

## **Climate Change Advisory Council Meeting - DRAFT MINUTES**

**Date:** 5<sup>th</sup> March 2021

**Start time:** 14:00

**Venue:** Video Conference Meeting

**Present:** Marie Donnelly, Professor Alan Barrett, Professor Gerry Boyle, Laura Burke, Professor John FitzGerald, Professor Peter Thorne, William Walsh.

**Apologies:** Professor Ottmar Edenhofer

**Secretariat:** Dr Margaret Desmond, Phillip O'Brien, Gemma O'Reilly, Seán O'Leary, Claire Camilleri.

### **1. Opening of Meeting**

#### **1.1 Minutes for the Climate Change Advisory Council Meeting 14.01.2021**

The minutes of the Council meeting held on the 14<sup>th</sup> January 2021 were signed electronically by the Chair.

#### **1.2 Adoption of Agenda**

The agenda was adopted by the Council.

#### **1.3 Disclosure of Interests**

Marie Donnelly disclosed that since retiring from the EU Commission, she has served as Chairperson of Renewable Energy Ireland and has stepped down from this position. She has also stepped down from the board of Tipperary Energy Agency and E3G. Marie is continuing as a member of the Governance Committee of MaREI and of UCD Energy Institute. She is also a Senior Advisor on Energy to Hume Brophy, Brussels, a global communications agency based in Brussels which is one to one and half days per month and is remunerated for this work. Marie informed Council that should a conflict arise during a meeting or an agenda item that she will advise of the conflict.

Prof. John FitzGerald also stated that he is a board member of UCD Energy Institute.

### **2. Independent Evaluation of the Climate Change Advisory Council**

The Chair congratulated the previous Council on the undertaking of this piece of work, noting that it is good practice to do so and that it is an important document for the new Council to have.

Key recommendations of the document were noted, including Council resources, access to data, communications and the development of a Council strategy. It was also noted that the memorandum of understanding between the Council and government departments is at an advanced stage of drafting, and that should a draft be provided in advance of the next meeting a written procedure may be undertaken.

It was also noted that a memorandum of understanding between the Environmental Protection Agency and the Climate Change Advisory Council is also being drafted.

The Council agreed that a strategy for the term of the Council will be developed in Q3 or Q4 of 2021 that will address the Independent Evaluation and to ensure that the new climate legislation and a full Council membership can be considered in the process.

### **3. Draft Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill**

The Council noted that it was hoped the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill would be published for this meeting. It was noted that it should be published in the coming weeks, and that it will be discussed at the next Council meeting.

### **4. Carbon Budgets**

The Council discussed its proposed role in advising on a series of carbon budgets as outlined by the proposed 2020 Amendment Bill. As part of this consideration, the Council discussed how to best approach this task, associated timelines for delivery, and how to address ongoing required engagement with Government on the setting of decarbonisation target ranges.

The Council raised significant concerns regarding the timeline of developing carbon budgets given the uncertainty of the mandate of the Council on criteria to undertake the task which has yet to be fully defined in the upcoming amending legislation, the newness of the Council and the resources available. The Council reiterated the importance of providing advice to government being based on evidence, and that further work is required to develop a robust methodology to support the recommendations to governments.

The Council acknowledged that fundamental to this process will be to take account of Ireland's international commitments under the Paris accord and the most recent

evidence as provided by the IPCC. The Council also recommended learning from the expertise of other countries who have already developed carbon budgets.

The Council also discussed the role of methane in the deliberations and the options for how this needs to be considered. It was acknowledged that this may be clarified in the upcoming draft Amendment Bill. The Council also raised concern about the lack of clarity of the actual target between the 7% per annum reduction or the overall 51% reduction, and the importance of this issue in how the decarbonisation ranges over the course of the cycle are to be established.

The Council considered and approved the proposal to establish an ad hoc group that would recommend an approach and methodology for preparing carbon budgets, and that there would be a number of short meetings prior to the next Council meeting in April to progress work on this topic. All Council members will be invited to attend, and other proposed members would be invited to attend preliminary meetings prior to endorsement at the next Council meeting.

The Council agreed that it would publish its recommendations for carbon budgets for the periods 2021 to 2025; 2026 to 2030; and a provisional budget for 2031 to 2035 in June 2021.

## **5. Council budget and Work Programme**

The Council was presented with a calendar of expected milestones, meetings, events and publications related to climate change up to October 2022, along with an updated work programme and budget to support the work of the Council. The Council were asked to consider and re-approve recommended areas of research areas from the previous Council regarding negative emissions, hydrogen and a draft Adaptation Committee work programme and associated budget allocations to ensure work can progress in these areas.

Additionally, the Council approved a reprioritisation of the budget allocation for consultancy support to the Council to assist with addressing the resource shortage. The Council also approved revised budget allocations for legal advice and other areas critical to the delivery of the expanded work programme of the Council. The Council were also asked to approve membership of the EEAC Network (European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils Network).

It was noted that once the amending legislation is published and adopted and when a full Council is appointed, it is intended to revisit these allocations to ensure resources are directed towards addressing emerging priorities. There will be a further opportunity at the end of Q2/Q3 for the Council to revisit the budget allocations for 2021.

The Council approved these recommendations and reallocation of budgetary support.

## **6. Council Resources**

The Council discussed a proposal outlining the expansion of permanent Secretariat staff requirements in order to develop and maintain capacity to meet Council needs, in the context of increased ambition nationally and at EU level, and to support a work programme of the Council. It was noted that this was in line with recommendations of the Independent Evaluation.

That Council endorsed the proposed staffing levels of an additional 15 personnel and a full-time manager. The Council recommended that the manager should be a Chief Executive Officer for the Council and noted the importance of this being an outward facing role to support the Council.

That Council approved the Chair to engage with the Minister and officials at the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications to seek these additional resources in line with this proposal. The Council also approved that the Secretariat will concurrently explore options including staff resource requests to advance this approach formally through EPA processes.

## **7. Adaptation**

The Council discussed possible approaches to put in place an Adaptation Committee for the new Council term and inform the Council of upcoming adaptation related issues. It was noted by the Council that in the current draft of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill requires the Advisory Council to establish an Adaptation Committee to assist and advise in relation to climate adaptation, providing a legislative foundation for the establishment of the Committee.

The Council were then asked to consider how adaptation issues should be considered in the interim period. The Council agreed that the current Adaptation Committee should be

asked to extend for not more than a year, with the Chair of the Council to act as Chair of the Adaptation Committee for the interim until a full Council is appointed.

## 8. Chair's Report of Council Activities

The Council noted a list of activities. This included:

- The previous Chair meeting with the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
- The previous Chair participated in the Shared Island Dialogue: The Environment and Climate - addressing shared challenges on the island
- A discussion on the announced appointments to the Climate Change Advisory Council between the Secretariat and the Office of the Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications
- An address SEAI Schools Programme
- A discussion between the Secretariat and the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications on decarbonization measures
- Participation by both the previous and current Chairs of the Climate Change Advisory Council at the Royal Irish Academy's Conference on Achieving Ireland's Climate Action Ambitions
- A discussion between the European Climate Foundation and the Chair on a European Climate Advisory Body.

The Council discussed the proposal of the establishment of a European Climate Council, including draft correspondence received from the European Climate Foundation and the Danish Climate Council supporting an independent expert advisory body under the EU Climate Law that would be made up of national advisory bodies. The Council discussed this issue and highlighted some concerns about such a body being established. The Council agreed that further discussion is required on this topic.

**THIS SECTION IS SUBJECT TO LEGAL PROFESSIONAL PRIVILEGE**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**9. Council administration**

The Council were reminded of the draft schedule of meetings for 2021 and 2022 that were distributed, and that these were subject to change.

**10. Agreed Outcomes, plans for next meeting and AOB**

The Council noted public consultation on a Microgeneration Support Scheme in Ireland 2021 by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, which was launched on the 14th January 2021 and closed on the 18th February 2021. As the new Council had not been convened during this period, the Council was not in a position to respond.

The Council noted the publication of the new EU Climate Adaptation Strategy published on 24 February 2021. The Council recommended that this be brought up at the next meeting of the Adaptation Committee.

The topic of a Committee on Climate Science was raised under Any Other Business, and it was agreed that this would be discussed at a future Council meeting.

The next meeting of the Council will be on the 15<sup>th</sup> April 2021.



15.04.2021