

# Where is Ireland when it comes to tackling Climate Change?



## EU Targets & Reporting

As a member of the EU, Ireland has committed to reducing its green house gas emissions to agreed targets for 2020 and 2030, with a longer-term strategy for 2050. Failure to meet those plans will potentially result in significant fines.

The **Environmental Protection Agency**, EPA, is the authority responsible for measuring Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions and submitting that data to the EU. The EPA has recently outlined the 'significant challenges' Ireland faces in meeting EU 2030 reduction targets. We already know that we will not meet the 2020 targets. The authority pointed out that Ireland "*will need full implementation of the measures in the National Development Plan, plus additional measures in future plans..*" to meet its EU targets for 2030.

## Government Action on Climate Change

The **Department of Communications, Climate Action and the Environment**, is responsible for Climate Action at government level. In 2017, the DCCA produced a **National Mitigation Plan** and in 2018 a **National Adaptation Framework** both of which aim to tackle Climate Change and ensure that the state meets its obligations as a member of the EU. Mitigation aims to address the causes of climate change (reduce emissions) and adaptation measures are the ways in which we will need to adapt to the changes that are inevitable, or have already taken place, particularly in terms of extreme weather events. **Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs)** have been established to assist local government to 'develop and implement its own climate action measures'. Each local authority is responsible for devising its own Adaptation Strategy.

When published in 2017, the National Mitigation Plan was criticised by environmental groups, and more particularly by the Climate Change Advisory Council (established under the Climate Action and Low Carbon bill of 2015) as having insufficient ambition to meet the challenges ahead. The role of the Climate Change Advisory Council is to review national climate policy and advise Government on how Ireland can move to a low-carbon, climate-resilient economy and society by 2050.

In April of 2018, the **Third Report and Recommendations of the Citizens Assembly – How The State Can Make Ireland A Leader In Tackling Climate Change** – was published. An Oireachtas Joint Committee on Climate Action was established to consider this document and in March of 2019 launched a report: '**Climate Change: A Cross-Party Consensus for Action**'. This is probably the most ambitious official report to have been produced to date and contains a series of recommendations across all sectors of government which would see, as the Chair of the Committee, Hildegard Naughton TD noted, '*...a fundamental shift in the way in which the State addresses climate action.*'

In May, a Climate and Biodiversity Emergency was proposed and passed in Dáil Éireann. However, only six TDs were present which left a question mark over the overall commitment of the houses of the Oireachtas to address both issues – Climate Change and Biodiversity Loss - which are inextricably linked.

Hot on the heels of the Joint Committee's report, in June of 2019, the DCCA launched its **Climate Action Plan (To Tackle Climate Breakdown)**, encouraged perhaps by the recent electoral successes of the Green Party and

the stated desire for climate action from the public. This has been met with a mixed response and is, on balance, less ambitious than the Joint Committee report. The new governance structure, where each Government department is accountable for its own carbon budget, has been commended. However, the over-reliance on electric cars, the limited detail on improving public transport in rural areas, and the 'business as usual' approach to reducing emissions from the agricultural sector have come in for significant criticism.

## Current GHG Emissions

To date, Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions (taking 1990 as a base-line) increased consistently during the boom, reduced slightly during the recession and then began to climb again as the economy recovered. Total national greenhouse gas emissions for **2017 were estimated (by the EPA) to be 60.74** million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. This represented a small decrease of 0.5% when compared with 2016. Ireland has committed to reducing its GHG emissions by 20% by 2020 when compared with 2005, and by 40% by 2030. An EU target of an 80% reduction by 2050 has now been overtaken by more ambitious plans – a goal of 100% reduction or a carbon neutral position is now mooted. The general consensus of those working in the area of climate change is that anything less will be insufficient to halt climate breakdown.

Compiled by the Green Arts Initiative in Ireland, August 2019



The [Green Arts Initiative in Ireland](#) is a Theatre Forum initiative in association with Creative Carbon Scotland

