



Briefing on Conversations with Constituents on Climate Action

Buswells Hotel, Tuesday 15th November 2016

Part One: Climate Policy Background

Stop Climate Chaos welcomes the recent Dáil vote to ratify the [Paris Agreement](#), which came into force on Friday 4th November.

The Paris Agreement [commits Ireland](#) and all the other parties to the treaty to: “holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels”. It further commits us to reducing emissions “in accordance with the best available science” and on “the basis of equity”.

The Paris Agreement is a starting gun not a finishing line. The text itself emphasizes the “emissions gap” between the temperature goal and the pledges that countries have made so far. A new report from the UN Environment Programme [projects warming of 3°C](#) even if current pledges are all implemented, while independent analysis by [Climate Action Tracker](#) concludes that actual current policies put us on track for global warming of 3.6°C.

All existing targets and timelines for emission reductions need to be reevaluated against the “Paris test”. Indeed, all policy choices need to be evaluated against the Paris Test: is this action compatible with limiting warming to 1.5°C, is it enough action to give us a decent chance of limiting warming to 1.5°C.

Overall EU targets for 2030 – a 40% reduction compared to 1990 – and for 2050 – an 80-95% reduction – are not “in accordance with the best available science”, nor do they limit our total emissions to our fair share of the remaining 2°C global carbon budget.

[Ireland’s National Policy Position](#), with its objective of an 80% reduction between the buildings, energy and transport sectors and carbon neutrality in agriculture, also needs to be reviewed in the light of Paris.

But those reviews must not delay action. Meeting Ireland’s current objective already requires [year-on-year emissions reductions of 5%](#) every year to 2050, starting now. The urgency to act could not be more clear: every year of inaction increases our risk from climate change impacts and increases the cost of transition.

Unfortunately, Ireland’s actions simply haven’t matched our aims. The EPA released the [latest figures on Ireland’s emissions](#) on Friday 11th November: they are still 6.6% *above* 1990 levels, and rose 3.7% last year. Ireland is [one of only 2 countries](#) in the EU which is going to miss its 2020 targets. And despite getting a very soft deal from the EU on our 2030 targets, our current pathway would expose us to non-compliance costs of [up to €6 billion](#).

Ireland’s last action plan on climate was [launched in 2007](#), by Dick Roche. It expired in 2012, almost 5 years ago. The Government held a big [public consultation in 2012](#) on what should be in the next one but has yet to even publish a draft of what will now be called our National Mitigation Plan.

What is absolutely clear is that Ireland needs to immediately embark on a rapid and just transition to a carbon-free future. **Overleaf we recommend some first steps.**

Stop Climate Chaos [will be hosting meetings](#) between TDs and constituents in Buswells on Tuesday 15 November



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Part Two: What Ireland needs to do now

We must immediately embark on a **rapid and just transition to a carbon-free future**. The [Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015](#) requires the Government to adopt its 5-year climate action plan, known as the National Mitigation Plan, by June 2017.

The law requires the Government to take into account “the policy of the Government on climate change” and “climate justice”. [That policy](#) contains a national transition objective amounting to an 80% net emissions reduction by 2050.

As the recent [Climate Advisory Council report](#) put it, the National Mitigation Plan should not just focus on our EU targets for 2020 and 2030 but “should outline the roadmap to achieve the 2050 national objective”. That requires [5% year-on-year](#) net emissions reductions every year from now to 2050. Both the EPA and Council describes what is required as “a major societal and economic transformation”. The upcoming National Dialogue on Climate Change really needs to engage the public on how best to achieve it.

In the meantime, there are immediate decisions the Government can make to show it is getting serious about climate action

We are asking TDs and Senators to write to Ministers supporting our calls to:

1. Introduce a fair payment for solar electricity – [Letter to Minister Naughten](#)

To kick-start community participation in the energy transition we’re asking Minister Naughten to introduce a fair payment for solar electricity so that people get paid for the excess energy they generate with panels on the roofs of their homes, farm buildings, schools, clubs and community halls, and from the electricity generated in solar farms, rather than having to give it away for free. A decision is due by the end of the year.

2. Divest taxpayers’ money from fossil fuels – [Letter to Minister Noonan](#)

To continue to invest in fossil fuel companies is to encourage and enable their plans to continue to explore and extract more and more fossil fuels – when even burning all that we already have would make the Paris commitments impossible.

[Divesting the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund](#) (ISIF) from fossil fuels and adopting a 100% renewables investment policy for energy investments by the Fund is the responsible and the moral option. These should be key recommendations emerging from the ongoing review of the ISIF investment strategy.

3. Increase investment in cycling and clean public transport – [Letter to Min Ross](#)

Transport is the only sector where emissions are still higher than they were in 1990. They almost tripled from between 1990 and 2007. They are rising again quickly now.

We are asking Minister Ross to realign investment to achieve the goals of the [Smarter Travel Policy for 2020](#), increasing investment in cycling and clean public transport.

Ultimately, the measures we adopt need to add up. They need to be consistent with a decent chance of limiting global warming to well below 2°C. Nobody is asking Ireland to do more than its fair share but we do expect Ireland to do its fair share. The concrete proposals we are making here would show Ireland is now serious about taking action.

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