



## Climate Change Advisory Council Meeting - MINUTES

**Date:** 14<sup>th</sup> January 2021

**Start time:** 9:00am

**Venue:** Video Conference Meeting

**Present:** Professor John FitzGerald, Professor Alan Barrett, Professor Gerry Boyle, Laura Burke, Professor Peter Clinch, Professor Frank Convery, Professor Anna Davies, Professor Ottmar Edenhofer, Professor Alan Matthews, William Walsh.

**Apologies:** Dr Joseph Curtin.

**Presenters:** Brian Carroll, Assistant Secretary, Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment

**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 12.11.2020

The minutes of the Council meeting held on the 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020 were signed electronically by the Chair.

#### 1.2 Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was adopted by the Council.

#### 1.3 Disclosure of Interests

There were no disclosures of interests to report.

#### 1.4 Chair's Report of Activities

The Council agreed over email regarding a letter of advice on the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill 2020 that was sent to the Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action, and copied to the Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications and Transport.

The Chair participated at the Northern Ireland Environment Forum 2020; the Small Firms Association of Ireland's Annual meeting; SEAI's National Energy Research and Policy Conference and European Movement Ireland's event on Event on the European Green Deal Recovery. The Chair also met with Minister Edwin Poots, Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland.

The Chair also had discussions with an official from the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, and also discussed the future of the Council with the Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications.

## **2. Adaptation Committee**

The Council was updated on the last Committee meeting held on 17 December 2020.

The Council discussed the retirement of Committee member Ciarán Hayes, noting his contribution to the Committee. The Council noted that his replacement depends on the Council's continuation, as the Committee's term is tied to that of the Council. It was agreed to postpone finding a replacement until there is further clarity regarding Council and Committee arrangements.

The Committee met with Chris Stark, Chief Executive of the UK Committee on Climate Change (UKCCC) and Kathryn Brown, Head of Adaptation to discuss the approach to Adaptation in the UK.

The Committee also met with UK Climate Resilience Champion Dr Kate Lonsdale from the UK Climate resilience programme. Dr. Lonsdale discussed the development of the programme, key themes and progress to date.

The Committee discussed health and climate change with Prof. Patrick Goodman from TU Dublin presenting to the Committee on European Academies' Science Advisory Council's 'The imperative of climate action to protect human health in Europe' report,'

while Prof. John Wenger, UCC, discussed air quality and air pollution issues and co-benefits.

The Adaptation Committee discussed a document that reviewed the Committee's work since establishment and recommended that it be presented to Council and help inform the next iteration of the Adaptation Committee. This also included an indicative work programme for 2021, recommending that it also be presented to the Council. The Council discussed this document and recommended that it be presented to the next incoming Committee to keep up momentum on work already achieved.

The Council noted the importance of the work undertaken by the Adaptation Committee and the quality of the reports the Committee has provided. The Council highlighted that adaptation is not an area that is given sufficient prominence in Ireland. The Council thanked the Committee for their hard work during their term.

### **3. Annual Transition Statement 2020**

The Council noted that on the 9th December 2020, the Minister presented the Annual Transition Statement 2019 to Seanad Éireann, and that the Annual Transition Statement 2020 has not been published. The Council noted this statement is required under legislation, and is important in the preparation of the Annual Review. It was agreed that the Council would draft a letter to the Minister asking for the timeline of the publication of the Annual Transition Statement.

### **4. Independent Evaluation**

The Council received the final report of the Independent Evaluation of the Climate Change Advisory Council. The Chair noted that he met with the evaluation panel. The Council noted that evaluation was a positive initiative by the Council, and that it was a thorough, helpful and credible document, and thanked the panel for their time in putting this report together.

The Council noted the recommendations and reflected on the resources and the communications of the Council.

The Council agreed to send a short statement with the Independent Evaluation to the Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications and also the Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action.

## **5. National and EU Developments**

The Council discussed the December 2020 publication of Ag Climatise: A Roadmap towards Climate Neutrality by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The Council noted that it was drafted on the basis of the previous 2030 ambition of the Climate Action Plan 2019 and that ambition has increased at both national level under the programme for government and EU level under the Green Deal. Therefore the Council recommended that document should be revised.

The Council also noted the lack of interconnection with wider environmental issues such as water and air quality. It was agreed to send a letter to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine outlining the Council's concerns.

The Council discussed developments in relation to the EU Green Deal and likely scenarios that include varying mixes of regulation, policy and measures.

The Council noted the importance for the next Council of staying informed of European developments, particularly in regard to this issue. The Council also noted that it is important that the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications update the Council on its position in relation to issues such as these, so that the Council can provide timely advice.

The Secretariat will continue to monitor these developments to ensure the Council is continually updated.

## **6. Update on Climate Action Amendment Bill and Council Transition**

Brian Carroll, Assistant Secretary in the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment attended the meeting to provide an update on the timing of the amending legislation to the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, and the transition of a new Council as the current term expires on the 17<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

The Council was informed that the Minister was not ready to announce the appointment of a new Council, or any interim arrangements. It was noted that if the Minister decided to advance on appointments under current legislation, the four ex-officios would continue on as Council members until the new legislation is to be enacted, and that it was at the Minister's discretion to make other appointments.

The amending legislation is currently being drafted, and it is hoped to proceed as soon as possible.

Mr Carroll noted the increased resource implications of the new legislation for the Council and noted the Memorandum of Understanding that is currently being drafted with relevant departments and the Department of the Taoiseach to deliver access to modelling for the Council. The Chair reiterated the importance of immediate action to resource the Secretariat appropriately to ensure support for the Council and their expanded role.

The Department intends to consult with the Council on Climate Action Plan 2021. It was acknowledged that it is important that the Climate Action Plan 2021 is being developed to run alongside the timeline of the National Development Plan to ensure coherence. A draft of the Climate Action Plan 2021 is expected in late April or May. The Department also intends to look for Council input on carbon budgets and the options to achieve the increased ambition articulated in the Programme for Government.

The Council brought to Mr Carroll's attention the Independent Evaluation Report and that they intended to send a copy to the Minister after this Council meeting.

The Council also highlighted that the Secretariat should be kept up to date on knowledge and information being discussed on European and international issues to ensure the Council can provide appropriate and informed advice particularly in relation to EU Climate Law and the 2030 Climate and Energy Framework and CAP reform.

The Chair also raised the challenge of meeting the 7% annual reduction in the programme for government, and how to best reach this reduction in a cost effective manner. Mr Carroll indicated the Department could write to Council for their view.

The Chair also informed Mr Carroll of a meeting with the Minister Edwin Poots, Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland.

The Council also reiterated the need for the Department to provide clarity in the proposed amendment bill on the role and function of the next Council. The Council offered the assistance of the Secretariat to the Department should they wish any input or learnings from experience to help inform their deliberations.

## **7. Council Work Programme and Budget 2021**

The Council were updated that the three fellowships were awarded in December 2020 to:

- Adaptation Fellowship: ESRI €169,738 with 50% payment of €84,869 in December
- Carbon Budget 1 Fellowship: UCC €180,000 with 50% payment of €90,000 in December
- Carbon Budget 2 Fellowship: DCU €165,486 with 50% payment of €82,743 in December.

The research award for the Assessment of Mitigation and Adaptation in Heat Sector was also awarded at €77,364 with a 50% payment of €38,682.00. The small scale study on 'Carbon Budgets: Perspectives on negative emissions (Forestry)' was also paid on completion of work (€7,000). The report is currently being finalised.

The Council were informed of an overall underspend of approximately €107,000 in 2020. Some cost savings for 2020 were due to impacts from COVID-19 in relation to cancelled meetings, unrequired travel and subsistence, changing priorities, research packages coming in under budget and Secretariat resource constraints in executing the budget.

The Council discussed an interim work programme for implementation until a new Council is appointed, and re-approved projects that were deferred from 2020. These include projects around negative emissions, economics of hydrogen, additional work identified from the transport chapter from the Annual Review 2020 and additional scenarios for agriculture.

The Council also approved the following expenditure to support the future work of Council:

- Consultancy for support of Council €125,000
- External peer reviewer member of the two carbon budget fellowship steering groups €5,000
- Adaptation Committee Work Programme €20,000
- Coasts and Cities Adaptation Workshop 2021 <€1,000

The Council discussed the projects that have been awarded and agreed that further details would be circulated. It was also discussed that hydrogen research may require further investigation in a more expanded project.

In regard to recommendations to a future Council for their 2021 work programme, the Council recommended EU developments and hydrogen as future priorities. It was suggested that it would be interesting to have outside perspectives on agriculture and additional scenarios. It was also proposed that the Secretariat or the Council should be involved in the Climate Change Research Coordination Group chaired by the EPA and tasked the Secretariat with following up with the EPA.

## **8. Council Administration**

The Secretariat advised that while there is no update on the plans for the next Council, the Secretariat would keep the current Council members updated and that the minutes for this meeting would also be circulated for approval before being submitted to the next Council.

The Council wanted to formally thank the Secretariat for their work during their term, noting the small size of the team.

#### **9. Agreed Outcomes, plans for next meeting and AOB**

It was agreed that a letter would be drafted and circulated to Council for approval to the Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications and Transport on the Annual Transition Statement, and to issue the Independent Evaluation on the Climate Change Advisory Council to the Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action and the Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications and Transport. A letter would also be drafted to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine regarding AgClimatise and circulated for approval.

As the Council term of office was ending on the 17<sup>th</sup> January 2020, no plans were made for further meetings of the Council.

Under any other business, the Council noted the EPA's report on Ireland's Provisional Greenhouse Gas Emissions and SEAI's Energy in Ireland report.

The Chair noted a letter received from Friends of the Earth regarding the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications tender request and technical analysis to inform a review of the security of energy supply of Ireland's electricity and natural gas systems. The Chair informed the Council that he had responded to the letter



05.03.2021