in Aspect Black & Chrome.”

In terms of décor, paint throughout the house was purchased at the couple’s local Homevalue store. “Using a quality brand is important in terms of the finish provided and we wanted something that was durable and easy to work with.” Andrew says.

“Julie’s father is a painter and decorator by trade, so he was able to point us in the right direction because he’s been working with paint day-in-day-out for years. We knew what we wanted in terms of the finish, so his guidance was invaluable.

“So, there is no doubt that the Homevalue connection was very helpful both in terms of the products we were able to source there and the advice and guidance they gave us. Two lads in particular were a massive help because one is an expert on the building side of things and the other is an expert on the plumbing side. Their knowledge was very helpful. I probably did their head in sometimes asking questions, but we got there and moving into the house in June last fulfilled a dream for Julie and me.”

Did they achieve their dream? A resounding Yes, Andrew says and a big shout out to his favourite supplier. “Home(value) is where the heart is,” he quips!

Follow Andrew and Julie’s journey on Instagram at Wexford_Selfbuild



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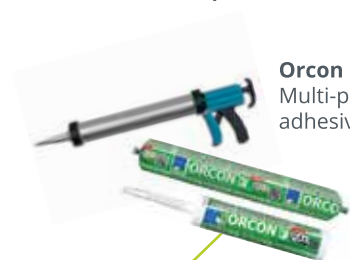
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The Low-Energy Build

One of the advantages of a self-build is that you can opt for an energy-friendly design and select the latest energy-efficient systems and technologies without having to resort to a costly energy retrofit. You can then sit back and look forward to years of reduced energy bills and a likely increase in the value of your new home.

The BER is an indication of the energy performance of a dwelling. It is calculated using Dwelling Energy Assessment Procedure (DEAP) which measures the construction material used for the property, ventilation, fuel used to provide general and water heating, thermal storage capacity and external exposure and lighting of the property.

The results are expressed in kilowatt-hours (kWh) of primary energy used for space and water heating, ventilation and lighting, per square metre of the building, per year. An

estimate of the carbon dioxide emitted, in kilograms of carbon dioxide per square metre of the building per year, is also made.

In Ireland, BER performance bands range from A1, which represents the most efficient level to G, the least efficient grade. An A1 rating is achieved where the primary energy used is between 0 and 25 kWh per square metre per year. A2 and A3 ratings are where the dwelling has a primary energy consumption of 25 up to 50 and of 50 up to 75 kWh per square metre respectively.

In achieving an A rating, energy performance will improve across multiple fronts. BER assesses not only insulation and U-Values (the measure of heat loss through the fabric of the building), but also thermal mass, air tightness, window glazing and size, boiler performance, fuel type, light bulbs, and more. Taken together, small changes in many of these make a big impact.

According to independent studies carried out on behalf of the Irish Concrete Federation, an A rated house shows a cumulative



improvement in energy performance of over 50% for over a typical 2005 building regulations dwelling. Improving a building regulation compliant dwelling to an A rating will typically reduce primary energy consumption from around 160 kWh to less than 75 kWh per square metre of building space per year.

Some measures are more cost-effective than others and most Irish architects experienced in designing energy-efficient homes favour the 'fabric first' approach, which is based upon the Passivhaus concept first developed in Germany over thirty years ago. This approach focusses on dramatically reducing energy usage in homes by directing attention to the design and construction elements of the build and making the property as airtight as possible. A central principle of passive house design is to reduce heat loss by heavily insulating the

home, creating airtight building envelopes and eliminating thermal bridges.

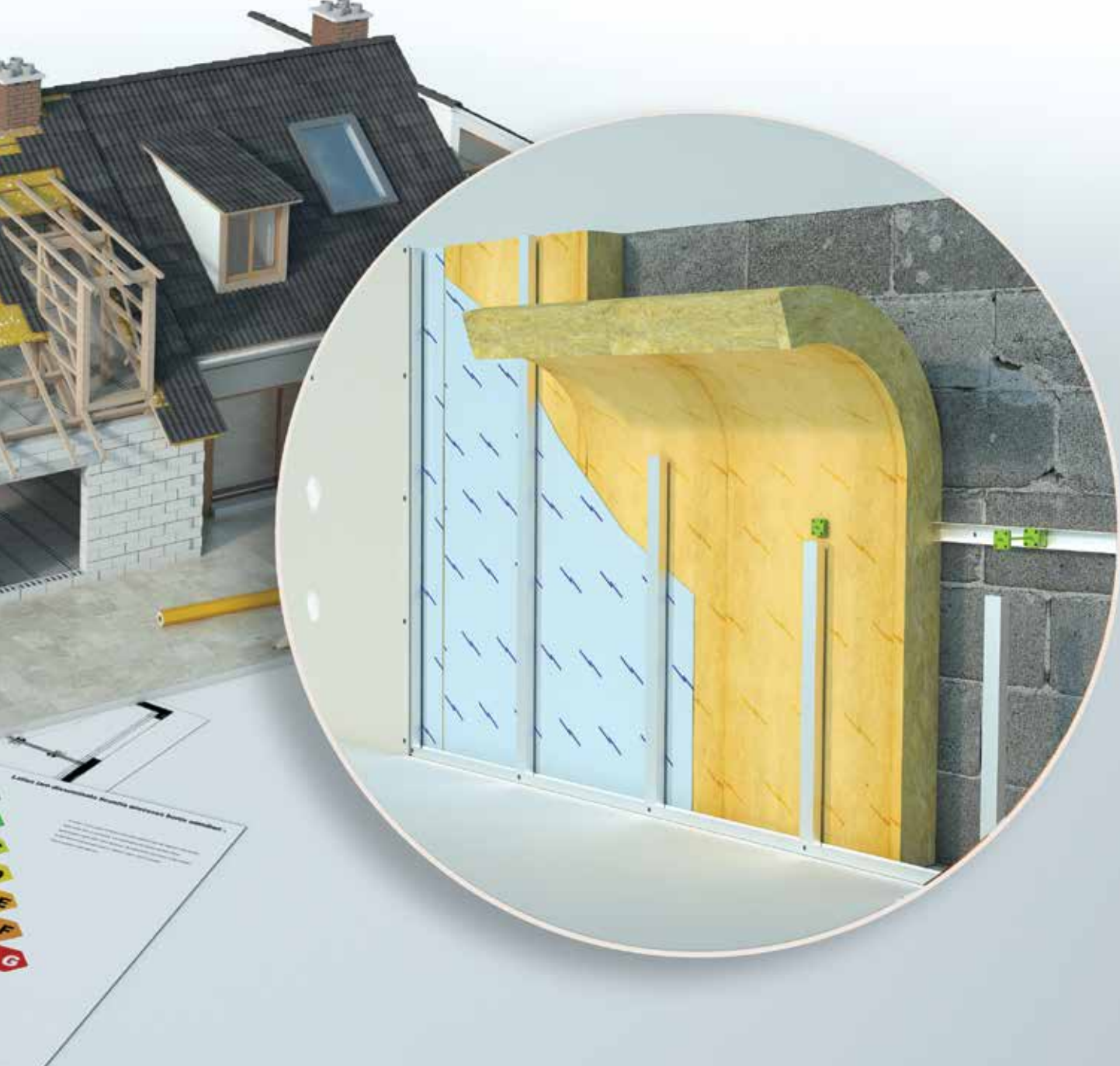
While a passive house typically costs around 8% to 12% more than a conventional house as a result of the upgraded building envelope and mechanical ventilation system, this cost will be amply repaid over the life cycle of the property as a result of reduced energy consumption and virtually non-existent heating bills.

In addition, many passive house advocates contend that a passive house can be built to the same price as a conventional home through rigorous planning and precise execution of construction and site management. In a recent study, Shane Colclough, a Research Fellow at the Centre for Sustainable Technologies at the University of Ulster investigated the costs of building an A1 rated passive house compared to a home built according

to minimum compliance under building regulations. The research was based on the case study of Madeira Oaks, a 12-unit scheme in Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford, and the answer was €132 - hardly a decisive difference.

You may not want the added complications and added stress involved in seeking Passivhaus certification but applying the core principals and adopting a 'fabric first' approach will deliver several tangible benefits, including excellent indoor air quality, a constant supply of fresh air as well as a reduction in maintenance and running costs and a dramatic reduction in energy consumption and CO₂ emissions.

By constructing the building fabric so that heat loss is reduced to the bare minimum and internal heat gains are maximised, there is less requirement for conventional heating systems and your energy needs can be met more readily



and economically by renewable technologies.

It is important to get your approach right from the beginning and designing a property according to passive house principals requires careful and detailed planning. Many of the measures adopted are relatively inexpensive but will make a significant contribution towards improving your overall BER rating.

AIRTIGHT SELF BUILD

Here are some of the steps to consider to achieve an airtight self-build.

Orientation

Most sites will facilitate the positioning of south-facing windows which can improve efficiency by 4% at minimal cost. Concrete homes of medium thermal mass can benefit particularly well, where the design promotes good passive solar gain. Consider keeping

glazing to a minimum on the north-facing elevation of your self-build and focus on insulation instead.

Windows and Doors

Most heat loss occurs through windows and doors so the decisions about the quantity and types included in your design are significant. The U-Value is the standard measure for the insulation properties of a window – the lower the numerical value, the better the insulation.

There have been significant developments in glazing in recent years and wider use of triple glazed units. Due to its increased density, triple glazing can help reduce noise and can regulate solar gain, whilst increasing thermal comfort. However, triple glazing is still approximately 10-15% more expensive than a double-glazed performance window.

Improving the U-Value for windows and external doors from 2.20 to 1.50 with, for example, triple glazing, argon-filled cavity and soft low-E glass (glass coated to minimise the amount of ultraviolet and infrared light that can pass through without compromising the amount of visible light) improves efficiency and is done easily when installing or renewing windows. This will cost around €3,000 but if the budget is tight, the best trade-off between cost and performance may be to opt for high-performance argon or krypton filled double glazing units.

Thermal Mass

A material's thermal mass is, fundamentally, its ability to absorb and store heat and it is a vital and complementary component of passive solar design. A material that has thermal mass has the capacity to absorb, store and release the sun's heat energy. Materials with high



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Homevalue



Solar panels take advantage of one of nature's most powerful resources: the energy produced by the sun. Solar panels, also known as photovoltaic systems, use semiconductor technology to convert the sun's energy into electricity that can power your home for free.

thermal mass such as brick, concrete, stone or ceramic tiles heat up slowly and then distribute their heat gradually. Their density and levels of conductivity help to keep the internal temperature of a building stable.

Materials with thermal mass should ideally be used in the floor or inside walls and located near the southern facing windows to allow the sun to shine directly on them, so they can store and gradually release the sun's heat energy.

Thermal Bridging in External Fabric

Thermal bridging around openings in the external fabric increases heat loss. Reducing the proportion of thermal bridging in the external fabric from 0.11 to 0.08 will deliver a 3% improvement in energy efficiency. Typical cost: €1000.

Increasing Insulation

One of the best ways to ensure that a new building is going to achieve a high BER score is to use proper thermal insulation. The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) estimates that up to 30% of the heat in your home escapes through the walls and another 30% through the roof. Insulating walls, attics and water tanks are common approaches but the importance of floor insulation has also been clearly established in recent years.

Replace the Open Fire

A balanced flue enclosed stove is far more energy-efficient than an open fire. Removing the open fireplace will typically result in an 11% improvement in efficiency. When the enclosed

stove is fired by a renewable fuel source, it also reduces net carbon dioxide emissions.

Improve Airtightness and a Pressurisation Test

In the absence of a pressurization test, the Dwelling Energy Assessment Procedure (DEAP) assumes a casual infiltration rate of 0.50 air changes per hour. Effective sealing around components such as windows and external door frames, electrical terminals and drainage pipes will lower rates significantly. A typical test and supervision costs between €500 and €1000 and can achieve improved efficiency calculations of 5%.

Heat and Power

Once you have taken care of the fabric of your self-build, now you can move on to consider how best to heat and power your home in the most energy-efficient manner possible.

Solar Panels: Your self-build may benefit from the use of a solar panel electricity system. These Solar Photovoltaics (PV), capture the sun's energy using photovoltaic cells and they do not require direct sunlight to work. This means energy can still be generated on cloudy days which can be used to run everyday appliances and lighting.

Heat Recovery Ventilation Systems: Where the dwelling has a high level of airtightness, contemporary whole building heat recovery ventilation systems deliver up to a 9% increase in energy efficiency. Choose a system that requires only minimal energy to operate fans.

Solar Hot Water Heating System: Solar water heaters will deliver hot water all year round, but can be particularly advantageous in summer, to replace electricity (which is assumed in DEAP to be the primary heat source).

Ground Source Heat Pump: If a renewable fuel source is not used, geothermal heating with a heat pump along with under-floor heating will significantly improve energy efficiency.

Insulate Primary Circuit Pipework: Insulating the primary circuit pipework between boiler and cylinder will typically deliver a 1% improvement in energy efficiency.

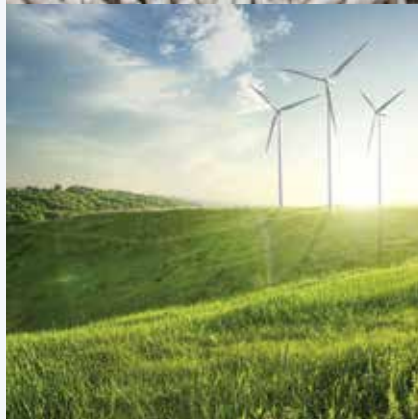
Hot Water Cylinder: Increasing the normal 35mm of cylinder insulating foam to 60mm will typically deliver a 1% improvement in energy efficiency.

Install a Wood Pellet Boiler: The efficiency improvement may be slight, but carbon dioxide emissions will be reduced significantly.

Use a Condensing Boiler: Today's balanced flue gas-fired boiler is about 80% efficient. Condensing boilers achieve 90% efficiency, and are as easily installed as conventional boilers, giving a 10% improvement in overall building efficiency.

10 TIPS FOR A TOP BER RATING

1. Don't spare the insulation. Insulate roof and attic areas to CE 23 standard and insulate above finish grade exterior walls and rim joist/box sill areas to CE 118. Insulate below finish grade exterior walls to CE 118.
2. Reduce unintended air infiltration by carefully sealing around all joints and penetrations.
3. Construct a house with a maximum of 12% window area to wall area and use energy rated windows.
4. Design rooms to take advantage of sun exposure.
5. Install a tankless water heater or a natural gas water heater with an energy factor (EF) of .62 or greater. Install electric water heaters with an energy factor (EF) of .95.
6. Select air conditioners and heat pumps that qualify for the energy rating. The energy logo indicates a high-efficiency product.
7. To maintain indoor air quality, select a controlled ventilation system or heat recovery ventilator.
8. Install high efficiency condensing furnaces or boilers with outside combustion air and exhaust. Another option is geothermal/heat pumps with ratings of 4.0 COP (coefficient of performance).
9. Purchase energy rated appliances - refrigerator, dishwasher and washing machine. The energy rating indicates a high-efficiency product.
10. Consider a solar-assist hot water system either for domestic hot water or to assist a home heating system and purchase a programmable thermostat that can automatically lower your temperature at night and when you are away.



RENEWABLE ENERGY TIPS

1. Combining solar collectors with a wood-burning stove provides an ideal year-round renewable energy heating solution. A solar collector system can provide around 60% of your annual hot water needs for free (80 to 90% in summer).
2. Simple passive solar design techniques can make a big difference to energy consumption in the home. Just by facing a house south to capture the maximum daylight energy bills can be reduced by 30%.
3. Transmission of light through windows (passive solar heating) can reduce heating costs - could you allow for passive solar heating in the design of a new home? What about integrating a solar water heating system onto a south-facing roof?
4. Adding an unheated conservatory or sunspace to the south face of your house increases passive solar gains and provides an insulating effect.
5. Space and water heating account for over 70% of the energy used in the home, so switching to clean renewable energy (e.g. wood fuel, solar energy or heat pump systems) makes a big reduction in the environmental impact of your home.
6. Wood is a renewable fuel you can use without producing the harmful greenhouse gas emissions of fossil fuels. Instead of coal or peat, throw on a log onto a fire. Whereas peat and coal take hundreds of thousands of years to form, wood is a renewable fuel that grows in just 3-70 years.
7. Using renewable sources of energy like wood and solar energy to heat our homes reduces our reliance on polluting, imported fossil fuels like oil and coal.
8. If you recycle glass and paper, you save on a great deal of energy, raw materials and pollution.



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Time for a Retrofit

A quarter of Ireland's CO₂ emissions are generated by inefficient housing stock, according to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland which says that as many as 1.5m Irish homes are considered energy inefficient and require upgrade work between now and 2050. In response, the government has launched a huge national retrofitting programme which will cost over €8bn.



Over a million homes in the country have a Building Energy Rating (BER certificate which indicates a buildings energy performance) of C or under and this issue is even more acute in the private rental market where 55% of private rented dwellings have a BER of D or lower. In addition, 98% of our home heating is provided from fossil fuels and Irish homes emit almost 60% more CO₂ than the average European home.

Unsurprisingly, upgrading our buildings so that they use less energy has been identified as one of the most cost-effective ways to reduce our greenhouse-gas emissions. Significant progress in this regard was achieved in November last year

when new building standards were introduced for all new homes built.

New builds now require a BER of A2 and the regulations are designed to make all new homes 70% more energy efficient when compared to 2005 performance requirements. New dwellings which demonstrate this high level of energy performance are called Nearly Zero Energy Buildings (nZEB).

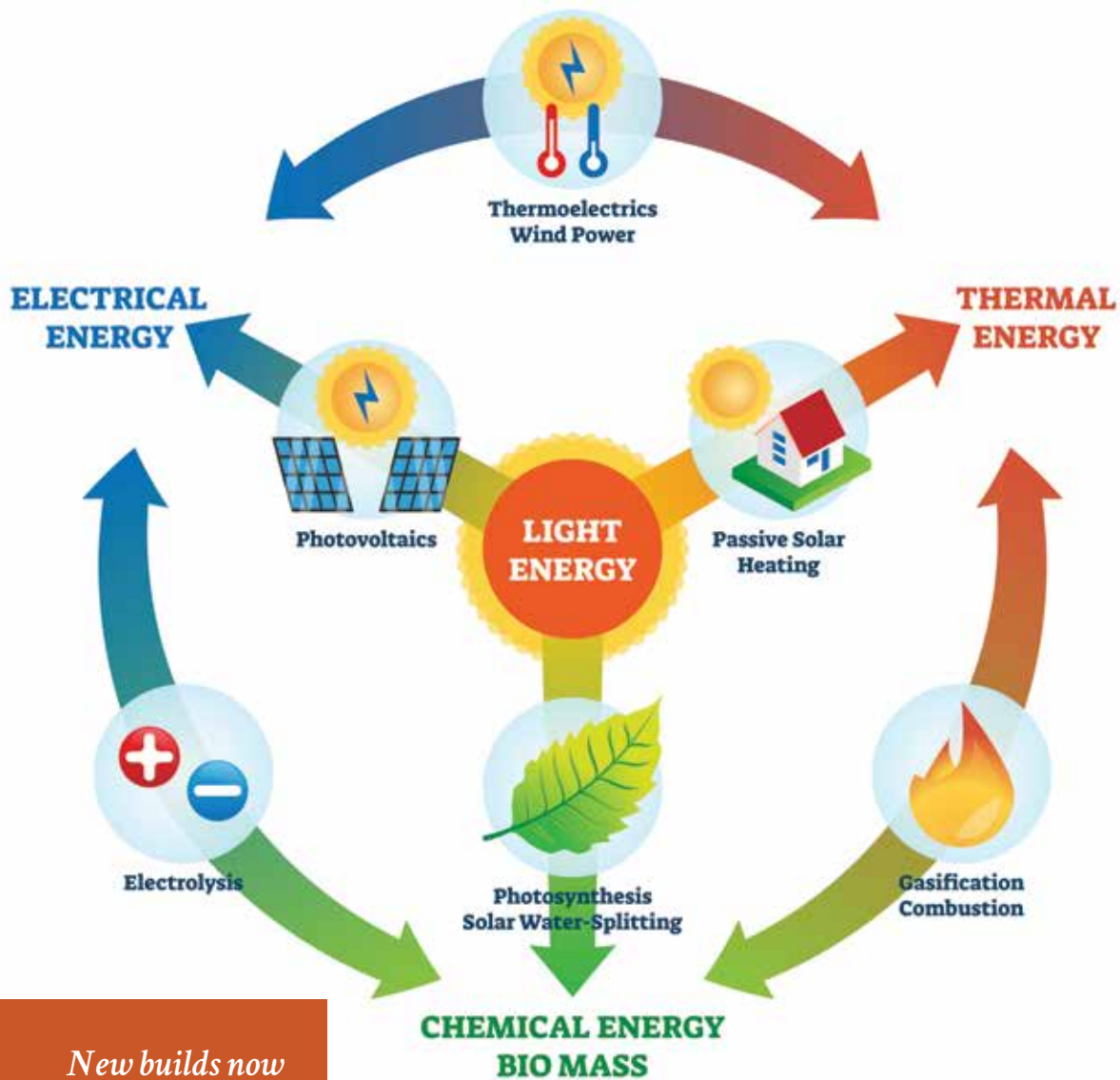
The improvements are delivered in part through improved building airtightness combined with more effective ventilation systems in new builds. In addition, energy used

by a nZEB must be from renewable sources “to a very significant extent”, including energy from renewable sources produced on site or nearby.

As part of the plan, there will be a ban on installation of oil boilers from 2022 while gas boilers will be prohibited in all new dwellings from 2025. Double-glazing windows will need to be replaced by triple glazing, while mechanical ventilation will become the norm in most dwellings.

A significant feature of the updated regulations is the requirement for “major renovations or extensions” to an existing home, to be

TIME FOR A RETROFIT



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brought up to a B2 standard insofar as this is “technically, functionally and economically feasible”. A project is classed as a major renovation when more than 25% of the surface area of the existing building’s thermal envelope undergoes renovation.

While the government accepts that the regulations are resulting in “small increases in overall costs with each incremental change” made, it insists that the additional costs will be recouped in energy savings over time.

While ensuring that any new housing coming on stream is highly energy efficient, the government is also taking steps to address the widespread deficiencies in our existing housing stock. One of the key features of the programme for government is an unprecedented and far-reaching national

retrofitting programme which aims to eliminate the use of fossil fuels for home heating.

Our Shared Future

Otherwise known as ‘Our Shared Future’, the programme for Government document features the words ‘retrofit(s)’ and ‘retrofitting’ no less 23 times. Under the plan the government is committed to retrofitting 500,000 homes to a building energy rating of B2 and to install 400,000 heat pumps in existing buildings by 2030. It will include new insulation, heating systems and renewable energy sources in order to upgrade the energy efficiency of older properties.

The programme will cost in the region of €8.7 billion and has been described by the Department of Public Expenditure as “one of

TIME FOR A RETROFIT



the most challenging infrastructure projects in the history of the State. It is due to be funded with €3.7 billion allocated under Project Ireland, complemented with €5 billion from carbon tax revenues. These targets are expected to achieve the Climate Action Plan target of reducing the greenhouse gas emissions from the residential sector from 6Mt CO₂e in 2017 to 3-4Mt CO₂e in 2030.

According to a report by the Department of the Environment, financial limitations are the key constraint to by householders undergoing domestic retrofits and it identifies high up-front costs, issues around availability of grants, long-term payback periods and complex funding structures as typical impediments.

“The majority of households are unaware and uninformed of the benefits that energy efficiency upgrades bring. Technical difficulties

and the disruption caused by energy efficiency works also contribute towards the low rate of deep retrofit implementation. Government intervention is needed to overcome market failures that could lead to otherwise sub-optimal take-up,” it says.

Modelling carried out as part of the development of the National Energy & Climate Plan shows that in order to attain the 2030 residential energy efficiency targets, retrofitting needs to be scaled up significantly and rapidly to an estimated level of 33,500 B2 retrofits per year by 2022 and 56,000 per year by 2024.

The cost of bringing a home to B2 or cost optimal standard is influenced by several factors, principally the size and type of home as well as the initial condition of the home but a cost-optimal analysis commissioned by

the Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government has estimated that the cost of achieving a B2 rating from a starting point of a D or E rating to be in the range of €21,000 to €39,000. A taskforce is working to finalise an estimate of the total cost of the retrofit programme as well as a new average cost.

Spend & Save

To ensure the wide take-up needed to achieve the 2030 retrofit targets, Professor John Fitzgerald of the Climate Change Advisory Council says that homeowners and tenants will need to be reassured that they will save money by retrofitting their homes. “If you want people to spend lots of money on retrofitting their homes, you must be able to tell them they’ll save a load of money from doing so. An incremental annual increased is one way of ensuring that people will recognise the significant savings to be made from home

TIME FOR A RETROFIT



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energy retrofits,” he said.

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) estimates that heating a 100 square metre, 3-bedroom, semi-detached costs €380 a year in an A-rated home. The cost rises to €1,850 a year in a home with a D rating and costs up to €4,000 a year in a G-rated home. Based on these SEAI figures, increasing your home’s BER rating from a D to an A might reduce your energy bills by 80%.

The SEAI also provides a range of grants to help homeowners improve the energy performance of their homes and will assist towards the cost of installing insulation and for a variety of sustainable technologies designed to reduce your homes carbon footprint. They also provide assistance in obtaining a BER assessment.

Insulation is a key consideration in any plan designed to make your home more energy efficient. A typical home loses up to 30% of its heat through the walls and more if they are not properly insulated. Grants of €400 are currently available for both attic and cavity wall insulation while a grant of up to €2400 is available for dry lining. External insulation grants of up to as much as €6,000 are also provided. In addition, a grant of €700 is available towards the cost of installing heating control upgrades which will further improve the energy profile of your home, although not all homes are suitable for this measure.

Increasing numbers of homes are installing domestic solar Photovoltaics (PV) systems consisting of several solar panels mounted on the roof or on special brackets in the garden which connect to the electrical loads in the home. Grants of €700 are available for each kW of solar Photovoltaics (PV) installed, up to a maximum of 2kW.

Solar thermal will provide up to 60% of all your hot water requirements and grants of €1,200 are available for this purpose. Grants are also available for heat pump technology and range from €600 for an air-to-air system, up to €3,500 for ground source, exhaust air and water-to-water systems. If three upgrades are completed, the grant value will be increased by €300 with a further €100 added towards a

SEAI ENERGY UPGRADE GRANTS

Attic Insulation

The current standard for attic insulation is 300mm of rockwool or similar. Even if you already have insulation, it is worth checking that it is thick enough. The SEAI estimate that it will cost between €700 and €1,000 (not including their grant) to upgrade to 300mm insulation for a 150 square metre, 4-bedroom, detached house with an annual heating bill of €1,600. They also estimate that the upgrade will save €250 a year off the heating bill.

Cavity Wall Insulation

If your external walls are built of two layers of brick or blocks with space between the rows then cavity wall insulation can be injected into the space (the cavity) from outside, filling it and providing greater insulation. The SEAI estimate that it will cost between €700 and €1,000 (not including the grant) to have cavity wall insulation injected into the external walls of the same size house described above (4-bed, 150 square metre detached house). They estimate that cost savings of €300 a year can be made off the heating bill and there is a grant of €400 available for this kind of work.

Internal Wall Insulation

If your walls do not have a cavity, then you can choose to apply internal or external wall insulation to them. Typically, this insulation is several times more expensive than cavity wall insulation. Internal insulation (called dry-lining) usually involves fixing insulation board to the inside of your external-facing walls and external insulation usually means adding a layer of tiles made of expanded polystyrene or rockwool to the outside of your home.

Installing internal insulation will mean you will have to remove any fixtures like cupboards, built-in units and wardrobes on walls to fit the insulation board to the inside of the walls which will result in some space loss.

For internal insulation, grants range from €1,600 for an apartment or mid-terrace to €2,400 for a detached home.

External Wall Insulation

External insulation is the most expensive option but it can be the most effective way to make your home more energy efficient. The cost of both internal and external insulation depends on many factors including the design and age of your home but grants exist to help with both types of work. For external insulation, they range from €2,750 to €6,000.

Heating Controls

The SEAI estimate that you can reduce your energy usage (and therefore your fuel bills) by 20% by upgrading your heating controls. Many Irish homes have just one heating zone and the heating is either on or off.

More sophisticated heating controls with 7-day timers mean you can set more heating zones. This means that you can control room heating individually and heat your hot water separately depending on your needs. Smart thermostats often allow you to get feedback on your energy usage. Grants of up to €700 are available from SEAI for installing heating controls.

Solar Panels

Ireland gets on average 1,453 hours of sunshine which can be converted into electricity using solar panels and used to power your TV, fridge, washing machine – anything electric, basically. SEAI estimates that a solar PV (Photovoltaic) system can save a household €200 to €300 a year off the electricity bill.

The SEAI offers a grant of €900/ kWp* for solar PV panels up to 2 kWp and €300 for every additional kWp up to 4 kWp if you get a battery (the total grant is capped at €2,400). The typical cost of solar PV panels is €1,700 – €2,500 per kWp.

*Note: Solar electricity systems are given a rating in kilowatts peak (kWp). This is the rate at which it generates energy at peak performance for example at noon on a sunny day.

Solar Water Heating

As well as capturing sunlight for energy, you can use the sun's energy to heat water directly via flat panels or tubes (called evacuated tubes) typically installed on your roof.

Thermal solar hot water systems, as they are called, is a bit of a mouthful but they are designed to supply 50-60% of the hot water you use in a year. The upfront cost of these systems is estimated by SEAI at between €800 and €1,300 a square metre and a typical home may need between 8 and 12 square metres of solar panels or tubes to collect the sun's energy. The grants available is €1,200.

Heat Pumps

If your home is already well insulated and glazed and has low heat loss, then a heat pump might help you to reduce your reliance on fossil fuels for heating. Heat pumps work by drawing heat energy from the air, ground or water and converting it to heat you can use to heat your home and hot water. Heat pump grants range from €600 to €3,500.



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TRIM HARDWARE, Trim, C15 T8PR

Tel: 046 9431133

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COOGAN'S HOMEVALUE, Castleblaney, A75 A386

Tel: 042 9740062

HOLLANDS OF EMYVALE, Derrygassan Upper, H18 NP64

Tel: 047 87216

OFFALY

ARRABAWN CO-OP, Birr, R42 YY90

Tel: 057 9120276

CLOONAN'S HARDWARE, Tullamore, R35 YX98

Tel: 057 9321468

DOUGLAS HOMEVALUE, Birr, R42 F765

Tel: 057 9120049

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Tel: 046 9731461

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CAHILL'S HARDWARE, Castlerea, F45 F2P2

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COONEY'S HOMEVALUE, Tibohine, F45 FK29

Tel: 094 9870007

COONEY'S HOMEVALUE, Elphin, F45 F8N1

Tel: 071 9635470

COONEY'S HOMEVALUE, Castlerea, F45 T039

Tel: 094 9620033

STROKESTOWN HARDWARE, Strokestown, F42 P798

Tel: 071 9633351

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HALMAC HOMEVALUE, Enniscrone, F26 PP83

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ARRABAWN CO-OP HOMEVALUE, Newport, V94 T327

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ARRABAWN CO-OP HOMEVALUE, Nenagh, E45 KV22

Tel: 067 41800

ARRABAWN CO-OP, Borrisokane, E45 YV00

Tel: 067 27146

ARRABAWN CO-OP, Reuska, E41 FC83

Tel: 062 78102

DOUGLAS HOMEVALUE, Roscrea, E53 HP60

Tel: 0505 21865

RONAYNE'S HOMEVALUE, Thurles, E41 VR83

Tel: 0504 21033

SHEAHAN'S HOMEVALUE, Nenagh, E45 HP70

Tel: 067 34466

TIPPERARY CO-OP HARDWARE, Tipperary Town, E34 N623

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FLYNN'S HARDWARE, Cappoquin, P51 K611

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FLYNN'S HOMEVALUE, Dungarvan, X35 HV07

Tel: 058 54408

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Tel: 044 9348357

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Tel: 044 9374119

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BOLGER'S HOMEVALUE, Crosstown, Y35 DW26

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Tel: 051 420088

MC MAHON'S HOMEVALUE, Wexford Town, Y35 W5P7

Tel: 053 9123344

SMYTH'S HOMEVALUE, Enniscorthy, Y21 X795

Tel: 053 9233323

WALLACE'S HOMEVALUE, Wellington Bridge, Y35 K226

Tel: 051 561113

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BURKE'S HARDWARE & DIY, Rathnew, A67 A304

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