Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN 2023
Changing Ireland for the Better

Millvale solar farm, Co. Wicklow

Línte na Farraige project, Galway by Aho Niittyvirta

Climate Action Plan 2023: Changing Ireland for the Better

We're making progress – but we need to move faster

The impacts and risks of climate change are becoming more complex and harder to manage. These impacts will be felt by all, but they won't affect everyone equally. Here in Ireland, we have experienced these impacts, particularly through floods and storms, and the damage they have caused.

We are making steady progress on our climate goals, but events like these, and their expected increase in frequency and intensity, highlight that we must work even harder to ensure the country can cope with the ongoing effects of climate change.

Change for the better

Inaction is not an option. We must change for the better. We need to move at scale and at speed to ensure our country, people and planet have the best possible chance, not only to survive, but to thrive.

Climate Action Plan 2023 sets out our ongoing, urgent response to the climate crisis. It follows the many milestones that have already been achieved, like the start of our off-shore wind energy programme, the roll-out of the most ambitious home retrofitting scheme in Europe, the solar rooftop revolution that is already underway and the reduction in public transport fares for the first time in 75 years.

Climate action is central to Ireland's development

Our Climate Action Plan is integral to the National Development Plan 2021-2030. It shows how Ireland is putting climate solutions at the very heart of our social and economic development.

Climate Action Plan 2023 has a greater focus on system change. We recognise that it is important that the systems that shape where we live or how we build, how we work or get around, how we shop or produce food do the heavy lifting. We need local government to change; we need the public sector to change; we need industries and key economic sectors to change.

Individuals and communities will continue to be key drivers of the low-carbon transition. Then it will be easier for people to make sustainable choices that have real benefits.

We have to work together

Delivering on this ambition will only work if we all come together in a strengthened social contract for climate action, working towards real solutions that are meaningful, inclusive, fair and accessible. Climate action is not all about challenges, but about realising the opportunities that a clean, sustainable environment and society will offer in a way that is fair for everyone. Every sector, every community, every person has a role to play.

Change is not easy

Change is never easy, but the benefits are clear. Reducing our dependence on fossil fuel and transitioning to our own natural resources is good for our collective community wealth. There are many exciting opportunities that arise from the transition to a carbon neutral society and economy: new sustainable careers; warmer more energy-efficient homes; better travel options; more sustainable consumer choice; more liveable towns and cities; cleaner air and water; and a better environment for future generations.

We can be good at this

We can be good at this, and we will be. Our potential to be climate leaders is huge: realising this potential must be our shared purpose.

The 2019 and 2021 Climate Action Plans saw a big step-up in our programme of engagement with citizens and communities; this will continue to expand into 2023 and beyond. It saw us begin to overhaul our energy system, our building sector, our food production and our transport system.

Now we need to ramp up our ambition. Global emissions have continued to increase, as they have here in Ireland, so the scale of change needed to reduce them is unprecedented. To stay ahead of the climate curve, we must implement our plans urgently.

Every year counts

The Climate Act 2021 and the annual Climate Action Plans leave little room for manoeuvre. It is the responsibility of Ministers, key economic sectors, and industries to demonstrate that they are on a clear path to halve our emissions by 2030 and achieve net zero by 2050. The sectoral emissions ceilings (SECs) agreed in July 2022 put in place targets for each sector to achieve this.

We have agreed the numbers. Now it's time to deliver on them.

This will mean a massive up-scaling in our switch to renewables; a dramatic change to our transport system and how we allocate our road space; ambitious home and business retrofitting and climate-based construction, and new innovative systems that will protect and support our family farms to diversify their income streams.

Every person matters, every place matters

Our approach in everything in this Plan is based on the principle of fairness, ensuring a just transition where costs and benefits are shared equitably. We have made just transition central to our climate policy. In 2021, we secured €169m to ensure a just transition in the Midlands counties most affected by the switch away from peat as an energy source. This year, we will see the establishment of the Just Transition Commission to ensure that no community, no sector and no person gets left behind.

The Six Vital High Impact Sectors

Powering renewables

75%
reduction in emissions by 2030

We will facilitate a large-scale deployment of renewables that will be critical to decarbonising the power sector as well as enabling the electrification of other technologies.

- Accelerate the delivery of onshore wind, offshore wind, and solar.
- Dial up to 9 GW onshore wind, 8 GW solar, and at least 7 GW of offshore wind by 2030 (with 2 GW earmarked for green hydrogen production).
- Support at least 500 MW of local community-based renewable energy projects and increased levels of new micro-generation and small-scale generation.
- Phase out and end the use of coal and peat in electricity generation.
- New, dynamic Green Electricity Tariff will be developed by 2025 to incentivise people to use lower cost renewable electricity at times of high wind and solar generation.

Building better

commercial/public **45%** | residential **40%**
reduction in emissions by 2030

We will increase the energy efficiency of existing buildings, put in place policies to deliver zero-emissions new builds and continue to ramp up our retrofitting programme.

- Ramp up retrofitting to 120,000 dwellings to BER B2 by 2025, jumping to 500,000 by 2030.
- Put heat pumps into 45,000 existing and 170,000 new dwellings by 2025, up to 400,000 existing and 280,000 new dwellings by 2030.
- Generation up to 0.8 TWh of district heating by 2025 and up to 2.5 TWh by 2030.

Turning transport around

50%
reduction in emissions by 2030

We will drive policies to reduce transport emissions by improving our town, cities and rural planning, and by adopting the Avoid-Shift-Improve approach: reducing or avoiding the need for travel, shifting to public transport, walking and cycling and improving the energy efficiency of vehicles.

- Change the way we use our road space.
- Reduce the total distance driven across all car journeys by 20%.
- Walking, cycling and public transport to account for 50% of our journeys.
- Nearly 1 in 3 private cars will be an Electric Vehicle.
- Increase walking and cycling networks.
- 70% of people in rural Ireland will have buses that provide at least 3 trips to the nearby town daily by 2030.

Making family farms more sustainable

25%
reduction in emissions by 2030

We will support farmers to continue to produce world-class, safe and nutritious food while also seeking to diversify income through tillage, energy generation and forestry.

- Significantly reduce our use of chemical nitrogen as a fertilizer.
- Increase uptake of protected urea on grassland farms to 90-100%.
- Increase organic farming to up to 450,000 hectares, the area of tillage to up to 400,000 ha.
- Expand the indigenous biomethane sector through anaerobic digestion, reaching up to 5.7TWh of biomethane.
- Contribute to delivery of the land use targets for afforestation and reduced management intensity of organic soils.

Greening business and enterprise

35%
reduction in emissions by 2030

We're changing how we produce, consume, and design our goods and services by breaking the link between fossil fuels and economic progress. Decarbonising industry and enterprise is key to Ireland's economy and future competitiveness.

- Reduce clinker content in cement and substitute products with lower carbon content for construction materials, ensuring 35% reduction in emissions by 2030 (against 2018).
- Reduce fossil fuel use from 64% of final consumption (2021) to 45% by 2025 and further by 2030.
- Increase total share of heating to carbon neutral to 50-55% by 2025, up to 70-75% by 2030.
- Significantly grow the circular economy and bioeconomy.

Changing our land use

Exact reduction target for this sector is yet to be determined.

The first phase of the land use review will tell us how we are using our land now. Then, we can map, with evidence, how it can be used most effectively to capture and store carbon and to produce better, greener food and energy.

- Increase our annual afforestation rates to 8,000 hectares per annum from 2023 onwards.
- Rethink our Forestry Programme and Vision. Promote forest management initiatives in both public and private forests to increase carbon sinks and stores.
- Improve carbon sequestration of 450,000 ha of grasslands on mineral soils and reduce the management intensity of grasslands on 80,000 ha of drained organic soils.
- Rehabilitate 77,600 hectares of peatlands.

Other actions

The Yeats Building, Sligo Town, Co Sligo

Shandon Bridge over the River Lee, Cork City

Research and innovation

National Agricultural Soil Carbon Observatory to be fully operational.

Publish Ireland's Five-Year Assessment Report on Climate Change.

Implement the €65m National Challenge Fund.

Governance

All Climate Delivery Taskforces in operation.

Government Departments to evaluate the climate implications of policy proposals.

Just transition

Implement Just Transition Framework through climate sectoral policies.

Establish Just Transition Commission to advise government.

Continue targeted work in the Midlands with €169m Just Transition Fund.

Targeted social welfare measures to prevent fuel poverty.

Decarbonisation of public and private local rural bus routes.

Citizen engagement

Ongoing inclusive programme of citizen and stakeholder engagement to inform climate policy, improve climate literacy, ensure transparency in decision-making, and empower people to take climate action.

Public sector

51% reduction in GHG emissions and a 50% improvement in public sector energy efficiency by 2023.

Delivery of Local Authority Climate Action Plans.

Climate related training and upskilling for public sector employees.

Full implementation of green public procurement

Carbon pricing and cross cutting policies

Continuing to implement successive carbon tax increases to be used for retrofitting of low-income homes, fuel allowance and addressing fuel poverty.

Continue to support private finance and EIB investment in climate projects.

The Marine Environment

Establish the new Maritime Area Regulatory Authority.

Progress the mapping of all Irish offshore waters to support all marine activities.

Legislation for the identification, designation, and management of Marine Protected Areas.

The Circular Economy

Whole-of-Government Circular Economy Strategy.

Introduction of single use cup levy moving to a ban on all single use plastics.

Start deposit-return scheme for plastic bottles and cans.

Food Waste Prevention Roadmap.

International Climate Action

Provide at least €225m per year in Climate Finance to developing countries by 2025.

Adaptation

Development of a new National Adaptation Framework (NAF) and Sectoral Adaptation Plans.

Development of Ireland's first set of standardised climate projections that can be used across multiple sectors to assist with adaptation planning.

Improved availability of climate services and climate information through implementation of the National Framework for Climate Services (NFCS).

Continued mainstreaming of climate change into the OPW's Flood Risk management policies.

Improvements in the climate resilience of Ireland's water supply infrastructure.

Aerial view of Lahinch, Co Clare

Dublin Bikes, Dublin

#ClimateActionIRL

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