



'We must act now to avoid future boom and bust cycles,' warn architects

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THE Royal **Institute of the Architects** of Ireland (RIAI) will today call for a national infrastructure delivery agency to be established to plan new homes, schools, roads, public transport and healthcare services over a 30-year period.

The RIAI says it is "imperative" that the State moves from a five-year planning cycle to a 30-year one to avoid boom and bust construction cycles, and to help properly plan for essential services to serve a growing population. The call is being made as part of a national infrastructure strategy to be unveiled at the institute's annual conference at the RDS.

The group maintains that Ireland has a legacy of poor long-term planning, which has contributed to a shortage of homes, transport and healthcare infrastructure, and that without proper oversight by one agency the mistakes of the past will be repeated.

The RIAI says a national infrastructure delivery

agency should be created to monitor data to inform and plan services while taking into account changes to population density, economic growth and the stock of existing infrastructure

It will provide an "optimal" level of investment and ensure that spending is delivered in transport infrastructure, educational buildings, healthcare, housing and other public projects.

RIAI President Carole Pollard said a range of datasets were available to

help predict and plan future needs. Figures from the Department of Education show that by 2025, more than 400,000 pupils will enrol in post-primary schools, the highest level in the history of the State. This will result in demand for extra school and third-level places. By 2046, some 1.4 million people will be aged over 65 compared with 530,000 today, Ms Pollard added.

"When the scale of demographic changes on the horizon are so obvious for all to see, it should serve as a stark reminder that

unless we plan now for the needs of Ireland's changing population we will merely replicate ill-informed and poor decisions of the past," she said.

"We face a choice of being in control of our own destiny or at the mercy of boom and bust cycles that have been so damaging to creating sustained progress in this country.

"There is an imperative to act, and to act now. We have experience of lessons from misadventures in planning and we have the data to inform our future needs."



RIAI president Carole Pollard