

The new Climate Action Plan: Will it lead to a revolution in how we live?

**Report from the Stop Climate Chaos Coalition and the Environmental Pillar on their
analysis of the Climate Action Plan**

Summary

- Current policies and measures on climate change are not working. Ireland is far off course to achieving its 2020 climate and energy targets, and it must significantly increase the pace of climate action if it intends to substantially reduce emissions across all sectors in line with 2030 and long-term obligations.
- This report *“The new Climate Action Plan: Will it lead to a revolution in how we live?”* draws on a detailed assessment by the Stop Climate Chaos Coalition and the Environmental Pillar of the Government’s new Climate Action Plan (published June 17th, 2019).
- We welcome proposals in the Plan for improved governance structures and mechanisms to ensure delivery and oversight of climate measures. An important litmus test for how genuinely committed the Government is to the merits of this Plan will be the urgency with which these governance reforms are put into law.
- While the decision in the Plan to enshrine into law the *current* 2050 target is a positive move, the EUs and Ireland’s 2050 targets are not yet Paris-aligned. EU and UN processes require us to ratchet up our ambition accordingly in the coming months. Moreover, the Government will need to specify in detail the process it proposes to follow to put Ireland’s actual emissions on a pathway aligned with the Paris Agreement.
- Limiting global temperature increase in line with the objectives of the Paris Agreement requires rapid, deep and permanent decarbonisation and enhanced biosphere resilience. A key failure of the Plan is the lack of any real commitment to this scale of emissions reductions over the coming decade, or an acknowledgement of the risks associated with a delayed, or slower transition as a result. The Plan proposes to reduce emissions by 2% a year from now to 2030 and 7% or more a year thereafter. That is not an acceptable or effective pathway.
- We have considerable concerns with the use of Marginal Abatement Cost Curve as the key mitigation planning tool in the Plan. By focusing on the cheapest mitigation options to reach short term targets, the Government runs the risk of delaying investments that would deliver more cost-effective long term reductions, instead over-investing in measures with limited mitigation potential and locking us into carbon-intensive infrastructure. This tool does not allow for analysis of the distributional costs of mitigation measures, the implementation barriers on these options or the implications of behavioural failures or lack of resources, the external environmental costs, or co-benefits.

- The Plan ignores, does not adopt, or weakens some of the recommendations and timelines proposed for policy delivery by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action in their landmark cross-party report in March 2019. In our assessment below, we look specifically at the transport sector, agriculture, land use and forestry, a just transition, and in relation to buildings, as examples where this is the case.
- Consequently, we see a significant missed opportunity for Government to i) fulfil the public mandate of the Citizens’ Assembly and respond to the unprecedented public concern about climate change, ii) respect the cross-party support and political impetus that now exists to enable Ireland move beyond a business-as-usual approach to tackling climate change, and iii) drive forward sustained emissions reductions.
- We are concerned by the lack of specific, detailed reference in how the Plan will be fully reflected, and its weaknesses addressed, in the final draft of National Energy and Climate Plan, which Ireland must finalise and submit to the European Commission before the end of 2019. We urge the Government to conduct its proposed evaluation of a net zero target for Ireland before the end of 2019 as part of its broader commitment to the European Union Long-Term Strategy (LTS).
- We urge the Government to:
 - ensure that the preparation of the first carbon budget by the Climate Council proceeds with the urgency specified in the JOCCA report and is presented within 12 months as proposed;
 - commit to bringing legislation (Heads of Bill) before the Dáil immediately after the 2019 summer recess to enshrine in law the enhanced policy governance and accountability framework recommended by the JOCCA and included in the Plan;
 - commit to building upon the full package of JOCCA recommendations through the retained flexibility in the proposed governance arrangements;
 - specify how it intends to fully reflect the Plan’s commitments, and address the weaknesses identified here, in the final draft of the National Energy and Climate Plan and in the Long Term Strategy.
- We conclude by emphasising that the Government’s commitment to climate action and the measures outlined in the Plan lack any real credibility if the Government is willing to support and permit the continued exploration for fossil fuels off the Irish coast. Specifically, the decision by Government to block further debate on the Climate Emergency Measures Bill for the duration of this Dáil by invoking the “money message” procedure is an ill-founded and undemocratic abuse of parliamentary procedure. Without policy coherence and equity across all economic sectors, emissions reduction efforts are futile and inequity will be enshrined in a policy framework that requires fairness and justice.

**Stop Climate Chaos Coalition
Environmental Pillar¹**

¹ Stop Climate Chaos is a coalition of 33 civil society organisations campaigning to ensure Ireland plays its part in tackling climate change. It was launched in 2007 and is the largest network of organisations campaigning for action on climate change in Ireland. Its membership includes development, environmental, youth and faith-based organisations. The Environmental Pillar is made up of national environmental non-governmental organisations that work together to represent the views of the Irish environmental sector. The Environmental Pillar creates and promotes policies that advance sustainable development and acts as an advocacy coalition promoting sustainable solutions in areas such as climate change, biodiversity, tree-cover, resource efficiency, transport, planning and water.