

Climate Action Roadmap

March 2023



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Climate Roadmap Roles:

Role	Name	Position/Grade
Climate and Sustainability Champion	JP Mulherin	Assistant Secretary for Corporate Affairs and Strategic Development (Acting)
Energy Performance Officer	Vacant (position in process of being filled)	Principal Officer, Corporate Support Unit

Approved by Management Board:

Name	Role
Mary Hurley	Secretary General
Bairbre Nic Aongusa	Assistant Secretary for Community Development
Fintan O'Brien	Assistant Secretary for Rural Development and Regional Affairs
JP Mulherin	Assistant Secretary for Corporate Affairs and Strategic Development (Acting)

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Climate Action Plan 2021 (CAP21) envisages the public sector leading by example on climate action to reach the target of reducing Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions by 51% by 2030 and becoming climate neutral no later than 2050.

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 gives legal underpinning to climate action by the public sector. It requires all public bodies to perform their functions in a manner consistent with national climate ambitions.

Although its share of emissions is relatively small nationally, the public sector plays an important leadership role as a catalyst, advocate, and proof-of-concept for ambitious climate action across buildings, transport, waste, and energy categories. Further, as a large purchaser of good and services, the promotion of green procurement practices is important to incentivise more sustainable product lines and supply chains, as provided for in actions under the Climate Action Plan 2021.

CAP 2021 includes an action under the section "Public Sector Leading by Example" to establish an appropriately resourced Climate Unit in every Government Department to ensure climate considerations are at the core of policy developments. The Department established its Climate Unit in September 2021 bringing a renewed focus to climate action matters across the organisation, and enabling a strengthened contribution to cross-Government climate matters.

To support public sector bodies leading by example, a Public Sector Climate Action Mandate now applies to public bodies covered by the CAP21 decarbonisation targets, with the exception for local authorities, commercial semi state bodies, and schools.

Each public sector body to which the Mandate applies will develop a Climate Action Roadmap setting out how it will deliver on its energy efficiency and emissions reduction targets. The Roadmap is the pathway by which the body will implement the Climate Action Mandate.

1.2 Public Sector Climate Action Mandate

The Public Sector Climate Action Mandate will support public sector bodies leading by example on climate action. It aims to inspire the necessary climate action in wider society to reduce Ireland's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 51% by 2030.

The Public Sector Climate Action Mandate will be adopted by public sector bodies covered by decarbonisation targets, including the Department of Rural & Community Development

The Mandate requires us to show leadership in climate action by taking, and reporting on, the actions set out in the Mandate under the following headings:

Our Targets

- Reduce GHG emissions by 51% in 2030
- Increase the improvement in energy efficiency in the public sector from the 33% target in 2020 to 50% by 2030
- Put in place a Climate Action Roadmap.

Our People

- Establish and resource Green Teams, reporting to senior management, to become integrated drivers of sustainability in every public sector body
- Nominate a member of the Management Board as the Climate and Sustainability Champion with responsibility for implementing and reporting on the Mandate
- Incorporate appropriate climate action and sustainability training (technical and behavioural) into learning and development strategies for staff
- Organise staff workshops (at least annually) to engage on climate issues, including a focus on decreasing the organisation's carbon footprint.

Our Way of Working

- Report GHG emissions and sustainability activities in the annual report
- Review any paper-based processes, and evaluate the possibilities for digitisation so it becomes the default approach
- Achieve formal environmental accreditation for large public sector bodies, such as ISO 50001 (Energy Management Standard) or ISO 14001 (Environmental Management System), with a view to going beyond ISO14001 to adopting EMAS (Eco Management and Audit Scheme).

Our Buildings and Vehicles

- Create bicycle friendly buildings for employees and visitors, by putting bicycle parking in place by 2022 which is secure, accessible, and simple for cyclists to recognise and use
- Display an up-to-date Display Energy Certificate in every public building that is open to the public to clearly show energy use
- The public sector will not install heating systems that use fossil fuels after 2023, unless at least one of a number of defined exceptions:
- Purchase only zero-emission vehicles where available and operationally feasible from end of 2022, enabling Ireland to go beyond the requirements of the Clean Vehicle Directive and act as an international leader in this area.

The Public Sector Climate Action Mandate will be reviewed annually and published in each iteration of the Climate Action Plan.

The Climate and Sustainability Champion ("the Champion") in each public body has responsibility for implementing and reporting on the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate.

2. Climate Action Roadmap

One of the key requirements of the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate is to ensure a Climate Action Roadmap is developed by each Government Department and for each public body under the Department's aegis by the end of Q1 2023.

The Climate Action Roadmap communicates how each public body aims to meet the requirements of the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate 2022 (the Mandate) and reach its 2030 carbon and energy efficiency targets.

The Roadmap must be in line with the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate and must be updated to reflect any changes made to the Mandate, as published on an annual basis.

The Roadmap must be signed off by the most senior management level within the organisation (e.g., CEO and Board, Management Board and Sec Gen, etc.).

2.1 Our People

The Climate Action Mandate requires that leadership and governance structures for climate action are set up, and that staff are engaged with climate action and have appropriate training.

Our People: Key Actions

- Establish and resource Green Teams, reporting to senior management, to become integrated drivers of sustainability in every public sector body.
- Nominate a member of the Management Board as the Climate and Sustainability Champion with responsibility for implementing and reporting on the Mandate.
- Incorporate appropriate climate action and sustainability training (technical and behavioural) into learning and development strategies for staff.
- Organise staff workshops (at least annually) to engage on climate issues, including a focus on decreasing the organisation's carbon footprint.

2.1.1 Leadership and Governance for Climate Action

Climate Action Unit

The Department established its Climate Unit in September 2021 bringing a renewed focus to climate action matters across the organisation, and enabling a strengthened contribution to cross-Government climate matters.

The Department actively participates on the Inter-Departmental Structures progressing the cross-Government Climate agenda, including the Senior Officials Group on the Environment and Climate Change, the Cabinet Committee on the Environment and Climate Change and the Climate Action Delivery Board, Climate Action Unit Network, Climate Communications Coordination Committee and Climate Communications Working Group.

Green Team

The Department is fully committed to and engaged with the Public Sector Energy Efficiency Strategy published in 2017.

In order to drive this agenda forward, the Department's GEO Committee (Green, Energy & Organisation Committee) was formed in 2019. The role of the GEO Committee is to:

- 1. Champion energy efficiency in the workplace.
- 2. Act as the Green Team for DRCD.
- 3. Identify ways of reducing waste.
- 4. Identify and implement practical measures to fulfil the Green Government initiative.
- 5. Act as a forum for discussing Green initiatives, energy efficiency, waste reduction, and other organisation and accommodation issues in DRCD.
- 6. Raise awareness about practical Green and Energy measures that can be taken at work and at home.

The Committee is composed of staff from the Facilities Management Team of the Rural Fund & Corporate Support Unit, and interested representatives from units throughout the Department ensuring a balance of business units and location. The Committee is chaired by the Facilities Management Team.

The GEO Committee oversees a number of initiatives to ensure energy conservation and environmental sustainability, including the implementation of our Resource Efficiency Action Plan and our participation in the Optimising Power at Work initiative.

The Committee actively engages with DRCD staff to advise and encourage energy efficiency, both in the office and in the home environment. The Department's energy advisor, appointed under the Optimising Power at Work initiative, provides ongoing advice and guidance to Departmental staff on energy saving measures and best practice.

The Department has also implemented the Green Government decision in January 2019, including the elimination of single-use plastics and waste reduction.

Climate and Sustainability Champion

JP Mulherin, Assistant Secretary (Acting) of the Corporate Division is the Department's nominated Management Board Climate and Sustainability Champion, with responsibility for implementing and reporting on the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate.

2.1.2 Engaging and Training Staff

Training

The Department's Climate Unit delivered a foundational awareness and training session for all staff in November 2022, in conjunction with an expert in the field, entitled "Introduction to Climate Action and why it is important". Content included:

- Climate change: essential information and data.
- The global context.
- Ireland's climate change: framework and structures for addressing climate change.
- Challenges and opportunities.
- What individuals and DRCD can do.

The aim of the course was to improve understanding and raise awareness of climate matters, highlight what is already being done by the Department in the climate space, remind people that we all have a role to play, and encourage all staff to get involved and give further consideration to embedding climate action in the delivery of the Departments' work.

The foundational training was an initial step and will be followed up at a later date by more targeted in-depth training around citizen/stakeholder engagement linked to DRCD's remit.

The Department is actively considering how to further strengthen and formalise climate action training for DRCD staff and incorporate appropriate climate action and sustainability training (technical and behavioural) into future L&D strategies for staff as these strategies are being developed.

Internal Climate Action Group

The Department has an Internal Climate Action Working Group, in place since November 2021. It meets quarterly and is chaired by the Climate Unit. The aim of the Group is to contribute to a greater level of awareness of cross-Government climate issues in the Department through the development of an enhanced culture of information-sharing, including examples of best practice.

Innovation Week

Showcasing climate action case studies, on a continued basis, is recommended to help people to fully understand the concept, embed the message and allow people to consider if projects might be replicated. Climate action was a central theme of Innovation Week activities in the Department of Rural & Community Development in October 2022, and other initiatives, including hosting of climate themed workshops, are being explored with a view to to informing staff of best practice at other opportunities.

2.2 Our Targets

The Climate Action Mandate sets the following emission reduction and energy efficiency targets for public bodies:

Our Targets: Key Actions

- Reduce GHG emissions by 51% in 2030.
- Increase the improvement in energy efficiency in the public sector from the 33% target in 2020 to 50% by 2030.
- Put in place a Climate Action Roadmap by the end of 2022.

For the purposes of the public sector Mandate, greenhouse gas emissions are taken to be energy-related carbon dioxide equivalent emissions. The baseline will be the average of 2016-2018 emissions. The target comes in two parts – both emissions associated with thermal energy (for heating and transport) and overall energy related emissions (including electricity) must be reduced by 51%.

2.2.1 Achieving the carbon emissions reduction targets (51% reduction by 2030)

Reduce GHG Emissions

The Department is committed to the installation of solar panels at its Ballina office location, which is managed by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Agreement on contribution of funding towards the cost of the installation has been agreed. It is anticipated a procurement process to obtain a contractor to carry out the work will commence shortly with full installation expected by year end.

Climate Action Roadmap

This document constitutes the Department of Rural and Community Development's first Climate Action Roadmap. The Roadmap summaries the progress made to date by the Department in meeting the commitments set out in the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate.

The Roadmap will remain under review and further iterations will be produced in line with public sector timelines (i.e. second iteration to be completed by end of quarter 3 2023 and from 2024 on within 6 months of publication of the Climate Action Plan).

2.2.2 Achieving the energy efficiency target (50% improvement by 2030)

Resource Efficiency Action Plan

The Department's Resource Efficiency Action Plan (REAP) was finalised in 2019. The REAP summarises the activities undertaken in the areas of energy efficiency, waste reduction and recycling, water conservation, and implementing the Green Government Initiative.

The implementation of actions identified under the REAP, and aligned with the Public Sector Energy Efficiency Strategy, has assisted the Department in exceeding the cross-government target set out in the Climate Action Plan 2019 of improving energy efficiency by of 33% by 2020. Since then the Department has further improved its energy efficiency to achieve an overall increase in energy efficiency of 37.8% by 2022.

Implementation of a new REAP is being progressed, to build on progress already achieved and to include measures to reduce the Department's energy consumption profile and encourage recycling best practice. Delivery of the actions in the updated REAP will advance the work of the Department in terms of energy efficiency in moving to meet the target of increased improvement in energy efficiency in the public sector from the 33% target in 2020 to 50% by 2030.

2.3 Our Way of Working

Our Way of Working: Key Actions

- Report GHG emissions and sustainability activities in the annual report.
- Review any paper-based processes, and evaluate the possibilities for digitisation so it becomes the default approach.
- Achieve formal environmental accreditation for large public sector bodies, such as ISO 50001 (Energy Management Standard) or ISO 14001 (Environmental Management System), with a view to going beyond ISO14001 to adopting EMAS (Eco Management and Audit Scheme).

2.3.1 Energy & environmental management systems and accreditation

As a small public sector body the Department is not required to achieve formal environmental accreditation such as ISO 50001 (Energy Management Standard) or ISO 14001 (Environmental Management System), or to progress beyond ISO14001 to adopting EMAS (Eco Management and Audit Scheme).

The Department actively engages with SEAI on a continuous basis to remain appraised of any developments with regard to energy management systems and requirements.

2.3.2 Green public procurement

Green Public Procurement (GPP) is a process where public authorities seek to source goods, services or works with a reduced environmental impact.

The EPA has published GPP guidance and ten accompanying criteria sets that support the inclusion of sustainable and green practices into public sector procurement procedures. The ten criteria sets published are Road Transport Vehicles & Services; ICT Products & Services; Food & Catering Services; Indoor Cleaning Services; Office Buildings Design, Construction & Management; Indoor & Outdoor Lighting; Heating Equipment; Energy related Products and Paper Products & Printing Services.

On foot of the reporting arrangements established by Circular 20/2019, the Department outlines progress in relation to Green Public Procurement as part of its Annual Report, which commenced with the 2020 report.

The level of procurement within the Department is quite small, and it is Department policy to avail of OGP frameworks wherever possible. For example, in 2021, seven contracts over €25,000 were put in place, with four of these being for services to Islands which fall under the Department's remit, and the remainder covering research and media services.

GPP was incorporated into the four main contracts in 2021, which were for services to the Islands, while green public procurement was not relevant in respect of the remaining three contracts. This situation is similar for 2022, and all future procurement in the relevant areas will be carried out in accordance with green procurement guidelines.

2.3.3 Resource use

The Climate Action Mandate requires public bodies to review any paper-based processes and evaluate the possibilities for digitisation, so it becomes the default approach.

Digital Transformation Project

DRCD's Statement of Strategy commits to fostering a culture of innovation and embracing technology within the organisation. It specifically committed to the development of an ICT strategy for DRCD which was completed in 2022.

DRCD's ICT Strategy seeks to realise the ICT vision to provide a more customer-driven innovative service by harnessing the latest and most appropriate digital technology to address the requirement and needs of our internal and external stakeholders' countrywide. The implementation of the strategy is informed by relevant national and international ICT frameworks, and all relevant regulatory and governance obligations.

While a small number of the large DRCD funding streams have their own ICT management systems, there are a number that still rely on paper and excel spreadsheet based processes. This is managed well internally, however a more comprehensive efficient digital solution is required and this was recognised in the Organisational Capability Review carried out with DRCD in 2019.

The DRCD digital transformation project will transition DRCD services to secure and scalable digital systems using a customer focussed approach and innovative technology and practices. This will in turn facilitate better and more effective collection and use of data to support better programme implementation and policy design.

The system will centralise the collection of all relevant data for organisations accessing funding through DRCD schemes and programmes with a view to having a comprehensive, user friendly end to end system that will support both the customer and DRCD in the effective delivery of DRCD services to all communities.

The system will also facilitate a significant move towards paperless based approaches to DRCD scheme and programme management and implementation.

The DRCD Programme Information Management System (PIMS) will be developed in phases with Phase 1 going to tender in Q2 2023. While the primary role of the system is to support the management of DRCD funding streams and programmes it will be designed with data management and sharing in mind, future proofing it as much as possible in the context of potentially working with other Government systems in the future.

TidyTowns Competition

In 2021 the process for the annual Tidy Towns Competition moved from a paper-based process to an online process, which given the participation of almost 1,000 Tidy Towns Committees across the country, resulted in a significant reduction in paper produced. The new digital approach included the introduction of an online application system and a File Cloud for sharing applications with the adjudication team. This online approached continued for 2022 and 2023.

In addition in 2023 Special Award categories in Climate Action and Sustainable Development Goals (sponsored by the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications) were included in the competition to recognise the input local communities can make in addressing and sustainability.

2.4 Our Buildings and Vehicle

Our Buildings and Vehicles: Key Actions

- Create bicycle friendly buildings for employees and visitors, by putting bicycle parking in place by 2022 – which is secure, accessible, and simple for cyclists to recognise and use.
- Display an up-to-date Display Energy Certificate in every public building that is open to the public to clearly show energy use.
- The public sector will not install heating systems that use fossil fuels after 2023, unless at least one of a specified list of exceptions applies.
- Purchase only zero-emission vehicles where available and operationally feasible from end of 2022, enabling Ireland to go beyond the requirements of the Clean Vehicle Directive and act as an international leader in this area.

Cycle Friendly Buildings

The location of the Department's Dublin office, situated in Dublin City centre, acts as an incentive to cycle to work in efforts to avoid traffic congestion. To facilitate this, there is a dedicated bicycle storage space, housed on the ground floor of the Dublin office building which all staff can access. There are 43 bike storage places available in total. Bicycle racks are available in the underground carpark and are used by staff members regularly.

Bicycle facilities are also available for staff located in the Ballina office, which is managed by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Energy Certificates

The Department's office in Dublin is not open to the public and therefore the requirement to ensure a Display Energy Certificate (DEC) is in every building 'frequently visited by the public' is not applicable to this location.

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage is the anchor tenant in DRCD's Ballina office and responsibility lies with this Department to ensure relevant certificates are in place.

Heating Systems

The heating system used by the DRCD in its Dublin office is controlled centrally. This approach ensures that energy is not consumed excessively and encourages maximum efficiency. The requirement in respect of new heating systems not using fossil fuels will be adhered to in the event of any new system being required.

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage is the anchor tenant in DRCD's Ballina office and responsibility lies with this Department to ensure these measures are implemented.

Zero Emission Vehicles

The Department does not own any vehicles and therefore this action is not applicable in respect of our activities.

However, the Department has encouraged the use of zero emission vehicles through its CLÁR funding stream. CLÁR is a targeted investment programme for rural areas that aims to provide funding for small infrastructural projects in rural areas that have experienced significant levels of de-population. The funding works in conjunction with local/Agency and other Departmental funding programmes and on the basis of locally identified priorities.

CLÁR 2022 introduced a specific Island Community Transport measure to respond to the needs of island communities, with funding prioritised for the purchase of hybrid/electric vehicles. The scheme provided up to 90% of the total cost of a community bus/vehicle with an electric charging point which is powered by solar PV panels. Max grant available of €100,000 for a vehicle, increasing to €120,000 where solar panel and charging point are included and maximum one application per Island.

3. Our wider climate action plans

Programmes managed by the Department such as LEADER, the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, CLÁR, and SICAP have a role to play in supporting the transition to a more sustainable society.

The significant investment by DRCD in remote working infrastructure across the country is also contributing to reduced commuting times and lower transport emissions, in addition to energy savings vis a vis working from home, bearing in mind that most homes will not be as energy efficient as the digital hubs.

Under the Connected Hubs initiative in 2021, a number of EV charging points were funded in remote working hubs, and the Call for Funding in 2022 included projects with sustainability/green elements. The Connectedhubs.ie platform enables hub users to filter hubs by facilities that have EV charging point/s.

The Department is also making investments through the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme and the Walks Scheme that protect and sustain our natural heritage and identify ways to assist communities in maximising the value of these assets for the local area.

While the Department does not have a direct role in mitigating Greenhouse Gas emissions from energy, agriculture or transport, our core mission enables us to play an important role in supporting the transition to a low carbon future.

Engaging with communities is key to ensuring a just and successful transition to a climate neutral future. Empowering individuals and communities to take local action will require support, including the provision of training and initiatives to enable local and community-based low-carbon development.

Our mission to support vibrant, inclusive and sustainable communities aligns with this objective. Our supports will contribute to existing community structures having the potential to mobilise, engage and support rural communities to reduce carbon emissions.

Work is ongoing to support training and capacity building at community level, with the Department currently undertaking a research project on the training needs of the community and voluntary sector including in respect of climate action. In addition, guidelines for the development of the Local Economic and Community Plans (LECPs) were published in November 2021 and the Department co-hosted a series of training webinars to support LCDCs and local authority staff in the development of the new. Research by the Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) will support the inclusion of climate actions in the forthcoming LECPs.

The development of new policies in the Department such as the National Policy for the Islands offers the Department an opportunity to be a leader in climate action and include a focus within policies and action plans on climate action and the environment in the same way as has been achieved with *Our Rural Future*.

Appendix 1: 2030 and 2050 targets for the Public Sector

EU and public sector targets - 2020/2050 2020 2030 2050 EU **Climate Neutral** • **- 20%** GHG • **- 55%** GHG emissions emissions • **+ 20%** renewable • + 32% renewable energy energy • + 20% energy • + 32.5% energy efficiency efficiency National • **- 20%** GHG **Net Zero Emissions** • 60 million tonnes to emissions 30 million tonnes • **+ 20%** renewable • Carbon budgets and sectoral emissions energy ceilings • + 20% energy efficiency

Appendix 2: Mapping to requirements of the Climate Action Mandate

2022 Climate Action Mandate	Section of Roadmap Guidance
Nominate a member of the Management Board as the Climate and Sustainability Champion with responsibility for implementing and reporting on the mandate.	Section 2.1 Our people
Establish and resource Green Teams, reporting to senior management, to become integrated drivers of sustainability in every public sector body.	Section 2.1 Our people
Report GHG emissions and sustainability activities in the annual report.	Section 1.5 Reporting
Organise staff workshops (at least annually) to engage on climate issues, including a focus on decreasing the organisation's carbon footprint.	Section 2.1 Our people
Incorporate appropriate climate action and sustainability training (technical and behavioural) into learning and development strategies for staff.	Section 2.1 Our people
Reduce GHG emissions by 51% in 2030.	Section 2.2 Our targets
Increase the improvement in energy efficiency in the public sector from the 33% target in 2020 to 50% by 2030.	Section 2.2 Our targets
Achieve formal environmental accreditation for large public sector bodies, such as ISO 50001 (Energy Management Standard) or ISO 14001 (Environmental Management System), with a view to achieving EMAS ISO 14001 (Eco Management and Audit Scheme).	Section 2.3 Our way of working
Review any paper-based processes and evaluate the possibilities for digitisation so it becomes the default approach.	Section 2.3 Our way of working
Purchase only zero-emission vehicles where available and operationally feasible from end of 2022, enabling Ireland to go beyond the requirements of the Clean Vehicle Directive and act as an international leader in this area.	Section 2.4 Our buildings and vehicles
The public sector will not install heating systems that use fossil fuels after 2023 (except in specific circumstances set out in the mandate).	Section 2.4 Our buildings and vehicles
Display an up-to-date Display Energy Certificate in every public building that is open to the public to clearly show energy use.	Section 2.4 Our buildings and vehicles
Create bicycle friendly buildings for employees and visitors, by putting bicycle parking in place by 2022.	Section 2.4 Our buildings and vehicles

¹ Public Sector Climate Action Mandate (2022), Gov.ie: https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/337b6-public-sector-climate-action-mandate/#public-sector-climate-action-mandate

Appendix 3: Timeline for Public Sector Bodies' Climate Action Roadmaps (2023 – 2025)

2023				
By end of quarter 1	First iteration of Roadmap completed by public sector body			
2023	To implement Mandate as included in Climate Action plan 2021			
By end of quarter 2 2023	Second iteration of Guidance published by SEAI and EPA			
2023	To implement Mandate as included in Climate Action Plan 2023			
By end of quarter 3	Second iteration of Roadmap completed by public sector body			
2023	To implement Mandate as included in Climate Action Plan 2023			
2024, and following years				
Within 2 months of publication of Climate Action Plan	Updated Guidance to be published by SEAI and EPA			
Within 6 months of publication of Climate Action Plan	Updated Roadmap to be completed by public sector bodies.			