

Power up

Importance of BIM in Publically Funded Construction Contracts

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The Irish Government last year accepted the Government Contracts Committee for Construction's ("GCCC") recommendation for the adoption of Building Information Modelling (BIM) across the public capital programme.

On 21 November 2017 the Government launched a new strategy to increase the use of digital technology in key public works projects which are funded through the public capital programme (the "**Strategy**"). Subsequently on 7 December 2017, the National BIM Council ("**NBC**") published a report titled Roadmap to Digital Transition for Ireland's construction industry (the "**Roadmap**") which can be found [here](#).

BIM comprises a digital dataset of all of the information relating to a project's development from the initial design stages through to completion and operation. As part of the Government's Strategy, public bodies will establish requirements for the use of BIM in the design, construction and operation of public buildings and infrastructure.

The use of BIM across building and infrastructure projects is commonplace in other European jurisdictions. The UK Government has mandated BIM for all centrally-funded public-sector project since April 2016. In conjunction with their Level 2 BIM initiative, it has issued a suite of connected guidelines which can be found [here](#). Similarly, the Netherlands, Denmark and Finland also require the use of BIM for publically funded building projects. Furthermore, the 2014 EU Public Procurement Directive, which was transposed in Ireland in 2016, encourages the use of BIM in publically funded projects.

The adoption of the Strategy will be on a phased basis over the next four years, beginning with the larger more complex projects. It is already being used on a number of public sector projects including on the Dublin Institute of Technology's Grangegorman Campus and the National Children's Hospital.

The Roadmap contains a number of recommendations from the NBC across the areas

of leadership, standards, education & training and procurement. Of interest is the NBC's prioritisation of "consistent leadership" and the recommendation that a dedicated body must be established if the targets regarding BIM are to be realised.

The increased use of digital technologies in the construction sector is seen as a necessary step if the industry is to deliver value for money and remain competitive. The Government's Strategy is a significant milestone to achieving this and it will be interesting to see how the adoption of BIM in publically funded projects unfolds and its impact on the wider construction industry.

The Office for Government Procurement and the GCCC are currently developing tools, template documents and contract protocols for the use of BIM in public sector projects. There is a widely-held view that the full benefits of BIM can only be realised when the contractual framework allows for early involvement of all parties and collaboration. With the key emphasis of the Public Works Contracts on cost certainty as opposed to collaboration between the parties, it will be interesting to see how they will be amended to integrate BIM.

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