



Community Work  
Ireland



National Women's Council

Our Lives.  
Our Rights.  
Our Voice.

**SUBMISSION**

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**NATIONAL LONG-TERM CLIMATE  
ACTION STRATEGY (NLTS)**

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**2023**



This submission has been prepared by:

## National Women's Council

Established in 1981 as the Community Workers Co-operative, Community Work Ireland (CWI) is a national organisation that promotes and supports community work as a means of addressing poverty, social exclusion and inequality and promoting human rights. CWI has a membership base of almost 900 community workers and community work organisations working with the most marginalised communities throughout the country. CWI has been involved in the area of climate justice since 2010.

## Community Work Ireland

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## Feminist Communities for Climate Justice

***Feminist Communities for Climate Justice*** campaigns for climate justice that reflects feminist and community work values. We mobilise communities, ensuring social inclusion and equality are central to climate policies and programmes.

This partnership between the [National Women's Council](#) (NWC) and [Community Work Ireland](#) (CWI) amplifies the voices of women and marginalised communities that are most impacted by climate change, building momentum in communities to engage, understand and influence climate policies.

Feminist Communities for Climate Justice will develop a feminist and community work analysis, deliver an accredited training programme, establish a Communities for Climate Justice National Network, and develop resources and campaigns.

## Acknowledgements

Orla Kelleher and Clodagh Daly (2023) 'Consultation Response: Ireland's National Long Term Strategy' Environmental Justice Network Ireland and Community Law and Mediation Briefing Paper, available [here](#).

## National Long-Term Climate Action Strategy (nLTS)

***The National Long-Term Climate Action Strategy (nLTS) needs to demonstrate how Ireland will achieve complete decarbonisation while protecting the communities most impacted by climate change, including an analysis of the impacts on women.***

### Just Transition

Climate change is a threat to the entire world, but all of us are and will be affected in different ways. The Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognise that the impacts of climate change will be felt by all, but that these impacts will be uneven. Vulnerable communities and people around the world – in particular women and girls – face devastating impacts to their livelihoods and greater challenges in adapting to the long-term effects of climate breakdown<sup>1</sup>.

Climate change deepens existing societal inequalities and negatively impacts areas such as, but not limited to, energy, food, care, clean air, housing, transport and migration.

At COP 27 in November 2022, UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous noted that; *‘Climate change and gender inequality are interwoven challenges. We will not meet the 1.5 degrees Celsius goal, or any other goal, without gender equality and the full contribution of women and girls’*<sup>7</sup>. This basic truth, she said, is demonstrated time and again. Countries with more women in leadership, in the labour force, in peacemaking and more, do better. The full participation of women brings better management of conflicts, humanitarian responses, pandemics, economic matters, climate solutions, and much more.

In 2022, the UN Commission on the Status of women, considered for the first time questions of gender equality and climate change. They noted that women are increasingly being recognized as more vulnerable to climate change impacts than men, as they constitute the majority of the world’s poor and are more dependent on the natural resources, which climate change threatens the most. However, despite increasing evidence, there is still hesitancy in making the vital connections between gender, social equity and climate change<sup>8</sup>.

To date, climate policy has not addressed the different ways in which climate change affects women and marginalised communities. As outlined in *A Guide for Inclusive Community Engagement in Local Planning and Decision Making*<sup>2</sup>, “Effective and meaningful participatory planning depends on the involvement of those whose voices are most marginalised. These are the people who experience a severe impact from decisions that fail to consider their experiences and concerns” (p. 9). Notwithstanding the Climate Conversations initiative, climate policy in Ireland needs to take far greater consideration of the experiences of women and marginalised communities.

<sup>1</sup> Changing Ireland for the Better. Climate Action Plan 2023

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/bcc24-a-guide-for-inclusive-community-engagement-in-local-planning-and-decision-making/>

Drawing on the understanding of Just Transition developed by NESC (National Economic and Social Council) and outlined in Ireland's Climate Action Plan 2021, the nLTS needs to ensure the transition is fair, equitable and inclusive in terms of process and outcomes. This submission will touch on the following:

1. Commit to **phasing out fossil fuel** subsidies
2. Commit to **energy justice**
3. **Gender, equality and poverty-proof** all climate and environment policies and investment
4. Recognise, reflect and respond to the specific issues experienced by women in the **Just Transition** to a regenerative, distributive economy and society
5. Commit to **transport justice**
6. **Protect and restore nature**

## 1. Commit to phasing out fossil fuels and fossil fuel subsidies

Fossil fuels account for 57% of Ireland's total greenhouse gas emissions while direct and indirect state fossil fuel subsidies in Ireland amounted to €2.2bn in 2021, according to the CSO. Research demonstrates that pollution and the poor air quality caused by fossil fuel use differentially affects marginalised communities, women and children.

### The nLTS must:

- ▶ Commit to specifying a pathway for phasing out all fossil fuels, as well as, direct and indirect fossil fuel subsidies, ensuring that all public bodies divest fully from fossil fuels.
- ▶ Ensure that marginalised communities, women and children are protected from the pollution and poor air quality caused by fossil fuel use.

## 2. End energy poverty

Increased energy costs hit the most disadvantaged people in Ireland the hardest. Women are at greater risk of energy poverty due to their lower average incomes,<sup>3</sup> while lone parents, the Traveller community, older women living alone, disabled people and carers are particularly at risk. There is lack of data disaggregated by sex/gender related to energy poverty with data created at a household level, masking gendered patterns internally in households.

### The nLTS must:

- ▶ Increase research capacity to analyse the gendered effects of energy poverty and impacts on marginalised communities
- ▶ Increase investment in retrofitting schemes, prioritising marginalised and vulnerable people
- ▶ Set clear targets for reducing energy poverty within the framework of the National Energy Poverty Action Plan
- ▶ Increase the payable period for the Fuel Allowance to 32 weeks and ensure the rate is adequate to alleviate fuel poverty; extend eligibility for the Fuel Allowance to people in receipt of Carer's Allowance and the Working Family Payment; and remove the wait period for people in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance
- ▶ Increase investment in targeted measures to help those vulnerable to energy poverty, particularly lone parents, the Traveller community, older women living alone, disabled women and carers

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<sup>3</sup> European Parliament (2017). Gender perspective on access to energy in the EU. Report for the FEMM committee.

### 3. Gender, equality and poverty-proof all climate and environment policies and investment

Climate and environment policies must not exacerbate but reduce existing social inequalities. The disproportionate and differentiated impact of these issues on women must be considered at national and local level.

#### The nLTS must:

- ▶ Gender, equality and poverty-proof all climate policies and investment

### 4. Recognise, reflect and respond to the specific issues experienced by women in the Just Transition to a regenerative, distributive economy and society

Long-Term Climate Action Strategies must include the *'expected socio-economic effect of the decarbonisation measures, including, inter alia, aspects related to macro-economic and social development, health risks and benefits and environmental protection'*<sup>4</sup>. IHREC highlights that a just transition should take into account the needs of vulnerable groups, including those living in poverty, disabled people, older people and ethnic minorities<sup>5</sup>.

Women's voices must be central to creating a truly just transition, building green employment, strengthening public services and valuing care work while fostering social and community inclusion. Care and social infrastructure must be central to the green transition toward a regenerative society for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

#### The nLTS must:

- ▶ Prioritise the establishment the overdue statutory Just Transition Commission and explicitly include human rights in its mandate<sup>6</sup>, adequately financing and maintaining effective provision
- ▶ Invest in and value care work as green and inherently low carbon work

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<sup>4</sup> [European Commission. National Long-Term Strategies.](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Policy Statement on a Just Transition - IHREC - Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission](#)

<sup>6</sup> IHREC op cit

## 5. Commit to Transport Justice

Transport is not a gender-neutral issue. Understanding the different ways that women use transport is essential to building inclusive transport infrastructure, where everyone feels comfortable and safe going to and from work, schools, leisure, etc. In Ireland, 20% of journeys are ‘companion journeys,’ which include driving children to school, a responsibility primarily of women, so making it safer, easier and cheaper for children to get to school without needing a car would have a significant impact on household costs, oil imports and pollution<sup>7</sup>. We believe that an inclusive approach must be undertaken, ensuring that all transport needs are catered for in designing transport infrastructure – incorporating those of women, disabled persons, people in rural Ireland and all members of marginalised communities.

### The nLTS must:

- ▶ Invest in safe, accessible, reliable and affordable public and active transport infrastructure, particularly rural; reduce the cost of public transport for people who struggle to access it, including free school buses for any children living more than 1km away from school and the expansion of the Free Travel Scheme to people in receipt of a number of social protection schemes and people in the international protection process<sup>89</sup>, and ensure public transport is disability-inclusive
- ▶ Invest in research into sustainable mobility to incorporate a gender analysis of public and active transport into transport planning and investment

## Protect and restore nature

### The nLTS must:

- ▶ Expand and increase incentives to protect, manage and restore climate and biodiversity-friendly land use practices, and ensure this action on state lands

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<sup>7</sup> CSO (2020). National Travel Survey 2019.

<sup>8</sup> Currently the Free Travel Scheme is available to people 1) over 66; 2) get Disability Allowance, Blind Pension, Carer’s Allowance or Invalidity Pension; 3) are blind or visually impaired and meet the requirements for a Blind Pension; 4) have been getting Incapacity Supplement with Disablement Pension for at least 12 months; 5) are a specified carer for a person getting Constant Attendance Allowance or Prescribed Relative’s Allowance; 6) are getting a social security invalidity payment from another EU member state or a country with which Ireland has a bilateral social security agreement; 7) are a widow, widower or surviving civil partner and over 60; <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/9bba61-free-travel-scheme/>

<sup>9</sup> NI have a different list with some interesting inclusions, including those fleeing domestic abuse: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/free-and-concessionary-bus-and-rail-travel>