

The following are excerpts from a variety of recent news articles that address the sustainability agenda both globally and locally here in Ireland. These articles cover topics such as ESG investing trends, data on Irish greenhouse gas emissions, and two additional positive environmental initiatives updates. The publishers are Investment News(8th July 2024) , Irish Times (9th July 2024), and RTE.ie (12th July 2024).

This week, our news focuses on sustainability and attitudes towards ESG investment internationally. Locally, we have a positive update on Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions and two positive news stories on the growth in sustainable energy adoption and reducing pollution levels in the West of Ireland.



ESG remains divisive, but it looks like remaining a growth area for investing.

Last week, Investment News (2024) reported on a survey conducted by the international investment firm Vontobel. The survey revealed that 65% of financial advisers believe that ESG investments do not adversely affect performance; rather, they have a neutral to positive effect on it.

ESG has become one of the most divisive topics in investing and not just in the US, according to new research by international investment firm, Vontobel. While the survey of financial advisors shows that the Americas region overall is somewhat behind Europe and Asia-Pacific for the percentage of their book of business invested in ESG, it also reveals that more than half of respondents globally said the share is less than 10%. The poll found that 24% of respondents from Europe said that at least a quarter of their total book is in ESG, this falls to 16% in Asia-Pacific, and 11% in the Americas. For those advisors that said they have limited or no investments in ESG, 80% said this is because they think it's just a trend, but overall, almost two thirds expect to have at least 10% invested in ESG over the next three years.

However, concerns around inconsistent standards, metrics and taxonomies continue to pose barriers to advising about ESG investments (88% said it makes it somewhat or very challenging), followed by insufficient sustainable products available across all asset classes (82%), evolving ESG regulations (81%), and a lack of ESG data, research and information (80%).

That said, Investment News (2024) highlights the promising future of ESG investing, even amid scepticism regarding the analytical data advisors currently utilise. Transparent and open conversations with clients can demonstrate the availability of ESG products across diverse asset classes, catering to various investment needs.

Advisors said that they rely most on financial institutions and consultants, industry reports and whitepapers, and financial news and journals when researching ESG products. “Although ESG has been facing several headwinds recently, our study shows that it is set to continue to rise in popularity among investors in the coming years to the extent that Bloomberg Intelligence estimates that global ESG assets will rise to \$40 trillion by 2030,” said Christoph von Reiche, Vontobel’s Head of Institutional Clients. “With their knowledge, competence and closeness to clients, financial advisors and wealth managers play a key role in helping the ESG sector to grow further and enabling investors to benefit from this important trend.” He added that with significant hurdles the whole investment industry needs to provide greater support in helping advisors overcome these obstacles. “On the perceived lack of suitable ESG products across asset classes, a closer and more open dialogue between both parties could help ensure that advisors’ needs, and those of their clients, are met appropriately,” he concluded.

Investment News (2024)

Ireland’s greenhouse gas emissions in 2023 reach lowest level in three decades.



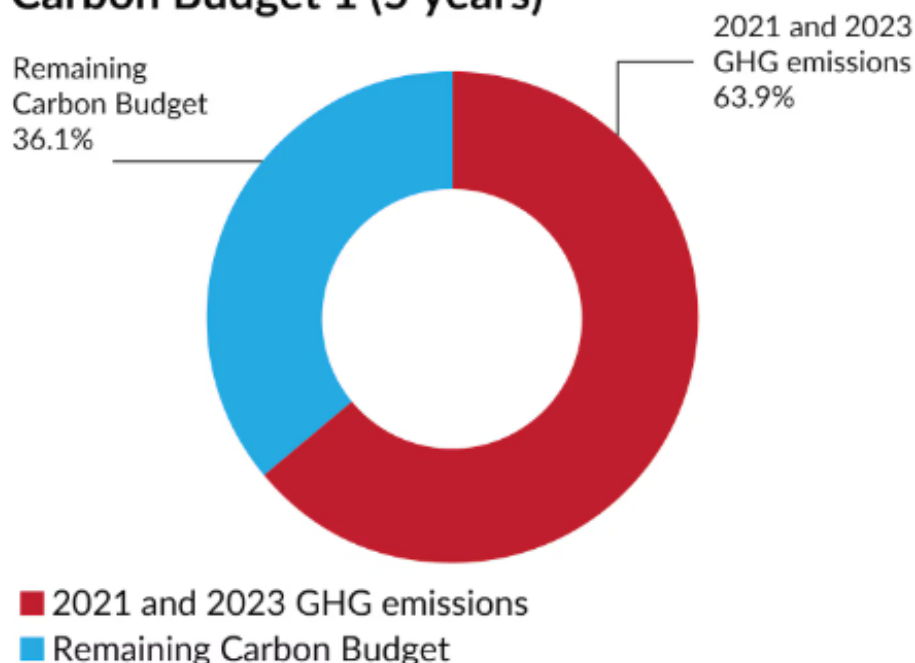
The Irish Times (2024) states that Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions decreased by 6.8 percent last year, marking reductions across nearly all sectors and resulting in the lowest emissions level in thirty years, as per the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). However, the country remains significantly behind its 2030 targets, despite the widespread reductions.

Data published by the Environmental Protection Agency(EPA) “indicates a move towards reducing carbon emissions at the scale and pace required to meet Ireland’s climate ambition of a 51 per cent reduction by 2030”, the agency concludes. It follows a reduction of 4 million tonnes of CO2 equivalent compared to 2022. EPA director general Laura Burke said the yearly fall was the largest reduction in emissions outside of recession. “However, while these are positive results for the year 2023, we are still well off track in terms of meeting EU and national 2030 targets. We need to maintain and further build momentum,” she said.

Emissions per capita decreased from 11.4 tonnes to 10.4 tonnes of CO2 equivalent per person in 2023, sustaining reductions in recent years. In total 55 million tonnes of CO2 equivalent were emitted, excluding emissions from land use, land use change and forestry. Despite progress on decarbonisation, current emission trends, however, mean legally-binding carbon budgets are unlikely to be met, increasing the likelihood of compliance costs facing Irish taxpayers in excess of €5 billion by 2030:

- Emissions from energy industries decreased by 21.6 per cent to 7.8 million tonnes of CO2 equivalent.
- Agriculture emissions decreased by 4.6 per cent to 20.8 million tonnes of CO2 equivalent due to an 18 per cent reduction in fertiliser nitrogen use, reduced lime application and overall reduction in numbers of livestock.
- Residential emissions decreased by 7 per cent to 5.3 million tonnes, the second substantial annual reduction in succession.
- Transport emissions increased marginally by 0.3 per cent to 11.8 million tonnes though they were 4.3 per cent below 2019 pre-Covid levels.

Carbon Budget 1 (5 years)



Source: EPA

Irish Times (2024)

The Irish Times (2024) reports that despite reductions, significant policy changes and swift, disciplined implementation across all government departments and state agencies are necessary if Ireland is to adhere to its legally binding pollution limits for 2025 and 2030.

EPA programme manager Mary Frances Rochford said many positives were evident. “Residential emissions were at their lowest level since 1990; we saw the largest year-on-year reductions to date in the energy and agriculture sectors.”

Friends of the Earth (FoE) head of policy Jerry MacEvilly said: “These figures show policy change works. It is significant and welcome that the Government’s climate measures are taking effect and leading to real reductions in Ireland’s polluting emissions.

“The Government has adopted many of the right policies but are failing to deliver actions needed to reduce emissions in line with the binding limits set by the Dáil,” Mr MacEvilly said. “We need faster and fairer climate action to make sure we leave a liveable planet for today’s young people. We need the government to lead the systems change we need in our transport, electricity, buildings and food systems,” he added.

“What these figures show is that politicians must hold their nerve on climate action,” said FoE chief executive Oisín Coghlan. “Government policy is beginning to make a difference but in recent times we have seen politicians in this country and across Europe step back from accelerating climate action because of pushback from vocal interest groups,” he added.

The Government must build on gains made in 2023 and prioritise corrective measures and known solutions across all sectors to urgently close the emissions gap, he said.

Irish Times (2024)



Galway project aims to raise awareness about air pollution.

RTE (2024) reports on a novel community art initiative in Galway, which seeks to heighten awareness of air pollution and motivate urban neighbourhoods to reduce carbon emissions.

'The Air We Share' project, launched last weekend, is part of Galway City Council's climate action plan. It will be run in the Westside area, which has been designated a decarbonising zone. It is hoped emissions there can be cut by over 50%, in the next six years, as part of ongoing local authority targets. Seven air pollution monitors will record pollution data around Westside to "make the invisible visible". The information gathered will be used by the local community to devise and create visual artistic representations of the statistics, in an effort to draw attention to the issue and promote debate. The project will be assisted by three artists in residence, who will work with locals over the next 12 months.

Dr Liz Coleman, an air pollution specialist at the University of Galway, said the project would raise collective understanding and create space to experiment with locally driven solutions.

RTE (2024)



"Today's announcement really demonstrates that the potential of solar power in Ireland is being realised in communities right across the country - the future is bright."....**Minister for Climate Eamon Ryan**

'Rooftop revolution' - 100,000 solar panels connected in Ireland.

According to RTE (2024), ESB Networks reports over 100,000 rooftop solar microgenerators have now been connected to Ireland's electricity network, cumulatively adding over 400MW of clean energy onto the power system:

ESB Networks said 20% of solar panel connections were delivered in the past six months, and it is continuing to progress applications at a rate of 750 per week. Minister for Climate Eamon Ryan described the milestone as a 'rooftop revolution'.

Conall Bolger, CEO, Irish Solar Energy Association said the milestone reflects a growing excitement within the Irish population for solar technology, driven by its environmental benefits and potential cost savings. "As more homes embrace solar, the need for grid upgrades becomes increasingly crucial. Upgrading our grid infrastructure will ensure that these renewable energy sources can be effectively integrated into our energy system, enhancing reliability, and maximising the benefits of solar power," he said. Mr Bolger said the Irish Solar Energy Association continues to advocate for policies that support both solar expansion and grid modernisation.

RTE (2024)

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