



**An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail**
Department of Rural and
Community Development

Climate Action Roadmap

October 2023



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1. Introduction

Climate Action Mandate

The Public Sector Climate Action Mandate, operating under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 and the Climate Action Plan 2021, requires public sector bodies to show leadership in climate action by taking, and reporting on, the actions set out in the Mandate.

This requires public sector bodies to put in place a Climate Action Roadmap to reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 51% by 2030 and increase the improvement in energy efficiency from the 33% target in 2020 to 50% by 2030.

DRCD continues to support Government climate policies, in particular delivery of the Climate Action Plan, through the delivery of policies and supports for community and voluntary sectors.

Climate Action Roadmap

On 16 May 2023, Government approved the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate 2023. Contained within the 2023 Mandate was a requirement for public sector bodies to update their Climate Action Roadmaps by the end of Q3 2023. This document is DRCD's updated Climate Action Roadmap.

This Climate Action Roadmap sets out the DRCD's obligations under Public Sector Climate Action Mandate and describes the plans in place and our progress towards meeting those obligations. The document is arranged under the headings of:

- Our People
- Our Targets
- Our Way of Working
- Our Buildings and Vehicles
- Our Wider Climate Action Plans

It has been developed in line with guidance from Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and. The Management Board of DRCD has approved this second iteration of the DRCD Climate Action Roadmap.

Our People: Key Actions	DRCD Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Ensure all senior management (PO level or equivalent and above) complete a climate action leadership training course in 2023, similar to the Local Authority training course as delivered by the CAROs¹. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed • Completed • Ongoing • Delayed
Our Targets: Key Actions	DRCD Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Update Climate Action Roadmaps annually in line with updated Public Sector Climate Action Mandate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing • Ongoing • Completed
Our Way of Working: Key Actions	DRCD Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed • Completed • Not applicable

¹ Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs)

<p>Management System), with a view to going beyond ISO14001 to adopting EMAS (Eco Management and Audit Scheme).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Green Public Procurement (GPP), in line with the EPA Green Public Procurement Guidance and using GPP Criteria Search where appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing
Our Buildings and Vehicles: Key Actions	DRCD Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the use of bicycles (including push bikes, electric bikes, and cargo bikes) and shared mobility options as an alternative to car use among employees and visitors by creating and maintaining facilities (both inside and outside of buildings) that support such options. • Phase out the use of parking in buildings that have access to a range of public transport services and active/shared mobility options for the majority of staff/visitors while providing that sufficient accessible parking is maintained for those with physical mobility issues. • 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, in (1) new buildings, and (2) “major renovation” retrofit projects (as defined in the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD)), unless at least one of a specified list of exceptions applies. • Procure (purchase or lease) only zero-emission vehicles from the end of 2022, enabling Ireland to go beyond the requirements of the EU Directive, amending Directive 2009/33/EC on the promotion of clean and energy-efficient road transport vehicles (EU Directive 2019/1161, the Clean Vehicle Directive) and act as an international leader in this area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing • Ongoing • Not applicable • Under Review • Under Review

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under review
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Leadership, Governance and Engagement

The Department actively participates in 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, ZEVI Stakeholder Group and the Climate Communications Working Group.

Climate Action Unit

The Department established its Climate Action 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.

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 Action 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.

Energy Performance Officer

The Department's Energy Performance Officer is Paul Geraghty, Principal Officer, Human Resources and Facilities Unit. With responsibility for overseeing and reporting on energy saving under the Public Sector Energy Efficiency Strategy.

2. Our People

Our People: Key Actions	DRCD Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and resource Green Teams, reporting to senior management, to become integrated drivers of sustainability in every public sector body. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organise staff workshops (at least annually) to engage on climate issues, including a focus on decreasing the organisation's carbon footprint. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all senior management (P.O. level or equivalent and above) complete a climate action leadership training course in 2023, similar to the Local Authority training course as delivered by the CAROs². 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delayed

Green Team - championing green initiatives

DRCD's Green, Energy & Organisation Committee was formed in 2019.

It seeks 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.

² Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs)

The Committee, meets on a quarterly basis and is chaired by the HR & Facilities Unit. Members include DRCD's Climate Action Officer and representatives from business units throughout the Department.

The GEO Committee promotes energy conservation and environmental sustainability, including the implementation of a Resource Efficiency Action Plan (REAP) and participation in the Optimising Power at Work initiative.

Climate and Sustainability Champion

Kenneth Jordan, Assistant Secretary for Corporate Affairs and Strategic Development, is the Department's nominated Management Board Climate and Sustainability Champion, with responsibility for implementing and reporting on the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate.

Staff workshops and training plans

The Department's Climate Action 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".

As required under the Mandate all staff shall undertake the new centralised climate related training and upskilling courses to be delivered by OneLearning / the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) in 2024. DECC is working with the IPA and OneLearning jointly to explore options for providing centralised climate training for all grades/levels in 2024. DRCD is committed to ensuring the maximum uptake of this training and all staff will be notified of the need for this compulsory training which will form part of their Learning and Development record.

The Climate Action Unit has developed a climate and sustainability section on the Department's intranet site to share climate related resources including online training programmes.

Climate Leadership Training for Senior Management

The Public Sector Climate Action Mandate 2023 includes a requirement to "ensure all senior management (Principal Officer level or equivalent and above) complete a climate action leadership training course in 2023, similar to the Local Authority training course as delivered by the CAROs³." This training is suggested to require three half day sessions and 1 full day session to complete. Currently, there is no centralised course available across the civil and public service.

³ Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs)

The Climate Action Unit and the Learning & Development Unit (L&D Unit) are investigating suitable options for training for senior management. The IPA's Professional Certificate in Climate Action and Sustainability Reporting (Level 9) and the suite of climate/sustainability courses available from the SEAI Energy Academy were considered. However, these are not suitable for the Department to meet the Mandate's requirements as the subjects covered do not fully match the requirements set out in the Mandate.

Given that there are limited training providers in this field, DRCD's L&D unit is liaising with L&D units in other departments to establish a suitable, and potentially co-ordinated, approach to this training requirement. A working group is being established by the L&D Managers' Network in Q4 2023 to identify a training solution across the Public Sector, with the goal of training commencing in Q1 2024.

3. Our Targets

Our Targets: Key Actions	DRCD Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce GHG emissions by 51% in 2030. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the improvement in energy efficiency in the public sector from the 33% target in 2020 to 50% by 2030. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update Climate Action Roadmaps annually in line with updated Public Sector Climate Action Mandate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed

GHG emission analysis

For the purposes of the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate 2023, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are taken to be energy-related carbon dioxide equivalent emissions. Progress will be measured against a baseline of the 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%.

DRCD measures to reduce our GHGs are driven by the Green Team at a cross-divisional level. Current measures are being reviewed and, if necessary new measures will be introduced under the Resource Efficiency Action Plan (see below).

Our Carbon Emissions analysis, performed by SEAI on our behalf, shows a decrease of 15.2% or 8,695kgCO₂ less than in 2021. This equates to an overall reduction in 2022 of 24.7% on baseline figures.

Resource Efficiency Action Plan

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

Currently the Department is updating the REAP and this should be finalised in Q4 2023. It will support the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate target of 50% improvement in energy efficiency reduction by 2030.

DRCD will continue to identify further potential measures to reduce both our carbon emissions and energy consumption. In 2023/24 DRCD will:

- Explore the use of photo-voltaic panels, and other energy generation technologies, at our offices in Ballina and Trinity point
- Review the energy efficiency performance of both the Ballina and Trinity Point offices with a view to taking remedial action where possible.

4. Our Way of Working

Our Way of Working: Key Actions	DRCD Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report GHG emissions and sustainability activities in the annual report. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review any paper-based processes, and evaluate the possibilities for digitisation so it becomes the default approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not applicable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement Green Public Procurement (GPP), in line with the EPA Green Public Procurement Guidance and using GPP Criteria Search where appropriate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing

Annual Report

DRCD's 2022 Annual Report published in August 2023 reported on GHG emissions and sustainability activities under STRATEGIC GOAL 5. Foster and maintain a high performance culture and organisation to achieve our mission in the interests of all communities. Progress against this Roadmap will feature in future DRCD Annual Reports.

Carbon offsetting

DRCD complies with [Circular 01/2020](#) issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) in January 2020, which sets out the procedures for offsetting the emissions associated with official air travel. In line with the provisions of that circular, all Government Departments, with effect from 1 January 2020, are required to record, monitor and value the greenhouse gas emissions associated with official air travel and, no later than 28th February each year, make a payment to the Fund Manager of the statutory Climate Action Fund related to these emissions for the preceding year. DRCD's Finance Unit manages the annual process for the payment of carbon offsetting payments relating to official air travel undertaken by any staff of the Department.

Digitisation of processes

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. Some specific examples in DRCD are;

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. A central element of the strategy is the roll-out of the DRCD Programme Information Management System (PIMS) to manage funding scheme applications and project progress monitoring. While paperless approaches are already the default in DRCD, it is envisaged that this system will facilitate further efficiencies in that regard, with improved knowledge management reducing paper usage. We will continue to review our practices and, where practicable and appropriate, further reduce our paper use.

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 approach continued for 2022 and 2023 and will be retained for future competitions.

In addition, in 2023 a Special Award category in "Climate Action and Sustainable Development Goals" (sponsored by the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications) was included in the TidyTowns Competition to recognise the input local communities can make in addressing climate action and sustainability.

Energy & environmental management systems

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 apprised of any developments with regard to energy management systems and requirements.

Green public procurement

In line with Circular 20/2019 Promoting the use of Environmental and Social Considerations in Public Procurement, the Department included details in its 2022 Annual Report of procurement contracts valued greater than €25,000, signed in calendar year 2022, that include green criteria which are designed to ensure that the product or service procured will have a reduced impact on the environment.

During 2022 DRCD entered into 14 contracts (each over €25,000 excluding VAT) worth approximately €15.1 million over their lifetime. Eight of these (combined value of approximately €14.6 million over their lifetime) incorporated green public procurement. This includes six contracts for transport services relating to Islands.

The Department will continue to incorporate green criteria, where appropriate, in future tendering competitions and has recently updated its procurement guidance which including further emphasis on the importance of this approach.

5. Our Buildings and vehicles

Our Buildings and Vehicles: Key Actions	DRCD Progress
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the use of bicycles (including push bikes, electric bikes, and cargo bikes) and shared mobility options as an alternative to car use among employees and visitors by creating and maintaining facilities (both inside and outside of buildings) that support such options. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase out the use of parking in buildings that have access to a range of public transport services and active/shared mobility options for the majority of staff/visitors while providing that sufficient accessible parking is maintained for those with physical mobility issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Display an up-to-date Display Energy Certificate in every public building that is open to the public to clearly show energy use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not applicable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The public sector will not install heating systems that use fossil fuels after 2023, in (1) new buildings, and (2) “major renovation” retrofit projects (as defined in the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD)), unless at least one of a specified list of exceptions applies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under Review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Procure (purchase or lease) only zero-emission vehicles from the end of 2022, enabling Ireland to go beyond the requirements of the EU Directive, amending Directive 2009/33/EC on the promotion of clean and energy-efficient road transport vehicles (EU Directive 2019/1161, the Clean Vehicle Directive) and act as an international leader in this area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under Review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under review

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. Bicycle racks are also available in the underground carpark and are used by staff members regularly. There are 43 bike storage places available at the Dublin Offices in total. Bicycle facilities are also available for staff located in the Ballina office.

As part of new staff induction training, these facilities and the cycle to work scheme are highlighted.

Notwithstanding current provision, DRCD intends to further encourage and facilitate cycling and other forms of active travel. In 2023/24 DRCD will:

- Review the shower and changing facilities available to staff at DRCD offices
- Review the quality, accessibility and adequacy of cycle storage spaces available to our staff
- Encourage participation in the cycle-to-work scheme
- Explore the option to provide cycle maintenance / repair services, on occasion, to staff.

Phase out the use of parking in buildings

There is very limited parking availability in the Department's Dublin Office premises, with DRCD allocated 6 parking spaces in the underground car park area. This is a minimum requirement for the conduct of business given regular need for some staff to travel by car in the course of their work.

DRCD staff share a common parking area with other users of the Ballina building. While Ballina Town is serviced by some public transport, there remains a need for staff parking for those staff that do not live on or near public transport routes, or within walking or cycling distance.

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 building that the Department occupies in Ballina has a public office used by another public sector body. The anchor tenant of the Ballina building, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, is responsible for ensuring relevant certificates are in place.

Heating Systems

Dublin and Ballina

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.

Notwithstanding the above points, and as noted at page 11 above, DRCD will review the energy efficiency of both office buildings with a view to identifying remedial actions, where required.

Airport Buildings

Aerfort Chonamara, the mainland airport serving the Aran Islands, was purchased by the State in 2019 and is owned by the Department. The airport comprises a small terminal building, hangar and refuelling facilities along with the runway and carpark. The Department has contracted out the day-to-day operation and management of the airport to Galway Aviation Services Ltd (t/a Aer Arann).

Since taking ownership of the airport, the Department has commenced a suite of works to address infrastructure deficits and regulatory requirements of the Irish Aviation Authority. This work has included resurfacing the runway, new cladding and roof insulation for the hangar, improvement to the sewage system, with further work being planned to include replacement windows and doors to improve efficiency, and carpark works to improve accessibility and install electric vehicle charging points.

Our Living Islands, the Government's national islands policy and action plan published by DRCD in June 2023, includes a commitment to develop a programme of renewal for the State owned aerodromes serving the islands by the end of 2023. This will examine further possible building upgrades to Aerfort Chonamara and the three airports on the Aran Islands, currently owned by Údarás na Gaeltachta, and the steps necessary to move towards Nearly Zero Energy Buildings (NZEB) or Zero Emission Buildings (ZEB).

Vehicles

Airport Rescue Vehicles

The Department owns a number of fire/emergency vehicles, as required by the Irish Aviation Authority's (IAA) licensing of the airports serving the Aran Islands. Most of the vehicles previously used were approaching end-of-life when Aerfort Chonamara was acquired by the State. The IAA regulations require off-road rapid response vehicles with specialised equipment to be available at each airport, comprising a main vehicle and a back-up/support vehicle. Over the past year, it has been necessary to replace many of the vehicles.

Following a competitive tender process, a second-hand purpose-built fire vehicle has been procured and delivered. In addition, three new custom-built vehicles are due to be delivered by the end of 2023. Two new support vehicles were procured through an OGP framework and fitted out to required specification afterwards, having regard to the harsh operating environment on the islands.

Consideration was given to Electric Vehicles, as they would be the preferred option for the islands from both policy and practical perspectives. Unfortunately, there were no suitable vehicles available to meet the off-road and weight/towing capacity requirements. It should also be noted that fire/emergency vehicles are currently exempt under the EU Clean Vehicles directive.

However, the Department has encouraged the use of zero emission vehicles through its CLÁR funding stream since 2022. The scheme provides higher levels of support, up to 90% of the total cost subject to maximum grant levels, for a hybrid or electric community wheelchair accessible vehicle (including fit-out) than for a petrol or diesel equivalent. 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.

Community Transport

Under Measure 2 (Mobility, Cancer Care and Community First Responders Transport) of the CLÁR 2023 programme, the Department allocated almost €506,000 for 7 Electric or Hybrid vehicles worth just under €583,000 to organisations nationwide. This follows from the 9 supported by the CLÁR 2022. Some of these vehicles are used for the transport of vulnerable members of the community in rural areas.

6. 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, not least through the promotion of active travel, green tourism and sustainable local development.

The significant investment by DRCD in remote working hubs across the country is contributing to reduced commuting times and lower transport emissions, in addition to energy savings when compared to working from home.

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.