



Press Release

MORE FOCUS ON IMPLEMENTATION AND ADAPTATION NEEDED

- The Climate Change Advisory Council's Annual Review 2021 identifies a significant gap between climate action policy and climate action delivery. This includes delays in implementation of the 2019 Climate Action Plan, missing the 2020 emissions reduction targets and the lack of a long-term emissions reduction strategy.
- To be resilient to a changing climate, a much greater focus must be given to climate change adaptation across Government, as little evidence was found of the necessary adaptation in some Departments, as shown in the Council's 'Adaptation Scorecard'.

8th December 2021: The Climate Change Advisory Council (the Council) will today publish its Annual Review 2021. The Review emphasises **the urgency of shifting from planning to action** in order to reduce emissions and to put Ireland on track to achieve climate neutrality and climate resilience by 2050.

The Council urges that the **2021 Climate Action Plan** be implemented in full and on time. Focusing on implementation is made more difficult by the fact that the **Annual Transition Statement for 2020 is overdue, the long-term emissions reduction strategy remains outstanding, and the detailed Climate Action Plan Annex of Actions has not yet been published.**

The Council acknowledges that positive steps in climate change mitigation and adaptation have occurred but there remains **a significant gap between climate action planning and climate action implementation.**

Addressing this implementation gap Chairperson of the Council, Marie Donnelly said:

*"Ireland's failure to meet its targets is due to not matching the ambition of plans with timely and complete delivery of actions. For example, many of the measures in the original 2019 Climate Action Plan have been delayed. The **time-lag** between policy development, implementation and actual emissions reduction means that **unless Government takes action now, we will be unable to meet our targets in future years.** The implementation of the carbon budgets published by the Council in October will be unachievable if this pattern within Irish climate policy is not overcome."*

Greater action is also needed to address the current and future impacts of climate change on Ireland's economy, society and environment through **adaptation**. For the first time the Review includes an **'Adaptation Scorecard'** which considers progress across the 12 National Adaptation Framework (NAF) sectors, local government and the NAF itself.

The 'Flood Risk Management' and 'Water Quality and Water Services Infrastructure' sectors have implemented the most substantial adaptation plans, but the Council has found little progress in the 'Health' and 'Communications Networks' sectors. Demand for electricity is

going to increase significantly in the coming years, and so far, there is only limited progress in building the resilience of the 'Electricity and Gas Networks' sector to climate impacts.

Discussing climate change adaptation Marie Donnelly said:

*“Climate change adaptation will be vital in order to protect our environment and society against changes in extreme temperatures, droughts and intense rainfall events. The Council has found that some sectors are more prepared than others, but overall there remains a real need for more meaningful leadership and coordination regarding adaptation across Government. **The Council has been unable to give the highest score for adaptation progress to any sector.**”*

Marie Donnelly concluded:

“The journey to climate neutrality will be challenging for everyone, but we must ensure Government supports target poorer households and those whose livelihoods currently rely on carbon intensive economic activities.”

The Annual Review has been submitted to the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications and will be available at <https://www.climatecouncil.ie/councilpublications>.

ENDS

For further information or to arrange an interview with a Climate Change Advisory Council representative, please contact:

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Notes for editors

About the Annual Review and the Council

The Annual Review 2021 is the fifth annual review carried out by the Climate Change Advisory Council. Each year the Council is mandated to review Ireland's performance during the immediately preceding year (in this case 2020) regarding the achievement of the country's national climate aims through climate change mitigation and adaptation, and compliance with European Union (EU) and international obligations related to climate action.

The Climate Change Advisory Council provides independent and science-based advice to Government and policy makers on what Ireland needs to do to achieve a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy by 2050. It is also tasked with assessing the progress made towards this goal. The Council was established under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015.

The implementation gap

Despite positive steps, there are a number of critical gaps in implementation where policy and ambition is not yet translating into the necessary action, for example:

- Ireland has failed to meet its 2020 target of a 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions under the EU Effort Sharing Decision and will have to purchase emissions allowances from other Member States to meet the shortfall.
- Many of the measures in the 2019 Climate Action Plan were delayed, with the transport and heat sectors of particular concern. Timely delivery of measures is essential if we are to meet our targets.
- The national Climate Action Delivery Board, whose role is to hold each department and public body accountable for the delivery of actions set out in the Climate Action Plan, did not meet in 2020 despite a commitment to meet quarterly.
- The Annual Transition Statement for 2020 has not yet been published.
- The publication of the National Coastal Change Management Strategy expected in Q1 2021 is overdue.
- Ireland has not yet submitted a mandatory Long-Term Strategy to the EU due by the 1 January 2020 under the 2018 Energy Governance Regulation, nor a voluntary submission to the UNFCCC.

Such ‘implementation gaps’ underline the importance of a continued and deepening focus on climate governance in Ireland and the need to further institutionalise implementation, monitoring and evaluation of climate action.

Adaptation Scorecard

Ireland’s first National Adaptation Framework (NAF) was published on 19 January 2018. It identifies 12 key sectors under the remit of seven Government Ministers where sectoral adaptation plans were to be prepared for approval by Government. These have a five year lifespan in line with the NAF which is to be reviewed at least every five years. Some Departments produced plans covering more than one sector, meaning that nine plans address the 12 sectors. Under the NAF each local authority also prepared a local climate change adaptation strategy.

For the first time this Annual Review includes an ‘adaptation scorecard’ to measure the progress of the sectors which were required to prepare adaptation plans under the NAF, local government and the implementation of the NAF itself. The Council has been unable to give the highest overall score to any sector. ‘Communications Networks’ and ‘Health’ have received the lowest rating and the ‘Electricity and Gas Networks’ sector only shows limited progress.

Sector (Department responsible)	Overall Progress Assessment
National Adaptation Framework (Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications)	Moderate progress.
Local Government (Local Authorities, CAROs)	Moderate progress.
Flood Risk Management (OPW)	Good progress.
Water Quality and Water Services Infrastructure (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage)	Good progress.
Built and Archaeological Heritage (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage)	Moderate progress.
Transport Infrastructure (Department of Transport)	Moderate progress.
Agriculture, Forest and Seafood (Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine)	Moderate progress.
Biodiversity (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage)	Limited progress.
Electricity and Gas Networks (Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications)	Limited progress.
Communications Networks (Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications)	No progress/insufficient evidence.
Health (Department of Health)	No progress/insufficient evidence.

Figure 1.1 Adaptation scorecard summary (Source: CCAC analysis, see Chapter 3)

The assessment presented was conducted over Summer 2021 and is based on pro forma documentation provided by the relevant bodies to the Council’s Adaptation Committee, and other reports and data.

Sectors with the most progress demonstrated clear ambition for adaptation within the sector with senior management and leadership buy-in. In these sectors the majority of identified vulnerabilities and risks were being addressed. These sectors demonstrated evidence that adaptive capacity is increasing (through targeted training for example) and knowledge gaps are being addressed with an effective interface between research and end user needs. They also showed good progress in monitoring and building knowledge of risks. They showed evidence that long-term decisions are accounting for the possible future climate with good evidence of mainstreaming and good coherence with other policy. They clearly consider the risks associated with future socioeconomic changes. Finally, they demonstrated that appropriate resourcing is being applied to achieve policy goals, including staff and financial resourcing.

There is also a disparity in how adaptation is prioritised and resourced across Government Departments and even within sections responsible for different sectors in the same Department. This underlines the Council’s concern that adaptation is not given sufficient weight in decision making and is not yet sufficiently mainstreamed and resourced in policy delivery at all levels of governance.

About Emissions Trends

In 2019, total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions fell 4.6% relative to 2018. Simultaneously, they were 9.9% higher in 2019 relative to the main reference year 1990. Emissions peaked in 2001 (Table 1.2 and Figure 1.2). Provisional EPA estimates of emissions in 2020 suggest GHG emissions fell by 3.6% at a time of significant pandemic restrictions, but, without further substantial and sustained policy interventions, this will be reversed with economic recovery.

	Year			% change 2019 to 2018
	2017	2018	2019	
Total greenhouse gas emissions excluding LULUCF	62.1	62.5	59.8	-4.4%
Total greenhouse gas emissions including LULUCF	68.6	67.3	64.2	-4.6%

Table 1.1 Total GHG emissions using the GWP₁₀₀ metric (Source: EPA National Inventory Report 2021)

Ireland will not meet its EU Effort Sharing Decision ‘ESD’ overall emissions reduction target for the period 2013 to 2020, through domestic actions, and will require purchase of emissions allowances to meet the shortfall.

National emissions projections published in June 2021 also suggest a significant exceedance of targets under the EU Effort Sharing Regulation to 2030 without the full use of the flexibilities anticipated in the Regulation.

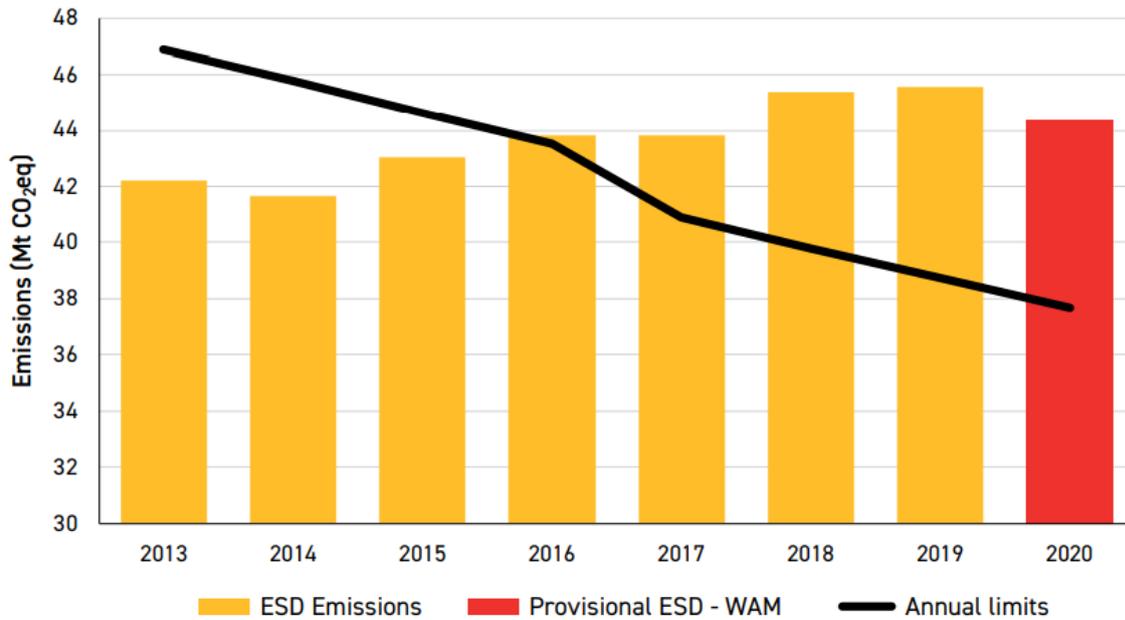


Figure 5.1 Distance to target: ESD category emissions from 2013 to 2020 and binding limits by year

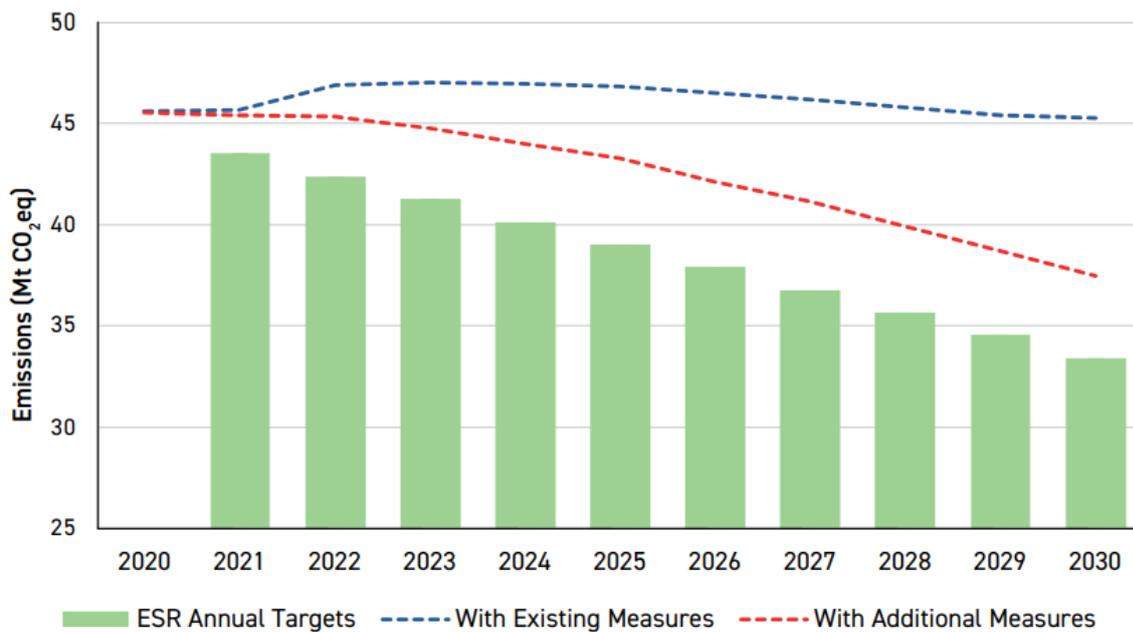


Figure 5.2 Possible emissions trends to 2030, and annual emissions targets under the Effort Sharing Regulation

Climate Change Advisory Council Members	Climate Change Advisory Council Adaptation Committee Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marie Donnelly (Chair) • Prof. John FitzGerald • Prof. Frank O'Mara (Teagasc) • Patricia King • Andrew Murphy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marie Donnelly (Chair) • Prof. John FitzGerald • Mark Adamson • Prof. Frank O'Mara (Teagasc) • Laura Burke (EPA)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Julie Sinnamon• Prof. Peter Thorne• Laura Burke (EPA)• Prof. Ottmar Edenhofer• Eoin Moran (Met Éireann)• Sinéad O'Brien• Dr. Cara Augustenborg• Prof. Morgan Bazilian• Jillian Mahon	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prof. Robert Devoy• Paddy Mahon• Dr. Ina Kelly• Keith Lambkin• Prof. Conor Murphy• Roger Street• William Walsh (SEAI)
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