

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN 2019

First Progress Report
Executive Summary



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Executive Summary

With increasing political and public pressure for climate action, Ireland is responding to the climate crisis. In October 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) highlighted the risks involved in exceeding 1.5 degrees of global heating. These risks include food and water insecurity, extreme weather events, sea-level rise, biodiversity loss, increased occurrences of flooding and drought, disease and the potential for mass migration. The climate crisis is without doubt the defining challenge of our generation. Global greenhouse gas emissions must reach net zero by 2050 to remain within the IPCC temperature thresholds established and mitigate most harm.

To date, Ireland has been a climate laggard, and repeatedly ranked as the worst performing EU member state in the annual Climate Change Performance Index. Progress towards decarbonisation has been slow, though evidence of the climate crisis has never been more pressing or well received. This includes a critical rally from the bottom-up for change, including from the next generation that will be impacted most by climate action or inaction taken today.

Against this backdrop, the *Climate Action Plan 2019 To Tackle Climate Breakdown* was published by Government on the 17th June 2019. The Plan contains 183 actions, broken down into 619 individual measures, which Ireland needs to implement to meet our EU 2030 targets and to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

The climate actions identified will be implemented by 13 Government Departments and 40 agencies under the remit of those Departments. Delivering such an integrated set of actions and policies will require a deep level of collaboration across Government.

Some key governance actions outlined in the Plan include the establishment of a Climate Action Delivery Board within the Department of An Taoiseach to hold designated bodies to account. In support of the Delivery Board, a new Climate Action Unit has also been established to monitor and drive implementation and assist with the preparation of a progress report each quarter.

A year on since the publication of the IPCC Special Report, this report outlines progress made on the 176 measures due for completion in the second and third quarters of 2019 as well as ongoing measures in the national Climate Action Plan. Of the 176 measures, 149 are complete or on schedule and 27 are delayed. This gives an overall completion rate of **85%** for the first progress report of the Climate Action Plan 2019.

Measures due in Quarter 2 2019

In the second quarter of 2019, Departments and agencies delivered all 7 measures that were due under the Climate Action Plan. Headline measures implemented in Q2 are highlighted in Table 1.

Table 1 Examples of progress made in Q2 under the Climate Action Plan

Sector	Action	Measure completed in Q2	Progress Update
Electricity	33	<i>Establishment of a Steering Group to examine and oversee the feasibility of the utilisation of CCS in Ireland, and report to the Standing Committee on Climate Action as appropriate</i>	Establishing a designated steering committee in Q2 was essential to begin examining the feasibility of Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) in Ireland. While reducing greenhouse gas emissions is a priority for climate action, the potential for capturing created carbon dioxide is also mooted globally to prevent further carbon dioxide from entering the atmosphere. Technology is rapidly developing in this area and it is essential that Ireland remains abreast of relevant developments.
Built Environment	66	<i>Introduce Nearly Zero Energy Buildings (NZEB) Dwellings in Building Regulations to facilitate phasing out the installation of oil boilers in new dwellings where practical</i>	SI 183 of 2019 and SI 292 of 2019 transposed the NZEB requirements of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive in Q2 2019. Introducing such regulatory measures is key to support the phasing out of fossil fuel boilers and develop a more sustainable housing supply.

Measures due in Quarter 3 2019

In the third quarter of 2019, Departments and agencies were to deliver 116 measures under the Action Plan. To date, 89 measures have been completed and 27 are delayed. Headline measures implemented are detailed for illustrative purposes in Table 2.

Table 2 Examples of progress made in Q3 under the Climate Action Plan

Sector	Action	Measure completed in Q3	Progress Update
Carbon Pricing/ Governance	7	<i>Implement a rolling strategy to reform environmental taxation measures across all relevant tax heads</i>	The Climate Action Plan contains a suite of taxation measures to initiate sustainable behavioural changes and provide certainty to markets. A Tax Strategy Group paper on Climate Action was prepared in Q3 and included proposals across a number of headings related to climate related fiscal measures. Policy options were considered in the context of the Budget 2020 which contained a strong climate focus. Measures introduced in 2020 included an increased carbon tax (with supports for more vulnerable members of society), a nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions-based charge, changes to BIK for vehicles and extended VRT reliefs, as appropriate.
Carbon Pricing/ Governance	8	<i>Implement a carbon tax rate of at least €80 per tonne by 2030 and carry out a full assessment of a trajectory of increases over successive annual Budgets</i>	The main step necessary for delivery in Q3 was to assess a carbon tax trajectory of at least €80/tonne by 2030, having regard to considerations on the social and economic impacts. The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) completed research on this matter in Q3 and published their final report on the day of the Budget 2020. Instead of a larger increase in any one year, the Minister for Finance committed to a €6 increase in Budget 2020 as a first step towards the 2030 target. The Minister also stated the Government's intention to increase this tax steadily in forthcoming years.
Carbon Pricing/ Governance	9	<i>Publish a Decision Paper and Revised Circular requiring the use of a new, much higher, shadow price of carbon and lower discount rate in cost-benefit appraisal, ensuring all major public investment projects take account of the climate impacts of these investments</i>	A circular confirming the revised shadow price of carbon and lower discount rate was issued in July 2019. The introduction of a Revised Circular requiring the use of a new, much higher, shadow price of carbon is essential to reform the Public Spending Code in a way that introduces more robust consideration of climate impacts in project appraisals. This will impact investment and infrastructure decisions thereafter.

Electricity	30	<i>Establish a working group on micro-generation and renewable self-consumption and agree terms of reference; and</i>	The establishment of a working group is an important first step in the development of micro-generation in the Plan. Supports for increased micro-generation of electricity by citizens, households and communities represented a central facet of the Citizens' Assembly's energy recommendations. Facilitating citizens to become involved in the energy transition is key for enhanced public engagement and empowerment on climate action, including removing blockages experienced to date as these measures aim to address.
	30	<i>Begin review of requirements for resolving market settlement issues for renewable self-consumers exporting to the grid</i>	
Built Environment	48	<i>Develop a plan to establish a new delivery body to ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery system for retrofits, including examining how to deliver a major house retrofitting programme in the Midlands. We will also look at easy pay-back models, for example through your electricity bill; and</i>	Built environment actions are critical to achieve the ambitious targets for retrofitting the existing building stock across Ireland. Retrofitting is essential to enhance the environmental performance of the national housing supply, including enhancing insulation and installing new heating technologies. The measures achieved in Q3 began the important analytical work required to deliver a retrofit programme as efficiently and effectively as possible. A new Task Force on the National Retrofit Delivery Programme has now been established to this end.
	49	<i>Develop a plan to ensure that the grant schemes, new finance models and the delivery system are effectively integrated</i>	
Transport	72	<i>Develop the EV charging network necessary to support the growth of EVs to at least 800,000 by 2030 and set a target for the supply of infrastructure to stay sufficiently ahead of demand</i>	The transition to electric vehicles (EVs) is a core element of the Climate Action Plan to help decarbonise the transport sector. Developing sufficient infrastructure to meet projected increased demand is central to delivery. The key measure due in Q3 included the introduction of a capital support to Local Authorities for the development of up to 200 on-street public chargers per annum. This measure is essential to improve the public charging network, and mitigate citizen concerns regarding range anxiety. SEAI have now opened the scheme for applications.

Transport	85	<i>Transition the urban public service obligation (PSO) public bus fleet to low emissions vehicles (LEVs)</i>	The key measure for delivery in Q3 was to initiate the tender process for the framework contract for the purchase of double deck hybrid buses. This has been completed and award of the tender is expected in Q4. Shifting passenger journeys from the private car to public transport is essential for a low carbon transport future. It is imperative that this public transport fleet is thus also decarbonised when facilitating increased demand.
Transport	90	<i>The delivery of the first Luas tram extension (extends 42m tram to 54m) for testing and commissioning</i>	Adding additional capacity to the Luas network represents a central action to improve the public transport network. Efficient, reliable and comfortable public transport is essential to encourage modal shift, particularly from the private car, to reduce emissions in this sector.
International	158	<i>Lead preparations for the United Nations (UN) Climate Summit on youth engagement and public mobilisation</i>	Ireland was actively involved in the preparation of the UN Climate Action Summit, which took place in New York in September 2019. The Summit aimed to demonstrate a leap in political ambition towards bolstering national and international climate action. Together with the Marshall Islands, Ireland led the track on Youth Engagement and Public Mobilisation. This focused on maximising the engagement and amplifying the voices of citizens, especially young people, in long-lasting climate solutions. The initiative was a great success with over 40 UN member states signing up to the youth pledge initiative ('Kwon Gesh').

Of the 27 measures that have been delayed, resource constraints (often human rather than financial) and lengthy procedural issues were most commonly cited as the reasons for delay. Several measures are also on track for completion by the end of October according to the most recent Departmental updates. Delayed items will be reported upon in future progress reports.

In forthcoming quarters, the Climate Action Delivery Board will also work to identify potential challenges, pre-empt potential delays, support progress development and unblock policy action, where possible. Examples of measures delayed in this first progress report are detailed in Table 3.

Table 3 Examples of delayed measures due for completion in Q3 under the Climate Action Plan

Sector	Action	Measure delayed in Q3	Progress Update
Governance	5	<i>Commence the process of forming carbon budgets for 2021 to 2025, 2026 to 2030 and 2031 to 2035 ahead of a new Climate Action (Amendment) Bill 2019 being enacted</i>	Robust and evidence-based carbon budgets represent a central facet of the Climate Action Plan to govern and enforce emissions reductions across sectors. Work has begun by the Climate Change Advisory Council in this respect, with an expert workshop due to take place in October. The Council plans to agree recommendations to the Department at its meeting in November 2019.
Electricity	21	<i>Ensure that updated planning guidelines for onshore wind are published in 2019</i>	The commitment in this quarter was to finalise the wind energy guidelines. This is an important first step in an interconnected series of important measures aimed at ensuring maximum onshore wind penetration on the grid. DHPLG in consultation with DCCAE have completed substantial work to date in preparing the draft guidelines for public consultation. One element remains to be concluded and it is expected that public consultation will commence by the end of October 2019.
Electricity	28	<i>Increase the volumes and frequencies of Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) auctions to deliver on the 70% renewable electricity target by 2030, ensuring an appropriate community/enterprise mix to achieve an efficient delivery of renewables</i>	The measure for delivery in Q3 was to finalise the design of the RESS including state aid notification. This process is at an advanced stage but has not been completed. Detailed RESS auction design is underway with a plan to begin qualification process for first auction by end Q4. Pre-notification was submitted in June 2019. Legal review of responses to DG Competition queries are close to finalisation ahead of formal state aid notification which will happen in Q4. The RESS is crucial to transition our energy supply out of fossil fuels and towards more renewable and community-based energy systems. This will not only decrease GHG emissions but also help to build community resilience and energy security nationally.

Transport	85	<i>Transition the urban PSO public bus fleet to LEVs</i>	A number of transport measures have been delayed as a result of delays to a public consultation effort due to take place as part of a wider public and active transport policy review. This includes Q3 measures related to a consultation on alternatively fuelled buses (Action 85), a consultation on public/sustainable transport policy (Action 94), consideration of the electrification of public transport (Action 94) and the publication of a revised implementation plan for Smarter Travel (Action 96). All of these aspects are intended to be addressed within the forthcoming public consultation. The Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport plans to launch this consultation in October.
	94	<i>Review public and sustainable transport policy and develop a roadmap to decarbonise all PSO public transport</i>	
	96	<i>Review and bring forward a revised implementation plan for the outstanding policies and actions in the 2009-2020 policy Smarter Travel, A Sustainable Transport Future</i>	
Agriculture, Forestry and Land Use	110	<i>Actively engage all stakeholders to develop a roadmap to ensure the future development of the agriculture and land-use (including forestry) sector will be built on environmental sustainability, and contribute fairly to Ireland's climate, air and energy targets</i>	The preparation of this roadmap is at an advanced stage and stakeholder engagement has commenced. The roadmap is expected to be published by the end of Q4, with a public consultation also to be held by the end of October 2019.
International	154	<i>Seek to at least double the percentage of official development assistance (ODA) spending on climate finance by 2030, and report on our expenditure each year</i>	Annual reports on ODA expenditure on climate were due for publication by DFAT in Q3. Work is ongoing and at an advanced stage, with the report now expected by the end of October.

Ongoing Measures

Progress regarding ongoing measures are also outlined in this report. Departments and agencies were due to progress 53 ongoing measures under the Climate Action Plan. All measures are currently on schedule, including:

- Implementing a rolling strategy to reform environmental taxation measures across all relevant tax heads (Action 7);
- Considering the merits of equalising electricity tax rates for business and electricity consumers to €1/MWh (Action 7);

- Monitoring of sustainable finance measures within a new Strategy for international financial services to promote the development of the sustainable finance sector in Ireland (Action 11);
- Prioritising public funding for energy, climate action and sustainability, aligned with the refreshed national Research Priority Areas 2018 to 2023 (Action 14);
- Delivering NPF objectives for regional development, urban growth and compact growth (Action 15);
- Developing interactive tools using BER database for industry to identify potential markets and allow for aggregated delivery models (Action 45);
- Developing Retrofit Standard/Guidance for traditionally built buildings (Action 50);
- Supporting capital investment in the higher education sector, both in the upgrade and retrofit of existing buildings, which will incorporate energy efficiency improvements, and new buildings which are built to NZEB standards (Action 67);
- Restoration of 22,107 hectares of raised bog habitat which will directly reduce/halt carbon loss (Action 134);
- Providing support for the development of relevant media content, including in the independent production sector (Action 159);
- Ensuring that the school curriculum is reviewed against climate action on an ongoing basis (Action 180).

Progress on all Q2, Q3 and Ongoing measures, including more detail related to their designated status and update, are explored in turn next.

“Societies who delay the transition needed will face higher costs and fewer opportunities. This plan is designed to demonstrate the determination of Government to shape a path to a decarbonised world...Change must happen in every home, in every workplace and in every network which supports our lifestyle. This requires a very high level of engagement, buy-in and motivation”

(Climate Action Plan, 2019, p135)



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland