

The Reality of Unaffordable Housing in Rural Ireland

This document summarizes a presentation delivered by Kevin Heanue at the 2024 North Atlantic Forum Conference held in Letterfrack, Ireland in June 2024.

KEY MESSAGES OF RESEARCH

The Affordability Gap for Housing in Peripheral Rural Areas is revisited to discuss the contemporary impacts and linkages to research first published over 20 years ago. The research explores the North West Connemara region and the rising property costs impacting the accessibility of the housing market for the local population. The presentation uses Central Statistics Office data and the previous analysis of proprietary qualitative data from a local community surveys, focus groups and key informants.

- ❑ The 'affordability gap' for housing in the rural area of North West Connemara has remained at 8 times local incomes.
- ❑ Demand for second/holiday homes, which in some areas account for more than 50% of the housing stock, contributes to high local property prices.
- ❑ High property prices make it difficult for 'newcomers' to buy or rent houses limiting the possibility of the important population dynamic in local development
- ❑ Government policy initiatives to improve affordability for households do not operate in many rural areas, especially remote rural areas such as the case study.

IMPACTS FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

There are incoherences among different government policies, some which promote rural living (agriculture policy, rural development policy) and other which at worst restrict or at best don't facilitate rural living (housing policy, planning policy).

- ❑ Locally relevant affordable housing solutions need to be designed especially for remote rural areas (8.8% of the population) as national initiatives not implementable.
- ❑ Community-led housing, community land trusts and cooperative housing could be explored as 'bottom-up' solutions to rural affordable housing problems.
- ❑ Research is needed on the characteristics, drivers, scale, and scope of rural housing affordability challenges and solutions in Ireland and how this fits with the policy and practice of integrated development.
- ❑ Alternatives to the current 'laissez-faire' approach to second home purchasing should be explored.

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FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information on this research can be found on the [North Atlantic Forum website](#) and www.teagasc.ie/

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