

CASE STUDY

## Building Ireland’s Future

We are committed to supporting the long-term vitality and vigour of the construction sector in Ireland. The success of our industry is dependent on ensuring the future pipeline of staff and addressing the significant skills shortages across the industry.

LINK TO STRATEGY:



Cairn Homes plc | Annual Report 2025

The Government’s previous housing plan ‘Housing for All’ and now the current ‘Delivering Homes, Building Communities’ strategy has identified that increasing the number of apprentices across the residential construction sector is critical to delivering the strategy’s targets. In 2024, we launched the Cairn Apprenticeship Programme to assist in attempts to tackle this challenge.

### Investing in the Future of the Industry

The Cairn Apprenticeship Programme is designed to attract and train the next generation of workers in our industry, so they can contribute to building a sustainable Ireland where people can thrive. A career in construction starts with the right foundation. As Ireland’s largest homebuilder we’re investing €10 million over the next five years in the Cairn Apprenticeship Programme.

By partnering with our wide network of subcontractors and the wider industry, Cairn is helping to pave the way for the next generation of construction professionals through mentoring, training and education programmes, financial support and collaboration with educational institutions.

### Challenges and Opportunities

The programme aims to tackle two key challenges: apprenticeship recruitment, and greater apprenticeship retention.

To tackle recruitment and strengthen the future talent pipeline, we launched the Mobile Training Unit in partnership with Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board (LOETB), Mount Lucas. This mobile rig provides a large, mobile, interactive and multi-functional showcase space, including demonstration facilities aimed at promoting awareness of construction trades careers.

There is an on-board tutor who travels with the rig, talks to students about different trade careers, and answers any questions they may have. The trades featured on the rig include electrical and mechanical, blockwork, carpentry and joinery. There are also a range of interactive audio and visual aids on board, such as virtual reality welding demonstrations.

Over the past 18 months the Mobile Training Unit has been travelling the country, appearing at national events such as the National Ploughing Championship and World Skills Ireland, while it is also regularly used for careers fairs and construction sector events.

The rig has visited dozens of schools across Ireland, and has seen over 1,750 students, both male and female, go on board and make use of the practical demonstration stations. During our May Transition Year programme, we invited 40 students and their guidance councillors to visit our Seven Mills development where we had the Mobile Training Unit set up.

This allowed students to sample different trade apprenticeships, followed by a site walk with our Site Management Team who showed them these trades in action on a live site. This outreach has generated significant interest, positioning construction apprenticeships as a viable, exciting and future-proof career path.

To tackle retention, we have introduced a structured bursary system, paying over €270,000 in financial supports since the programme was launched. These payments are strategically timed to coincide with key phases of training, helping apprentices overcome barriers to retention at common dropout points on the apprenticeship journey.



Strategic Report

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Alongside financial support, apprentices benefit from mentorship by Cairn experts, examination preparation workshops, and flexible learning options delivered both in-person and online.

**United for Success**

We know collaboration is key to the programme’s success. Our collaborative approach is not restricted to our subcontractors and industry partners, but also extends to higher education institutions.

We have partnered with Atlantic Technological University (ATU) and formed an industry consortium to develop a new Quantity Surveyor Apprenticeship, due to launch in the first half of 2026. This initiative will create 40 new apprenticeship places annually, with plans to expand nationally.

In 2025 we recruited a Partnership Lead for the Apprenticeship Programme, dedicated to project managing and developing relationships. Implementing this dedicated resource allows Cairn to grow, improve and broaden the influence of the programme.

**1,755**

students have accessed the Cairn Mobile Training Unit to date

A key action already undertaken, has been the establishment of a stakeholder map and engagement plan. This plan aims to enhance current relationships with subcontractors engaged on the Programme, and develop new relationships with subcontractors not yet engaged.

In addition, high-potential external stakeholder relationships have been identified that would allow Cairn to increase the scope and influence of its Apprenticeship Programme, across state authorities, education and training facilities and industrial representation groups.

**Measuring our Impact**

Our impact will be measured in two strands:

- the total apprentices enrolled on the programme across its lifecycle; and
- the number of apprentices completing the programme, gaining a relevant qualification for a career in their chosen trade.

To ensure the success of this programme we regularly engage with both our subcontractors and apprentices who engage with the programme for their feedback. This provides a means of adapting and improving elements of the programme where necessary.

Enrolment target of

**500**

apprentices enrolled by the end of 2028

To date we have

**278**

active or qualified apprentices in the programme

