

9th April 2020



Re: Ensuring the Programme for Government Delivers a Fair Recovery with Faster Climate Action

We write to you from the Stop Climate Chaos Coalition as discussions continue this week to finalise a joint policy framework by Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael to advance negotiations with other parties on the formation of the new Government. We understand that this framework will centre on containing the Covid-19 pandemic and stimulating economic recovery, and will include measures to address climate change. As such, we believe this is a timely opportunity to write to you to emphasise important principles which should underpin this framework and the Programme for Government that emerges.

There is no question that Ireland faces an immediate economic crisis, and that emergency measures to contain the virus and to help people in crisis are of utmost importance. As soon as the immediate emergency has passed, it will be essential that this public health crisis be treated as a critical inflection point for how the Government can respond effectively and speedily to the chronic and insidious features of climate change and the task of decarbonisation.

We urge you to:

- 1. Confront the climate crisis with the same determination as efforts to tackle Covid-19**
- 2. Put people and planet at the centre of the economic recovery plan rather than a return to business-as-usual.**
- 3. Deliver fairer and faster climate action**, including at least 8% annual reductions in emissions over the lifetime of the Government and passing the new Climate Action Bill within 100 days of the Dáil functioning again. The urgent delivery of fairer and faster climate action is a key ask of the [One Future campaign](#), the details of which were outlined in a letter sent to you on March 3rd (see [here](#) for a brief overview of the campaign's policy asks, and [here](#) for a more detailed briefing).

1. Address the climate emergency with the same determination as efforts to tackle Covid-19

The Covid-19 crisis clearly highlights how interconnected we are globally, and how increasingly fragile we are to systemic shocks and risks as a consequence. At the same time, we are witnessing the importance of early warning systems, the strength of international collaboration and cooperation in tackling what are emerging multiple crises. At a national level, the response to the disease demonstrates the vital importance of preparation and cooperation, determined political leadership,

effective communication, timely state intervention at the scale required, and the central role of independent science and trusted expertise in informing government decision-making. We are witnessing what is possible to achieve nationally in the face of a global crisis, at State and community level, when resources are mobilised and coordinated, and coherent expert-led decisions are implemented with the scale, urgency and leadership required.

The next Government must learn from this current situation that they have **a responsibility to reduce emissions with the scale and urgency that is necessary to limit global temperature increases in line with the Paris Agreement.** Unlike Covid-19, climate change is an entirely foreseeable global risk. Like Covid-19, however, it will have dramatic and far-reaching, potentially catastrophic society-wide impacts. The last Dáil declared a climate and biodiversity emergency: the incoming Government must act like there is an emergency. An overheating planet and less resilient ecosystems are already putting people, societies and economies at growing risk of global crises – if we delay any further the transformations required to build sustainable, climate-resilient economies and restored ecosystems, the dramatic, irreversible costs will keep rising.

We are calling on all parties to ensure the next Programme for Government demonstrates the same leadership and determination to reduce emissions, commensurate to the scale and urgency required, as currently deployed to suppress the transmission of coronavirus.

2. Put people and planet at the centre of the economic recovery plan

The Government has rightly committed to the necessary interventions that will help provide important economic support and security to individuals and families in this time of instability and uncertainty. The public health crisis we are currently experiencing however, demonstrates the need for economies that support the long-term health, wellbeing and sustainability of communities.

As soon as attention moves to rebooting the economy, it will be essential that we focus our public policy and public investment on laying the foundations for an economy that is more sustainable, more resilient and more equal. **If we fail to do so, we will knowingly repeat mistakes from the last economic crisis that have resulted in a failure to meet climate action objectives.** Ireland cannot afford to return to a business-as-usual model with short-term economic measures which further jeopardise a safe and sustainable future for all. Recovery efforts that roll back environmental standards, subsidise or lock in high emitting industries and sectors, technologies or activities, will exacerbate existing risks such as the health impacts of worsening air pollution, the impacts of accelerating climate breakdown, and the economic costs of a delayed transition to a zero carbon future and the loss of ecosystem services.

Amid the crisis, this is our chance to build a better future. Any stimulus plans that are envisaged in the next Programme for Government, if carefully considered, designed and targeted, can place

Ireland on a firmer footing on the path to implementing the Paris Agreement and ensuring that the essential task of building a secure, sustainable and equitable future are not lost or undermined by a short-sighted vision of what economic recovery looks like. We must use this opportunity to substantially green capital expenditure plans and channel investment into zero-carbon infrastructure, food security, sustainable land use and habitat restoration, clean renewable energy, public health care, the expansion of social security, and into quality sustainable jobs. Stimulus packages that boost economic activity must be consistent with, not contradict, our obligations to the Paris Agreement.

We are calling on all parties to ensure that any economic recovery plan currently being developed must speed up the transition to a healthier, fairer, sustainable society and economy. It must be subjected to an emissions impact assessment and it must reduce not raise emissions over the lifetime of the Government.

3. Deliver fairer and faster climate action

The fast evolving and uncertain situation we currently find ourselves in emphasises the importance and necessity of a stable climate policy governance framework that keeps a sustained focus on transitioning to a zero carbon future, especially when there is a risk that competing priorities will be allowed to crowd-out essential climate action. To achieve this, and now more so than ever, we need strengthened climate legislation based on the cross-party recommendations in the JOCCA report and on the outgoing Government's outline draft of a Bill, including putting net-zero target into law, mandating the Dáil to set 5 year emissions targets in the form of carbon budgets, requiring the Government to set decarbonisation targets for each sector and establishing that the Climate Action Plan will be updated annually.

We call on the next Government to prioritise strengthening the 2015 Climate Act, with a view to a new climate action law being passed by the Dáil within 100 days of the formation of a Government.

To reduce emissions with the urgency and scale required, the incoming Government must deliver emissions reductions that average at least 8% a year over the lifetime of the Government. That is what climate science and expert-advice indicates is required if we are to bend the emissions curve in line with the Paris Agreement. Indeed, as the UN Secretary General has pointed out, that is what global emissions must be reduced by every year from now to 2030; richer countries should in fairness reduce further and faster.

The outgoing Government, in the 2019 Climate Action Plan, proposed emissions reductions of only 2% a year over the next decade. That is simply inadequate and unacceptable. It is also unsustainable politically as well as environmentally. The EU has begun the process of raising its overall 2030

target in line with the requirement of the Paris Agreement. If the Government accepts the science, and if Ireland wants to shake off its laggard status it should move to support the proposal for cutting emissions by at least 55% by 2030, and acknowledge that this target should go higher to 65% to reflect the EU's fair share of the global effort out to 2030.

The recommendations in the landmark 2019 all party report on enhancing climate action (the JOCCA report), which were not fully incorporated into the 2019 Climate Action Plan provide an obvious starting point for enhanced action, along with the policy proposals of **the One Future Campaign for Faster and Fairer Climate Action**, to which the Stop Climate Chaos Coalition is a signatory. The leaders of Sinn Fein, the Green Party, Labour, the Social Democrats and Solidarity-People Before Profit all signed the One Future pledge before the election and we would expect them to bring those demands to the table in any negotiations on a Programme for Government.

We call on the next Government to respect the science and deliver annual reductions in greenhouse gas emissions of at least 8% a year over its lifetime, to bend our emissions curve in line with Ireland's obligations under the Paris Agreement.

Finally, we urge you to ensure the principles of social dialogue and public participation are more effectively applied to climate policy than they have been to date. While the National Economic Dialogue has been a useful annual forum, we are firmly of the opinion that a more structured, ongoing, social dialogue is now required, taking the best elements of the Stakeholder Forum on Brexit, the NED and NESC. We believe existing social partners are equally committed to an enhanced process of social dialogue and we look forward to engaging constructively in any initiative in this regard.

Wishing you the best with the negotiations for a Programme for Government in these unprecedented times.

Yours sincerely,



Oisín Coghlan, Policy Coordinator with the Stop Climate Chaos coalition