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30th April 2020

Dear Minister,

RE: The Climate Change Advisory Council's role in the Development of Carbon Budgets

Following on from the publication of the Heads of Climate Action (Amendment) Bill in January 2020 and further consideration by the Council, the Council strongly recommends, that, contrary to the procedures outlined in the draft legislative proposals, it would be more appropriate that Government propose and set carbon budgets. These would then be reviewed by the proposed Climate Action Council for their ambition and feasibility against the national targets.

The Council makes this recommendation based on the following reasoning:

The role of the present Climate Change Advisory Council is to review progress and government action on Irish climate policy objectives and legislated targets, and to deliver advice and recommendations in that regard to Government. The Council believes it is appropriate and necessary that the advice and recommendations are independent and unbiased. The Council believes the proposed legislation should maintain and expand the role of the Climate Action Council to review and monitor climate policy by including in the Council's remit the additional task of reviewing any proposed national carbon budgets. This would mirror the role of the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council in reviewing the annual budget.

The Climate Action Council should not be in a position where it might be perceived as setting national targets to be enshrined in legislation. Moreover, the Government is better placed to engage sectors and the general public to ensure “buy-in” and acceptance of carbon budgets. Following on from this understanding, the Council does not consider it appropriate that the proposed Climate Action Council, as an appointed body, should propose carbon budgets.

The Council recommends an approach, similar to that adopted in France and Denmark, where the carbon budgets are developed and set by government. These budgets are subsequently reviewed for ambition, feasibility, and appropriateness by their respective advisory bodies. With the UK and New Zealand models, similar to what is proposed for the Irish legislation, there is a risk of duplication of functions between government departments and the Council, while also impairing the ability of the Council to independently assess carbon budgets that it originally put forward.

The Council has further advice to offer on other details of the Climate Action (Amendment) Bill and will be happy to share these with officials in your Department.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. John FitzGerald

Chair

Climate Change Advisory Council