

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN 2021

Securing Our Future



CWI Guide to the Climate Action Plan - Points from a Climate Justice, Just Transition and a Community Development Perspective



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

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Preface

This is an outline of *Securing Our Future: The Climate Action Plan 2021* from the perspective of climate justice, just transition and community development. Please note, the account is descriptive, designed to provide some indication to CWI members and others of what elements might have an impact on their work and on the communities with which they work. We will be developing a more analytical piece at a slightly later date.

Climate Action Plan 2021

The **Climate Action Plan 2021: Securing Our Future** was published on Thursday November 4th, 2021. The Plan outlines the likely impacts of climate change here and across the globe, stating that the impact of climate change will be felt by every individual, household, and community in Ireland.

In line with EU ambition, the Programme for Government, Our Shared Future commits to achieving a 51% reduction in Ireland's overall Green House Gases (GHG) emissions from 2021 to 2030, and to achieving net-zero emissions no later than 2050.

These legally-binding objectives are set out in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, the enactment of which was a key priority in the Programme for Government.

The Climate Act will support Ireland's transition to net-zero and the achievement of a climate neutral economy no later than 2050. It also establishes a legally binding framework with clear targets and commitments, to ensure the necessary structures and processes are in place to deliver our national, EU and international climate goals and obligations in the near and long term.

It sets out an overall target for achieving a reduction on Green House Gas Emissions and assigns sub-targets to a range of sectors:

- Electricity 62-81%
- Transport 42-50%
- Buildings 44-56%
- Industry 29-41%
- Agriculture 22-30%
- Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) 37-58%

The Plan outlines the governance arrangements in place to ensure implementation of the Plan, which has a legislative underpinning. These will include:

- The Climate Action Delivery Board, which will ensure that each department and public body is held to account for the delivery of actions set out in the Climate Action Plan. The Board will also review key strategic projects and areas of work.
- The Cabinet Committee on Environment and Climate Change, supported by the associated senior officials' group, will be central to climate policy formulation and implementation on a whole-of government basis.

Just Transition

Delivering a just transition is based on recognising the transformational level of change required to meet these targets and having a shared understanding that the transition is fair, just, and that the costs are shared equitably. Our climate policies should, therefore, seek to protect the most vulnerable (p. 37)

The Plan suggests using the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) definition of just transition - “A just transition is one which seeks to ensure transition is fair, equitable, and inclusive in terms of processes and outcomes”. The Plan states that a just transition can, therefore, refer both to the broader policy framework of climate action to support individuals and communities in the transition, as well as the process of ensuring that individuals and communities have a voice and a role in informing and shaping these supports.

The Plan outlines a just transition framework that is made up of four principles:

1. An integrated, structured, and evidence-based approach to identify and plan our response to just transition requirements. This will include the establishment of a new Just Transition Commission at a national level to manage the long-term agenda of a just transition to a climate-neutral economy and society.
2. People are equipped with the right skills to be able to participate in and benefit from the future net zero economy
3. The costs are shared so that the impact is equitable and existing inequalities are not exacerbated, including:
 - a. A commitment to ensuring that the costs associated with transition are shared so that the impact is equitable and that existing inequalities are not exacerbated.
 - b. Ensuring that the impacts of increasing carbon tax will be balanced by a targeted package of social protection supports that offset impacts on lower-income households.
 - c. Considerations around costs and equity will also apply to other fiscal measures, as well as to the provision of grants or other supports to assist the implementation of climate policy.
 - d. A commitment to ensuring that people experience the benefits of a greener future and are not hit with disproportionately high costs if they wish to participate, to include government supports for low income households to participate in schemes
4. Social dialogue to ensure impacted citizens and communities are empowered and are core to the transition process. This principle draws on research by the National Economic and Social Council on just transition that has found that co-designing an inclusive, focused and participatory process with those most impacted at an early stage is key to ensuring that a transition is just. This principle states that the National Dialogue on Climate Action (NDCA) will be the key mechanism for facilitating the social dialogue process as part of the just transition. The NDCA will include processes of awareness-raising, communications and activation, and ensure community engagement and participation, using a model that has been co-designed with stakeholder participation and informed by broad public participation and social and behavioural research. The NDCA will complement engagement activities undertaken by departments and agencies at sectoral, local, regional and national levels, including through local authorities, Public Participation Networks, SEAI Sustainable Energy Communities, Local Community Development Committees, Climate Action Regional Offices, the Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF), NESC, and other key national and sectoral dialogues.

The Plan provides examples of how climate considerations are to be integrated into policy development, including:

- Integration of community participation mechanisms in the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme

- Provision of 100% grant funding for retrofitting to lower income households under the Warmer Homes Scheme
- Commitment to a new Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan to reduce our reliance on private cars
- Establishment of a 'Future of Farming in Ireland' Dialogue under the Ag-Climatise Roadmap for the agriculture sector
- Integration of just transition into our national rural development policy, Our Rural Future, as an essential building block to achieve a sustainable, resilient and climate neutral economy and society
- Inclusion of climate change and just transition actions and associated themes in the **new Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme**, and support for the provision of training and capacity building in relation to climate change with a focus on just transition, social inclusion and anti-poverty for Local Community Development Committees and Local Development Companies.

Our experience to date shows that, as we move forward, we need systematic and active engagement with stakeholders and the public across Ireland at local and national level. The National Dialogue for Climate Action (NDCA) will be the primary vehicle through which this will be delivered (p. 57)

Citizen Engagement

The Plan references the National Dialogue for Climate Action (NDCA) that took place in 2021 and included a series of climate conversations that it says captured the views of over 3,800 people. These conversations, the Plan states, gave voice to a public who are responsive to this crisis and feel a sense of urgency around climate action. It demonstrated an enthusiasm to work with the government, agencies, and organisations across society to deliver on more ambitious targets. It identified areas where people are already making changes and where individuals and communities feel they lack information, knowledge and resources, or the capacity to pursue these changes. In particular, many expressed the view that there is a need for innovation in finance (e.g. removing bureaucracy, providing low-cost finance options), and a need to enhance the capacity of local authorities and the community sector, in order to meet ambitions.

The vision of the NDCA is to empower everyone in society to help deliver on the goal of reducing Ireland's carbon emissions and to actively participate in the transition towards a climate neutral economy by 2050.

The purpose of the NDCA is to create a comprehensive structure to support widespread public and stakeholder engagement on climate change, empower people across all of society to adopt more sustainable behaviours and be a vehicle to facilitate public participation in the Climate Action Plan.

The vision and purpose of the NDCA will be realised through three key objectives:

1. Improving **climate literacy** by creating awareness about, and promoting understanding of, climate change.
2. Funding, supporting, and enabling **active engagement** in climate action at a local and national level, conducting public consultations, and promoting self-efficacy by empowering the public to adopt more sustainable behaviours.
3. Capturing insights from engagement activities and conducting social and behavioural research to measure behavioural change and provide an evidence base to inform the Climate Action Plan and sectoral climate policies.

The NDCA will be led by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) with a secretariat provided by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The NDCA will be coordinated

through an Interdepartmental Working Group on Citizen Engagement and Dialogue which will include governmental departments and agencies who are actively involved in delivering on climate action goals across key sectors.

Climate Literacy

The Plan aims to improve climate literacy through enhanced communications underpinned by evidence.

Engagement and Empowerment

The majority of the NDCA work programme will involve the design and delivery of activities to help people and stakeholders take an active role in delivering on climate change.

At national level the NDCA will facilitate, support, and coordinate a series of climate conversations, a national stakeholder forum, a youth climate assembly, an open public consultation, and will host a series of conferences and lectures. The purpose of these national level dialogues is to allow a broad range of stakeholders and the public to communicate with each other and with policy makers. Each of these actions will run at least once a year as part of the programme to provide input into the annual Climate Action Plan.

A **National Climate Stakeholder Forum (NCSF)** will be established by DECC to function as a consultative forum on climate issues, with administrative support being provided by the EPA. The participants will include a broad range of stakeholders from across society including elected politicians; government departments and local authorities; state agencies and national organisations; academics; representative bodies; community, local and voluntary groups; and representatives of stakeholders and communities most at risk from the impacts of climate change or the transition to a carbon neutral society. The NCSF will be established and run in a manner similar to the National Economic Dialogue and will meet at least twice a year. It will inform stakeholders of the latest scientific and policy developments and will act as a core mechanism to facilitate inputs into the Climate Action Plan and sectoral policies relating to climate change.

A Youth Climate Assembly will also be established, and the NDCA will also co-design and run an annual series of Climate Conversations that will serve as public consultation on climate action. The EPA will implement a National Dialogue, that will include climate conferences, lecture series and support workshops annually.

Local and Community Activities

The Plan states that, central to the delivery of the Climate Action Plan, is empowering local communities to address the challenges they face in transitioning to a carbon neutrality. The NDCA will provide financial support for local innovations, host climate conversations allowing local actors to share ideas, support networking and capacity building, and host an annual local climate action conference.

A new Community Climate Action Programme will be funded from the Climate Action Fund to support action by communities. The programme is designed to support and empower communities to shape and build low-carbon, sustainable communities, including using nature-based solutions, in a coherent way to contribute to our national climate and energy targets. In addition to providing funding opportunities for relevant community projects and initiatives, this programme also aims to build capacity to act within communities, aimed at facilitating and encouraging enduring behavioural change and voluntary action. Local authorities will play a key role in developing partnerships with local communities and community development organisations to progress community activation and climate action.

There are two strands proposed to progress this:

- Strand 1 – Building Low Carbon Communities
- Strand 2 – Education, Capacity Building and Learning by Doing

Under Strand 2, the Creative Ireland Programme, in collaboration with DECC, is providing a Creative Fund that will deliver, through cultural and creative projects, individual and community awareness of the need for climate-related behavioural change. The projects funded under the CAF will provide insight, innovative ideas, and scalable solutions to the challenges of climate change. The NDCA will ensure that innovations emerging in these projects will be recorded and their scalability in other areas examined.

Strand and 2 will include a series of **Local Climate Conversations** on an annual basis designed to inform people about what actions are being undertaken by government and local actors in relation to climate change. These workshops will be led by the NDCA at national level and be supported by local authorities, the Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs), the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and the Department of Rural and Community Development.

It will also include supports for existing networks and organisations to help empower communities to explore new initiate, expand existing activities, and encourage wider participation in existing actions, including voluntary organisations, non-government organisations and other local organisations.

Carbon Pricing and Cross-Cutting Policies

The Plan states that government policies on taxation, expenditure, sustainable finance, spatial planning and research and development provide an important enabling framework of individual, house-hold, community and company-led climate action.

There is a commitment to increasing carbon taxes and a further commitment to allocate carbon revenue to programmes such as targeted social welfare and other initiatives to prevent fuel poverty and ensure a just transition, and part-funding a national retro-fitting programme targeting all homes, but with a particular emphasis on households in or at risk of energy.

The Plan states that it will introduce Green Budgeting, acknowledging that the budgetary process is not a neutral process but reflects societal choices about how resources are deployed. The process will build on the implementation of gender and equality budgeting, which the Plan states is at an advanced stage, and the development of wellbeing budgeting as committed to in the Programme for Government.