Irish Rural Link
Nasc Tuaithe na hÉireann

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Irish Rural Link
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Irish Rural Link Welcomes New Planning Guidelines for Rural and Gaeltacht Housing

Irish Rural Link (IRL), the national network representing the interests of rural communities, has today, 30th June 2026, welcomed the new Planning Guidelines announced today by the Minister for Rural and Gaeltacht Housing.

Irish Rural Link has consistently highlighted the need for a more balanced and practical approach to rural housing. The organisation believes the current planning regulations have become overly restrictive, making it increasingly difficult for people with genuine local connections to obtain planning permission. The process is often lengthy, costly and complex, placing unnecessary burdens on individuals and families who simply wish to live in their own communities.

Welcoming the announcement, Irish Rural Link said the revised guidelines should provide greater certainty and fairness for people who have grown up in rural areas and wish to remain in, or return to, their communities.

Many people want to return home to continue working on the family farm, support an existing agri-business, establish a local enterprise or contribute to essential services within their community. Providing these individuals with a realistic opportunity to build a home is vital to sustaining vibrant rural communities and ensuring future generations can continue to live and work where they have strong family and community ties.
Irish Rural Link emphasised that facilitating rural housing should complement, rather than replace, ongoing efforts to revitalise Ireland's rural towns and villages. Investment in town and village renewal, the refurbishment of vacant and derelict properties, and the delivery of quality housing within settlements remain essential components of balanced rural development. A thriving rural Ireland requires both strong towns and villages and sustainable countryside communities.

The organisation also welcomed the recognition within the new guidelines of the need to facilitate people who wish to downsize while remaining in their local area. Enabling

older people to move into more suitable accommodation close to family and community networks can improve quality of life and free up larger homes for younger families. However, Irish Rural Link stressed that this must be supported by the provision of essential services, including healthcare, public transport, shops and other community facilities, to ensure people can continue to live independently and remain active within their communities.
CEO of Irish Rural Link, Briain Smyth says: *"For a community to thrive, all of its services need to be in place from day one. So, while we welcome the new planning framework, we must ensure that transport, schools and healthcare are developed alongside the rebuilding of rural communities."*

Irish Rural Link looks forward to engaging with Government, local authorities and other stakeholders to ensure the new planning guidelines are implemented in a fair, consistent and transparent manner, delivering positive outcomes for rural communities across Ireland.

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For further information, please contact (anytime):
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About Irish Rural Link:
Irish Rural Link represents the interests of locally based rural groups in disadvantaged and marginalised rural areas by highlighting problems, advocating appropriate policies, sharing experiences and examples of good practice. It has a membership of nearly 600 rural community groups dedicated to sustainable rural development and represents rural communities at a national and international level