PRESS RELEASE

29th July 2026

Urgent action required to address household emissions and reduce exposure to fossil fuel price volatility says Climate Change Advisory Council

- The Built Environment sector accounted for 12.5% of total greenhouse gas emissions in 2025.
- Residential building emissions fell year-on-year by 5.0%, while emissions from commercial and public buildings fell by 3.5%, primarily due to a warmer winter.

Launching the Built Environment chapter of its Annual Review 2026 today, the Council said increased investment and faster rollout is needed in retrofitting, heat pumps, solar PV and district heating to reduce emissions, improve comfort and health outcomes and to protect citizens against volatile energy costs.

Although there has been a reduction in built environment emissions, the Council says these reductions should not be mistaken for structural progress. While residential and commercial/public buildings remained within their first sectoral emissions ceilings for 2021–2025, the outlook for the next carbon budget period is much more challenging. Both residential buildings and commercial and public buildings are projected to exceed their second sectoral emissions ceilings for 2026–2030 by 22% and 62% respectively.

The review warns that progress on local authority social housing retrofits remains too slow, with only 10,370 homes retrofitted since 2021. Approximately 5,000 retrofits are needed on average each year between now and 2030. The Council is calling for increased, sustained and ring-fenced multi-annual funding in Budget 2027 to allow local authorities to accelerate retrofit delivery and meet the Government's own targets of 36,500 social houses brought to BER B2 or cost-optimal standard by 2030.

The review also highlights solar PV as one of the fastest routes to lower bills and widen participation in the energy transition. It recommends the roll out of solar PV across local authority housing stock and that a national framework should also be put in place for plug-in solar to allow apartment dwellers to benefit from solar energy.

The Council says delayed and incomplete policy frameworks are now creating uncertainty for households, local authorities, industry and investors. For example, the delayed National Building Renovation Plan, due last December, has prompted the European Commission to open infringement proceedings in March. The plan should be published immediately, with a clear pathway to phase out fossil fuel boilers by 2040 as required under the EU Energy Performance of Buildings Directive.

The Council identifies the requirement for a National Heat Strategy based on spatial planning, system diversity and resilience, to identify where district heating, geothermal energy, heat pumps and other low-carbon heating solutions can be most effectively deployed. The Council acknowledges Cabinet approval for revisions to the General Scheme of the Heat (Networks and Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, but the legislation has slipped repeatedly and must now be finalised and enacted to give district heating the regulatory certainty it needs.

On resilience, the Council wants to see a clear programme of work so the Built Environment and Planning sector can develop and implement a dedicated Sectoral Adaptation Plan in the next plan cycle. Ensuring our built environment is resilient to immediate and future climate change impacts, such as heatwaves and flooding, is paramount to securing the future of our communities. In addition, the Council also recommends that Government expedite the development of coastal change management plans in priority vulnerable areas.

Alex White, Chairperson of the Climate Change Advisory Council, said:

"As long as Ireland remains heavily dependent on fossil fuels to heat homes and buildings, our households, businesses and public services will remain exposed to global price volatility and energy insecurity.

The Government has set the right ambition to end Ireland's reliance on fossil fuels. The test now is delivery. We have the solutions and we know there is an appetite for them, but they must be enabled through policy and legislation. These solutions must be funded to deliver lower-cost clean energy for Ireland.

Our communities also need plans and solutions to prepare for the impacts of climate change, especially coastal areas and those that are at risk of flooding.

This transition must be fair. Social housing retrofit is one of the clearest tests of delivery. The State owns this housing stock, the targets are clear, and the benefits for households are immediate. To meet the 2030 target, local authorities will need to retrofit around twice as many homes each year as were delivered in 2025."

END

NOTES TO EDITOR:

- Heat pump installations increased by 21% year on year, but total heat pump installations only reached 41% of the 2025 target.
- Homes upgraded to BER B2 or better through SEAI schemes increased by around 20%.
- The number of local authority units retrofitted increasing by just 2.5% in 2025, from 2,607 to 2,671.

If you have any questions or are seeking further comment, please do not hesitate to contact:

Mark Harrington (mark.h@springboardcommunications.ie or +353 86 128 3843)

The Climate Change Advisory Council will publish Sectoral Reviews throughout the year. The publication schedule below is subject to change and indicative only:

Chapter	Published
Our Changing Climate	Published 1st April 2026
Electricity	Published 13th May 2026
Transport	Published 17th June 2026
Built Environment	Published 29th July 2026
Agriculture, Forestry and Land Use (AFOLU)	Early September 2026
Preparing for Ireland’s Changing Climate	End September 2026
Industry and Waste	Mid October 2026
Biodiversity	End October 2026
Cross Sectoral	Mid November 2026
Irish Translation of Summary document	Mid November 2026