

Commissioned by:  Friends of the Earth

Compendium on Environment and Climate in Ireland's Programme for Government



| 2024

Compendium on the status of environmental commitments made in Ireland's 2020 Programme for Government.

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Overview: The Government of Ireland's Programme for Government (PfG), published in 2020, contains nearly 300 environment or climate related commitments. The purpose of this compendium is to summarise the most up-to-date status of all environment or climate-related commitments in Ireland's 2020 Programme for Government (PfG) as of 31 July 2024. The compendium was compiled based on extensive stakeholder consultation and independent research by the authors. The research team contacted 97 expert stakeholders across all sectors, including from within Government, civil society organisations, industry bodies, academics, and opposition political parties. Thirty three stakeholders agreed to be interviewed or provide written submissions, resulting in approximately 16 hours of transcripts which informed this compendium. Following this qualitative data collection, the team conducted additional research in the grey literature, including through Oireachtas testimonies, Government press releases, media coverage and Government reports.

Within this compendium, the Government's PfG commitments have been divided into nine categories: *Climate; Nature and Biodiversity; Water and Marine; Circular Economy and Waste; Air Quality, Transport, Buildings, Energy, and Agriculture and Forestry*. In each category, relevant commitments within the PfG have been identified (*in blue italics*) and status updates on each commitment have been developed in consultation with stakeholders. Figure 1 summarises the extent of progress for all environmental commitments in the Programme for Government as evaluated by the authors of this compendium. The total number of commitments for each environmental sector is presented in the legend on the right-hand side. Within each sector, the authors determined whether commitments were completed (green), in progress (orange), or not progressed (red) based on the information provided in this document. Climate-related commitments demonstrated the highest completion rate (84%), while the Water and Marine category had the lowest completion rate (44%). Overall progress to date across the Government's 278 environmental commitments was determined to be 60% complete, 13% in progress, and 27% not yet progressed. Appendix 1 outlines specific commitments which the authors determined have not progressed at all (Table 1) or minimally progressed (Table 2).

In July 2024, Friends of the Earth commissioned three academic experts to independently assess the Irish Government's performance on environment and climate relative to commitments in the PfG. This is the fourth year such work has been commissioned. The three experts used the information in this compendium, along with their own knowledge of Government policy, to score each of the nine categories. Their assessment will *not* evaluate whether commitments contained in the PfG were adequate, but rather how well the Government is keeping its word on their *own* climate and environmental promises. Commitments were evaluated, not only based on the extent of their progress, but also regarding their processes and outcomes. The latest assessment will account for the fact that the current Government has served for four years while their PfG was developed with up to a five-year timescale. Government performance will be evaluated based on the level of policy development and implementation that can reasonably be expected within four years.

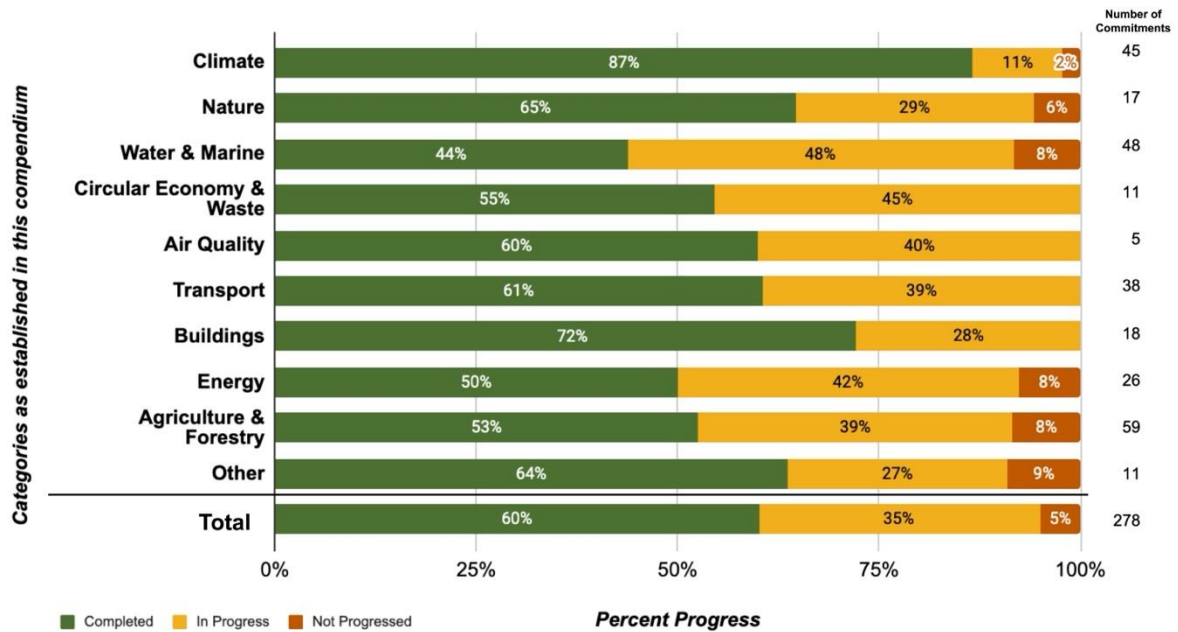


Figure 1: Progress to date for all environment and climate commitments in the 2020 Programme for Government based on information summarised in this compendium

A 2021 version of this compendium was compiled by Seán McLoughlin for the first evaluation, available [here](#) along with the first Report Card of Government conducted in 2021. The 2022 version of the compendium was compiled by Rebecca Bailey and Peter Stevenson (UCD Environmental Policy Programme), which is available [here](#). The 2023 version of the compendium was compiled by Patricia Lentz and Emma Flannery from UCD Environmental Policy Programme and Isabelle Hardgrave and Clara Weldon from UCD Sustainability Programme and is available [here](#).

Disclaimer: This report was developed with the input of many organisations and does not represent the views of any specific individual or organisation. In making their evaluation, academic experts will be free to use information beyond what is presented in this document.

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1. Climate

1.1. Climate Governance

1.1a "Introduce the Climate Action (Amendment) Bill 2020 into the Dáil within 100 days. It will:"

2021-2024 Outcome: The [Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2021](#) (the 'Climate Act') was signed into law on the 23rd of July 2021. This commitment has been completed and was considered as part of 2021 assessment.

1.1b "1. Set a target to decarbonise the economy by 2050 at the latest."

2021-2023 Progress: This target was established in the Climate Act, and officially completed in 2021 through primary legislation, committing Ireland to meet net-zero emissions by 2050 through climate actions outlined in the Climate Action Plan 2021. [The Long Term Strategy on Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions](#) ('LTS') was approved by Government in [April 2023](#), more than 3 years after the European Commission [deadline](#). Submissions for a [second public consultation](#) intended to be used for an updated LTS closed in July 2023.

2024 Progress: An updated Long Term Strategy on Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions [was published](#) in June 2024. One stakeholder felt the target should have been set as zero emissions by 2030 rather than net-zero by 2050 and that aviation emissions should have been included in the target.

1.1c "2. Make the adoption of five-year carbon budgets, setting maximum emissions by sector, a legal requirement."

2021-2023 Progress: The Climate Act mandates the setting of five-year carbon budgets. In April 2022, the first set of carbon budgets were adopted. Sectoral emission ranges were set out in the 2021 National Climate Action Plan (NCAP21). Sectoral targets were agreed in July 2022. The agreed sectoral targets "only amount to a reduction of 43%", below the 51% target outlined in the Climate Act. A source commented that the unallocated emissions savings of 5.25 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent included in the 2026-2030 carbon budget should be partially or entirely allocated by the Autumn of 2023. In 2023, the CCAC continued to [raise concerns](#) regarding how carbon budgets are to be allocated to sectors with uncertainties relating to the Land Use sectoral emissions ceiling and the unallocated savings for the second carbon budget period.

2024 Progress: The sectoral emissions ceiling for the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sector has not been set. [Climate Action Plan 2024](#) (CAP24) states that the unallocated savings for the period 2026-2030 will be dealt with "no later than 2025". In response to a parliamentary question in April 2024, [Minister Ryan stated](#), "Reflecting this high level of uncertainty with LULUCF emissions; the series of planned inventory refinements; and the continued volatility for LULUCF baseline emissions to 2030 and beyond, the 2024 Climate Action Plan puts in place ambitious activity targets for the sector." [According to the EPA](#), "The first two carbon budgets (2021-2030) will not be met, and by a significant margin of between 17 and 27 per cent." Almost 64% of the first five-year Carbon Budget was [used between 2021-2023](#), leaving 36% of the budget available for the remaining two years. Remaining within budget for the first carbon budget period will require substantial annual emissions reduction of more than 8% from 2024-2025.

1.1d "3. Establish the Climate Action Council on an independent statutory footing and ensure greater gender balance and increased scientific expertise in its membership."

2021-2024 Outcome: The Act mandates that the Minister and the Government "use their best endeavours" to ensure that the membership of the Climate Advisory Council has an appropriate balance of scientific expertise, and an equitable balance between men and women. The 14 members of the [Climate Change Advisory Council](#) are evenly balanced as of June 2023. This commitment is deemed complete and was considered as part of the 2022 assessment.

1.1e "Update the Climate Action Plan annually and report progress quarterly."

2021-2023 Progress: . The Climate Action Plan 2021 was published in November 2021, with the first quarterly report published in June 2022. [The Climate Action Plan 2023 \(CAP23\)](#) was published in December 2022. CAP23 built upon the previous two climate action plans, taking account of sectoral emissions ceilings and carbon budgets, while maintaining the targets of a 51% emissions reduction by 2030 and the achievement of carbon neutrality by 2050.

2024 Progress: [Four progress reports](#) were produced under CAP23, stating that 65% of the 290 actions due for delivery in 2023 were completed. Delayed actions of higher impact are to be included in subsequent progress reports until their completion. The final version of [CAP2024](#) was approved by the Government in May 2024.

1.1f "Maintain the existing Climate Action Delivery Board model."

2021-2023 Progress: The Climate Action Delivery Board's terms of reference were [updated in November 2021](#) to include the monitoring of sectoral emissions ceilings and carbon budgets. The CCAC welcomed that the Delivery Board was now meeting regularly. However, the [CCAC urged](#) that the reporting analysed by the Delivery Board should be focussed on the most critical 20% of actions to maximise the impact that such a body can have on the acceleration of delivery. In May 2023, then [Taoiseach Leo Varadkar](#) confirmed that the Climate Action Delivery Board was meeting quarterly. In April 2023, the CCAC [released a letter](#) urging the Board to ensure no further delays in delivering actions and to provide explanation as to why actions have been delayed in 2023 and details as to when these actions will be delivered. CAP23 states that in order to achieve the ambitions it lays out, "strengthening the role of the Climate Action Delivery board to ensure better alignment with the Cabinet Committee on the Environment and Climate Change and enable cross-governmental ownership of the plan" is a key area of change needed.

2024 Progress: A stakeholder noted that the board is in place and is being maintained with supporting infrastructure put in place, such as additional task forces.

1.1g "Propose that the Oireachtas should establish a standing Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action, with powers similar to the Public Accounts Committee."

2021-2023 Progress: The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2021 specifies that a Joint Oireachtas Committee will be continuously involved in various aspects of climate action. [The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Environment and Climate Action](#) was established in May 2021, previously named the [Committee on Climate Action](#) (established in July 2020).

2024 Progress: One stakeholder shared that they did not think the Joint Oireachtas Committee had any additional powers beyond any other Oireachtas committee but that it had an important role in terms of the analysis of progress with different ministries relevant to it. A source noted that the [Climate Act](#) includes provision for Ministers to be called before a joint Oireachtas committee over their department's carbon budget and that this responsibility has been granted to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action. Another source noted the Committee has no issues with getting Ministers or other stakeholders to appear. This source also stated that the Committee hasn't been constrained by powers but perhaps by resources. A third source commented that the setup of the Oireachtas Committee did not allow it to fulfil its legal function of monitoring compliance with the Climate Act due to the short duration of sessions, poor structure, and low attendance of committee members. This source also criticised the infrequent and inconsistent scheduling of meetings and the lack of power to compel people.

1.1h "Ensure that the Department of Climate Action has the capacity and expertise to manage the transition in energy efficiency and renewable energy and to carry out its expanded function in relation to carbon budgets."

2021-2023 Progress: Under Budget 2022, a 19% increase on 2021 (€858 million) was allocated to the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC). DECC was allocated an additional €150 million in Budget 2023, with expenditure totalling €1.038bn.

2024 Progress: Budget 2024 allocated €1.159 billion to DECC, an increase of €121 million from Budget 2023. A source noted the Department had expanded greatly in terms of budget and personnel. Another source believed that the department was adequately resourced. Another stakeholder felt there should be a state run company rolling out renewable energy rather than tendering to the private market.

1.1i "Review on an ongoing basis the structure and operations of state agencies that will be responsible for delivery of increased targets under this plan."

2021-2023 Progress: In July 2022, the Government published a new [Public Sector Climate Action Mandate](#). In 2022, the EPA state agency review was completed. In May 2023, the [Public Sector Climate Action Mandate for CAP23](#) was approved by Government. The SEAI [Monitoring and Reporting system](#) requires all public bodies and schools to report their energy performance annually.

2024 Progress: The Public Sector Climate Action Mandate [was reviewed and updated](#) for CAP24. One stakeholder believed that the legal remit of some public bodies should be reviewed to ensure they are aligned with the Climate Action Plan and National Climate Objective. This stakeholder disagreed with Minister Ryan's [statement](#) that it was not necessary to do so. Another source pointed out that the strategies of [Coillte](#) and [Bord na Móna](#) have changed entirely due to climate action planning.

1.1j "Work with the European Commission to advance a stronger National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) for 2030, consistent with the ambition of this programme."

2021-2023 Progress: A strengthened NECP was not submitted between 2021-2023, despite the European Parliament [requiring a draft NECP](#) to be submitted by June 30th 2023.

2024 Progress: [A draft of the updated NECP](#) was submitted to the European Commission in December 2023 and a public consultation on this document was held in February 2024. A [public consultation](#) on a further draft update to the NECP began in May 2024 and closed on June 27, 2024. The draft updated NECP [was submitted](#) to the European Commission in July 2024 after the June [deadline](#).

1.1k "Respond to the OECD review of the Environmental Protection Agency and ensure that our legislative framework for licensing pollution is fit for purpose."

2021-2023 Progress: In July 2021, DECC agreed a revised Performance Delivery Agreement (PDA) with the EPA, which was last updated in December 2022. [Annex 5](#) of the PDA reviews the recommendations made by the OECD review. The EPA [stated](#) that the recommendations made in the OECD review were considered in their [Strategic Plan 2022-2026](#).

2024 Progress: In June 2024, Government approved the [General Scheme for the Environment \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Bill 2024](#). The Bill aims to streamline the EPA licencing system by providing definite timeframes for EPA licencing decisions and more options for the agency to efficiently regulate lower risk activities and minor changes to licences.

1.1l "We will conduct a review of greenhouse gas emissions on a consumption basis, with a goal of ensuring that Irish and EU action to reduce emissions supports emission reductions globally, as well as on our own territories."

2021-2023 Progress: In November 2022, the ESRI published a paper, funded by the EPA, titled '[The Global Emissions Impact of Irish Consumption](#)', which used a consumption based accounting method for greenhouse gas emissions. However, a Government review of greenhouse gas emissions on a

consumption basis was not published between 2021 and 2023.

2024 Progress: A stakeholder mentioned that the ESRI is working on behalf of the EPA to develop analysis in this space but that it is not yet completed.

1.1.1. Just Transition

1.1.1a "Publish a Just Transition Plan, to frame the work of a permanent Commission for Just Transition. The plan will identify and prepare for challenges that will arise in a number of sectors and regions, recognising that there will be a variety of different transitions, and that it is clear that there will be no simple one-size fits all approach."

2021-2023 Progress: [Ireland's Territorial Just Transition Plan](#) was approved by the Government in November 2022 and subsequently adopted by the European Commission. Public consultation on the plan took place between December 2021 and February 2022. The most negatively affected territories addressed in the plan included counties Offaly, Laois, Longford, Westmeath, and Roscommon, as well as the Municipal Districts (MDs) Ballinasloe (Co. Galway), Athy and Clane-Maynooth (Co. Kildare), Carrick on-Suir and Thurles (Co. Tipperary).

2024 Progress: A stakeholder felt that recommendations in the plan for the establishment of the Just Transition Commission were reasonably broad and covered the areas in this commitment. The Just Transition Commission [was established on an administrative basis](#) in April 2024. Membership of the new Commission will comprise nominees from the five pillars of social dialogue (Agriculture, Community and Voluntary, Employer, Environment, and Trade Unions). Recruitment for the Commission is currently underway with a call for expressions of interest closing on June 25, 2024. One stakeholder noted that, while it had not yet been established on a statutory basis, setting the Commission up first on an administrative basis was not an uncommon approach and that this is a 'fairly solid undertaking' from the Government indicating it will be in place. Minister Ryan [stated](#) that the Commission will be given a legislative basis.

1.1.1b "Establish the Just Transition Commissioner as a statutory office, with appropriate staffing and resources. The experience of the Just Transition Commissioner's work in the Midlands and the work of the National Economic and Social Council will inform the approach."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2022, Kieran Mulvey was [reappointed](#) as the Just Transition Commissioner, following the completion of his two year term.

2024 Progress: The Just Transition Commissioner's [mandate expired](#) in December 2021 (final progress report was published in April 2022). As noted above, a Just Transition Commission is being established.

1.1.1c "Ensure financing is available and continue to grow the size of the Just Transition Fund."

2021-2023 Progress: In June 2020, it was announced the Just Transition Fund was [€11 million](#), an increase from the [€6 million](#) fund in Budget 2020. Under Budget 2022, €34 million was allocated to Just Transition Projects. According to CAP23, the National Just Transition Fund committed to providing €22.1 million in grant funding to projects until 2024. In June 2023, Minister Ryan [stated](#) that the fund had disbursed €5.1 million to participating projects. [Budget 2023](#) detailed the allocation of €6 million worth of carbon tax funds to the National Just Transition Fund. Following the European Commission's adoption of the Territorial Just Transition Plan in December 2023, €84.5 million from the EU Just Transition Fund was incorporated for the period of 2021 to 2027. Additional national co-financing will provide the Programme with a total of up to €169 million for investments.

2024 Progress: It does not appear that more funding was pledged beyond the EU Just Transition Fund. In January 2024, [Minister Ryan](#) announced a €5 million funding call under the EU Just Transition Fund for local community organisations and small-to-medium sized enterprises in the Midlands region. In April 2024, [Minister Ryan announced](#) 15 projects in the Midlands to receive €18

million under the EU Just Transition Fund. [Fáilte Ireland](#) was tasked with the administration of €68 million for a Regenerative Tourism and Placemaking Scheme 2023-2026 in the Midlands. Under Fáilte Ireland the '[Investment Grant-Aid Scheme for Private & Community SMEs](#)' is taking expressions of interest until the end of June 2024.

1.1.1d "We will ensure that the Just Transition in the Midlands works inclusively by (1.1.1e-i):"

1.1.1e "1. Supporting the Just Transition Commissioner in designing a comprehensive and inclusive response."

2021-2023 Progress: Four '[Just Transition Progress Reports](#)' were published by the Just Transition Commissioner, Kieran Mulvey. Recommendations from these reports include engagement with the Midlands Regional Transition Team; adequately resourcing National Just Transition Fund Projects; and providing greater access to education opportunities.

2024 Progress: The Just Transition Commissioner's [mandate expired](#) in December 2021 (final progress report was published in April 2022). The Just Transition Commission was established on an administrative basis in April 2024, recruitment to fill the Commission is ongoing.

1.1.1f "2. Publishing and implementing a detailed all-of-government implementation plan consistent with the recommendations of the first report of the Just Transition Commissioner."

2021-2023 Progress: CAP23 states all four Just Transition Reports were considered in the formulation of the Government's Implementation Plan for the Midlands published in the Climate Action Plan 2021.

2024 Progress: A source noted that the implementation of this plan is underway, giving the example of [home retrofitting in the Midlands](#). They pointed out that this has evolved since the PfG and that the focus on Just Transition has expanded past the original scope of supporting regions in the Midlands where power plants were closing down.

1.1.1g "3. Conducting a feasibility study into the establishment of a Green Energy Hub/Renewable Energy Hub in the Midlands, using the existing infrastructure in this region."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2022 the ESB published a [feasibility study](#) into the potential to provide energy services at its sites at Shannonbridge and Lanesborough, which would facilitate growth in renewable generation. The development of three new green energy hubs in the midlands are in progress, as outlined in the EirGrid report "[Shaping Our Energy Future](#)" and confirmed by a source. The Bord na Móna Energy Park is one project aiming to cover 3,000ha of land in Offaly, Westmeath and Meath into a range of low carbon energy generation assets.

2024 Progress: [The Shannonbridge](#) site earmarked for a renewable energy hub by the ESB has since been selected for the development of a gas Temporary Emergency Generation project. Amazon Web Services [has signed a power purchase agreement](#) to become the first business to join Bord na Móna's Eco Energy Park. In May 2024, the [ESB transferred](#) Dalton Centre at Shannonbridge to Offaly County Council in addition to €500,000 for the benefit of the local community.

1.1.1h "Support for the workers, sectors, and regions most exposed, in order to help them to benefit from the new economic opportunities afforded to us by the transition to a low-carbon, digital economy."

2021-2023 Progress: In July 2021, the Taoiseach, Minister Ryan and Bord na Móna's CEO announced [885 additional jobs in the Midlands were planned to be created over the next 4-5 years](#), as Bord na Móna transitioned to a "*climate solutions company*". In May 2023, [Minister Ryan stated](#) that projects committed across the Midlands region were estimated to create 178 'direct jobs' and 999 'indirect jobs'. The [Territorial Just Transition Plan](#) stated that the EU Just Transition Fund will be directed towards skills and training support for those who have been most affected by the just transition process. Stakeholders criticised the narrow scope of the Government's approach to the just

transition, highlighting sectors such as agriculture and marine, which must be considered in the transition towards a low-carbon economy.

2024 Progress: In April 2024, [Minister Ryan announced](#) 15 projects in the Midlands to receive €18 million under the EU Just Transition Fund to create employment and diversify the local economy. The approved projects include benefits such as *“the upskilling and training of communities in the territory to participate in the low carbon economy”*. In April 2024, [Bord na Móna announced](#) that Amazon Web Services signed a PPA for energy from a wind farm in Co. Offaly, the construction of which will bring jobs to the area as well as a [community benefit fund](#). One stakeholder said that supports in this area have improved but that a clear framework is missing to communicate the structures that can deliver that support. Another stakeholder commented that despite progress on training affected workers, there has been no investment in replacement industry in that area, so retrained workers will be working outside of the area.

1.1.1i “And protection for vulnerable families and communities least equipped to make the transformation.”

2021-2023 Progress: In January 2022, Niamh Garvey of the National Economic and Social Council (NES) stated that *“Further work is required to scope out the outcomes and processes appropriate for impacted individuals and communities”*. In May 2022, Deputy Darren O’Rourke (Sinn Féin) [stated that current Government policy regarding the Just Transition is “leaving people behind”](#). This sentiment was echoed by civil society representatives consulted as part of this assessment in 2022. In 2022, researchers in UCD published the journal article [‘How just are just transition plans? Perceptions of decarbonisation and low-carbon energy transitions among peat workers in Ireland’](#), which found a disparity between the “theory” and “practice” of the just transition. Peat workers from the case study felt the promises of the just transition were not upheld.

2024 Progress: One source pointed to the [warmer homes scheme](#) as progress under this commitment, as well as the increased provision of the fuel allowance using funds from the carbon tax. In 2023, 5,900 homes [were upgraded](#) under the scheme. This source also noted the provision of half price public transport fares as progress under this commitment. A stakeholder remarked that, although free retrofits are being offered, they do not cover the hidden costs for vulnerable groups. Another stakeholder believed that increased ambition around the retrofitting of social housing to protect the most vulnerable families from the impact of price volatility and fossil fuel dependency is required and that the Solar for Schools scheme should be extended to social housing. They also stated that action under this commitment is too slow and should be afforded a higher priority.

1.1.2. Climate Engagement

1.1.2a “Sustained leadership from Government and the Oireachtas.” AND

1.1.2b “Sustained engagement with citizens, sectors, and regions.”

2021-2023 Progress: In March 2022, the first National Climate Stakeholder Forum was held as part of The National Dialogue on Climate Action. The second National Climate Stakeholder Forum was held in [July 2022](#). In July 2022, the Government also announced the [“Climate Conversation 2022”](#), consisting of an online questionnaire where respondents evaluated the Government’s approach to climate change. These responses were used in the formation of NCAP22. The Climate Conversation questionnaire was repeated in 2023. The third National Climate Stakeholder Forum was held in May 2023. An NGO representative commented that Government engagement with the NGO sector was poor, with DECC providing no sense of a desire to co-produce solutions. An opposition party member expressed concerns regarding poor engagement with citizens. A source acknowledged shortcomings in communicating climate action with the public and fostering community support on initiatives.

2024 Progress: The fourth and fifth [National Climate Stakeholder Forums](#) were carried out in November 2023 and February 2024, respectively. [CAP24 states that](#) *“this programme will be*

expanded to include regional and possibly sector specific forum meetings.” A third [National Climate Conversations](#) online survey ran from June to September 2023. One source highlighted the establishment of a Climate Change Communications Coordinating Group and a Climate Communication Strategy, ensuring a coherent message on climate from Government. Another source felt that the Government had not *“broken down the ‘them and us’ type of barrier that ... clearly exists in the Dail”*. A stakeholder remarked that the Government and the Oireachtas have not communicated to the public the extent to which climate change is a crisis which requires extraordinary action. Another stakeholder commented that Government engagement with NGOs has been “reasonably good” but could still be improved. They acknowledged that the Government allocates a number of its UN COP entry badges to Irish NGOs each year, which is not done by all countries. The Department of Transport published its [Public Engagement on Climate Action and Sustainable Mobility 2024-25 Strategy](#) in May 2024. The Strategy aims to *“strengthen the social contract between the public and the State for climate action and sustainable mobility – through an inclusive programme of engagement at national, regional and community levels”*.

“We will develop a new model of engagement with citizens, sectors, and regions as an early priority for Government, building on the learning of recent years. It shall embrace (1.1.2c-e):”

1.1.2c “1. Dialogue on a structured basis, so that the diverse elements of society can contribute to the process. There will be a specific youth dialogue strand.”

2021-2023 Progress: In early 2021, the National Dialogue on Climate Action consulted with young people as part of the Climate Action Plan 2021. An advisory group of young people was formed to guide the development of a permanent Youth Climate Council by Q3 2021. In March 2022, The National Youth Assembly of Ireland met as the Youth Assembly on Climate. In July 2022, a representative of The National Youth Assembly presented a report at the 2nd National Climate Stakeholder Forum. [The National Youth Assembly on Climate](#) (NYAC) took place in March 2023. Representatives from the NYAC spoke at the 2023 National Climate Stakeholder Forum. In 2023, DECC launched the [Climate Youth Delegate Programme](#), which appoints two delegates aged 18-25 to engage in Ireland’s climate action efforts.

2024 Progress: [CAP24 states](#) that work will continue to evolve the NYAC *“to better engage with young people on climate action and examine the coordination of youth engagement on climate action across society.”* A source felt that youth engagement has been very strong and that the Just Transition Taskforce discussed how the Just Transition Commission should fit into this. A stakeholder stated that holding the citizen’s assemblies was a positive step. However, they noted that it is unclear *“the extent to which they really influence what’s happening on a policy level”*. They also remarked that assemblies should be structured in a way which allows for the consultees to set the terms of reference rather than being *“managed to produce a certain kind of result.”*

1.1.2d “2. A process of accountability on progress, including an annual review.”

2021-2023 Progress: Quarterly progress reports for the National Climate Action Plans (NCAPs) were published in June, July, and November 2022. The final progress report of NCAP 2021 was published in February 2023. The first quarterly progress report of NCAP 2023 was published in May 2023.

2024 Progress: In 2023, DECC published the [National Dialogue on Climate Action Monitoring and Evaluation Report 2022](#). A source noted that the annual NCAP includes progress reviews on its engagement actions. [CAP24](#) briefly reviews progress made in 2023 and includes recommendations from the Climate Change Advisory Council. CAP24 states that oversight of the engagement programme is now provided by the Climate Communications and Engagement Taskforce.

1.1.2e "3. The promotion of citizen, sectoral and regional involvement in delivering actions within their own sphere of influence."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, through the NCAP21 Interdepartmental Engagement and Consultation Steering Group, DECC invited 26 Public Participation Networks (PPNs) to take part in a series of workshops as part of the on-going Climate Conversation. An additional eight PPNs were invited to take part in in-depth focus groups. In March 2021, the Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) launched a website, caro.ie, to support all county and city councils in leading Ireland's climate action efforts. In November 2021, the Community Climate Action Programme was launched to provide eligible organisations with resources to assist local communities in climate action initiatives. In 2021, [more than 13,000 local authority staff](#) received training in climate action through engagement with the CAROs and DECC. Nine 'Regional Enterprise Plans' were published in 2022, which included decarbonisation objectives for each region and climate resilience measures. Each of the four CAROs ran until June 2023 and a new five year Service Level Agreement (SLA) was established in July 2023. Stakeholders expressed concerns regarding local authority staffing, with levels remaining below pre-recession standards. In May 2023, [Minister Ryan acknowledged](#) the difficulties local authorities were facing in recruiting and sustaining staff. [The Local Authority Climate Action Training Programme](#) committed €1.575m over the period of 2021-2023 to fund upskilling and capacity building.

2024 Progress: All 31 Local Authority Climate Action Plans were [launched](#) in April 2024, including over 4,000 actions to be completed over the next five years. One stakeholder noted evidence of progress and increased funding in this area, but was concerned that perhaps it is not being carried out in a structured way, limiting opportunities to learn from and build on the actions taken.

1.1.3. European Green Deal

1.1.3a "We will support the European Green Deal."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, NGO representatives felt the Government of Ireland was supporting climate action at a European level to an extent that had not been seen since 2011. In 2022, NGO representatives expressed concerns regarding the Government's position on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). In CAP negotiations, the Government highlighted that it would adhere to the CAP legal instrument, but not the non-legally binding EU Green Deal components.

2024 Progress: Ireland [was instrumental](#) in the final adoption of the Nature Restoration Law by the EU. A source noted that this would not have gotten over the line without Minister Ryan's intervention. Another source remarked that Ireland has been one of the more ambitious Member States in supporting the Green Deal over the term of this Government.

1.1.3b "We will direct any relevant funding under the European Green Deal towards decarbonising projects such as renewable energy, retrofits, ecosystem resilience and regeneration, clean research and development spending, and reskilling needs to address unemployment from COVID-19 and structural shifts from decarbonisation."

2021-2023 Progress: According to a source, funding was being directed appropriately. However, an NGO representative commented that more focus and reflection was required on where the funding is directed. Opposition politicians commented that the European Green Deal still required translation into more concrete national climate actions.

2024 Progress: A source commented that EU funding is quite prescriptive and therefore has been distributed as directed under the funding arrangements, supporting decarbonisation in general.

1.2. Greenhouse Gas Emissions

1.2a "We are committed to an average 7% per annum reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions from 2021 to 2030 (a 51% reduction over the decade) and to achieving net zero emissions by 2050. In setting the initial carbon budget, we will incorporate measures that will initiate significant change in line with this ambition."

2021-2023 Progress: The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 established a system of 5-year economy-wide carbon budget periods. Emissions allowed under the 2021-2025 Budget Period are 295 Mt of CO₂ equivalents, representing an ["average reduction in emissions of 4.8% per annum for the first budget period"](#). In July 2022, sectoral emission ceilings were agreed upon for all sectors except land use. In 2021, Ireland's emissions [rose by 4.7% compared to 2020](#), surpassing pre-Covid levels by 1.1%. Emissions decreased by [1.9 per cent](#) in 2022.

2024 Progress: In May 2024, the [EPA projected](#) Ireland will achieve an emissions reduction of up to 29% by 2030 if planned policies are fully implemented and that the first two carbon budgets will not be met. According to [media reports](#), Minister Ryan stated that the EPA projections do not include a number of policies which are difficult to model, such as further incentives for solar power, the new biomethane strategy, and plans to reduce through traffic in Dublin city centre. Since the EPA report, [Minister Ryan launched](#) the Accelerating Renewable Electricity Taskforce Implementation Plan which includes 70 actions to accelerate delivery of Ireland's renewable electricity. Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions (excluding LULUCF) [decreased by 6.8%](#) in 2023. This included a 21.6% reduction in emissions from electricity generation due in part to a 12-fold increase in the amount of imported electricity. One stakeholder noted that communications about emissions reductions need to be more transparent, pointing out that the legally binding emissions reductions targets included LULUCF and that, when LULUCF is included, the total emissions reduction was only 3.8%.

1.2b "We will directly draw on the National Economic Plan and associated funding to front load investment that is directly aligned with our climate ambitions."

2021-2023 Progress: The National Economic Recovery Plan (NERP) was published in June 2021. The plan outlined how the Government would allocate €915 million from the European Recovery and Resilience Facility. Advancing the Green Transition was labelled "Priority 1", with €503 million in funding as required by the EU. In October 2021, the NERP was superseded by the National Development Plan. National Strategic Outcome 8, "Transition to a Climate-Neutral and Climate-Resilient Society", anticipated that €500 million will be accrued to the Climate Action Fund by 2027 and stated that €186 million was committed to climate-relevant projects. The plan stated that DECC will receive an additional €5 billion from 10 years of carbon tax receipts and a total indicative allocation of €12.9 billion from 2021-2030.

2024 Progress: The Future Ireland Fund and Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund Act 2024 [was signed into law](#) in June 2024. This bill provides for an [Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund](#) which will seek to deal with the procyclicality of capital spending by establishing a €14 billion reserve over the period 2024 to 2030.

1.2c "Scale up Enterprise Ireland support for smaller companies to invest in technology for clean processes, waste, and energy efficiency."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, applications were opened for client companies wishing to apply to the €10 million Climate Enterprise Action Fund. In June 2022, a €55 million Green Transition Fund was announced. This fund consisted of the Climate Planning Fund for Business, which assisted businesses with creating strategic initiatives to reduce emissions. The Enterprise Emissions Reduction Investment Fund also allowed manufacturing companies to invest in CO₂ reducing technologies. In December 2022, then [Taoiseach Leo Varadkar stated](#) that €1,024,796 was allocated towards 66 projects availing of the Green Transition Fund. Enterprise Ireland set a target of 425 climate interventions with companies over the course of the 2022-2025 funding period. In 2022, Enterprise

Ireland approved 126 projects, valued at €1.4m, across their climate initiatives. There were also three further Environmental Aid approvals valued at €12.8m.

2024 Progress: A stakeholder noted that scale up is happening but that more needs to be done and it needs to be front and centre of Enterprise Ireland’s activity. Another stakeholder remarked that this should be widened to include the IDA. In June 2024, Minister Burke [announced €300 million in funding](#) to drive the decarbonisation of manufacturing sectors to be used by Enterprise Ireland and the IDA through the Environmental Aid scheme. Enterprise Ireland is running [a number of schemes](#) to help businesses reduce their environmental impact, including assessment grants and training.

1.2d “Devising a systematic programme of sectoral audits of the commercial and industrial sector to underpin, area by area, strategies to meet the new national targets. These will be developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders in those sectors to meet targets consistent with our national climate objectives (with particular potential in food, cement, and refrigeration).”

2021-2023 Progress: According to a source, 11 working groups within the Civil Service and Government were established to identify sectoral opportunities for emission reductions. The outputs were included in Climate Action Plan 2021. In 2023, [the budget](#) for this scheme increased from €1.75m in 2022 to €2.3m. CAP23 states that energy audits will be mandatory for organisations whose energy usage exceeds 10TJ.

2024 Progress: One stakeholder noted there is no baseline data available for tracking how well industry is decarbonising. They also noted there is limited evidence of progress on emissions in the cement sector. Another source indicated that this programme of sectoral audits has not been put in place. However, they believed audits were in place for leading sectors.

1.2e “Expanding and incentivising micro generation, including roof-top solar energy.”

2021-2023 Progress: A public consultation on a micro-generation scheme was carried out in February 2021. In February 2022, the legislation for the Clean Export Guarantee tariff was [signed into law](#). This allowed domestic customers to receive remuneration for energy exported to the grid. The final Micro-generation Support Scheme (MSS) design was [approved in December 2022](#) and is currently running. In October 2022, Minister Ryan announced [grants of up to €2,400](#) for the installation of solar PV panels for businesses, public organisations, and community groups. In April 2023, [a zero VAT rate](#) was approved for the cost of supply and installation of solar panels for private households, saving consumers €1,000 on average. In July 2023, Minister Ryan announced [further grants for businesses](#), ranging from €2,700 to €162,600. A source stated that, as of May 2023, there were 61,000 micro-generation connections in Ireland.

2024 Progress: In January 2024, grants for domestic solar PV installations were reduced by €300 to a [maximum of €2,100](#). In July 2024, the [ESB announced](#) that 100,000 microgenerators were connected to the electricity grid and 750 connections were taking place each week. In June 2024, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities published [Clean Export Guarantee - Enduring Arrangements to Remunerate Customers for Microgeneration Exports](#) as a long term continuation of the original interim arrangements published in 2022. One stakeholder noted that they would like to see 100% grants for microgeneration installation.

1.2f “We shall evaluate, before the end of 2020, whether Ireland should include wetlands in its land use inventory notified under EU regulations.”

2021-2024 Outcome: From the [beginning of 2021](#), Ireland opted to include the impact of managed wetlands on greenhouse gas emissions and removals in its accounting under EU regulations. This commitment is now considered complete and was considered in the 2022 assessment.

1.2g *“Every minister will make climate action a core pillar of their new departmental strategies, which must be produced within six months of the Government taking office.”*

2021-2023 Progress: This commitment was not fulfilled by all Government departments within the first six months. However, in 2022, a new [Climate Action Division](#) was established within the Dept. of Public Expenditure and Reform. While there was no coordinated Government approach towards fulfilling this commitment, in May 2023, then [Taoiseach Leo Varadkar stated](#) that the Department of the Taoiseach drives climate action across all departments through its work with the Cabinet committee on the environment and climate change.

2024 Progress: A source noted that a climate action unit has now been established in every department. Another source noted that research was carried out recently to assess relevant climate knowledge among civil servants and to assess the capacity of the civil service to deliver on climate.

1.2h *“Each minister will direct each of the agencies and offices under their department to adopt a climate mandate, under which those bodies will seek to support climate action within their own operations and among their clients and suppliers.”*

2021-2023 Progress: This commitment was addressed in the Climate Action Plan 2021 under Section 9.3.2. ‘A Public Sector Climate Action Mandate’. In July 2022, a new [Public Sector Climate Action Mandate](#) was published. In August 2022, the Government approved a [Climate Action Framework for the commercial and semi-state sector](#), which concerned carbon pricing, carbon footprint measurement, and green public procurement. In March 2023, the EPA released its [second report on Green Public Procurement](#), which found that, of the reported spend of €528 million on projects exceeding €25,000 across 18 Government departments, only 10% of contracts included green criteria. EPA Director General, Laura Burke, commented *“It is disappointing that there has been a low level of implementation of Green Public Procurement in Government Departments in 2021, even lower than that reported in 2020.”*

2024 Progress: In April 2024, DECC published the [Green Public Procurement Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2027](#), including 54 actions to be taken on green public procurement, sectoral/product targets, and minimum environmental criteria for public procurement of goods and services. In June 2024, the [Government announced](#) that it will develop a new Public Procurement Strategy which will integrate green public procurement. A source considered this commitment fulfilled through the [Public Sector Climate Mandate](#) which applies to all departments and agencies. A stakeholder expressed a desire for the legislative mandate of certain departmental bodies, such as Gas Networks Ireland, to be brought in line with the Climate Act and disagreed with [Minister Ryan’s assertion](#) that this is unnecessary due to provisions of the Climate Act. This desire was echoed in the Climate Change Advisory Council’s recommendations in its 2024 [Annual Review of the Electricity sector](#).

1.3. Climate Adaptation

1.3a *“We will continue to take climate adaptation measures to ensure that the State helps protect people from the effects of climate change in Ireland which are already locked in, and we will take steps to limit any damage caused. These measures will continue to build upon the National Adaptation Framework (NAF).”*

AND 1.3b *“We will ensure that each Sectoral Adaptation Plan identifies the key risks faced across each sector and the approach being taken to address these risks and build climate resilience for the future.”*

2021-2023 Progress: In 2022, a review of the National Adaptation Framework (NAF) was initiated. In September 2022, the [review of NAF](#) was published. It included 33 recommendations which should be considered for a new NAF. The [2023 Annual Review by the Climate Change Advisory Council](#) was unable to give the highest score for adaptation progress to any sector and remained *“concerned*

about the understanding of adaptation and the capacity of all sectors to respond in a comprehensive manner” and continued to call for a revised NAF.

2024 Progress: The [National Adaptation Framework](#) 2024 was published in June 2024. The NAF sets out 14 sectors for which Sectoral Adaptation Plans must be developed, grouped under 4 categories, highlighting the potential to work cross departmentally on their development. A stakeholder remarked that this commitment is very much still an aspiration and that although wheels are turning to fulfil it, the Government is not at the point yet where they could say it has been delivered.

1.3c “We will maintain a multi-annual investment programme in flood relief measures to protect communities.”

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, the Government maintained flood relief investment at a level consistent with the €1.3 billion committed to the period of the 2018-2027 National Development Plan. This was maintained under the [National Development Plan 2021-2030](#).

2024 Progress: According to the Office of Public Works’ FloodInfo.ie site, [6 flood relief schemes have been completed](#) since the beginning of 2021, one of which was completed in 2023. The total expenditure on these 6 schemes was €126.4 million and they protect a combined total of 3,459 properties. There are currently 95 schemes in development or under construction and 54 schemes identified under the Catchment Flood Risk and Management Programme (2021) which are to be progressed in the future.

1.4. Climate Funding

1.4a “We will establish the Climate Action Fund in law within 100 days, through the early enactment of the National Oil Reserves Agency Bill. We will quickly launch a second call under the Climate Action Fund.”

2021-2023 Progress: In July 2020, The Climate Action Fund was legally established with the enactment of the [National Oil Reserves Agency \(Amendment\) and Provision of Central Treasury Services Act 2020](#). There was no second call for the Climate Action Fund in 2022 or 2023. A source commented that the structure of the fund had changed, from a few very large calls to multiple small calls, including the Community Climate Action Programme and the Creative Climate Action Programme. [The call for strand 2](#) of the Creative Climate Action Programme was launched in December 2022.

2024 Progress: Budget 2024 included funding from the [Climate Action Fund](#) for eligible schools to obtain 6 kilowatts of roof-mounted solar PV. Under the fund, [Creative Climate Action II](#) granted €5.8 million in funding in July 2023. [Minister Ryan pointed](#) to delays in distributing funds due to delays in eligible projects. He also stated that the fund will be used to support the development of anaerobic digestion in advance of funding allocations from the Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund, as well as in the retrofitting of public buildings.

1.4b “We will also launch a call under a Local Environmental Innovation Fund to enhance community participation.”

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021 and 2022, there were no public calls under any fund entitled the “Local Environmental Innovation Fund”. In February 2023, [€24m in funding](#) for local authorities was announced under the Community Climate Action Programme.

2024 Progress: In December 2023, [Local Authorities began to accept applications](#) from community groups under the Community Climate Action Programme.

1.4c “We will expand the Environment Fund, taking account of the consultation process that has been completed, through the introduction of new levies; and we will ring-fence this money for investment in biodiversity and climate initiatives, including a parks fund to support the development of new parks and wildlife areas.”

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, there was no evidence of the expansion of the Environment Fund. In 2022, the [Environment Fund was moved to the Circular Economy Fund](#), under the Circular Economy and Miscellaneous Provisions Act. Remaining funds accrued to the Environment Fund were transferred to the Circular Economy Fund.

2024 Progress: A [waste recovery levy](#) and increase to the existing landfill levy came into effect in September 2023, with proceeds lodged to the Circular Economy Fund. €2 million from this fund was [allocated](#) to the public drinking water scheme. There is no evidence of a “parks fund”, but a [new 552 acre national park in Co. Meath](#) was announced in September 2023, followed by Ireland’s first [marine national park in Co. Kerry](#) in April 2024.

1.4d. “Prioritise Green Finance strategic actions that are developed in line with climate justice targets and Sustainable Development Goals.”

2021-2023 Progress: In July 2022, the [International Climate Finance Roadmap](#) was published. This outlined how the Government would meet the annual €225 million international climate financing target by 2025 and align finance with the aims of the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals. [Ireland’s Climate and Environmental Finance Report 2021](#), published in 2023, stated €99.6m of the €225m target was provided.

2024 Progress: According to [Ireland’s Climate and Environmental Finance Report 2022](#) (published February 2024), Ireland’s climate finance expenditure was €120.7m in 2022. Ireland’s [International Climate Finance Roadmap](#) sets out how it will meet the annual target of €225 million by 2025 and outlines the principles and objectives behind this funding. One stakeholder pointed out that Ireland’s fair share of the \$100 billion climate finance target, set at COP 15, is €500 million annually but that this is based simply off a partition of that political target and not any academic estimates of need or impacts. They also felt that no meaningful progress has been made in regulating private capital by this Government and that [funds registered in Ireland hold €5.76 billion](#) in climate-harming activities in the Global South. This stakeholder did acknowledge that, although the quantity of Irish climate finance is too low, its quality is high and is distributed as grants rather than loans.

1.4.1. Carbon Tax

1.4.1a “Increase the carbon tax to 100 euro per tonne by 2030, informed by the findings of an ESRI study, to be published by October 2020 on how best to prevent fuel poverty. This increase is to be achieved by an annual increase of €7.50 per annum to 2029 and €6.50 in 2030.”

2021-2023 Progress: The carbon tax increased by €7.50 in Budget 2021. A further €7.50 increase was provided in Budget 2022, raising the tax from €33.50 to €41.00. In 2023, the carbon tax rate increased by €7.50, from €41 to €48.50 per tonne.

2024 Progress: The carbon tax [increased](#) by €7.50 to €56 a tonne in Budget 2024.

1.4.1b “We will legislate to hypothecate all additional carbon tax revenue into a Climate Action Fund raising an estimated €9.5 billion over the next ten years. Funds will be utilised over that period to:

- 1. Ensure that the increases in the carbon tax are progressive by spending €3 billion on targeted social welfare and other initiatives to prevent fuel poverty and ensure a just transition.*
- 2. Provide €5 billion to part fund a socially progressive national retrofitting programme targeting all homes but with a particular emphasis on the Midlands region and on social and low-income.*

3. Allocate €1.5 billion to a REPS-2 programme to encourage and incentivise farmers to farm in a greener and more sustainable way. This funding will be additional to funding from the Common Agricultural Policy. It will include incentives to plant native forestry and to enhance and support biodiversity tenancies."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021-2023, the [legal hypothecation](#) of carbon tax revenue specified under this commitment had not taken place. Annual increases of the carbon tax were legislated in the [Finance Act](#). The Budget 2021 document "[The Use of Carbon Tax Funds](#)" laid out hypothecation of the revenue from the 2020 and 2021 carbon tax increases. This document estimated proceeds of €238 million from the 2020 and 2021 carbon tax increases. Under Budget 2022, the allocation of the carbon tax revenues were €202 million in "Investment in Residential & Community Energy"; €174 million on "Targeted Social Protection Interventions"; and €36 million for the "Continuation of the 2020 and 2021 Carbon Tax Investment Programme". The Budget 2023 document [The Use of Carbon Tax Funds](#) detailed the allocation of carbon tax revenue for 2023 and the spending over previous years. In 2023, €291m of the carbon tax revenue was allocated to investment in residential and community energy efficiency; €44m towards targeted social welfare protections; €81m towards incentivising green and sustainable farming; and €412m towards the continuation of the 2020-2022 Carbon Tax Investment Programme.

2024 Progress: Legal hypothecation has still not taken place. However, €788 million is [forecast](#) to be ring fenced from the carbon tax in 2024. This amount [has been allocated](#) to measures to protect the most vulnerable from unintended impacts of the tax increase. €380 million was allocated to the SEAI to fund retrofitting and solar PV grant schemes, including the [Warmer Homes Scheme](#) for people in receipt of certain welfare payments. €113 million was [allocated](#) to the Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme, an increase of €32 million. In 2022, €1.3 billion euro was [allocated](#) to [Ireland's Forest Strategy 2023-2030](#) which was published in September 2023. The Strategy includes significant allowances to incentivise farmers to plant native forestry. The figures laid out in this commitment are for the 10-year period to 2030 and therefore it is not possible for the commitment to be fully completed in the lifetime of this Government.

2. Nature and Biodiversity

2a. "Progress the establishment of a Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity."

2021-2024 Outcome: The Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss commenced in May 2022 and published their [final report](#) in April 2023, including 159 recommendations for the State. The Assembly concluded that the State had [failed](#) to preserve Ireland's natural environment and protect its biodiversity. In October 2022, the Children and Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss took place over two weekends, with 35 participants aged 7-17 and concluded with 58 recommended actions published in a [final report](#). This commitment has been completed and was considered as part of the 2023 assessment.

2b. "Promote biodiversity initiatives across primary, post-primary and third-level sectors, and ensure that schools, colleges, and universities across the country play an active role in providing areas to promote biodiversity."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2022, the Higher Education Authority Bill was before the Seanad to provide institutions with support to enable "all learners to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote environmental development and sustainability", including "actions in respect of social, economic, cultural and environmental development, climate and biodiversity". In 2022, the OPW Biodiversity Action Strategy 2022-2026 [contained actions](#) to further promote biodiversity education across school levels. However, in 2023, it was not clear if these had effectively been implemented.

The desire to promote biodiversity education was further reflected in the final recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss, in particular with "[1.8 Public Engagement, Education, and Awareness](#)." The report included recommendations on required biodiversity training for civil servants; educational opportunities for local communities at Natura 2000 sites; and expanding biodiversity curriculum to early childhood, primary, and post-primary education.

2024 Progress: The [4th National Biodiversity Plan](#) described how NPWS is investing in education and awareness programmes to enhance community engagement. Target 2D18 of the plan aims to create a marine biodiversity education and outreach programme led by DAFM, DHLGH, and other relevant stakeholders. A number of counties also have biodiversity programmes, e.g. [Monaghan County Council held its first ever Youth Biodiversity Conference in May 2024](#). A private organization, [Biodiversity in Schools](#), continues to run a number of campaigns with funding from grant schemes and corporate sponsorship. This year's [Nature Hero award](#) went to Carlow's Educate Together National School, as part of a Biodiversity in Schools initiatives. There was also an announcement of [€2.8 million awarded under the Local Biodiversity Action Fund \(LBAF\) 2024](#). Over 230 community projects have been funded across all 31 local authorities as of 2024., e.g. [Meath County Council awarded €100k for local biodiversity projects](#). Eight projects were approved this year, including the creation of private habitats for biodiversity, and primary & secondary school biodiversity education initiatives. One stakeholder commented that biodiversity is being promoted in third level education, but questioned whether this was due to the Government actions.

2c. "Review the remit, status and funding of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), to ensure that it is playing an effective role in delivering its overall mandate and enforcement role in the protection of wildlife."

2021-2023 Progress: NPWS reviews in 2021 and 2022 described the NPWS as an "under-resourced" and "neglected" public service, leading to the [creation of a Strategic Action Plan](#) approved by Cabinet. To implement the actions outlined in the plan, a €55 million investment package was [announced at the National Biodiversity Conference](#) in June 2022. The level of funding allocated to the NPWS was nearly doubled to €29 million in Budget 2021. However, this was still [significantly less than the funding of €46 million provided in 2008](#) and, according to NGO representatives, insufficient for the NPWS to play an effective role in delivering its extensive mandate. Twenty-five new park and wildlife ranger jobs were created in 2022. Under Budget 2022, €47 million was allocated to the NPWS, bringing funding and staffing levels back up to pre-2008 levels. In June 2023, the Government released [a progress report](#) on the Strategic Action Plan, with 20 out of the 31 actions officially completed. The one action that was not started related to the consideration of roles and functions of public bodies in relation biodiversity and nature. Fifteen more actions were scheduled to be completed by March 2024.

2024 Progress: The 2024 NPWS Strategic Plan Progress Tracker has not been published yet. Regarding funding of NPWS, the Future Ireland Fund and Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Bill 2024 has been discussed. However, there are concerns from stakeholders that nature and biodiversity are becoming the 'poor cousin' to climate and energy. The [budget for NPWS](#) increased from €28.7 million in 2020 to €69.1 million in 2024, and staff numbers increased from 350 in 2020 to 537 in April 2024. Several stakeholders expressed concern that NPWS was 'spread too thin' and lacked the funding to complete projects. The [Environmental Pillar](#) welcomed the 28% increase in funding for Budget 2024. The [Wildlife \(Amendment\) Act 2023](#) (July) introduced a new public sector duty for biodiversity. This provides that every public body is obliged to take into consideration the targets of the NBAP.

2d. "Ensure that all local authorities have a sufficient number of biodiversity and heritage officers among their staff complement."

2021-2023 Progress: Since September 2021, [all County Councils](#) have had a dedicated Heritage Officer. As of June 2022, there were only [five biodiversity officers employed by city and county councils](#). In June 2022, Minister Noonan announced [six new biodiversity officers](#) would be recruited in local authorities as part of a pilot scheme ahead of a planned national roll-out in 2023/2024, which would deliver 31 officers over the following three years. €600,000 was allocated to accelerate the pilot scheme. In February 2023, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage [announced](#) that 11 local authorities were awarded funding to appoint biodiversity officers, bringing the total to 25 biodiversity officers in local authorities across the country. These positions were anticipated to be fully appointed by September 2023, while the [national rollout](#) of advisors was expected to be finished in the next two years. These biodiversity officers will take on responsibility for implementing Biodiversity Plans in their local communities in addition to supporting biodiversity policy making in local legislation and planning

2024 Progress: [Ireland's Fourth National Biodiversity Plan has a Biodiversity Officers Programme](#). In 2024, it is expected that Biodiversity Officers will be working at the city and county level in 25 Local Authorities and eventually expanded to 31. The Heritage Council currently lists the contact details for 26 Local Authority Biodiversity Office. [Biodiversity Officers](#) in Local Authorities have access to grant funding opportunities in the Local Biodiversity Action Fund launched in May 2024.

2e. "Support biodiversity data collection."

2021-2023 Progress: This is a legal requirement under several EU Directives. In March 2022, a grant scheme of up to €5,000 for biodiversity recording was [announced](#), aimed at citizen science programmes and voluntary organisations to support species identification. The National Biodiversity Data Centre continued to develop new projects. A lack of ICT capacity was described as a limiting factor in biodiversity data collection and dissemination. The modernisation of ICT under the [Strategic Action Plan](#) for the NPWS aimed to alleviate this. In May 2023, Minister Malcolm Noonan [announced](#) €2.7 million in funding for biodiversity projects and grants schemes, including a small recordings grant scheme. This scheme provides the natural history recording community an opportunity to apply for funding in biodiversity data collection with €193,000 fund. This was an increase from Budget 2022's allocation of €70,000. In the same [press release](#), Minister Noonan relaunched the Local Biodiversity Action Fund, which has been run since 2018 and provides funding opportunities for local authorities to participate in biodiversity data collection. In December 2022, Minister Noonan [announced](#) the restructuring of the National Biodiversity Data Centre, which designated greater oversight faculty to the Government by the Heritage Council.

2024 Progress: In March 2024, [Minister Noonan announced funding of €34 million for a new LIFE Strategic Nature Project](#). This nine-year project aims to enhance decision making through new investments in data systems. The plan will bring together biodiversity data, identify gaps in conservation and restoration to achieve objectives, and enhance Ireland's capability to secure funding through the establishment of a National Complementary Funding Unit. In May 2023, [Minister Noonan announced that 233 community projects had been funded through the Local Biodiversity Action Fund](#) across all 31 of the Local Authorities.

2f. "Publish a new National Pollinator Plan and encourage public bodies to promote and protect biodiversity."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, a [new All-Ireland Pollinator Plan \(AIPP\) 2021-2025](#) was launched with support from both the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the National Parks and Wildlife. The AIPP is voluntary, and this was a concern among stakeholders. While the new National Pollinator Plan was not a Government plan, the Department of Heritage supported it ["where \[they\] could"](#). One stakeholder indicated more than 7,000 actions were implemented across the country

stemming from the AIPP. Another source stated there was funding from the NPWS for a Communities Officer and from the Department of Agriculture for a Farmland Officer. NPWS and DAFM contributed to a pilot scheme rolled out in 2022 (the [Irish Pollinator Monitoring Scheme](#)). All but three of the local authorities in Ireland signed up to support this pollinator scheme. In conjunction with the AIPP 2021-2025, Minister Malcolm Noonan and Minister Pippa Hackett [supported](#) the adoption of a pilot pollinator monitoring scheme. This pilot [National Pollinator Monitoring Scheme](#) is managed by the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

2024 Progress: [The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is in its third year with a review published in December 2023](#). It stated that 89% of the 186 actions in the Plan had been completed or were in progress. All 42 Councils in Ireland have formally partnered with AIPP and committed to taking actions on their public lands. A five-year research project funded by DAFM under the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020 by the National Biodiversity Data Centre '[Protecting Farmlands Pollinators](#)' has been completed. The AIPP opened entry to the Local Authority Pollinator Award 2024 and closed applications in June 2024 as part of the national Tidy Towns competition since 2016.

2g. "Review the protection (including enforcement of relevant legislation) of our natural heritage, including hedgerows, native woodland, and wetlands."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2022, a review of the Wildlife Act and Birds and Habitats Regulations began, but was expected to take several years to complete. The [Flora \(Protection\) Order, 2022](#) (signed May 2022) added protection to additional 25 vascular plants within the State. However, there were some bureaucratic difficulties in bringing natural heritage protection back into focus. In June 2023, the Court of Justice of the European Union [ruled](#) that Ireland had failed to effectively protect conservation land areas and species under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives by [failing to protect "217 out of 423 defined as so-called special areas of conservation \(SAC\) identified in 2004."](#) In reaction to this, Minister Malcolm Noonan issued [a statement](#) explaining that the Court's judgement is based upon the position of Ireland in January 2019, but the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) and the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) had made enormous strides since then. Tenders for woodland site assessment [were put forth](#) by DHLGH and NPWS in 2021.

2024 Progress: [Reviews of the Wildlife Act and the Birds and Habitats Regulation are underway as of June 2023](#). Minister Noonan stated that the review is part of this commitment with habitats being an important aspect of this legislation. Updates to the legislation are expected to be passed by the end of 2027. In [May 2024, in a Dail Eireann debate, Deputy Ó Cathasaigh moved to bring the Protection of Hedgerows Bill 2024 into Private Member's time](#). The Bill provides protections to hedgerows; prohibits their removal; and introduces an appeals procedure for offences. This Bill introduced the concept of 'significant hedgerows' as there is no legal definition of hedgerows and is [currently before the Dail in second stage](#). [The Native Woodland Conservation Scheme 2023-2027](#) was launched in February 2024 under the Forestry Programme 2023-2027 and succeeded the Native Woodland Conservation Scheme 2014-2020. The [Local Biodiversity Action Fund](#) has funded a number of relevant projects (see Commitment 2m), including a hedgerow survey project in Co. Kilkenny and a Tree Map Survey in Co. Roscommon. In June 2024, the [EU Nature Restoration Law](#) was passed, which is expected to impact the future of this commitment.

2h. "Develop a new National Invasive Species Management Plan."

2021-2023 Progress: In February 2022, [the European Commission called out Ireland](#) for its failure to *"establish, implement and communicate to the Commission an action plan... to address the most important pathways of introduction and spread of invasive alien species of concern"*. Under current legislation, responsibility for invasive species management [rests with the landowner](#). According to a source, as of June 2022, this plan was still *"at an early stage"* and was anticipated to be published in 2023. While the plan was intended to address invasive species management at a national level, it was

not known what measures would be outlined. In 2022 and 2023, the NPWS released invasive species pathways plans to target the reduction of pathways through public awareness and preventative actions. In July 2022, the Invasive Species Aquatic Pathway Action Plans (2022-2027) were [published](#). In May 2023, Ireland's Invasive Alien Species Soil and Stone Pathway Action Plan 2023-2027 [opened for public consultation](#), concluding in June 2023. Local authorities took significant action in invasive species management, e.g. Cork County Council's [Invasive Species Management Plan](#).

2024 Progress: In May 2023, the Invasive Alien Species Soil and Stone Pathway Action Plan 2023 – 2027 [Public Consultation](#) was opened. A [finalized draft](#) was then published on the National Biodiversity Data Centre's [Invasive webpage](#), but there are no updates regarding the final publication of this Action Plan. In August 2023, [Agriland](#) reported that a draft version of a new National Invasive Alien Species Management Plan was planned for public consultation later that year, but there have been no updates since. In [May 2024](#), Minister Noonan released a table showcasing the invasive species projects taken by NPWS from the years 2020-2023.

2i. "Coordinate the actions in the Programme for Government regarding peatlands to maximise the benefits for biodiversity."

2021-2023 Progress: In November 2020, [€108 million was approved for Bord Na Móna's Bog Rehabilitation Scheme](#) as part of the NextGenerationEU recovery package. Grant funding of c. €230,000 was awarded to 25 local community groups for peatland projects in Q1 2021. [The Living Bog Project](#) continued to be supported by the Government. As of 2022, the fulfilment of this commitment was coordinated through the interim review of the National Peatlands Strategy. In May 2023, the National Peatlands Strategy Mid-Term Review and Implementation Plan were [published](#), outlining progress in peatland management, including efforts in biodiversity. According to the Review, the Peatlands Strategy Implementation Group had numerous ongoing efforts to support biodiversity conservation in peatlands, such as an all-island approach to peatland management. NCAP23 [outlined](#) restoration plans for rehabilitation of 33,000ha of Bord Na Móna boglands by 2025.

2024 Progress: In [June 2023](#), Ireland lost a case brought by the Commission over failure to implement the EU Habitats Directive. If Ireland does not become fully compliant, the [State could face heavy fines](#). In [March 2024, the Commission referred Ireland to the Court of Justice for failure to protect sites of raised bogs and peatlands](#). In June 2024, the EU Nature Restoration Law (NRL) established targets for the restoration of peat and wetlands. In the NRL, Ireland's peatlands are highlighted, including the EU LIFE Living Bog Project and the Bord Na Mona Peatlands and People project. The [Transport Research Arena announced a €600,000](#) peatland rewetting project that will restore 100 hectares of bog in Wicklow Mountains National Park. This project will be taken in partnership with NPWS and the Department of Transport. [The Nature Trust, backed by Coillte, also announced a 500 hectare blanket bog restoration project in November 2023 with](#) Amazon donating €2.5 million to support this initiative. In May 2024, Minister Noonan announced up to €600,000 available for community-led projects under the [Peatlands and Natura Community Engagement Scheme 2024](#).

2j. "Introduce policies on supports for urban biodiversity and tree planting."

2021-2023 Progress: Urban tree planting is primarily the remit of the relevant local authority. Lack of national progress surrounding urban biodiversity support was [criticised as a missed opportunity](#), particularly as there is [great interest](#) from the public to implement such initiatives. In May 2023, Minister Malcolm Noonan announced €2.7 million in funding for the [Local Biodiversity Action Fund](#), which funds urban biodiversity efforts. Despite this, numerous stakeholders felt that urban tree planting efforts were not prioritised to the same extent as Ireland's afforestation and LULUCF efforts. However, a source indicated that the draft Nature Restoration Law published by the European Commission included ambitious legally binding targets for urban tree planting and urban biodiversity.

2024 Progress: The [Forest Strategy Implementation Plan](#) has targets for urban tree planting, specifically regarding expansion of the NeighbourWoods scheme. The newly published [EU Nature Restoration Law](#) (June 2024) has targets for urban ecosystems, including no net loss of green urban space and tree cover by 2030 and a steady increase in their total area from 2030.

2k. "Encourage and support local authorities to reduce the use of pesticides in public areas."

2021-2023 Progress: No obvious progress was made in 2021 apart from some awareness raising by the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan team. As of 2022, the Government's position was that use of herbicides in public areas was permitted provided it complied with the Sustainable Use Directive, but pesticides should not be used "[unless a risk assessment has shown that their use is necessary](#)". DAFM engaged with local authorities through presentations and regular inspections. Petitions to ban the use of herbicides in public areas were [discussed](#) by the joint Committee on Public Petitions. In February 2023, the public consultation period [closed](#) for the European Commission proposed Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation to codify targets outlined in the EU Farm-to-Fork Strategy of a 50% reduction in chemical pesticides and hazardous pesticides by 2030. Biodiversity officers in local authorities had the opportunity to address this at local level in county Biodiversity Action Plans.

2024 Progress: [Uisce Éireann detected 52 cases of pesticides exceeding allowable levels in drinking water in 2023. However](#), since 2018, there has been a 50% reduction in pesticides exceedances. The EU Nature Restoration Law set targets for the reduction of pesticides in urban areas, which will affect future pesticide legislation in Ireland. [The outcomes of the public consultation by DAFM regarding the Commission's proposed SUR were published this year](#). Discussions of blanket bans versus prohibiting untrained users were part of the consultation outcomes. The EU has withdrawn the [Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation](#) due to pressures from the agriculture industry and lobbying organizations.

2l. "Continue to implement the third National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021 and build on the commitments made at the first National Biodiversity Conference."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, the vast majority of actions within the plan remained unimplemented. While the tenure of this plan ended in 2021, most of the commitments in the third plan remained unfulfilled. These were expected to be rolled over into the fourth NBAP. One stakeholder felt this was a prime example that "[biodiversity is a poor man's cousin to climate](#)" due to the lack of statutory policies in biodiversity management and enormous delays. The [Wildlife Amendments Bill](#) was passed in July 2023, providing legal standing for National Biodiversity Action Plans. One stakeholder felt that achieving legal footing before publishing the fourth NBAP would be considered substantial progress.

2024 Progress: [The 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan \(NBAP\) was published Jan 2024](#), which builds upon the previous plan with five objectives covering biodiversity needs in Ireland. The [Wildlife \(Amendment\) Act 2023](#) (July) introduced a new public sector duty for biodiversity, requiring every public body to take into consideration the targets of the NBAP. A new [Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund](#) was announced in the Budget 2024, which was an important development for the implementation of the NBAP along with the statutory footing the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2023.

2m. "Support local nature groups and local authorities to work in partnership on local biodiversity projects."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, €1.35 million was [made available](#) for the National Biodiversity Local Authority Biodiversity Grant Scheme operated by NPWS along with additional funding [for community peatlands projects](#) of €160,000 across 16 projects. In 2021, this funding was complimented by a 41% increase in funding for the Irish Environmental Network, indirectly supporting local groups to work on projects with local authorities. Speaking at the National Biodiversity Conference 2022, Minister Noonan outlined a number of supports provided to local communities, including €1.5 million to local authorities under the Local Biodiversity Action Fund

combined with €600,000 to support the Biodiversity Officer Programme rollout. In partnership with the Community Foundation for Ireland, €500,000 over the following five years was committed to the Environment and Nature Fund. In 2023, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage [funded 188 projects](#) across the 31 local authorities through the Local Biodiversity Action Fund.

2024 Progress: In May 2024, Minister Noonan announced up to €600,000 available for community-led projects under the [Peatlands and Natura Community Engagement Scheme 2024](#). There was also an announcement of [€ 2.8 million awarded under the Local Biodiversity Action Fund](#) (LBAF) 2024. Over 230 community projects have been funded across all 31 local authorities as of 2024., e.g. [Meath County Council awarded €100k for local biodiversity projects](#). Eight projects were approved this year, including the creation of private habitats for biodiversity, and primary & secondary school biodiversity education initiatives.

2n. "Continue to raise awareness of biodiversity through initiatives like the Annual Biodiversity Awards Scheme."

2021-2023 Progress: As of 2023, there was no Government-backed awards scheme for Biodiversity. The 2022 National Biodiversity Conference was part of the public consultation aimed at increasing the transparency and raising the profile of the upcoming 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan. [National Biodiversity Week 2022](#) was launched by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and consisted of over 100 events across the country. As per the Strategic Action Plan for the NPWS, a new head of communications was anticipated to be appointed in September 2022. The [National Biodiversity Week](#) took place in May 2023 and included a contest for the Biodiversity Photographer of the Year with monetary prizes.

2024 Progress: As of 2024, there is still no Government-backed Biodiversity awards scheme. [The 2024 National Biodiversity Week Ireland was held this year from the 17-26th of May](#). However, the [4th National Biodiversity Action Plan](#) strives for a "Whole-of-Government, Whole-of Society" approach to biodiversity with an aim to ensure every 'citizen, community, business, local authority, semi-state and state agency' has an awareness of biodiversity and its importance.

2o. "Build on the success of the UNESCO Dublin Bay Biosphere and achieve further UNESCO designations for Irish sites, including the Lough Allen region."

2021-2023 Progress: [According to reports in June 2021](#), five sites in Ireland were expected to apply for inclusion on the country's tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites: The Valentia transatlantic cable station in Kerry; the Burren in Clare; Glendalough monastic city in Wicklow; the passage tomb landscapes of Sligo; and the Royal Sites of Ancient Ireland. In January 2023, the [Passage Tomb Landscape of County Sligo; Transatlantic Cable Ensemble and Royal Sites of Ireland](#) were submitted to the Tentative List for UNESCO site certification. However, as of July 2023, only [two pre-existing sites](#) (Brú na Bóinne established in 1993 and Sceilg Mhichíl established in 1996) were inscribed under the World Heritage list.

2024 Progress: There are currently three official [World Heritage sites in Ireland](#): Brú na Bóinne, Sceilg Mhichíl, and the Giant's Causeway (UK) and three on the tentative list. The Lough Allen region was not included on the Tentative list. A [public consultation](#) on Strategy for World Heritage in Ireland 2024-2034 closed April 2024. The purpose of this strategy is to provide a framework for implementing the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention in Ireland.

2p. "Appoint Education Liaison Officers in each of our National Parks to work with schools across the country, to promote the importance of biodiversity and the natural world, and to involve pupils in the work that goes on in our National Parks."

2021-2023 Progress: In June 2021, Minister Noonan stated his Department was progressing matters regarding the number of education liaison officers. In May 2022, Minister Darragh O'Brien, [stated that](#) the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage was consulting with the

Department of Education to deliver this. There was no indication that this commitment had been fulfilled, but there was some progress. The review of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) emphasised education structures in the national parks. A source stated that a lot of work was taking place in Killarney National Park to improve the quality of biodiversity and nature education.

2024 Progress: A stakeholder commented that they had never heard about the Education Liaison Programme and expressed concern that adding more work to NPWS staff was not a valuable use of their time. There is still no indication that this commitment has been fulfilled, but , with the [increase in the NPWS budget](#) and [increase in staff](#), there is potential to progress this programme.

2q. "Legislate to designate our western lakes as salmonid lakes."

2021-2023 Progress: In July 2021, Minister Ryan stated that the proposed bye-law intended to give effect to this commitment was [in working draft form](#). The public consultation for the draft bye-law [closed for submissions](#) in August 2021. Since then, there has been no [update](#) from the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications on this commitment.

2024 Progress: There is no indication of any progress on this legislation.

3. Water and Marine

3.1. Drinking and Waste Water

3.1a. "We will develop a scheme between local authorities and Irish Water to provide drinking water fountains nationwide to reduce plastic bottle litter."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, [five water fountains](#) were installed in Limerick city. In February 2022, a "[Drinking Water Expert Group](#)" was convened with provisions in the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) budget. The cost of [€2,272](#) for the installation of water fountains acted as a barrier for local authorities. Nevertheless, one stakeholder noted that fountain installations appeared to be increasing. The installation of water fountains in [Laois](#) and further [pilot water stations](#) were planned. [Water refill stations](#) were installed in Cavan and Mayo.

2024 Progress: In August 2023, the DHLGH [provided](#) the National Federation of Group Water Schemes (NFGWS) with €100,000 to continue its water fountain installation project. A [public drinking water scheme](#) was launched in June 2024. The scheme will draw on €2 million from the Circular Economy Fund and be available to Uisce Éireann, local authorities, and the NFGWS.

3.1b. "We will continue to help fund upgrades to wells."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, the Government [continued to fund well upgrades](#) under the 2020 Housing Regulations. In 2022, under the Rural Water Programme, [grants](#) were available to upgrade, install, improve the water quality of private wells, and for group water schemes from local authorities. Stakeholders acknowledged that there was a [grant available](#) for wells, but complained they were [subject to different conditions](#). While there was funding for well upgrades, a stakeholder noted that meetings were taking place within the rural water section to establish whether these grants need to be reviewed. Though other reviews were being put in motion in the rural water section, the review of grants for wells was "*not on the priority list*".

2024 Progress: In early 2024, Minister Darragh O'Brien announced the [Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme 2024-2026](#), providing €125 million in capital investments. The maximum grant available per house increased from €9,000 to €15,000. Under the [programme](#), grants for private wells are available. A stakeholder noted that communication about these grants could improve.

3.1.1. Infrastructure and Capital Programme

3.1.1a. "Retain Irish Water in public ownership as a national, standalone, regulated utility."

2021-2024 Outcome: Irish water remained in public ownership. This commitment is complete as Irish water is a single public utility which came into [effect in January 2023](#) and has since been rebranded as [Uisce Éireann](#).

3.1.1b. "Ensure that Irish Water is sufficiently funded to make the necessary investment in drinking water and wastewater infrastructure."

2021-2023 Progress: Irish Water estimated that [2.2 million litres](#) of water were saved each day through the find and fix programme. However, the Water Advisory Board reported that water supplies in need of repair [regressed in 2021](#). In November 2021, the EPA released the [Urban Wastewater Treatment report](#), finding that urban waste discharge was the main source of pollution in [208 water bodies](#). However, there was nothing in the [Draft River Basin Management Plan for Ireland](#) to address this and the [2022 EPA Urban Wastewater report](#) called for more investment. The [National Development Plan 2021-2030](#) committed to a €6 billion investment into [Uisce Éireann](#). Uisce Éireann's [capital investment plan](#) continues until 2024, and a feasibility study is being carried out to assess infrastructure issues within wastewater infrastructure. [Budget 2023](#) provided funding of more than €1.68 billion to support water services and [multiple programmes](#) exist to improve wastewater infrastructure. There were differing views from stakeholders and the Government regarding the appropriate level of funding Irish Water receives.

2024 Progress: [Budget 2024](#) secured €1.66 billion for Uisce Éireann with a total of €1.8 billion going to water services. Additionally, [€50 million](#) has been allocated under the National Development Plan for the provision of wastewater collection and treatment for villages without access to public services. However, [criticism](#) remains that not enough is being done, including from stakeholders. The [third cycle](#) of the River Basin Management Plan included completion of the public consultation for its Natura Impact Statement in June 2024. The plan calls for the protection and development of drinking and wastewater structures.

3.1.1c. "Mandate Irish Water to develop plans to ensure security of supply and sufficient capacity in drinking and wastewater networks to allow for balanced regional development."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2022, progress was delivered as part of the National Water Resource Plan and a [series of regional water resource plans](#) were developed by Irish Water, which were being reviewed by the regulator. However, this was planned prior to the publication of the PfG. In 2022, regional development plans were [progressing](#). These [regional plans](#) were acknowledged as "very detailed plans" by one stakeholder.

2024 Progress: The four regional plans have now been [adopted](#) with a Strategic Environmental Assessment, an Appropriate Assessment, and a consultation report published for each one.

3.1.1d. "The Government will fund Irish Water's capital investment plan for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure on a multi-annual basis and deliver the €8.5 billion funding package committed to in Project Ireland 2040."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, [the provision](#) to Irish Water was €1.3 billion. Under Budget 2022, [€1.459 billion](#) was secured by Irish Water. As part of the 2023 budget, funding of [more than €1.557 billion](#) was included in relation to domestic water services provision by Irish Water. The [National Development Plan](#) pledged to deliver €6 billion in investment to Irish Water. The 2023 budget for Uisce Éireann was recognised as "[record funding](#)."

2024 Progress: [Budget 2024](#) saw €1.66 billion allocated to Uisce Éireann. As a result, the €6 billion pledged to Uisce Éireann under the National Development Plan has been delivered.

3.1.1e. "Support take-up of Irish Water's Small Towns and Villages Growth Programme 2020-2024, which will provide water and wastewater growth capacity in smaller settlements that would otherwise not be provided for in Irish Water's capital investment plan."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, Carrigallen wastewater treatment plant was [selected for upgrade](#) as part of the small towns and villages growth programme. Over €97 million was [allocated to Irish Water](#) for this programme with an additional [21 projects](#) selected in September 2021. The Commission for Regulation of Utilities [provided](#) nearly €100 million for the programme in 2023. In addition, the [Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme 2022-2025](#) used exchequer funding to improve water services in rural Ireland.

2024 Progress: The programme is [planned](#) to continue into 2029, pending the regulatory process. To date, [39 municipalities](#) are taking part in the programme with one already completed. The [Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme](#) will continue supporting the programme.

3.1.1f. "Ensure that the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund supports the development of such projects."

2021-2023 Progress: There were no major announcements detailing the use of this fund in relation to water infrastructure. The delivery of projects under this fund [was delayed](#) following the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2023, [30 projects were completed with 81 projects expected](#) to be completed by the end of the year.

2024 Progress: In 2024, over [€163 million](#) was awarded to the fund with [60 applications](#) made. Successful applications can be seen [here](#). A new call for [Category 2 applications](#) is expected to open in August 2024. The draft [Revised National Planning Framework](#), published in July 2024, affirms this commitment.

3.1.1g. "Support continued investment in reducing leakage across the network."

2021-2023 Progress: A [national leakage reduction programme](#) was ongoing and [remained on track](#) to reach leakage reduction targets. [Media reports](#) from June 2023 highlighted the benefits of the leakage reduction programme, while underlining continued investments of [€250 million](#) every year until 2030 into the program. Stakeholders confirmed leakage was reducing. While progress was considered "slow", they felt "ambitious targets" were evident.

2024 Progress: Uisce Éireann's [national leakage reduction programme](#) remains on track to reach its targets and continues to invest €250 million a year into the programme. However, even if targets are met, there may still be [supply issues](#) due to the growing population. Work continues on repairs in [Cork](#), [Waterford](#), [Meath](#), [Sligo](#), and [Limerick](#).

3.1.1h. "Fully consider the review from the Commission for Regulation of Utilities to Irish Water's proposed approach to the Water Supply Project for the Eastern and Midlands Region."

2021-2023 Progress: The last [updated review](#) was carried out in 2018. Stakeholders were uncertain about the progress of the review.

2024 Progress: The [review](#) was at the Preliminary Business Case stage within the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in March 2024. In June 2024, the project [received](#) Cabinet approval, allowing it to proceed to the planning stage. A stakeholder confirmed that a public consultation for the project is due in the second half of 2024.

3.1.1i. "We will continue to help fund upgrades to domestic wastewater treatment systems, including septic tanks." AND

3.1.1j. "We will review and work to improve the inspection regime for the 500,000 domestic wastewater systems and incentivise upgrading works."

2021-2023 Progress: In July 2020, the EPA reported the grant scheme for septic tanks had [been expanded](#) to cover specific areas. Stakeholders expressed concern regarding the eligibility

requirements for septic tank upgrades as tanks located in areas of high pollution were not necessarily [eligible for an upgrade](#). Stakeholders also felt the inspection regime had never been adequate, stating the EPA reviews of the inspection plan were poor. While the [2022-2026 plan](#) increased the number of inspections, from 1,000 to 1,200, SWAN Ireland's [review of the plan](#) stated that all dwellings where wastewater treatment is a detriment to water quality should be inspected. Despite wastewater and septic tanks with [certain requirements being funded](#), uptake of the grant scheme remained low. Stakeholders felt the [inspection plan](#) was not working successfully, highlighting the fact that many failures in relation to septic tanks were "not being addressed". Concerns regarding [shortcomings in relation to inspections](#) were raised in 2022 with the need for them to be completed in 2023.

2024 Progress: In January 2024, [grant amounts](#) for domestic wastewater treatment schemes were increased and the requirement for wastewater systems to be registered were removed. The EPA released a [report](#) in May regarding domestic wastewater treatment system inspections from 2023, noting that the number of failures open for more than 2 years continued to rise. One stakeholder stated that while the changes to the grant scheme were beneficial, the inspection regime needed to be expanded further.

3.1.1k. "As a very significant user of electricity, we will review the electricity requirements of water and wastewater treatment plants and carry out a series of pilot projects to incorporate onsite renewable energy generation."

2021-2023 Progress: [Renewable energy projects](#) were completed in relation to wastewater treatment plants, but there were no announcements for a review of electricity requirements.

2024 Progress: Upgrades to a wastewater treatment plant in [Cork](#) were completed in April 2024. Progress on the development of solar farms at water and wastewater treatment facilities continues in [Westmeath](#) and [Tipperary](#), though complaints have been lodged with the latter. In its [Water Services Strategic Plan](#), Uisce Éireann is committed to the development of a net zero roadmap, with initiatives focusing on energy efficiency, renewable energy production, and emissions reduction.

3.1.2. Safety and Standards

3.1.2a. "Ensure that Irish Water progresses works to reduce the number of schemes on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Remedial Action List."

2021-2023 Progress: As of July 2021, there were 53 public water supplies on the EPA's [Remedial Action List](#) (RAL). EPA's quarterly [Public Water Supplies Remedial Action List](#) showed an increase of one supply from January 2020. As of January 2022, there were [52 water supplies](#) on the list. In 2023, [58 water supplies](#) were on the RAL.

2024 Progress: As of Q4 2023, [57 water supplies](#) were on the RAL. [Uisce Éireann](#) confirmed its commitment to the removal of sites from the RAL through concerted action. However, the EPA [reported](#) that the number of "at-risk" supplies has not changed since many supplies are being added or removed to the RAL.

3.1.2b. "Support Irish Water in its programme to remove lead pipes from the public supply."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, the Water Advisory Board was "[Concerned with the lack of progress by Irish Water during 2020 to replace lead connections, with little progress made.](#)" The Water Advisory Board noted in [their Q1 2022 report](#) that Irish Water was ahead of its replacement target. Although there were no new regulations regarding this commitment, "[€68.5 million for legacy issues in relation to lead pipe remediation](#)" was secured under the National Development Plan. A stakeholder confirmed there was a lead replacement scheme, including the domestic lead remediation [grant scheme](#) available for households in 2022. In June 2023, a [grant for older homes](#) was launched along

with [an information campaign](#) to increase homeowner’s awareness of this grant.

2024 Progress: In 2023, [Uisce Éireann](#) started adding orthophosphate to some water systems, [asserting](#) it was an effective barrier to lead, minimizing the need for the replacement of pipes. Over 9,500 lead connections were replaced in 2023, but the [EPA noted](#) that this rate would be unable to achieve the target of 180,000 replacements. They also noted that compliance with the [Drinking Water Directive](#) would not be met without the replacement of all lead connections.

3.1.2c. "Ensure that the State complies with the EU Water Framework Directive"

2021-2023 Progress: The general scheme of the Water Environment (Abstractions) Bill reached the pre-legislative scrutiny stage. However, advice from the office of parliamentary legal advisers to the Housing Committee concurred with the position of SWAN Ireland that the Heads of Bill were not in compliance with the Water Framework Directive (WFD). More than half of Ireland’s rivers, lakes and estuaries [failed to meet](#) WFD status. With total nitrogen and phosphorus content [increasing](#), stakeholders felt it would be [impossible](#) for Ireland to achieve a status of “good quality” as stipulated by the WFD. The EPA released a [Water Quality Indicators 2020 Report](#) in 2021. In January of 2023, the European Commission [referred](#) Ireland to the EU Court of Justice for its failure to correctly transpose the Water Framework Directive into law. Stakeholders felt the State was unwilling to make the necessary changes to comply with the WFD. A stakeholder and the [media](#) highlighted the lack of compliance with the WFD through the [EPA indicators report](#). Another stakeholder acknowledged the [Abstraction Act](#), but they felt it did not properly address the requirements of the WFD .

2024 Progress: In June 2024, the EPA published the [Water Quality Indicators 2023](#) report, indicating no significant change in water quality with improvements being offset by declinations elsewhere. In light of Ireland’s high levels of nitrogen in its waters, a series of [discussions](#) were held in the Dáil regarding compliance with the Nitrates Directive and the implications for Ireland. Pollution resulted in a fish kill in a river in [Cork County](#) in June 2024. While Ireland’s River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) remains to be published, its [Natura Impact Statement](#) entered public consultation in May 2024. An appropriate assessment of the RBMP remains ongoing. In February 2024, the new [Water Services Policy Statement](#) was published and a [€60 million project](#) to improve water quality in catchments was launched in March 2024. In July 2024, a draft of the [Revised National Planning Framework](#) was opened for public consultation; listing objectives to ensure that the necessary actions to conform with the Directive are being taken. Moreover, a stakeholder stated that despite the RBMP being in its draft phase, some of its actions were already being implemented. Although stakeholders acknowledged progress has been made, it was stated that it would be impossible for Ireland to achieve this commitment. One stakeholder noted that even if all the measures in the RBMP are implemented, about 40% of Irish waters would not meet the standards of the Directive. In July 2024, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage published a [Drinking Water Source Protection Guidance](#) document.

3.1.2d. "Expand programmes, including the Agriculture Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme (ASSAP), and work with farmers, industry, and advisory services, to protect and deliver improvements in water quality."

2021-2023 Progress: There was no published expansion of ASSAP, nor published water quality data to demonstrate this program was effective. An [independent review](#) stated that the design of ASSAP was “a vital element for addressing the water quality challenges in Irish agriculture”. However, the recommended measures to strengthen ASSAP were not implemented as of the 2022 assessment. A [recommendation](#) to expand and continue the programme was committed to and funded by the Government in 2023. Despite ambiguity regarding the impact of the program, a stakeholder confirmed its expansion. Another stakeholder felt the development of a more connected relationship between ASSAP advisors and catchment scientists would further the goals of the

programme.

2024 Progress: A [€60 million project](#) to improve water quality in catchments was launched in March 2024. An operational group consisting of the Local Authority Waters Programme, Teagasc, Dairy Industry Ireland, and Bord Bia will implement the project along with various stakeholders. The number of dedicated ASSAP advisers has also [trebled](#) in recent years to 42.

3.1.2e. "Launch a new revised and strengthened River Basin Management Plan in 2022, drawing on a collaborative approach between all stakeholders."

2021-2023 Progress: A [public consultation](#) was conducted in August 2020 with a draft River Basin Management Plan published in September 2021. The plan was [criticized](#) for a lack of ambition and for lacking a central body. Lack of policy cohesion between agriculture/forestry and water quality was described as a "huge issue" by stakeholders. Despite the addition of measures to address nitrate pollution, the plan was criticized for [failing to adequately address](#) it. A stakeholder described the plan as "marginally strengthened". However, it was difficult to assess the 'collaborative' aspect of this commitment as the finalized plan had not yet been published. Media reports confirmed that departments were working on [revised and "strengthened"](#) River Basin Management Plans. However, one stakeholder voiced concern over the content of the draft not being sufficient and that "collaboration between stakeholders" was not happening as promised.

2024 Progress: A revised River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) remains to be published with Ireland receiving a [warning](#) from the EU in September 2023. In May 2024, the [Natura Impact Statement](#) of the RBMP entered public consultation. An appropriate assessment of the RBMP remains ongoing. A stakeholder reported that the RBMP has incorporated significant feedback from stakeholders, further strengthening the plan since its first iteration. However, the extent to which the RBMP was strengthened was called into question as another stakeholder felt that it might only be marginally so.

3.1.2f. "Ensure that Irish Water develops Drinking Water Safety Plans to protect abstraction sources; and reduces public health risks, including Trihalomethane (THMs) exceedances in treatment plants."

2021-2023 Progress: The EPA's "[Drinking Water Quality in Public Supplies 2020](#)" report anticipated the transposition of the Drinking Water Directive (DWD) to place this requirement on a statutory footing. However, there was an infringement case before the Court of Justice of the EU due to supply zones failing to meet standards for THMs. The European Commission [welcomed](#) Ireland's progress in addressing THM levels. However, this was stated more than three years after the opening of the [infringement case](#), despite several water supply zones still not complying with the DWD. According to the EPA, there was [no water quality standard for microplastics](#) in the Drinking Water Regulations. A new [Drinking Water Directive](#) was [implemented](#) in 2023, obliging Member States to make drinking water safety plans. Stakeholders believed Uisce Éireann were progressing well on this commitment but lacked evidence to say this with certainty.

2024 Progress: The EPA published its drinking water quality reports for [public](#) and [private](#) supplies in 2024, indicating about 95% of public supplies and private group schemes were compliant with THM levels. A report on [private](#) supplies in 2022 was published in early 2024. However, the number of compliant private water supplies (i.e. wells) is unknown since not all of them are registered. In January 2024, the Court of Justice of the EU ruled that Ireland [failed to uphold](#) the [Drinking Water Directive](#). Uisce Éireann is developing a new [Water Services Strategic Plan](#) to 2050, committing to the development of drinking water safety plans for each water supply zone. The plan is currently in public consultation. In July 2024, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage published a [Drinking Water Source Protection Guidance](#) document.

3.1.2g. "Continue to support the Local Authority Waters Programme and expand the Community Water Development Fund."

2021-2023 Progress: The Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO) launched its 2021 Community Water Development Fund (CWDF) in November 2020. The 2021 fund was [increased to €360,000](#) from €225,000 in 2020. In 2022, the budget for this fund was increased to €500,000. However, this scheme was described as oversubscribed by stakeholders, with funding remaining insufficient when measured against public interest. LAWPRO was also described as understaffed; there were 13 community water officers while a [SWAN assessment](#) found at least 46 were required. In 2023, [€523,000](#) was allocated to the CWDF, but the fund applications were [twice the grant available](#). Stakeholders confirmed that financial resources were expected to increase along with the CWDF and acknowledged good progress in relation to this commitment.

2024 Progress: In September 2023, [€520,000](#) was expected to be available for the CWDF, but in May 2024, Minister of State Malcolm Noonan stated that ,under the CWDF, over [€700,000](#) will fund projects. Another €500,000 would be provided to LAWPRO for a new Catchment Support Fund. However, stakeholders agreed that the CWDF remains oversubscribed and that the extent of its projects is not sufficient. A [€60 million project](#), in conjunction with LAWPRO, Teagasc, Bord Bia, and Dairy Industry Ireland, to improve water quality in catchments was launched in March 2024. LAWPRO has a [staff of 74](#) working across its Communities, Catchment, and its Farming for Water teams.

3.1.3. Group Water Schemes

3.1.3a. "We will support the National Federation of Group Water Schemes, to ensure that issues of quality and security of supply are addressed." AND

3.1.3b "We will continue to invest in a multi-annual capital funding programme to improve the quality of drinking water in group water schemes, while protecting water quality."

2021-2023 Progress: In March 2021, [funding of €500,000 was announced](#) to implement targeted drinking water source protection actions in group water scheme catchments as part of the national federation of group water schemes source protection strategy. A review of the funding and support provided to water schemes in rural communities was [underway](#) in 2022, but not yet acted upon. Stakeholders confirmed that support for the National Federation of Group Water Schemes (NFGWS) was in place along with multi-annual capital funding for group water schemes with more funding becoming [available for 2023](#).

2024 Progress: In early 2024, the [Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme 2024-2026](#) was announced, providing €125 million for rural water infrastructure. The NFGWS was asked to support its members in completing applications. In July 2024, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage published a [Drinking Water Source Protection Guidance](#) document.

3.1.4. Conservation

3.1.4a. "Implement the recommendations of the Committee on Future Funding of Domestic Water Services in relation to excess use."

2021-2023 Progress: Although a stakeholder confirmed that [recommendations](#) were made on water conservation, this commitment has not progressed.

2024 Progress: A stakeholder confirmed that there was no progress on this commitment due to the political nature of its implementation.

3.1.4b. "Advocate at EU level for more water and energy-efficient white goods."

2021-2023 Progress: A stakeholder confirmed that no progress was observed at this level as of 2023.

2024 Progress: In April 2024, an EU [code of conduct](#) for energy smart appliances was launched, applying to a range of appliances including washing machines and dishwashers. A source confirmed that Ireland did not have a role in its development.

3.1.4c. "Conduct a feasibility study examining how further assistance can be given to low-income households for the installation of water efficient appliances."

2021-2023 Progress: A stakeholder confirmed that nothing had been done in relation to this commitment as of 2023.

2024 Progress: A stakeholder confirmed that there has been no progress with this commitment.

3.1.4d. "We fully support the work of the Water Services Innovation Fund, which aims to investigate solutions to promoting greater efficiency in water usage."

2021-2023 Progress: According to the [Water Services Innovation Fund Annual Report 2020](#), the CRU allowed Uisce Éireann access to €4 million under the Fund for the period 2020-2024. A stakeholder confirmed that this commitment had not progressed in 2023.

2024 Progress: A stakeholder confirmed that there has been no progress with this commitment.

3.1.4e. "We will continue to work with An Fóram Uisce (the water forum) to review and develop water-quality strategies."

2021-2023 Progress: There was no publicly available evidence of An Fóram Uisce's input being integrated into policy initially, but a stakeholder confirmed this commitment was progressing and there was engagement regarding conservation in 2023. Regarding water quality, the River Basin Management Plan engagement was considered "extensive." Stakeholder input and engagement with the Government was considered positive.

2024 Progress: In summer 2023, An Fóram Uisce made [recommendations](#) for a national water conservation strategy. Stakeholders confirmed that the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage has continued its engagement with the Forum and that the Forum feels heard.

3.1.4f. "We will commission a range of research projects to explore innovative ways of improving our water infrastructure and reducing consumption."

2021-2023 Progress: There were no announcements regarding this commitment, and one stakeholder voiced concerns over the progress of this commitment. In July 2022 there was a [call for research](#) on conservation by An Fóram Uisce. Following this, [An Fóram Uisce](#) submitted a policy position document on water conservation to the Department of Housing, Local Government, and Heritage (DHLGH).

2024 Progress: In March 2024, An Fóram Uisce published a [research report](#) regarding consumers and their awareness of water issues and opinions on communication with their water providers. A stakeholder confirmed that the DHLGH also provides An Fóram Uisce with funding which is then used for commissioning research, but stakeholders felt the Government did not fulfil this commitment since the DHLGH did not commission research themselves.

3.2. Marine

3.2a. "Develop a new integrated marine sustainable development plan, as a successor to Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth, focusing on all aspects of the marine, with a greater focus on sustainability and stakeholder engagement and centrally coordinated by the Department of the Taoiseach, to be implemented over the life of the Government."

2021-2023 Progress: [Improvements were seen in relation to fishing control laws](#). A stakeholder confirmed new fishery control regulations were on the way to being passed.

2024 Progress: In April 2024, [five new inland fisheries regulations signed by Minster Ryan](#). However, stakeholders felt that there seemed to be no successor to 'Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth' (HOOW).

One stakeholder described HOOW as a 'disaster' set on 'increasing exploitation and not environmental protection'. The Project Ireland 2040 [Draft First Revision to the National Planning Framework's National Policy](#) Objective 50, seeks to support sustainable growth of the maritime economy and continue to invest in the seafood sector.

3.2b. "Ensure that inshore waters continue to be protected for smaller fishing vessels and recreational fishers and that pair trawling will be prohibited inside the six-mile limit."

2021-2023 Progress: The High Court ruled that the policy directive excluding large vessels from trawling in inshore waters within six miles of the coast was void/or of no legal effect. The substantive hearing by the Court of Appeal took [place in June 2021](#). Vessels resumed trawling in the waters inside six nautical miles and no progress was made with appeals as of the 2022 assessment. In May 2022, [Minister Charlie McConalogue](#) released a statement that he was awaiting the decision of the Court of Appeal to inform next steps. The resumption of trawling within the six-mile limit was highlighted by NGOs such as [Birdwatch Ireland](#) as a critical issue. [A Parliamentary Question](#) in 2023 in relation to pair trawling indicated there were legal proceedings still ongoing which prevented progress on this commitment. Trawling [was still permitted](#) after the policy directive was reversed. However, there was a strong [appeal for action](#) in 2018-2019 with "900 submissions with people sufficiently engaged to appeal to the minister to do something". In March 2023, [two fishermen](#) won an appeal over a "trawling ban" where it was further indicated that the "Government Policy Directive" did not have legal effect. [The Irish Wildlife Trust](#) stated that years of trying to protect inshore waters from trawling as "another failure".

2024 Progress: In February 2024, a [public consultation was issued](#) on a Review of Trawling Inside the Six Nautical Mile Zone and the Baselines. The [consultation submissions closed](#) in April 2024. RTE reported on the [divided opinions over the proposed ban](#) in March 2024. Organisations in the fishing industry remain divided over the ban. A stakeholder felt that the Government may still deliver on this objective, but they have wasted a 'huge amount of time' and that this could be 'one of the most progressive changes in fisheries management in the history of the state'.

3.2c. "Aggressively tackle the issue of waste, ghost nets and illegal dumping in the marine environment, through rigorous implementation of the Port Reception Facilities Directives and by requiring all Irish fishing trawlers to participate in the Clean Oceans Initiative, ensuring that plastic fished up at sea is brought ashore."

2021-2023 Progress: While [96% of Irish trawlers were signed up to the Clean Oceans Initiative](#), there was no clear evidence of participation in this scheme as a requirement. There was insufficient information available on the implementation of the Port Reception Facilities Directive. In June 2022, Minister McConalogue announced the '[Clean Oceans Initiative Fishing Gear Retirement Scheme](#)'. According to stakeholders, industry-led initiatives were also progressing, but it was unclear how these were monitored. There was no legislative action to address this commitment. [In February 2023 announcements were made](#) indicating the introduction of [a programme of measures](#) to tackle strain on Ireland's Marine environment and achieve Ireland's targets for a clean marine environment. One of the main measures [seen in the Programme of Measures](#) (PoMs), was the aim to reduce litter in the seas through the implementation of the Single-Use Plastics Directive and Circular Economy Act. There was further evidence of such PoMs being implemented within [CAP23](#).

2024 Progress: In January 2024, the [Irish Examiner](#) reported a team of deep sea divers will take on a nationwide underwater beach clean led by Sea Shepherd Ireland as part of their GhostNets network campaign. As of January, the fishing sector has collected over 1,000 tonnes of marine litter as part of the 'Fishing for Litter' initiative, according to [Minister McConalogue](#). EPA data on waste fishing gear is due by the end of 2024. Similarly, by the end of 2024, the [Single Use Plastics Directive will](#) require the establishment of an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme for fisheries and aquaculture gear containing plastic. Trial Fishing Gear Retirement schemes were being conducted as

of January 2024, but no new information has been released. One stakeholder indicated that the available schemes are too small in scale and the Government needs to start addressing these issues at source.

3.2d. "Work to develop the aquaculture sector in a sustainable way, including shellfish aquaculture, using native species, and implement the recommendations of the report of the Independent Aquaculture Licencing Review Group, to ensure that feed products for aquaculture are sourced and produced in the most sustainable manner possible."

2021-2023 Progress: Minister McConalogue [announced in July 2021](#) the award of EUR 1 million in grants to 13 aquaculture enterprises under European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Programme. In June 2022, the online Aquaculture Information Management System (AQUAMIS) [was launched](#) in line with the [Independent Aquaculture Licencing Review Group's recommendation](#). This was described as Phase 1 of implementing the Review Group's recommendations. Phase 2 was expected to be delivered [over a 24-month period](#). In December 2022, the EU Commission [adopted](#) the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) Programme 2021-27 for Ireland, with a budget of €258 million, of which €134 million was from EU contribution and €116 million was from the Government of Ireland.

2024 Progress: In October 2023, the [National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture \(NSPSA\) Development 2030 was published](#). This was the successor to the 2014-2020 plan, detailing four objectives: green transition, social acceptance, and knowledge and innovation [under the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund](#). In February 2024, the [Irish Farmers Association \(IFA\) held an IFA Aquaculture annual conference](#), including an address on how global tensions, cost of living crisis, and changing global markets are all affecting the Irish Aquaculture Industry. There, IFA Aquaculture Chairman, Michael Mulloy stated that the NSPSA was "very important" as it set out the objectives and actions of the Government until 2030.

3.2e. "Progress a national policy on coastal erosion and flooding having regard to climate change."

2021-2023 Progress: The National Coastal Change Management Strategy Steering Group [met for the first time in September 2020](#). The group was intended to report to the Government within six months with initial findings, but no findings were made public between 2021 and 2023. In a May 2023 debate, Minister of State Patrick O'Donovan [stated](#) that the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform was assisting Local Authorities in coastal erosion management. There was a further statement that the Office of Public Works had started a national assessment of coastal erosion through the Irish Coastal Protection Strategy Study (ICPSS).

2024 Progress: In October 2023, the [Coastal Change Management Strategy Report](#) was published. The report sets out the initial findings and recommendations of the Inter-Departmental Group on Managing Coastal Change Strategy. [This report sets out a blueprint to deal with 'future coastal change'](#). The Project Ireland 2040 [Draft First Revision to the National Planning Framework's National Policy Objectives 53-55](#) all relate to coastal environment and erosion goals.

3.2f. "We will task the Marine Institute with a collaborative EU-wide research initiative, aimed at investigating the climate-change mitigation potential of blue carbon and working towards a means of creating a validated inventory that will in the future assist the EU in meeting our climate-change objectives."

2021-2023 Progress: The Marine Institute [launched a funding call](#) for a programme of research in the area of Blue Carbon. The successful recipients of funding, 'BlueC' and 'Quest', were [announced in February 2022](#). These projects received 2.6 million in funding. In a June 2023 debate, there was [discussion of](#) the Marine Institute's 'Blue Carbon and Marine Carbon Sequestration in Irish Waters and Coastal Habitats' special report from 2021 and the projects Quest and Blue C, without providing

updates on the outcomes of these projects.

2024 Progress: The Marine Institute released a [Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership's Joint Transnational Call](#) in 2024. This was co-branded as part of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. There are €40 million in funds available with a max of €1 million per project. The vision of the Sustainable Blue Economy Partnership is to research a just transition to a regenerative blue economy.

3.2.1. Common Fisheries Policy

3.2.1a. *"We are fully committed to the environmental objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)"*

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, The [Irish Wildlife Trust](#) indicated: *"the level of overfishing is getting worse and there is no indication that the Government is planning anything but business as usual."* In February 2022, a Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) Review Group [was announced](#) in response to a call made by the High Court of Ireland for the Court of Justice of the European Union to decide whether EU ministers have illegally set unsustainable fishing limits, following a case taken by Friends of the Irish Environment. The CFP Review Group undertook a review of the CFP and its implementation in Ireland. A stakeholder confirmed there was a [national review of the CFP](#) in December 2021, with many recommendations sent to the Minister regarding what needs to be changed from a national perspective. Issues around overfishing and insufficient compliance in relation to the objectives of the CFP [continue to be reported](#). [The Irish Wildlife Trust](#) stated that, rather than being pledged to the CFP environmental objectives, the *"Irish Government tried to defend overfishing in the High Court"*.

2024 Progress: In January 2024, the [EU Court of Justice](#) released their judgement on the case brought forth by Friends of the Irish Environment in 2020, challenging the total allowable catches for cod whiting. In March 2024, Minister McConalogue welcomed the Commission's plan to [evaluate the Common Fisheries Policy](#). A stakeholder commented that the Government cannot be fully committed to CFP if they are being taken to court over it.

3.2.1b. *"Actively promote setting annual quotas, in line with Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) principles."*

2021-2023 Progress: An NGO representative felt Ireland played a negative role in quotas at EU level, contributing to the EU's failure to implement MSY principles, by advocating for practices which resulted in overfishing. Ireland continued to press for total allowable catches above scientific advice. [The Marine Strategy Framework Directive](#) implemented 12 new measures and highlighted the review of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), which focused on an "ecosystem-based approach" while considering MSY.

2024 Progress: [Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Plan](#) includes Target 2D13: *"Commercial fish and shellfish stock levels are maintained or restored to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as soon as possible, in accordance with the EU CFP through ongoing implementation of Multiannual Plans and remedial measures for vulnerable stocks"*. However, a stakeholder stated that there is continued overfishing above the MSY.

3.2.1c. *"Promote the introduction of constructive technical measures that promote sustainability, decrease by-catch and protect fish stocks for the future."*

2021-2023 Progress: The Sea-Fisheries (Technical Measures) Regulations 2020 (S.I. No. 440/2020) was enacted in October 2020, giving full effect to the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/967. BIM [trialled technical measures](#), such as nets with altered mesh sizes, for the purposes of improving environmental and economic sustainability. BIM also published technical guidelines on reducing the number of unwanted catches. However, stakeholders indicated uptake of these measures was questionable, and there appeared to be no legislative backing for the use of such

measures. One NGO representative confirmed that reports were carried out on technical measures in increasing sustainability, e.g. [the fisheries conservation report in June 2023](#).

2024 Progress: In [June 2024](#), Minister McConalogue announced four new schemes co-funded by the State and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund 2021-2027 to deliver €258 million for the Seafood Development Programme: the Sustainable Fisheries Scheme provides support to fishing vessels and the Inshore Fisheries Scheme provides targeted support for small-scale coastal fishing vessels. Both support the investment of gear that reduces catches of juvenile and/or over quota species. There is also a Lobster V-notching Scheme, and the Seafood Processing Capital Investment Scheme. Applications for the schemes are now open.

3.2.1d. "Work to eliminate illegal fishing and promote a culture of compliance by all EU vessels in our 200-mile zone, in order to protect the fish stocks on which the Irish fishing industry depends."

2021-2023 Progress: Auditors found evidence of large-scale overfishing between 2012 and 2016, declaring Ireland's systems for controlling and sanctioning compliance with the rules as "unsatisfactory". As a result, Ireland could have [tens of thousands of fish deducted from its quotas](#) and could lose up to €40 million in EU funding. Land and sea inspections of fishing vessels also dropped by 30% in 2020, with a [drop of over 60% sea boardings](#) by the Naval Service due to Covid-19 redeployment. In 2021, the Naval Service undertook [269 boardings](#) relating to fisheries, resulting in nine detentions, compared to [309 boardings in 2020](#). Illegal discarding continued to be a significant issue in Irish waters. In November 2021, the European Commission [issued a formal notice](#) to Ireland regarding how this issue will be tackled. [Fines were implemented for illegal fishing](#) in March 2023. In July 2022, [media reported](#) more than 100 prosecutions were charged for illegal fishing.

2024 Progress: In May 2024, [Inland Fisheries Ireland \(IFI\)](#) secured a conviction against four men for separate illegal salmon angling offences. Also in May, a [Scottish skipper](#) was in court in West Cork for alleged illegal fishing. However, a stakeholder felt that not enough has been done to eliminate illegal fishing.

3.2.1e. "Implement the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) capability review, with a view to enhancing governance issues, and consider any other measures that may be necessary."

2021-2023 Progress: According to [Minister's Questions in April 2021](#), an independent Advisory Board nominated by DAFM was established to assist the management of the SFPA in the implementation of the report. According to a [Parliamentary Question](#) in June 2022, the "advisory board has no legal responsibility and is solely advisory in nature". The responsibility to implement the SFPA capability review was solely with the SFPA, according to the Minister's response. In November 2023, [The Sea Fisheries Regulator](#) published their 2021 report. Within this report, high expectations were indicated, including "significant ongoing progress" as part of their capability review. Following on from this, [they implemented a three-year strategy](#) from 2021-2023.

2024 Progress: In October 2023, the [Sea Fisheries Protection Authority](#) published their [Annual Report for 2022](#) detailing the extensive work the SFPA undertook across the year, including appointment of a new Authority and new senior management across the organisation. One stakeholder commented that there was evidence of modern day slavery in the fishing industry in Ireland and the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority is a disaster due to the massive 'illegality' in the industry. The [claim of modern day slavery](#) has been reported on in the media since 2022.

3.2.1f. "Implement a fair EU points system, in order to protect fish stocks and ensure the release of suspended EU funding."

2021-2023 Progress: In August 2020, [laws were introduced](#) providing the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority with powers to apply penalty points against licensed fishing vessels for serious infringements of the European Common Fisheries Policy. The [Sea-Fisheries \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Act 2022](#) amended the European Union (Common Fisheries Policy) (Point System)

Regulations 2020. [In January 2023, the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority \(SFPA\)](#) announced a serious infringement concerning a sea fishing boat liable to penalty points. [In Q1 2023](#), the SFPA published a report highlighting the implementation of “3 points” for an infringement.

2024 Progress: It is unclear if further progress has been made on this commitment, but the SFPA has begun the [Consultation Process for their Statement of Strategy 2024 - 2026](#).

3.2.2. Marine Protection Areas

3.2.2a. *"We support the principles and ambition of the EU Biodiversity Strategy and will develop comprehensive legislation for the identification, designation, and management of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in Irish territorial waters." AND*

3.2.2b. *"We will realise our outstanding target of 10% under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive as soon as is practical and aim for 30% of marine protected areas by 2030." AND*

3.2.2c. *"This will be done on the basis of scientific expertise and in close consultation with all stakeholders, in particular the fishing industry, as well as environmental and community representatives. This consultation process will begin in the first 100 days of Government."*

2021-2023 Progress: An expert report on MPAs (initiated under the last Government) was published in 2021. Multiple NGO representatives expressed the opinion that legislation will be necessary if there is any chance to meet the 30% by 2030 target, asserting that existing [MPAs remain mismanaged while the criteria for deciding where new MPAs should go has yet to be determined](#).

[According to Minister Noonan](#), the target of 30% would be included in legislation. However, the quality of this legislation was unknown until the draft is published. Stakeholders felt Ireland was well behind on achieving the targets outlined in this commitment as only 2.1% of Ireland’s marine and coastal areas were designated as MPAs. The [review of the public consultation on the MPA Advisory Group report](#) was published in March 2022. It was unclear when the outcome of this consultation would be known. An NGO representative confirmed that MPA legislation was currently being drafted. A source also confirmed the MPA legislation had been developed and they increased [marine protected area coverage](#) to “8.3% and hope to be 10%” targets under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, further noting that they were “on track” for 30% MPAs by 2030.

2024 Progress: The MPAs legislation has still not been published and there is no external progress on this commitment according to stakeholders. One stakeholder commented that *"The legislation famously [...] has not been initiated. So that's a big failure"*. [The Government promised that the bill would be published before the Dail recess for the past two summers](#). A stakeholder commented that the target of 10% has still not been achieved but that MPA designation are around 9%. Another stakeholder commented that there has not been close consultation or engagement with stakeholders. At the end of June 2024, [Fair Seas called on the Government](#) to publish the MPAs prior to the summer recess, commenting that they *"have been told by the Government that they are at the cusp of finishing it – so that is why all hope is not lost."*

3.2.2d. *"We will examine the establishment of an offshore maritime area as Ireland’s seventh national park."*

2021-2023 Progress: No progress was made on this commitment.

2024 Progress: [Ireland's 8th National Park was announced in April 2024](#): *Páirc Náisiúnta na Mara in Co. Kerry. This park joined other state-owned land at "Sceilg Mhichíl, Derrynane and Valencia Island, together with the waters at Kerry Head shoals, around an Sceilg and Puffin Island and becomes the largest National Park in Ireland with over 70,000 acres of lands and seas in public ownership."* The Park will be dedicated to the restoration of significant biodiversity and archaeological heritage.

3.2.3. Marine Planning and Development Management Bill

3.2.3a. *"The Government will prioritise the passage of a balanced and Aarhus Convention compliant Marine and Planning and Development Management Bill through the Oireachtas."... "Give cross government priority to the drafting of the Marine Planning and Development Bill, so that it is published as soon as possible and enacted within nine months."*

2021-2024 Outcome: The [Marine Planning and Development Bill](#) was replaced by the Maritime Area Planning Bill. This commitment is now the '[Marine Area Planning Act](#)' and was passed by the Oireachtas in December 2021. Several stakeholders expressed concern over the Act's compliance with the Aarhus Convention. Furthermore, the Act was criticised for not addressing interim protection of areas before designation. Other concerns within the legislation included the [impact of the planning process on biodiversity and the process of judicial review](#). The MAP Act and National Marine Planning Framework were agreed upon in 2021, and a review of the current planning framework is ongoing. This commitment is now considered complete and was evaluated in the 2023 assessment.

3.2.3b. *"We will bring forward Ireland's first ever National Marine Planning Framework. This will introduce a planning system for the development of Ireland's maritime area in the same way that the National Planning Framework fulfils this function on land."*

2021-2024 Outcome: The [National Marine Planning Framework \(NMPF\)](#) was approved by the Dáil in May 2021. SWAN's report on the NMPF stated that it cannot be considered a spatial plan, which is required under the Directive, as it did not ["allocate where activities will take place at sea or set out regionally differentiated priorities for the use and protection of Ireland's marine space"](#). When the final plan was published, there were calls from NGOs, the fishing sector, and opposition parties to allow for more scrutiny of the plan. [Oireachtas testimony](#) by civil society organisations in February 2023 pointed out that Ireland was approximately nine years late delivering on the obligation to provide for MPAs under the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive, and this delay further compromised Ireland's implementation of the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive. This commitment is now considered complete and was evaluated in the 2023 assessment.

3.2.3c. *"These two documents will form the basis for Project Ireland Marine 2040, our long-term overarching strategy to manage Ireland's seas for the benefit of all its people."*

2021-2023 Progress: The two documents have been published. However, as highlighted in Section 3.2.3a and b, NGOs expressed numerous concerns over their quality. In July 2021, the [National Marine Planning Framework](#) was published, outlining the role of Project Ireland Marine 2040 in working with the Project Ireland Delivery Board.

2024 Progress: The [Draft South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan for Offshore Renewable Energy](#) was published in May 2024. [DECC](#) published a map of the Maritime Areas proposed for offshore wind development in the South Coast.

3.2.3d. *"A marine planning oversight delivery board on the same model as the Project Ireland 2040 Delivery Board will be established to provide leadership and oversight to the implementation of these policies."*

2021-2023 Progress: While there was a reference to this Delivery Board in the National Marine Planning Framework, there were no public reports of any appointments, meetings or actions taken by the Board as of 2022. The Maritime Area Regulatory Authority was aimed to be [established and operational from 2023](#). In 2022, Minister of State Ossian Smyth stated *"The establishment of this authority is one of the highest priorities for the Government"*. Within [CAP23](#), there was a focus on marine planning and establishing the Marine Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) expected to be functional in 2023.

2024 Progress: The South Coast Offshore Renewable Energy Designated Maritime Area Plan

Proposal ([DMAP](#)) was published in July 2023. MARA [was established in July 2023](#) and is responsible for judging applications of maritime area consents, permitting licences, and imposing regulations for developments and activities in Ireland's maritime area. [The establishment of MARA paved the way for a National Industrial Strategy for Offshore Wind](#) published in March 2024.

4. Circular Economy & Waste

4a. "Publish and start implementing a new National Waste and Circular Economy Action Plan."

2021-2024 Outcome: The [Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy](#) was published in September 2020. The Whole-of-Government Circular Economy Strategy 2022 – 2023 '[Living More, Using Less](#)' was published in December 2021. The [Circular Economy and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2022](#) was signed into law in [July 2022](#), including the application of [mandatory incentivized pricing to all commercial waste customers](#). A working group was established with five seats occupied by the NGO sector. According to one NGO representative, the retention of this advisory group should contribute to the proper implementation of the various regulations and legislation. NGO representatives felt the drafting of a [new national waste management plan](#) was very detailed but wanted more specificity on reuse and repair within the document. This commitment has been completed with the publication of the Waste Action Plan and was considered as part of the 2023 assessment.

4b. "Strengthen the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) model (for packaging), to ensure the coverage of the full net costs related to the separate collection and treatment of the end-of-life products."

2021-2023 Progress: The heads of regulation were completed in 2021. Additional enforcement provisions around EPR, including fixed payment notices, were delivered through the Circular Economy and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2022. Additional EPRs will arise from the Single Use Packaging Directive. According to [a Government announcement](#), by 31 December 2024, producers of balloons, wet wipes and fishing gear will also be subject to an EPR scheme. [Extended EPR](#) has been introduced in different areas and extended into other products such as [cigarette products](#) and [in relation to farm plastics](#). NGO representatives regarded this commitment as being on track and felt there was a noticeable shift toward compostable packaging.

2024 Progress: Self compliance under packaging regulations [was removed as an option](#) for large producers as of January 2023. One stakeholder remarked that EPR is not going far enough in Ireland. Another stakeholder noted that there has not been much forward momentum on this commitment and that we haven't seen any strengthened EPR for packaging. This stakeholder did state that "*a good bit of work is being done on the textiles front.*"

4c. "Consider ways in which we can better inform consumers about the carbon footprint of products, including through labelling."

2021-2023 Progress: According to a source, DECC was working with the Department of Enterprise to develop Ireland's negotiating position on the European Commission's Sustainable Products Initiative. The two departments believed this is the most effective route to ensure customers are informed about the environmental impact of products. An NGO representative felt this commitment was moving slower than they would like.

2024 Progress: A source again noted that this is best done at EU level due to Ireland's small market size and that Ireland has been one of the more ambitious voices at EU negotiations. [The EU has passed the Consumer Rights Directive](#) banning misleading green claims and improving availability of information available to consumers to help them make circular and ecological choices. Member states have 24 months to transpose the Directive. One stakeholder remarked that existing labelling is confusing and lacks detail. They pointed to the need for third party verified climate scoring similar to

Nutri-scores. Another stakeholder noted that the Government has been active in supporting such initiatives at an EU level.

4d. "Ensure that public procurement leads the transition to the Circular Economy through an evidence-based approach, such as relying on Environmental Product Declarations. We will mandate the inclusion of green criteria in all procurements using public funds, to be completed within 36 months."

2021-2023 Progress: The 'Green Tenders' document on Green Public Procurement was [reviewed](#) in 2022 as part of the "[Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy 2022 - 2023](#)", DECC was working with the OGP and the EPA to update all procurement frameworks within the three years. In March 2023, the EPA released its [second report on Green Public Procurement](#), which found that only 10% of contracts included green criteria. [CAP23](#) also considered measures and plans to implement green public procurement. [The Public Sector Climate Action Mandate](#) was announced in 2023, with a focus on green public procurement.

2024 Progress: In April 2024, DECC published the [Green Public Procurement Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2027](#). The Strategy includes 54 actions to be taken on green public procurement, sectoral/product targets and minimum environmental criteria for public procurement of goods and services. In June 2024, the [Government announced](#) that it will develop a new Public Procurement Strategy which will integrate green public procurement. In June 2024, the Office of Government Procurement launched a new framework [allowing public bodies to purchase remanufactured laptops](#), providing €30 million in funding to purchase an estimated 60,000 laptops over the next 4 years. One stakeholder welcomed this initiative but criticised the slow progress on green public procurement and emphasised the need to move from strategy development to implementation.

4e. "Work with EU Member States to encourage the further reduction and prevention of plastic packaging."

2021-2023 Progress: Ireland was on track on requirements of the SUP Directive. The Circular Economy Act put forward measures such as the 'latte levy' to meet targets. In 2021, the Rethink Plastic Alliance and Break Free From Plastic movement [released an assessment](#) of each EU Member States' transposition of the SUP Directive, highlighting five positive developments in Ireland.

2024 Progress: The EU Parliament [has approved](#) a new regulation to reduce packaging waste, this still needs to be formally adopted by the Council. A source noted that Ireland has worked to increase ambition in ongoing EU packaging regulation negotiations. One stakeholder noted that the Government has been proactive at EU negotiations, supporting ambitious targets such as bans of single use sachets. This stakeholder also highlighted Ireland's membership of the high ambition coalition for the global treaty on plastic pollution. Another stakeholder stated that we should work with Slovenia to learn from their success in launching a public waste management company.

4f. "Continue and expand the Clean Oceans Initiative to collect, reduce and reuse marine litter and clean up our marine environment."

2021-2023 Progress: Minister McConalogue [announced in June 2021](#) that over 600 tonnes of marine waste had been collected by Ireland's seafood sector since 2015 as a result of participation in the Clean Oceans Initiative. However, there was no evidence of any expansion of the scheme's scope in 2021. In June 2022, Minister Charlie McConalogue announced the "[Clean Oceans Initiative Fishing Gear Retirement Scheme](#)", aimed at collecting old and damaged fishing gear. [CAP23](#) introduces measures to improve engagement in the clean oceans initiative.

2024 Progress: From the 31st of December 2024, producers of fishing gear will face [Extended Producer Responsibility](#). One stakeholder remarked that the Government's contribution to the Clean Oceans initiative does not go beyond providing refuse sacks, high-vis vests and maybe some gloves to the voluntary organisations which carry out beach clean ups. They noted that they do not see any

attempt to collect or reduce marine litter.

4g. "Examine changes to the tax system to encourage the efficient use of resources."

2021-2023 Progress: Economic instruments such as a levy on takeaway and zero VAT for the reselling of used items or for repair services were cited as further areas of development by one NGO representative. Zero VAT on repair services was [discussed by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action in October 2021](#), but it was not taken up by DECC. An NGO representative highlighted the levy on takeaway cups and the importance of zero VAT in reselling reused items for repair services. However, it was noted that there had been a lack of movement on "reuse and repair".

2024 Progress: A source pointed out the introduction of [the recovery levy](#) from September 2023 and the legislative provision for coffee cup, cold drinks cup and disposable food containers levies in the Circular Economy Act. Enactment of the coffee cup levy has been delayed and legislative revision regarding the point of collection of the levy by Revenue will be required before it can be rolled out. A source also pointed to ongoing work to remove exemptions from the landfill levy for construction and demolition waste and an ongoing examination of an aggregates levy. A stakeholder stated that no attempt has been made to change the tax system to encourage the efficient use of resources. This stakeholder gave the example of varying VAT rates on household goods depending on its recyclability and longevity. Another stakeholder pointed to the need for insurance reform as insurance causes issues for repair and upcycling initiatives, particularly at a community level. This stakeholder also called for 0% VAT on repair activities along with a low or 0% VAT rate on second hand goods.

4h. "Create a Circular Economy Unit in Government, to ensure a whole-of-government approach to the circular economy."

2021-2023 Progress: A Circular Economy Unit was established in the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) with two circular economy divisions; the Circular Economy Strategic Economy Division and the Circular Economy Materials Management division. NGO representatives felt it was "working quite well, encouraging a whole of Government approach" and were positive about this commitment.

2024 Progress: A [Circular Economy Strategy](#) was published in 2021 and work is ongoing on a second iteration which will include more focused actions with designated action owners, according to one source. One stakeholder noted that more work is required to ensure a whole of government approach stating that they see "that side of government ... making one announcement, but then ... other announcements that are kind of almost counteracting it coming out of the other side."

4i. "Phase out the use of single-use plastics."

2021-2023 Progress: A latte levy was [expected to be in place as of 2022](#). However, Government focus moved towards single use disposable agents and prioritising use of reusable products. VOICE was [looking for stronger provisions](#). Under the Single Use Plastics (SUP) EU Directive, DECC banned single use plastic items, like plastic cutlery, in 2021, while tobacco products containing plastic were [prohibited](#) in 2023. In June 2023, Minister Smyth introduced a public [consultation](#) for management of disposable vapes. A source emphasised the progress being made in relation to this commitment.

2024 Progress: From July 2024, it is [prohibited to sell bottles](#) or cartons with caps which do not remain attached to the bottle. From 2025, PET bottles must contain a minimum of [25% recycled plastic](#). As noted above, implementation of the 'latte levy' has been stalled awaiting legislative amendments. A source noted the funding recently made available for the installation of public water fountains in order to encourage reuse. A stakeholder commented that this commitment is not being addressed in a coherent or strong way. Another stakeholder noted that enforcement on bans of single use plastic items needs to be improved. This stakeholder also remarked that more needs to be done at retail level, especially around fruit and vegetable packaging.

4j. "Examine the potential of a municipal compost system for biodegradable packaging."

2021-2023 Progress: No progress was made regarding this commitment in 2021 or 2022. NGO representatives pointed to a need for more education in this area and issues around access to individuals living in both rural and urban settings such as apartment blocks. [Waste legislation](#) was scheduled to come into effect in July 2023. NGO representatives were happy to see this but felt there needs to be more emphasis on messaging and clarity around waste segregation.

2024 Progress: Waste collectors have been [obliged to provide compost bins](#) to all households from the beginning of 2024. A source pointed out that incentivised pricing has been extended from domestic to commercial waste to promote proper waste segregation. A stakeholder noted that a municipal compost facility will not happen and that biodegradable packaging will be handled by a private company. Another stakeholder commended the alignment of household and business waste regulations but called for an information campaign to ensure that people at work and at home effectively segregate their waste.

4k. "Intend to introduce a deposit-and-return scheme for plastic bottles and aluminium cans, in line with the findings of the recently commissioned report."

2021-2023 Progress: A national deposit-and-return scheme (DRS) for PET bottles and cans was [expected to be in place by the end of 2022](#) to achieve the 90% collection target. [The DRS](#) was launched in 2023 and was scheduled to be fully rolled out by [February 2024](#).

2024 Progress: The Deposit Return Scheme was introduced in February 2024, with all relevant containers sold having to form part of the scheme from the 1st of June 2024. According to [media reports](#), 200 million containers have been returned as of the 18th of June making the return rate over 50% and trending upwards. Re-turn has also launched a ['Return for Children'](#) charity fundraising initiative allowing people to donate their containers at events and festivals to children's charities. One stakeholder criticised the fact that this scheme has not been rolled out on an all island basis. Another stakeholder stated that *"there was a bit of a creaky start, but it appears to be bedding in relatively successfully at this stage."*

5. Air Quality

5a. "We will publish the first ever clean air strategy."

2021-2023 Progress: Despite completion of a consultation in 2017, the Clean Air Strategy was not published in 2021 or 2022. Stakeholders were concerned the strategy would be outdated by the time it was published. Following over 100 public consultation [submissions](#), [the Clean Air Strategy](#) was published in April 2023. Stakeholders welcomed its ambition to meet World Health Organisation air quality guidelines by 2040, more stringent than current [Clean Air for Europe Directive](#) limits. Air pollution is governed under the Air Pollution Act 1987, which was criticised by stakeholders for being outdated, but the Clear Air Strategy detailed plans to create a new Clean Air Act.

2024 Progress: In March 2024, [Minister Ryan stated that the Air Pollution Act 1987](#) has been deemed mostly fit for purpose, and that there was a draft General Scheme for the Air Pollution Act (Amendment) Bill expected to circulate for approval by June 2024. One stakeholder shared their disappointment that the Government will not publish a Clean Air Act and discussed the need for a more holistic approach to air quality.

5b. "Develop a regional approach to air quality and noise enforcement."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2020, the EPA [contracted the Cambridge Environmental Research Consultants \(CERC\) to undertake regional-to-local scale air quality modelling for Ireland](#). An EPA report was commissioned in November 2020 [to provide an emissions inventory for the five main](#)

[cities \(Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford and Galway\)](#), creating a local approach to air quality monitoring. However, this report excluded small towns such as Ennis, Tralee and Enniscorthy, which are among [the most highly polluted areas in Ireland](#). In 2022, no results regarding the modelled air quality and resultant maps were publicly available, and there was no clear progress on the development of a regional approach to noise enforcement. [In September 2022](#), Minister Eamon Ryan stated that DECC and the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) were working on a [business case assessment to improve noise enforcement](#), but stakeholders were critical of the lack of progress surrounding noise enforcement. In 2023, there were still [no dedicated resources](#) within regional authorities in relation to air quality enforcement. However, local authorities received an additional [€500,000 in funding](#) to support enforcement campaigns. According to the Clean Air Strategy, the Clean Air Act was expected to require local authorities to develop action plans in instances where there are exceedances of the air quality limits in their areas.

2024 Progress: According to a stakeholder, there have been mixed efforts around Ireland regarding air quality targets. The [Climate Action Plan 2024](#) has targets for air quality and noise enforcement, but there is no clear regional approach laid out. Cork City Council published the [Noise Action Plan 2018-2023](#) and has a current draft for the successor plan for 2024-2028. The [2023 Local Government Services Report](#) mentions air quality, but not noise. In June 2023, LGMA published a [Local Authority Fleet Strategy to Decarbonisation](#) which has a priority for protecting air quality. [Round 4 Strategic Noise Maps](#) are available on EPA maps site, and Noise Action Plans are set to be published in January 2025. The Project Ireland 2040 [Draft First Revision to the National Planning Framework](#) was published in July 2024. Objective 90 and 91 of the framework regards air quality and noise enforcement, respectively. Reference to Quiet Areas and Noise Management are in the revised National Planning Framework.

5c. "Develop a multi-agency approach to clamping down on the sale of high-sulphur content fuel imported from the UK, with local authorities and the Revenue Commissioners involved"

2021-2023 Progress: From 2021 - 2023, no announcements were made on the development of a multi-agency approach. However, in [July 2022](#), the Solid Fuel Regulation was agreed, lowering the permitted sulphur content of these fuels from 2% to 1% by September 2025. According to the Clean Air Strategy, a National Air Quality Enforcement Steering Committee will be established in 2024 with membership from DECC, other Government departments as well as law enforcement agencies, including An Garda Síochána.

2024 Progress: As of July 2024, there was no update on the National Air Quality Enforcement steering committee to be established in 2024. A stakeholder felt that there is an urgent need for this committee as fuel is still crossing the border into the Republic from Northern Ireland, but that they had not heard of the National Air Quality Enforcement Steering Committee.

5d. "Invest in our network of monitoring stations, to provide scientific evidence of air quality across different parts of the country, including real-time and localised air quality information."

2021-2023 Progress: In August 2021, Minister Eamon Ryan announced plans to expand the air quality monitoring network by 15 stations, increasing the total number of stations to 110 [during the period up to 2024](#). This would be the highest level of monitoring per capita in Europe, but plans for this network were in place before the publication of the PfG. In 2022, there were [90 monitoring stations](#), and this increased to 113 stations as of June 2023. Stakeholders were happy with the level of monitoring. However, some expressed concerns surrounding frequent breakdowns and maintenance of the stations. For example, [the Sligo station](#) only conducted one reading in 2021 and remained offline. Stakeholders emphasised that improved monitoring is required regarding ultrafine particles as well as in sensitive areas, such as schools and hospitals.

2024 Progress: As of December 2023, [there were 116 air quality monitoring stations](#). Dublin Airport also undertakes a [voluntary ambient air quality monitoring programme](#) with one air

quality monitoring station. One stakeholder stated that there is an urgent need for this continuous evidence as an information base. They also felt that communicating the levels of ambient air quality to the population, especially in cities, needs to be a Government priority. Another stakeholder raised the issue of continued breakdowns and non-functioning stations due to outdated technology and a lack of resources as extremely problematic.

5e. "Extend the Smoky Coal ban to new towns and, over the term of Government, move towards a full nationwide ban."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, there was a public consultation on the development of new Solid Fuel Regulations and the Clean Air (Smoky Coal Ban) Bill 2021. In July 2022, the [Government agreed on new regulations of solid fuels](#), which focused on the large-scale, commercial sale of smoky fuels. These regulations were submitted to the European Commission under the Technical Standards Directive (2015/1535) notification procedure. Despite the passing of the Smoky Coal Ban in 2022, the illegal use of imported smoky coals from Northern Ireland remained an issue in 2023. The Solid Fuel Merchants Ireland (SFMI) claim that [€56 million worth of illegal coal](#) was brought into Ireland in 2022. Stakeholders felt additional support was needed for those switching from solid fuels to renewables, and improved public awareness campaigns and policing was required.

2024 Progress: There has been a continued [government crackdown on smoky coal import](#) from Northern Ireland. The [Air Pollution Act \(Amendment\) Bill](#) that is set to circulate for approval soon, is said to give local authorities greater powers to crack down on the supply of smoky solid fuels. One stakeholder commented that enforcement remains a key issue for Ireland regarding Smoky Coal.

6. Transport

6a. "Use a range of policy approaches to incentivise use of electric vehicles (EVs) and encourage a shift away from petrol/diesel vehicles."

2021- 2023 Progress: A grant scheme for battery electric vehicles (BEVs) was sustained in 2022. However, grants for plug-in hybrid electric vehicles were removed to further encourage the uptake of BEVs. Incentives such as a €600 home charger grant, lower motor tax and reduced tolls were also introduced. The number of new EVs in 2022 [increased by 81% compared with 2021](#). During the first four months of 2023, [17% of new private cars](#) were electric. Zero Emissions Vehicles Ireland (ZEVI), established in July 2022, was [tasked](#) with supporting consumers, the public sector and businesses to make the switch to zero emission vehicles. [Initiatives](#) such as purchase grants, VRT relief, reduced tolls, home charger grants, favourable motor and BIK tax rates, along with extending the charging network contributed to an increased take up of EVs, with almost [88,000 registered](#) at the end of April 2023. From January 2023, EVs were [subject to differing BIK rates](#). However, a stakeholder felt the Government relied too heavily on EVs to reduce transport emissions.

2024 Progress: A new [scheme](#) to provide public EV charging stations was implemented in July 2023. The [Low Emissions Vehicle Toll Incentive](#) concluded at the end of 2023 with no plans for renewal. In February 2024, a [grant scheme](#) for Zero Emission Heavy Duty Vehicles was introduced. The first six months of 2024 saw a 24% decrease in new, electric private cars compared to last year, with over [3300 less cars licensed](#). Reductions of the EV Home Charger grant, the EV purchase grant, and the conclusion of toll discounts for EVs may be partially to [blame](#). These reductions come in the face of extensions for EV VRT relief and the EV tapering mechanism for BIK relief in [Budget 2024](#). As of April 2024, there were over [125,000](#) registered EVs in Ireland. In May 2024, the [National Road EV Charging Network Plan](#) was launched to create a roadmap for EV charging development. A [regional and local EV charging plan](#) is in draft stage with its public consultation closing July 2024. ZEVI published [guidelines](#) for the universal design of EV charging infrastructure in May 2024. To ensure

the continued transition to EVs, [€115.8 million](#) was allocated in 2024 for grants and the construction of EV infrastructure, including a [€21 million grant scheme](#) to facilitate development of charging infrastructure from the private sector. In March 2024, a [bill](#) was proposed in the Dáil to ban the advertising of fossil fuelled vehicles. Additionally, petrol stations of a certain size were told by SEAI they must [advertise electricity rates](#) along with their fuel prices. A new [transport strategy](#) was also presented, offering a firm policy direction to help enable the necessary system changes. A [consultation](#) for the strategy is open until August 2024.

6b. "Legislate to ban the registration of new fossil-fuelled cars and light vehicles from 2030 onwards and phase out diesel and petrol cars from Irish cities from 2030."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2022, it was noted that this commitment could not be achieved unilaterally, so the EU planned to legislate a ban on new fossil fuel car registration by 2035. Accordingly, the [European Parliament](#) voted to approve a new law banning the sale of petrol and diesel cars from 2035 in February 2023. However, an exemption agreement between the EU and Germany was [announced](#) in March 2023, allowing “*sales and registration of internal-combustion engine (ICE) models after the 2035 deadline — provided those vehicles operate only on carbon-neutral fuels, often generically referred to as ‘e-fuels.’*”

2024 Progress: In October 2023, [Tánaiste Micheál Martin](#) received permission to intervene in a case regarding vehicle emissions at the Court of Justice of the EU, to prevent its negative impact on this commitment. In March 2024, a [bill](#) was proposed in the Dáil to ban the advertising of fossil fuelled vehicles. There is also [growing opposition](#) to the ban of fossil fuelled vehicles within the EU, with the desire to focus on zero-carbon fuels as an alternative. It was noted by a stakeholder that progress on this commitment can only be made at the EU level.

6c. "Review the current motor taxation regime to ensure that it adequately captures the harm caused by NOx (nitrogen oxide) and SOx (sulphur oxide) emissions. This will only apply to newly registered vehicles."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, the surcharge bands on NOx were adjusted so higher NOx emitting vehicles pay more with no additional changes being made since then. The SOx emissions are not yet encapsulated in this tax and would require new forms of data collection to include it.

2024 Progress: No further progress was available on this commitment. However, the [Climate Change Advisory Council](#) recommended a review of taxation across all vehicle categories to be conducted at the end of the first carbon budget in their 2024 Annual Review.

6d. "Publish an EV strategy to ensure that charging infrastructure stays ahead of demand and provide planning guidance to local authorities."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, the ESB ecars programme was introduced to improve charging facilities across Ireland. In May 2022, there was a public consultation on the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy 2022-25. In Budget 2022, €100 million was allocated to implement the charging infrastructure outlined in the strategy. In 2023, the [Electric Vehicles Charging Infrastructure Strategy 2022 – 2025](#) was launched, aiming to have high-powered chargers every 60 km on the motorway network as well as home/apartment, residential neighbourhood, destination, and en-route charging. The [Shared Island Sports Club Scheme](#), launched in 2023, seeks to install EV charging points at sports clubs, retail centres, and tourist sites across the country.

2024 Progress: The EU Just Transition Fund [Community Facilities EV Charging Scheme](#) was launched in July 2023, seeking to provide charging facilities in public areas. In May 2024, the [National Road EV Charging Network Plan](#) was launched to create a roadmap for EV charging development. Transport Infrastructure Ireland launched a [grant scheme](#) for the development of charging infrastructure along motorways. The locations of 17 new recharging pools were [announced](#) in July 2024. A [regional and local EV charging plan](#) is currently in draft stage, with its public consultation closing July 2024. ZEVI

published [guidelines](#) for the universal design of EV charging infrastructure in May 2024. A public consultation for an updated [National Policy Framework for Alternative Fuels Infrastructure for Transport](#) was also launched. A source confirmed that Dublin County Council is tendering EV charging infrastructure across the city, with the Cork and Galway councils following suit soon. Capital was provided to local authorities to facilitate these developments.

6e. "Publish a public procurement framework for EVs. By at least 2025, we will only allow public sector bodies to purchase low or no-emissions cars and light goods vehicles."

2021-2023 Progress: In August 2021, the [Clean Vehicles Directive](#) was transposed into law. [By 2025](#), 45% of buses and 10% of trucks procured by public bodies must be "clean" vehicles, with those targets rising to 15% and 65% respectively, by 2030. For lighter duty vehicles, the target is 38.5% by 2025. The [Public Sector Climate Action Mandate](#), published in July 2022, stated that public sector bodies will procure only zero-emission vehicles from the end of 2023, enabling Ireland to go beyond the requirements of the Clean Vehicle Directive. However, the lack of zero-carbon alternatives for commercial operators [presents a challenge](#). Manufacturers have indicated their commitment to [increasing the availability of e-trucks](#) to the market by mid-decade to address this challenge.

2024 Progress: The [Green Public Procurement Action Plan](#) published in April 2024 confirmed this commitment, subject to exceptions within the [Public Sector Climate Action Mandate](#) that there may be supply issues until 2030. To facilitate the transition to zero-carbon alternatives for commercial operators, a grant scheme for zero-emission [heavy-duty](#) vehicles was introduced in [early 2024](#). A new [public procurement strategy](#) is being developed to enable sustainable public procurement.

6f. "Require that all new urban buses be electric hybrid or electric."

2021-2023 Progress: In June 2022, 120 of 800 new electric buses were ordered. [Ireland's first all-electric bus service](#) was launched in Athlone in January 2023 as the first to launch under the Government's [Pathfinder Programme](#). Bus Éireann drivers and mechanics took part in a [training programme](#) focused on the driving, maintenance, and operation of the new buses.

2024 Progress: Dublin's order of [100 electric buses](#) was delivered in 2023. About [40 of them](#) are now in operation with the rest scheduled to go into service in the coming months. An additional [50 electric buses](#) have been accepted by the National Transport Authority (NTA) with another 70 on order. Charging infrastructure installed in late 2023 allows for at least [136 electric buses](#) to be operational in Dublin. The first phase of bus depot electrification in [Limerick](#) was completed in April 2024, with 30 charging guns available. The first 34 electric buses in Limerick have been piloted since February 2024. Limerick is also set to become Ireland's first [fully electric regional city bus service](#), thanks in part to investment from the NTA.

6g. "Legislate for e-scooters and e-bikes."

2021-2023 Progress: The legislation of e-scooters and e-bikes under the [Road Traffic \(Amendment\) \(Personal Light Electric Vehicles\) Bill 2021](#) went before the Dáil in 2021. [The Road Traffic and Roads Act 2023](#) was enacted in July 2023 to remove restrictions surrounding use of e-scooters, classifying them as [Personal Powered Transporters](#). E-bikes were also given [legal status](#) under the Act.

2024 Progress: In [May 2024](#), e-scooters and e-bikes were recognized under the [Road Traffic and Roads Act 2023](#) as legal modes of transportation.

6h. "Publish and implement a 10-year strategy for the haulage sector focused on improving efficiencies, standards, and helping the sector move to a low-carbon future."

2021-2023 Progress: The ten-year [Strategy for the Haulage Sector First Consultation document](#) was published in April 2021 in addition to the Alternatively Fuelled Heavy Duty Vehicle Purchase Grant Scheme [launched in March 2021](#). It [reopened for applications](#) in April 2022. In December 2022, [Ireland's Road Haulage Strategy 2022-2031](#) was published. The [strategy](#) focused on generating

efficiencies, improving standards, securing jobs and helping the road freight sector move to a low-carbon future, with a particular focus on decarbonization.

2024 Progress: An annual [progress report](#) for the strategy was published in January 2024, with progress made on 19 of the 39 actions identified in the strategy. The report highlighted five actions for priority implementation in 2024: prioritising the work of ZEV; progressing feasibility studies for freight consolidation centres; holding a logistics and supply chain event; examining policy actions; and completing the procurement process for national eco-driving standards.

6i. "Review and reduce speed limits, where appropriate, to address both road safety issues and carbon emissions, and ensure greater compliance."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, Transport Infrastructure Ireland commissioned an analysis of the impact of changing and varying speed limits on greenhouse gas emissions and pollutants to assist in the development of Climate Action Plan 2021. In March 2022, there was a review of speed limits in the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Transport and Communications. The [Road Traffic and Roads Act 2023](#) introduced the use of [variable speed limits](#) on specific national roads in Ireland, specifically the M50. The [County Wicklow Road Traffic Special Speed Limit Bye-Laws of 2023](#) came into effect in June 2023, with periodic limits coming into effect in August 2023.

2024 Progress: In September 2023, the [Speed Limit Review](#) was published, aiming to address the inconsistencies of speed limits across the country, vehicular emissions, and driver compliance. In December 2023, a [bill](#) to improve road safety was published and [signed](#) into [law](#) in April 2024. [Guidelines](#) for the development of speed limits will be published later this year, allowing local authorities to carry out their own speed limit reviews and pass bye-laws for special speed limits.

6j. "Run a pilot to examine the potential for ride-sharing apps to improve rural connectivity."

2021- 2023 Progress: A [grant scheme](#) was launched in 2023 to assist local hackney services which cannot support full-time operations. A stakeholder indicated that legislation has stopped this scheme as the [ride-sharing model used by Uber](#) and competitors such as Lyft would not comply with [legislation](#) governing small public-service vehicles, stating that anyone carrying passengers for money must have a valid taxi licence.

2024 Progress: No progress has been made on this commitment, drawing [criticism](#) from Fine Gael Senator Garret Ahern. Despite the barriers involved, a source confirmed that public transport available through app-based [Smart demand responsive transport](#) is ongoing in three pilot locations. There are 21 licensed local authority hackney drivers and 25 licensed local authority hackney vehicles nationwide as of [May 2024](#).

6k. "Continue to support the greening of the taxi fleet and continue to provide financial assistance to taxi drivers switching to battery electric vehicles and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles."

2021-2023 Progress: In February 2021, the expansion of the Electric Scheme for Small Public Service Vehicles, such as taxis and hackneys, was announced to increase grants for EV purchases, with additional grants provided if the vehicle is wheelchair accessible or for scrapping an older, more polluting, or high mileage vehicle. The scheme continued in 2022 and 2023, with the grant offer period extended from three to nine months in 2023.

2024 Progress: The [Electric Small Public Service Vehicle](#) grant scheme was renewed and opened for applications in February 2024. A budget of [€11.5 million](#) was allocated for the scheme in 2024.

6l. "Support EU and international action to reduce aviation emissions, in line with the aims of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change."

2021-2023 progress: There was no apparent progress on this commitment in 2021. However, in 2022, Ireland [endorsed the concept](#) of green aviation at COP26. In April 2023, [EU negotiators agreed to decarbonise the aviation sector](#) through the stimulation of the region's green aviation fuel market in the ReFuelEU Aviation agreement. The [Renewable Transport Fuel Policy](#) and the [National](#)

[Hydrogen Strategy](#) were published in summer 2023, to inform Ireland’s national strategy in developing sustainable aviation fuel and decarbonizing the aviation sector.

2024 Progress: In late 2023, the [ReFuelEU Aviation](#) regulation was enacted. Additionally, a [task force](#) was [established](#) to assist in the development of a national Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) policy roadmap, and it is expected to be completed by the [end of the year](#). However, a stakeholder felt that international and EU action to reduce aviation emissions have not been good enough.

6.1. Cycling and Walking

6.1a. "Each local authority will be immediately mandated to carry out an assessment of their road network, to see where space can be reallocated for pedestrians and cyclists. This should be done immediately."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2022, progress was made at a national level to allocate more road space to pedestrians and cyclists. In addition, [€289 million](#) was allocated for local authorities to develop more walking and cycling infrastructure. The NTA allocated [€290 million](#) for Ireland’s local authorities in 2023 to fund the development of walking and cycling infrastructure across the country by 2025. In April 2023, Minister Ryan announced the roll out of the [Walking and Cycling Index 2023](#) (previously known as the Bike Life report).

2024 Progress: [€340 million](#) was spent on active travel in 2023, up from €310 million in 2022. In March 2024, the NTA published the [Walking and Cycling Index 2023](#) for the Dublin metropolitan area. Separate indexes for [Cork](#), [Limerick](#), [Galway](#), and [Waterford](#) were also published. Another [€290 million](#) was allocated by the NTA to local authorities for the development of walking and cycling infrastructure in 2024. A breakdown of the investments can be seen [here](#). However, there was [concern](#) about the inability of local authorities to develop active travel infrastructure due to lack of capacity. A source confirmed that road assessments had been carried out by local authorities, but due to the similarities with the CycleConnects programme, the data was not published.

6.1b. "The Government’s commitment to cycling and pedestrian projects will be set at 20% of the 2020 capital budget (€360 million) per year for the lifetime of the Government."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, [€360 million](#) was invested in walking and cycling projects. Active travel investment per annum was set at €360 million until 2030 as per the [National Development Plan](#). This investment was maintained in 2022 and 2023. However, [several Irish councils had underspent](#) their Government allocation in 2021. A stakeholder raised concern about the need to focus on the quality of projects rather than how much was spent.

2024 Progress: The projected amount of spending in 2023 was over [€400 million](#). The Government continued their [€360 million](#) investment in Budget 2024. However, a stakeholder was concerned about the inability of the money to be spent due to the lack of capacity and planning delays. Other sources believed that more can be spent despite these limitations.

6.1c. "Deliver a five-year, multi-annual funding programme linked with a specific target of new separated cycling and walking infrastructure, which will be delivered or under construction by the end of 2024."

2021-2023 progress: The [National Sustainable Mobility Policy](#) was published in 2022, setting out the strategic framework for active travel development until 2030. Through its corresponding action plan, targets for sustainable mobility are laid out. The [National Development Plan](#) also guaranteed annual funding of €360 million for its duration.

2024 Progress: Published in August 2023, the Sustainable Mobility Policy [progress report](#) stated 19% of its actions were completed, 53% were ongoing, 9% were at risk of delay, 14% were delayed, and 5% were ongoing as of April 2023. Considerable progress has been made since then, including more development of [greenways](#), the [National Cycle Network](#), the [Safe Routes to School](#) program, and

[active travel infrastructure](#). Additionally, the Government has continued its commitment of a [€360 million](#) investment into active travel infrastructure. Sources noted this investment serves as a limit since the Government is able to spend that and more per year. However, there is disagreement amongst stakeholders whether the National Sustainable Mobility Plan and the annual funding fulfil this commitment.

6.1d. "Mandate that every local authority, with assistance from the National Transport Authority (NTA), adopts a high quality cycling policy, carries out an assessment of their roads network and develops cycle network plans, which will be implemented with the help of a suitably qualified Cycling Officer with clear powers and roles."

AND "Expand and enhance the expertise on active travel needed to dramatically improve infrastructure and participation both in the NTA and local authorities, including by establishing Regional Cycle Design Offices, co-located in the seven Regional Design Offices for roads, to support local authorities."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, the Government announced funding for [248 new staff in local authorities](#) which would include an Active Travel Officer dedicated to behavioural change and promotional activity. Progress was made on this commitment within some local authorities, though there was an imbalance of implementation across the country and limited publicly available information regarding the Regional Cycle Design Offices. In August 2022, there were [seven councils](#) yet to fill 50% of the walking and cycling jobs funded by the Government. However, Active Travel teams were present in [all 31 local authorities](#), with the number of specialised workers for Active Travel projects increasing from 57 in January 2021 to roughly 240 as of April 2023.

2024 Progress: Although the allocation for Active Travel staff was [increased to 320](#) at the request of local authorities, only about 240 positions were filled. Publicly available information regarding the establishment of the Regional Cycle Design Offices remains scarce. However, [Mayo County Council](#) started developing Active travel facilities in conjunction with Transport Infrastructure Ireland in April 2024. A source confirmed that local authorities had conducted road assessments for the development of cycling policies. The local authority cycling policies, [CycleConnects](#), underwent public consultation in late 2022 and an environmental assessment in 2023. The CycleConnects programme is due to be finalized and published in Q3 2024, as confirmed by a source. The local authority road assessments were completed but not published due to their similarity with the CycleConnects programme.

6.1e. "Dramatically increase the number of children walking and cycling to primary and secondary school by mandating the Department of Transport to work with schools across Ireland, local authorities, the Green-Schools programme and local initiatives, including Cycle Bus and School Streets."

2021-2023 Progress: Safe Routes to School (SRTS) was announced in March 2021 with [170 schools](#) selected for the scheme. However, there was limited progress made due to capacity issues. There is a goal to develop routes for [761 schools](#) over the coming years. In December 2022, [Round 2](#) of the Safe Routes to School was launched, bringing an additional 108 schools into the program. As of May 2023, SRTS projects were completed at [22 schools](#) with the remaining schools at various stages of progress through the Programme. Although the [Central Statistics Office](#) found the dominant form of transport for school children was still by car, the number of students walking and cycling to school had increased significantly. In 2022, there were 88% more primary school children commuting by bicycle than in 2016, and the number of students aged 13 to 18 cycling to school was up 79%.

2024 Progress: By the end of 2023, a total of [46 schools](#) completed the programme with the rest in different stages of development. Approximately [20 additional schools](#) completed the program in 2024 so far, bringing the total number of schools completing the programme since the start of this PfG to 65. [Round 3](#) of the programme is expected to be announced later this year. A budget of [€20](#)

[million](#) was allocated to the SRTS programme for 2024.

6.1f. "Widen the eligibility of the Bike to Work scheme. We will provide an increased proportionate allowance for e-bikes and cargo bikes."

2021-2023 progress: In 2021, E-bikes were added to the Bike to Work scheme with a grant of €1,500 to assist with purchase. The limit for regular bikes eligible for the scheme was raised from €1,000 to €1,250. Cargo bikes were added to the Bike-to-Work Scheme with a [grant of €3,000](#) in 2023.

2024 Progress: No additional progress was made on this commitment and a [Parliamentary Question in April 2024](#) to Minister McGrath confirmed the Department of Finance had not received a proposal from the Department of Transport either in 2023 or to date in 2024 which proposed expansion of the Cycle to Work Scheme.

6.1g. "Ramp up the Cycle Right programme to ensure that all children are offered cycling training in primary school."

2021-2023 Progress: The Cycle Right programme grew in 2023 with an expected participation of [35,000](#) compared to 30,000 participants in 2022. There was an increased number of DEIS schools offering the programme due to the additional funding they received from the Department of Transport (extra €10 per pupil, €45 per pupil in total).

2024 Progress: The programme continues to grow by about 5,000 participants annually and aims to reach [40,000 children](#) in 2024. A source stated that about 9,000 participants in the programme came from DEIS schools. A review of the programme in 2023 identified a need for increased funding, difficulties with training instructors, and regional imbalances. Moreover, the potential of the programme to reach older and younger students, parents, and adults was acknowledged.

6.1h. "Conduct a review of road traffic policy and legislation to prioritise the safety of walking and cycling."

2021-2023 Progress: A [ten year road safety strategy](#) was launched in December 2021, including ambitious targets and a large investment in road safety during its first phase action plan to 2024. Updates to the Road Traffic and Roads Act 2023, such as introducing variable speed limits and facilitating the construction of walking and cycling infrastructure, were made to increase road safety. In late 2022, [fines for dangerous driving behaviour](#) were implemented and a [new polydrug testing device was developed](#).

2024 Progress: A review of the Road Safety Authority was [launched](#) in March 2024 to make recommendations on its future structure and operation. There was also [discussion](#) in the Dáil about the direction of transport policy in Ireland and safety levels, particularly regarding the development of a car-centric society.

6.1i. "We will lead the development of an integrated national greenways strategy."

2021-2023 Progress: €63.5 million for greenways was [confirmed](#) for 2021. In 2022, a multi-stakeholder working group developed a [Code of Best Practice for National and Regional Greenways](#). However, no integrated national greenways strategy was launched. Despite this, a source confirmed the publication of a [National Cycle Network Strategy](#) in Q3 2023.

2024 Progress: In 2024, [€72 million](#) was allocated to Transport Infrastructure Ireland for the development of greenways. The [National Cycle Network Plan](#), published in early 2024, seeks to increase the connectivity of Ireland through the development of greenways and cycling infrastructure. The plan will use existing and planned infrastructure, along with the development of new infrastructure.

6.1j. "Work with local authorities and appropriate agencies to continue developing an integrated national network of greenways to be used by commuters, students, leisure cyclists and tourists."

2021-2023 Progress: The greenway network continued to expand in 2021. However, many of the

routes were not directed into major towns. Around [€60 million](#) was allocated to 40 greenway projects in 2022 “in nearly every single county”. A further [€63 million](#) was invested in the greenway network in 2023 through Transport Infrastructure Ireland. The number of greenways in development in Ireland increased from 13 in 2019, to over [70 projects](#) under construction by 2023.

2024 Progress: In 2024, [€72 million](#) was allocated to Transport Infrastructure Ireland for the development of greenways. Over [120 greenway projects](#) will receive funding in 2024. The [National Cycle Network Plan](#), published in early 2024, seeks to increase the connectivity of Ireland through the development of greenways and cycling infrastructure.

6.2. Transport Infrastructure

6.2a. “The Government is committed to a 2:1 ratio of expenditure between new public transport infrastructure and new roads over its lifetime. This ratio will be maintained in each Budget by the Government. In the event of an underspend on roads, this will not impact on public transport spending.”

2021-2023 Progress: In Budget 2020, [€3.5 billion](#) was allocated to the Department of Transport, 51% of which was allocated for “sustainable transport”. In 2022, the 10-year National Development Plan allocated [€35 billion](#) out of €165 billion to transport projects planned to the end of the decade. Budget 2023 maintained the [€3.5 billion](#) investment with the goal of more accessible and greener transport across the country. However, Minister Ryan stated the Government was “[too slow](#)” in achieving a 2:1 expenditure ratio for public transport infrastructure versus new roads due to [pushback](#) given the current state of some roads in the country.

2024 Progress: Budget 2024 continued its allocation of [€3.5 billion](#) to the Department of Transport with approximately [€1.6 billion](#) (45%) allocated to public infrastructure investment and services: €613 million for public service obligations and local link services, and €971 million for public transport investment. About €1.2 billion was allocated to road networks and road safety: €228 million for national and regional road construction, €840 million for the protection and renewal of roads, and €97 million for private contractors.

6.2b. “We will develop and implement the existing strategies for our cities, such as the Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy, the Galway Transport Strategy, the draft Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy, as well as strategies being developed for Waterford and Limerick, and other projects progressing through planning. Specifically, the Government will prioritise plans for the delivery of Metrolink, Luas and other light rail expansion, DART expansion and interconnector and Bus Connects in Dublin, Cork, Galway, and Limerick.”

2021-2023 Progress: In 2020, the NTA published an Issues Paper as an initial part of a statutory review of the Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy along with plans for a €2.6 billion extension of DART services. In July 2020, the European Commission confirmed a grant award of €8.8 million, under the EU's Connecting Europe Facility for the design phase of the upgrade of the Kildare rail line. The NTA prepared an updated [Draft Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area](#), setting out the framework for investment in transport infrastructure and services until 2042. Transport strategies for [Waterford](#) and [Limerick](#) were published in late 2022. Work on BusConnects Dublin was being implemented, including the new Dublin Area Bus Service Network. The new [Galway Transport Strategy](#) was due to be published by the end of 2023. During 2022, work commenced on redesigning the bus network in Galway as part of the BusConnects Galway programme, with a public consultation on the draft new network closing in June. The Cork sustainable transport corridors entered the second round of [public consultations](#) for the BusConnects Cork programme. Progress in the Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy included a Railway Order application submitted in March 2023 for [DART+ South West](#) while an application was due in Q3/Q4 2023 for [DART+ Coastal North](#). The Road Traffic and Roads Act 2023, enacted in June 2023, introduced [essential powers](#) to the

relevant authorities for the delivery of core bus corridors.

2024 Progress: Development of the new Galway transport strategy [remains ongoing](#) and was expected to enter the consultation phase in Q2 2024. Additionally, a [light rail feasibility study](#) is also being undertaken in Galway with a [public consultation](#) anticipated for Q3 2024. Similarly, the development of the [Cork light rail system](#) is expected to go into public consultation in the coming months. A Preliminary Business Case is being prepared for the [Cork Area Commuter Rail Programme](#). In Dublin, the [LUAS Finglas project](#) Preliminary Business Case was submitted for review. The development of Metrolink continues through the planning phase, having had an [oral hearing](#) in Q1 2024. Over [€150 million](#) has been spent on the project so far. Regarding the DART+ programme: the Railway Order application for [DART+ Coastal North](#) is expected to occur in July 2024; public consultation for [DART+ Coastal South](#) is expected to open summer 2024; and an oral hearing was held for [DART+ West](#) in fall 2023. Planning permission was [granted](#) for DART+ West in July 2024. However, the [rejection](#) of planning permission for a depot to store trains along the DART+ West line will affect its construction. Progress was made with the BusConnects redesign in late 2023: [Phase 5b](#) was launched in Dublin, the [third round](#) of public consultation in Cork commenced, and the final new bus network redesigns for [Limerick](#) and [Galway](#) were published. In July 2024, a draft of [Waterford's new bus network](#) was published and is undergoing public consultation. While stakeholders acknowledged the necessity of the planning system, it also serves as a point of [frustration](#) since it has delayed implementation.

6.2.2. Public Transport

6.2.2a. "Review fare structures to ensure that public transport is as accessible as possible, supports the delivery of services, and incentivises off-peak travel."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2022, a 20% reduction of public transport fees and 90 minute fare for LEAP were introduced as part of fare restructuring. In April 2023, the NTA published the [National Fares Strategy](#) for commuter and inter-urban journeys, standardizing the cost per kilometre across the country. It was anticipated that the [first phase of implementation](#) would happen in late 2023, following the NTA's Fare Determination.

2024 Progress: The [NTA](#) published their [Fares Determination](#) report in January 2024, introducing the Dublin city and commuter zones; a new, cheaper all-modes ticket; and the restructuring of fares. Fare adjustments are set to roll out by the [end of Q2](#) and the implementation of the city and commuter zones by the end of Q3. As a result of the fare reductions, overall passenger numbers [increased](#) by 24% compared to 2022 and 5% compared to 2019, servicing over 300 million passengers. Despite the adjustments, the NTA [warned](#) Minister of Transport Eamon Ryan that it may have to hike fares due to a lack of funding.

6.2.2b. "Task the NTA to produce a park and ride implementation plan for each of the five cities to help reduce congestion and journey times. These will integrate car parking facilities with public transport and cycling networks and will include the provision of secure lockers for bicycles."

2021-2023 Progress: The National Transport Authority established a Park and Ride Development Office (PRDO) in 2021. A strategy for [Dublin](#) was published in 2021. Phase 1 and 2 of the Five Cities Demand Management Study was [published](#) in 2022. The PRDO [commenced](#) the process of developing a park and ride strategy for Cork. The [Waterford](#) park and ride strategy was published in its Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy, as was the one for [Limerick](#), in 2022. Wicklow train station park and ride received [€40,000](#) from the Active Travel Investment Grants 2023, but it was the only park and ride development to receive funding.

2024 Progress: No funding was allocated to the development of park and rides from the NTA [Active Travel](#) grants. A park and ride strategy was developed for [Galway](#). Work on park and rides in [Cork](#) may be delayed since they are contingent on the delivery of other proposals. Moreover, the PRDO is

currently validating the park and ride strategy in the Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy since the strategy predates the establishment of the office, as confirmed by a source.

6.2.2c. "Develop and implement a Sustainable Rural Mobility Plan. This will introduce a public transport service standard under which all settlements over a certain size in terms of population, combined with employment or education places, will have a service connecting them to the national public transport system. Local Link will play a key role in this development. This service standard will be informed by the Connected Ireland research being carried out by the NTA."

2021-2023 Progress: In April 2022, the [Sustainable Rural Mobility Plan](#) was launched as "Connecting Ireland" and included the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan, aiming to increase connectivity throughout rural Ireland between 2022 and 2025. The NTA continued to [improve rural public transport](#) services in 2023, with the planned implementation of 67 new and enhanced bus services, as well as the development of non-conventional measures such as Smart DRT (Demand Responsive Transport) and rural hackney pilot schemes. The NTA published the [Connecting Ireland Phase 1 Review](#) in April 2023, assessing the key achievements of bus services launched in 2022. The plan began [Phase 2](#) in early 2023.

2024 Progress: The NTA [launched](#) 65 new and enhanced bus services in 2023. An additional [16 routes](#) were either completed or in process in the first half of 2024. TFI Local Link saw a 78% [increase](#) in rural passengers compared to 2022, reaching over 3 million passengers.

6.2.2d. "We will review the operations and funding of Local Link within nine months."

2021-2023 Progress: In [April 2022](#), Minister Ryan announced additional and enhanced local bus services to support Ukrainian refugees. Funding for TFI Local Link was increased from €12 million in 2016 to over [€42 million](#) in 2023, allowing 100 new Rural Regular Service routes to operate at least 5 times per day over 5-7 days per weekly schedule. Designed to ensure connectivity with other public transport systems as well as improved service connectivity between and within towns and villages, passenger numbers rose to 2.8 million following very low post COVID numbers.

2024 Progress: A source confirmed that TFI Local Link receives funding from the Rural Transport Programme and Public Service Obligation, totalling €57 million in 2024: over [€25 million](#) from the Rural Transport Programme and €37 million from Public Service Obligation. A source stated that a review of the Local Link programme is being carried out by Indecon Consultants and is due to be completed shortly.

6.2.2e. "Establish a Working Group to utilise the modelling capacity of the NTA and commuter and travel data held by the CIE Group of Companies, the Central Statistics Office, NTA and other stakeholders to identify existing and potential demand for public transport and work to match demand with available services and new services, where appropriate."

2021-2023 Progress: No progress was made on this commitment between 2021 to 2023. A source indicated this was due to the fact that a similar working group has already been created.

2024 Progress: A stakeholder stated that a working group had been created, though they were not sure if anything had been published.

6.2.2f. "Ensure a national integrated public transport system with an integrated timetable, one tag on ticketing system and coordination between bus and rail timetables of all operators."

2021-2023 Progress: The NTA continued to work on Next Generation Ticketing (NGT), implementing Account Based Ticketing as the preferred option. However, there was no on-the-ground implementation in 2021. Although the NTA is ["years away"](#) from the introduction of contactless payments, the NTA planned to award a contract for an NGT system by [Q4 of 2023](#). The NTA trialed the use of card payments on Local Link rural services, as they have ["much more modern ticketing equipment which allows contactless payments to be made"](#).

2024 Progress: While still developing an NGT system, [mobile ticketing](#) is already being used on [some bus routes](#). In April 2024, [Indra](#) was awarded the contract for the development of an NGT ticketing system. In May 2024, Iarnród Éireann and the NTA [collaborated](#) to develop an integrated timetable for railways. With the development of a more predictable timetable, bus schedules can be [better integrated](#), creating reliable timetables.

6.2.2g. "Establish a National Public Transport Forum involving all stakeholders and commence Section 17 of the Dublin Transport Authority Act to establish the Dublin Transport Advisory Council."

2021-2023 Progress: There was no progress made on this commitment in 2021. A "Sustainable Mobility Policy Framework" was published in April 2022, and progress was to be reviewed annually. No announcements were made regarding the establishment of either the National Public Transport Forum or the Dublin Transport Advisory Council. A source stated this commitment was included as Action 71 in the [National Sustainable Mobility Policy Action Plan](#). The [Sustainable Mobility Policy \(SMP\)](#), states it will broaden Section 17 of the Dublin Transport Authority Act to address transport on a national level. In April 2023, the [National Sustainable Mobility Forum](#) was held, updating relevant stakeholders on implementation and development updates. Lastly, the adoption of a Dublin Transport Advisory Council is being considered, in order to achieve Action 74 of the SMP.

2024 Progress: The [second meeting](#) of the National Sustainability Mobility Forum was held in May 2024. The forum saw the creation of the [Sustainable Mobility Academy](#), an online platform for sustainable mobility practitioners to share knowledge. The establishment of a National Transport Advisory Council [remains to be seen](#) as Section 17 of the [Dublin Authority Act](#) has not been revised to reflect the establishment of such a council. Although a [Transport User Advisory Group](#) has been established, its [members](#) do not include the groups laid out in the [Act](#). However, a stakeholder claimed that an appropriate group has been created.

6.2.2h. "Accelerate sustainable transport plans for schools. We will complete the review of the School Transport Scheme to seek better outcomes and reduce car journeys. The School Transport Scheme should work in liaison with the Safe Routes to Schools Programme."

2021-2023 Progress: The [review of the School Transport Scheme](#) commenced in February 2021. In June 2021, the steering group presented an initial [interim report](#) on eligibility for the School Transport Scheme. The Department conducted an extensive stakeholder engagement process beginning in January 2022. Although school bus fares were free in the 2022-2023 school year, resulting in an increase of the number of applications and students being refused seats, [bus fares were to be reintroduced for the 2023-2024](#) school year at a lower rate.

2024 Progress: The third and final [review](#) of the School Transport Scheme was published in February 2024, recommending expansion of the scheme and highlighting the potential for emissions reduction and improved rural connectivity. Fares for the 2024/25 school year are to be maintained from last year. A [Public Engagement Strategy](#) was published in May 2024.

6.2.3. Rail

6.2.3a. "In line with the commitment in the National Planning Framework to balanced regional development, prioritise rail projects in Cork, Galway, Limerick, and Waterford on existing and unused lines."

2021-2023 Progress: In June 2021, [€184 million](#) was allocated by the EU, as part of its NextGenerationEU recovery package for Europe, for Cork commuter trains. In 2022, progress was made under the Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy as well as new rail development in [Limerick](#) under the National Development Plan 2021-2030. In July 2023, the Department of Transport (ROI) and the Department of Infrastructure (Northern Ireland) [published](#) their joint draft

report of the All-Island Strategic Rail Review, providing 30 recommendations for the implementation of a new rail system. The [review](#) assessed the possible opportunity for improved train services along the network's different existing or potential future lines.

2024 Progress: The [Cork](#) rail system continues to expand with plans for additional stations and electrification. In Galway, redevelopments continue upgrading [stations](#) and [railways](#). Limerick sees the development of new stations at [Ballysimon](#) and [Moyross](#) along with the refurbishing of a [freight line](#). Development of a new [transport hub](#) also continues to progress in Waterford.

6.2.3b. "Continue to fund safety works and capital improvements to the rail network, expand the Irish Rail fleet and progress the electrification of rail services to decrease journey times and emissions."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, Iarnród Éireann [announced a new National Train Control Centre](#) to integrate the signalling and communications control across the entire network. Furthermore, [750 electric/battery-electric](#) powered vehicles were contracted for delivery over a 10 year period. In 2022, the first of [41 new diesel carriages](#) were delivered. In November 2022, the Minister for Transport obtained Cabinet approval for Iarnród Éireann to order [90 new battery-electric train carriages](#) for delivery to the Irish rail system in 2026. The order included 18 modern 5-carriage Battery-Electric Multiple Units at a cost of approximately €179 million.

2024 Progress: New diesel carriages started entering service in [February 2024](#). There is currently [no date](#) set for the wide scale electrification of the rail system, with only about 3% of Irish rail currently electrified. In [Budget 2024](#), €971 million was allocated to public infrastructure development, [including the rail system](#). Funding from RePowerEU is to be [allocated](#) to the development of electrification works at Drogheda train station along with [capital improvements](#) in Cork.

6.2.3c. "Commission an economic evaluation of higher-speed rail links between our main cities."

2021-2023 Progress: In October 2020, Minister Eamon Ryan and the Northern Ireland Minister for Infrastructure, Nichola Mallon, announced that a [feasibility study](#) would be conducted for high-speed rail. In November 2021, the Department of Transport [launched](#) the public consultation period for the All-Island strategic rail review. In July 2023, the joint draft report of the All-Island Strategic Rail Review was [published](#) by the Department of Transport (ROI) and the Department of Infrastructure (Northern Ireland). The review indicated the development of a high speed rail network (300 kph) would generate too much carbon during construction, outweighing the benefits. However, it recommends the development of higher speed rail networks for intercity and regional travel, 200 and 120 kph respectively. By implementing its 30 recommendations, Ireland's [2,300 km](#) of public rail could be expanded to 2,950 km of low-carbon, faster rail.

2024 Progress: The public [consultation](#) for the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the All-Island Strategic Rail review was completed in September 2023. The [final report](#) of the All-Island Strategic Rail Review was published in July 2024.

6.2.3d. "Consider the report on the future of the Western Rail Corridor and take appropriate action."

2021-2023 Progress: The Western Rail Corridor was committed to in the [National Development Plan](#) as part of the All-Island Strategic Rail Review in late 2021. In 2022, Dr John Bradley's ["forensic dissection"](#) of EY's report argued that the Western Rail Corridor is financially viable in contrast to EY's projections. In May 2023, Minister Eamon Ryan [fell under fire](#) for failing to back the full reopening of the Sligo to Galway railway line.

2024 Progress: No funding is currently allocated to the development of the Western Rail Corridor. However, the issue of its development will be [reconsidered](#) after the publication of the final All-Island Strategic Rail Review in [July 2024](#).

6.2.4. Buses

6.2.4a. "Protect and expand regional connectivity and connectivity between towns and villages in rural Ireland."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2020, Bus Éireann announced [120 new jobs and an expansion of services](#), including both new routes and enhanced frequency on existing routes. In 2022, 81 additional buses for regional connectivity were announced. The Department of Transport announced [67 new bus routes](#) to be rolled out across the country in 2023 through the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan. Almost €4 million was invested in implementing Connecting Ireland bus services in 2022, but that was doubled to [€8.5 million](#) with funding from the Department of Transport and NTA.

2024 Progress: In 2023, [significant increases](#) in passengers were reported with over 300 million passengers in 2023, a 24% increase from 2022 and a 5% increase from 2019. The NTA [launched](#) 65 new and enhanced bus services in 2023. An additional [16 routes](#) were either completed or are in the process of being completed in the first half of 2024.

6.2.4b. "Give greater priority to bus services by expanding Quality Bus Corridors and consider the introduction of Bus Rapid Transit Services."

2021- 2023 Progress: A number of Quality Bus Corridors opened in 2023 including the extension of the [College Green bus corridor](#). The College Green Pathfinder Project will help alleviate public transport congestion in the city core and prioritise public transport at all times. One stakeholder mentioned that the Government was a year and a half behind schedule and many of the project applications were stuck in the planning phase.

2024 Progress: While no Bus Rapid Transit Services (BRTS) have been developed, [BusConnects](#) is able to [fulfil](#) that role to an extent. A source stated that the implementation of BRTS has merged with BusConnects due to the inability to adequately differentiate the schemes. As such, BusConnects will implement the standards set out by the BRTS. Progress was made with the BusConnects redesign in late 2023: [Phase 5b](#) was launched in Dublin, the [third round](#) of public consultation in Cork commenced, and the final new bus network redesign for [Limerick](#) and [Galway](#) were published. In July 2024, a draft of [Waterford's new bus network](#) was published and is undergoing public consultation. Additionally, the construction of [12 bus corridor schemes](#) in Dublin were submitted for approval, with planning permission already granted for [four of them](#). A source confirmed that two additional schemes, Blanchardstown and Swords, were also given permission. Planning for the implementation of the new bus network in Cork has [commenced](#) and a Preliminary Business Case is being prepared. An [oral hearing](#) for the Galway BusConnects was held in February 2024.

7. Buildings

7a. "We will publish our National Retrofitting Plan as part of the National Economic Plan. It will set out our commitment to:"

2021-2024 Outcome: The National Retrofitting Plan was completed as part of [Climate Action Plan 2021](#), published in November 2021. This commitment was completed and assessed in 2022.

7b. "1. Developing a new area-based and one-stop-shop approach to retrofitting to upgrade at least 500,000 homes to a B2 energy rating by 2030."

2021-2023 Progress: The SEAI launched a "One Stop Shop Development Call" in 2020 and instituted the one stop shop service in spring 2022 as part of the 'New Home Energy Upgrade Scheme'. [Nine service providers operated these one stop shops](#) with plans to add more providers. In October 2022, it was [reported](#) that the flagship National Home Energy Upgrade Scheme saw low application

numbers. In July 2023, the “One Stop Shop” scheme had [16 service providers](#). However, the uptake of retrofitting was slow and an area-based approach to retrofitting had not been rolled out. Moreover, stakeholders and [media reports](#) reflected on administrative and implementation delays as primary barriers to the uptake to retrofitting. One stakeholder stated it is unlikely that this commitment will be achieved by the end of the decade, as Ireland is currently not on track to complete these energy upgrades.

2024 Progress: In 2024, the number of one-stop shop service providers [grew to 20](#). Because one-stop shops currently use a market-based approach, a stakeholder noted that the new [Energy Performance of Buildings Directive](#) would require “publicly run” one-stop shops instead. As such, the extent to which this scheme achieves the commitment targets may be affected. Although costs and affordability were acknowledged as the [biggest barriers](#) to implementation, a new [loan scheme](#) enacted in April 2024 seeks to rectify that. SEAI’s [annual report](#) on the National Retrofitting Plan stated nearly 48,000 property upgrades were completed in 2023, bringing the total number of upgrades to 132,721 since 2019. Of those 48,000, only 17,601 were upgraded to a B2 rating or better, with 36,115 upgrades completed since 2019. Retrofits carried out by [local authorities](#) increased by 7% from 2022, with 2,445 upgrades in 2023. A budget of [€437 million](#), the largest yet, was allocated for SEAI’s residential and community upgrade schemes. In [Q1 of 2024](#), SEAI reported that over 5,000 homes achieved a B2 BER status, a 53% increase from Q1 2023. The [target](#) for SEAI supported upgrades is 52,000 for 2024, with nearly 21,000 achieving a BER of B2. There were 11,701 property upgrades in [Q1 2024](#), an 18% increase from Q1 2023. Over 800 heat pumps were installed in [Q1 2024](#), a 3% increase from Q1 2023. An area-based retrofitting project in Fingal County remains [ongoing](#) and targets [150 retrofits](#) annually by 2024.

7c. "2. Grouping homes together to lower cost, starting in the Midlands area."

2021-2024 Outcome: In September 2020, the Government approved the [allocation of €20 million](#) from the carbon tax to eight local authorities under the Midlands Retrofit Project. In 2022, the Midlands Retrofit Project was piloted. According to a source, the project did not prove to be as successful as originally thought and therefore there were no plans to replicate this elsewhere. This commitment was assessed in 2022 and was deemed as complete.

2024 Progress: Although the previous compendium marked this commitment as complete, there was still some progress made. Despite the unsuccessful outcome of the pilot and a decision to [end it in 2022](#), the Midlands Retrofit Programme retrofitted another [193 homes in 2023](#). The programme has now depleted its initial budget, retrofitting 674 homes of its targeted 750. Despite no additional plans to implement other area-based methods, the [Fingal County Council](#) has initiated an [area-based project](#) to retrofit private and local authority homes. Fingal County Council plans to retrofit [150 homes](#) annually by 2024.

7d. "3. Leveraging smart finance (e.g. loan guarantee, European Investment Bank, Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland)."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, funding provided under the European Recovery and Resilience Facility was allocated to provide risk protection to banks and financial institutions that offer retrofitting loans at low rates. In 2022, a call for bank involvement resulted in the European Investment Bank (EIB) running through the strategic banking operation with plans to [launch these loans in July 2022](#). However, the scheme was delayed [even further](#) in January 2023. The Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SCBI) stated they were working with DECC and the EIB to create a [residential retrofit loan guarantee scheme](#). In February 2023, Minister of Finance Michael McGrath shared that the SBCI had [lent approximately €3.4 billion](#) to more than 53,000 Small Medium Enterprises, including in the Energy Efficiency Loan Scheme, by the end of December 2022.

2024 Progress: In April 2024, the €500 million [Home Energy Upgrade Loan Scheme](#) was launched. The scheme promises significantly lower rates because of the guarantee provided by the European

Investment Bank and a Government funded interest rate subsidy. [Loans](#) are provided by participating financial institutions and will be available through the end of 2026.

7e. "4. Developing easy pay-back mechanisms (i.e. through utility bills)."

2021-2023 Progress: Pay-back mechanisms were available through loans in 2022.

2024 Progress: The new [Home Energy Upgrade Loan Scheme](#) does not feature a pay-back mechanism.

7f. "Designate a National Retrofitting Delivery Body by the end of 2020."

2021-2024 Outcome: SEAI was designated the National Retrofitting Delivery Body. This commitment was assessed in 2021 and is now deemed completed.

7g. "In addition to the current scheme, use resources from the National Recovery Fund to immediately finance local authority retrofit programmes and to offer grants to owners of private properties. This effort will initially be focused on the Midlands, where dependence on fossil fuel is greatest."

2021-2023 Progress: As part of the EU funding detailed in the [National Recovery and Resilience fund](#) (NRRF), €40 million was allocated towards "De-risking a Low Cost Residential Retrofit Loan Scheme", while €60 million was allocated towards a "Public Sector Retrofit Pathfinder Project and Public Sector Buildings' Energy Retrofit Programme". A stakeholder was unaware of any National Recovery Fund (NRF), stating that the EU's NRRF effectively superseded the NRF in 2020. In 2022, grants to owners of private properties and local authorities were offered. The Community Energy Grant Scheme committed €43 million for public, commercial and community buildings, with €15 million of this scheme relating to home retrofits. The National Retrofit Plan was [published](#) in February 2022 and expanded the Local Authority Retrofit programme. In June 2023, DECC funded [€87 million](#) for energy upgrades of Local Authority homes in 2023. As of April 2023, [36,500 homes](#) of the 500,000 retrofit target by 2030 are expected to be owned by local authorities. It was [reported](#) that the low cost retrofitting scheme was facing delays as of February 2023.

2024 Progress: In Budget 2024, [€90 million](#) was made available to local authorities for the retrofitting of social housing, allowing approximately [2,500](#) local authority owned homes to be retrofitted to a B2 standard or the cost optimal equivalent. Although 2023 targets of 2,400 homes retrofitted were [expected](#) to be met, only [2,252 retrofits](#) were completed. Additionally, the [Midlands Retrofit Program](#) saw the completion of 193 retrofits in 2023. A total of 674 retrofits have been completed through the program since 2020. Through the NRRF, Ireland will receive [€1.15 billion](#) in grants from 2024 to 2026, including [€40 million](#) to establish a low-cost residential retrofit loan scheme. Though there is no mention of funding local authority retrofit programmes, [funding](#) will be provided for retrofitting public sector buildings. For private owners, the Government's new [loan scheme](#), published in April 2024, facilitates homeowners' ability to retrofit their homes, where existing grants are combined with low interest loans to alleviate the costs of energy upgrades.

7h. "Commence pilot schemes in early 2021, to test key elements of the national plan, building on the work being started in the Midlands. Following evaluation of the pilots, we will roll out our National Retrofitting Scheme."

2021-2023 Progress: In September 2020, the Government approved the allocation of €20 million from carbon tax to eight local authorities under the [Midlands Retrofit Project](#). The [National Retrofitting Scheme](#) was launched in February 2022. The 10-year funding, registration, and one-stop shops were all underway, and home retrofitting was taking place. DECC targets were to complete 75,000 B2-equivalent home retrofits each year between 2026 and 2030 to reach its overall target of 500,000 by 2030. However, it was reported that the capacity to retrofit 500,000 homes was "[falling short](#)." In March 2023, the [Fingal County Council](#) announced a pilot project for an area-based approach to retrofitting, despite issues with the [Midlands Retrofitting Programme](#).

2024 Progress: Despite the unsuccessful outcome of the Midlands Retrofit Programme and a decision to [end it in 2022](#), the programme retrofitted another [193 homes in 2023](#). The programme has now depleted its initial budget, retrofitting 674 homes of its targeted 750. Despite no additional Government plans to implement other area-based methods, the [Fingal County Council](#) has initiated an [area-based project](#) to retrofit private and local authority homes. Fingal County Council plans to retrofit [150 homes](#) annually by 2024.

7i. "Work with the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland to develop funding options to deliver retrofitting with suitable retail partners, such as An Post and the Credit Unions."

2021-2023 Progress: Whilst there was no obvious involvement from the SBCI, An Post and various Credit Unions entered the retrofit finance market, with the latter receiving €10 million in additional funding from the [SEAI](#). As of 2022, this commitment was in progress and the [SBCI Loan Guarantee scheme](#) was expected to be launched that year. But in January 2023, the [SBCI Loan Guarantee Scheme](#) had yet to be launched, with an expected months-long delay. The SBCI and the Government continued to work with the EIB to organise the structure of the scheme.

2024 Progress: The [Home Energy Upgrade Loan Scheme](#) was launched in April 2024. Backed by [SCBI](#), the scheme is carried out through [financial institutions](#) and is set to run through the end of 2026.

7j. "Amend the Energy Efficiency Obligation Scheme to boost the supply of retrofits, by increasing the targets which obligated parties must deliver, including for domestic homes and those in energy poverty."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, a public consultation on the design of the new Energy Efficiency Obligation Scheme (EEOS) was launched. In 2022, the EEOS was underway, resulting in many of the one-stop-shops funded by investments from the energy suppliers as the obligated parties. Under the amended EEOS, ["15% of all EEOS savings... are to be delivered in the residential sector"](#). In January 2023, the amended EEOS was relaunched, with the amendments designed in response to the EU [Energy Efficiency Directive](#) (EED), including [legal mandates for energy companies](#). In February 2023, Minister Eamon Ryan [stated](#) that the SEAI has been a primary contributor to the redesign and implementation of the amended scheme, and an online reporting system was created. Following the commencement of the scheme in March 2023, the Council of the EU and the European Parliament reached an agreement on the [energy reduction targets](#); that final energy consumption must be collectively reduced by 11.7% compared to 2020 projections.

2024 Progress: It is not clear how Ireland will achieve its energy consumption targets, as set by the amended EED. Although these targets are to be met through its [National Energy and Climate Plan \(NECP\) 2021-2030](#), there is ambiguity surrounding how those targets will be achieved through the EEOS and additional measures. A source stated that a public consultation to determine the split between the EEOS and additional measures is expected to be held in Q4 2024. Public consultations for the NECP opened in [February](#) and [June 2024](#).

7k. "Take steps to increase the number of homes and businesses with Building Energy Ratings (BER) and Display Energy Certificates (DEC) and use this data to increase the number of home and business retrofits being carried out."

2021-2023 Progress: [In 2020](#), 3,964 homes were retrofitted to a B2 equivalent BER or higher. In 2021, 15,457 homes were retrofitted under various schemes. The number of households obtaining BERs increased [8% since 2020](#). In May 2023, Minister Eamon Ryan [stated](#) that the number of homes upgraded to a B2 equivalent BER was 8,481. Overall, [27,199 property upgrades](#) took place. However, the Government was still a long way from their target of 500,000 homes with a B2 equivalent BER by 2030. The SEAI Annual Report from 2022 showed that [50,000 applications](#) were processed. In May 2023, the Warmer Homes Scheme revealed that delays occurred during the COVID pandemic for deep retrofits, with [7,000 homes](#) on waitlist. Through this scheme, the rate of implementation went

from 400 homes a month in 2022, to 500-600 a month in 2023.

2024 Progress: SEAI released the [second annual report](#) of the National Retrofit Plan in March 2024 with over 17,000 homes achieving at least a B2 energy rating, a 108% increase from 2022. In addition, over 67,000 applications were processed. The number of homes and businesses with BERs and DEC also increased. From [2022 to 2023](#), the number of residences with BERs increased 17%. Furthermore, [Q1 of 2024](#) saw BER certificates increase 10% from Q1 2023. Businesses with a DEC increased by 11% from [2022 to 2023](#). However, [Q1 of 2024](#) saw this number increase by 16% from Q1 2023. Additionally, the Warmer Homes Scheme received its largest budget yet, [€210 million for 2024](#) with nearly 5,900 homes upgraded in [2023](#) and average wait times dropping from 26 to 20 months. However, there are currently over [18,000 people](#) on the waitlist with over 1,100 applicants a month. Ireland is now said to have the [highest per capita](#) retrofitting of any European country.

7l. "Develop standard designs available for all property types."

2021-2024 Outcome: A Standard Recommendation for the design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of heat pump systems in dwellings (S.R. 50-4:2021) was submitted to public consultation for a two-month period in Q3/Q4 2020. It was reviewed and published in April 2021. Standard designs were completed and the Heat Pump document was published in 2022. This commitment was assessed in 2022 and is now deemed completed.

7m. "Strengthen the capacity of state agencies responsible for the delivery of the ambitious targets we are setting out."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2022, the capacity of state agencies was strengthened through a substantial increase in staffing and funding. However, in June 2023, Minister Eamon Ryan stated that the public service was in a dire need of an increase of approximately [20,000-30,000 jobs](#). Numerous stakeholders identified the lack of skilled and educated workers, such as skilled employees for retrofit upgrades and qualified biodiversity experts, as a barrier to efficient policy implementation.

2024 Progress: Nearly [12,000](#) full-time staff equivalents (FTEs) were added across the public sector in the latter half of 2023. However, positions related to the environment only increased by approximately [100 FTEs](#) in the civil service and non-commercial state agencies, bringing the total amount of environmental FTEs to approximately 2,000. In 2023, SEAI had [940 and 224](#) domestic and non-domestic BER assessors, respectively. A stakeholder stated this was the first time such data had been collected. A source confirmed that steps were being taken to increase the number of assessors.

7n. "Commence a targeted programme to install heat pumps in homes that are already suitable for the technology, as part of our plan to install 600,000 heat pumps by 2030."

2021-2023 Progress: Budget 2021 allocated funding for a new marketing and information campaign, focused on promoting the uptake of heat pumps. A series of "[SEAI Heat Pump Webinar for Homeowners](#)" were held for people who requested the information pack. A stakeholder stated that while individual actions such as those detailed above were welcome, the overall uptake of heat pump installation remained low with construction delays from COVID contributing significantly. In 2022, this commitment was not on track, despite increased grant funding for the installation of heat pumps in homes. The number of heat pump installations ultimately [did not reach the targets](#) of the 2022 SEAI Business Plan. Although there was an increase of 15% from 2021, the installation rates were nowhere near targets. The National Residential Retrofit Plan established a heat pump target of 400,000 installations by 2030, which is not in line with the current commitment. In March 2023, a Government package was launched to increase grant funding from [€3,500 up to €6,500](#) for heat pump installations. Barriers to installation were low workforce capacity, high equipment costs, [supply chain issues](#), and the overall high cost of living.

2024 Progress: Although no programme specifically for heat pump installation has been created, as confirmed by a stakeholder, the [Home Energy Upgrade Loan Scheme](#) encompasses the installation of

heat pumps via the [Better Energy Homes Scheme](#). Grants for heat pump installation have increased to [€10,500](#) in certain circumstances. In March 2024, SEAI published 2 reports regarding barriers to heat pump installation using insights from [heat pump installers](#) and [homeowners](#). Barriers included costs, administrative burdens, and knowledge gaps. Only about [16,600](#) heat pumps have been installed since 2019. A stakeholder felt insufficient information campaigns regarding heat pumps was a barrier to their widespread implementation. In July 2024, a [scheme](#) incentivizing qualified plumbers to partake in heat pump installation training was introduced.

7o. "Publish a feasibility study on establishing a district heating authority and setting new targets for district heating as part of a new strategy. This will be in addition to developing a regulatory environment for district heating."

2021-2023 Progress: Two planned district heating pilot schemes in Dublin received approximately [€25 million in Government funding](#) through the Climate Action Fund in 2021. The feasibility study [was published](#) as part of the SEAI 'National Heat Study' in February 2022. A new [District Heating Steering Group](#) was working on policy, planning, funding, and standards. This group was expected to [deliver a report to the Government](#) in Q4 2022. In November 2022, Minister Eamon Ryan [reported](#) that the District Heating Steering Group had met 10 times since its establishment and that the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) was appointed as the regulator for district heating. Similarly, the SEAI launched a programme of pilot feasibility surveys. In April 2023, the [Heat and Built Environment Delivery Taskforce Terms of Reference](#) was published, with the Steering Group acting as working group. In March 2023, the Steering Group shared in a [task force meeting](#) that the report had been finalised and was under review by the Minister with plans for Government review. In April 2023, Tallaght [launched](#) the first "large-scale district heating network," managed by the South Dublin County Council and Codema.

2024 Progress: In August 2023, Minister Eamon Ryan launched the [District Heating Steering Group Report](#), recommending the development of legislative, financial, and centralized support for the successful development of district heating systems. A National District Heating Centre of Excellence was [established](#) within SEAI to centralize the development of district heating networks. The centre will focus on the development of national strategy for long-term growth amongst other things. The District Heating Steering Group was reconstituted as a working group under the [Heat and Built Environment Taskforce](#) to implement its Group Report. The Taskforce will also develop a [Heat Policy Statement](#). CRU continues developing the necessary [regulatory framework](#) for district heating. Support for the development of district heating is affirmed in the draft [Revised National Planning Framework](#), published in July 2024.

7p. "Take actions to drive energy-efficiency upgrades in rented properties and commercial building stock, following a consultation process that has already been completed."

2021-2023 Progress: Under the Housing For All Plan, [landlords](#) needed to meet a minimum energy rating for their rental properties from 2025. As of 2022, consultation had yet to be published and there was no plan for retrofitting the private rental sector. Despite this, grants were made available to landlords, covering 30-50% of the cost and 80% of costs. In the Finance Act 2022, a new [tax credit](#) was introduced for small-scale landlords who implement retrofits while the tenant remained in the home. In June 2023, the Minister for Finance explained that the [amount of deduction that can be claimed](#) is "the lesser of the qualifying expenditure incurred or €10,000," with a maximum limit of two rental properties. Under the [National Retrofit Plan](#), a minimum efficiency rating requirement for private rental properties from 2025 was targeted.

2024 Progress: Through the [Home Energy Upgrade Loan Scheme](#), [landlords](#) are now able to apply for loans to facilitate upgrading their properties, though BER standards still need to be set. Work is [currently ongoing](#) for the development of BER standards for rental properties, with the Department

of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Economic and Social Research Institute conducting joint research and is expected to be completed later this year.

7q. "Publish a new Public Sector Decarbonisation Strategy for 2030. This will include the development of policies to ensure greater use of energy performance contracts within the public service."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, DECC developed a methodology for measuring, accounting, and reporting public sector GHG emission reductions and expected to submit this for Government approval in [Q2 2021](#). In May 2023, Minister Eamon Ryan and Minister of State Ossian Smyth received [Cabinet approval](#) for the [Public Sector Climate Action Mandate 2023](#). This mandate applies to all bodies outlined under the decarbonisation targets, except for Local Authorities, Commercial Semi-State Bodies and the School Sector, pushing for public bodies to take part in SEAI's Partnership Programme. A [Public Sector Climate Action Strategy 2023-2025](#) was also published, laying the foundation for the achievement of Ireland's climate targets.

2024 Progress: An updated [Public Sector Climate Action Mandate](#) was published in preparation for NCAP 2024. Public sector bodies subject to the mandate must develop annual Climate Action Roadmap guided by [SEAI and the EPA](#). Recognizing the role the public sector has in leading the transition to a carbon-neutral society, a [Green Public Procurement Strategy](#) was published in April 2024. Discussion on development of a new [public procurement strategy](#) has also begun.

7r. "Ensure that development of sustainable communities is the core objective of the LDA, delivering sustainable, climate resilient, low-carbon housing."

2021-2023 Progress: The Land Development Agency Act was enacted in July 2021, primarily focusing on city centre housing. According to a [representative of the LDA](#), "(with) half a million homes projected to be built nationally by 2040, the LDA is working to support the delivery of climate resilient low carbon developments." A stakeholder stated the LDA was taking a holistic approach to sustainability and was applying for [Home Performance Index Certification](#) across all of their sites. In October 2022, the LDA introduced plans for a [Digital Hub Campus](#) to develop a sustainable and inclusive urban community. In the [Report on Relevant Public Land](#), sustainable development was cited as a key factor in current development projects, aiming to grow sustainable communities. While the LDA acknowledged sustainable community development as a primary focus, it has been criticized as "full of lofty ideas but short on demonstrable plans".

2024 Progress: Published in March 2024, the [LDA Statement of Strategy 2024-2028](#) promotes sustainable community development through use of climate adaptive technologies, prioritization of publicly owned land and underutilised buildings, and focusing on land with compact development potential. Despite the constraints previously mentioned, [some progress](#) has been made, with around 6,000 houses out of 10,000 now securing planning permission. Minister Darragh O'Brien has stated that [enabling sustainable growth](#) and development is a key objective of the LDA. In June 2024, the [Planning and Development Bill 2023](#) passed the Seanad Éireann 3rd stage. In that iteration, the LDA is allowed to bring to the attention of the planning authority sites whose development would benefit the State and be in the common good. The draft [Revised National Planning Framework](#) further supports this commitment by reaffirming support for the LDA's sustainable developments.

8. Energy

8a. "We will implement a new National Energy Efficiency Action Plan to reduce energy use, including behavioural and awareness aspects of energy efficiency such as building and data management."

2021-2023 Progress: The National Energy Efficiency Action Plan was [replaced by the National Energy and Climate Plan](#) (NECP). Measures from the plan were implemented in Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP23). CAP23 highlighted the [National Energy Security Framework](#) in delivering change in relation to energy efficiency. There was a focus on improvement from SEAI in relation to their [Pathfinder Programme](#). Another focal point in progress was seen in the [National Retrofit Plan](#) to improve energy efficiency in housing. Further energy efficiency plans were included in the [Resource Efficiency Action Plan](#). Energy efficiency plans were also included in the Public [Sector Climate Action Mandate 2023](#). [Grants](#) were established to implement energy efficiency measures in businesses. One NGO representative praised the Government's commitment and investment in increasing energy efficiency. However, accessibility to some grants and schemes remained a concern.

2024 Progress: An updated NECP [was submitted](#) to the European Commission in July 2024 after the June deadline. [CAP24 includes an action](#) to deliver a demand side strategy which aligns with EU energy efficiency requirements. One stakeholder noted the lack of a new heat policy in response to the SEAI's national heat analysis while also pointing out progress through incentives on energy efficiency, such as the Low Cost Loan Scheme.

8b. "We will take the necessary action to deliver at least 70% renewable electricity by 2030."

2021-2023 Progress: In [2020](#), 42.1% of Ireland's electricity came from renewables. The renewed National Development Plan increased the commitment to renewable energy share to 80% by 2030. According to a stakeholder, EirGrid's [Shaping Our Electricity Future Strategy](#) was not capable of delivering an 80% target. Another stakeholder highlighted that the target will become more difficult to achieve as electricity demand increases. Ireland's renewable electricity share [was 36.4% in 2021](#).

2024 Progress: An Accelerating Renewable Electricity Taskforce [was created in Q1 2023](#). There was an [increase in the renewable share](#) in electricity generation rising from 38.6% in 2022 to 40.7% in 2023. According to the [Climate Change Advisory Council](#), "*delays remain prevalent in the planning process, especially for onshore wind projects*", with no wind projects gaining planning approval in the 12 months to September 2023. There are [delays of over one year on 52% of necessary grid upgrades](#). The Council stated that the Government must enact the Planning and Development Bill 2023 and adequately resource planning authorities to overcome this. The Planning and Development Bill [passed through the report stage](#) in July 2024. In July 2024, [Minister Ryan secured cabinet approval](#) to carry out the Accelerating Renewable Electricity Taskforce Implementation Plan on speeding up renewable electricity delivery. The plan sets out 70 actions across grid, planning and markets. A stakeholder noted that the Government has made this commitment a very strong priority. However, another stakeholder stated that, although progress was being made, the Government is not on track to achieve this target primarily due to the planning system. In July 2024, [the Government approved](#) an Electricity Storage Policy Framework and principles guiding the formation of a Private Wires Policy Framework. Minister Ryan stated that these policies "*are essential ... to our renewable electricity ambitions.*" A stakeholder stated that they remain optimistic that the 80% target will be met and that, if it is missed, it will be missed "*by a year or two*" not by ten years. This stakeholder did note that, although some progress has been made regarding hybrid grid connections, it has been relatively slow. Another stakeholder added that hybrid connections represent an opportunity to rapidly deploy more renewables.

8c. "Hold the first Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) auction by the end of 2020, with auctions held each year thereafter, including the first RESS auction for offshore wind in 2021."

2021-2023 Progress: The first RESS auction was completed in 2020. However, 2021's onshore wind RESS auction was delayed. Two successful RESS auctions were held in 2022, in addition to several corporate power purchase agreements. The [first off-shore wind auction](#) was announced in 2023 priced at [€86.05/MWh](#), one of the lowest prices paid by an emerging offshore wind market worldwide. A source cited this as progress towards the target of developing 5GW of offshore wind by 2030 as the first auction accounted for 3.1GW. However, while there was progress made on onshore wind, projects are expected to struggle to get through the planning system.

2024 Progress: [RESS 3 took place](#) in Autumn 2023 striking an average price of €100.47/MWh with an Offer Quantity of 646MW, 498MW of which were for solar power. The [RESS 4 auction](#) is scheduled for August 2024. [ORESS 2.1](#) will take place in late 2024 or in the first half of 2025, depending on whether the Designated Maritime Area Plan is referred for judicial review. One stakeholder noted that this commitment is more or less complete and that the department has continually improved the auction system.

8d. "Produce a whole-of-government plan setting out how we will deliver at least 70% renewable electricity by 2030 and how we will develop the necessary skills base, supply chains, legislation, and infrastructure to enable it. This new plan will make recommendations for how the deployment of renewable electricity can be sped up, for example the provision and permissioning of grid connections."

2021-2023 Progress: [CAP23](#) is as a whole-of-Government plan to achieve 80% renewable electricity by 2030, including a focus on the acceleration of renewable energy development which accounts for specific planning issues around grid connections.

2024 Progress: Similar to CAP23, [CAP24 sets out](#) key actions to deliver 80% renewable electricity by 2030, including actions on skills and grid infrastructure. A stakeholder stated that, although no dedicated plan was developed beyond the Climate Action Plan, there are dedicated task forces covering each of the stated topics.

8e. "Complete the Celtic Interconnector to connect Ireland's electricity grid to France."

2021-2023 Progress: [The Celtic Inter-Connector](#) commitment was on track. Stakeholders were broadly positive at the time.

2024 Progress: Construction of the Celtic Interconnector [is ongoing](#) and is expected to be completed in 2026. A stakeholder stated that, as far as they are aware, this is on track.

8f. "Commence planning for future interconnection with our neighbours."

2021-2023 Progress: GreenLink (linking Ireland to Britain) reached financial close and entered construction phase, aiming for completion by the end of 2023/2024. The North-South interconnector was [fully approved in Q4 2021, and Eirgrid is ready to begin construction](#).

2024 Progress: The GreenLink is on track to be commissioned by the end of 2024, according to the [GreenLink community newsletter](#). A stakeholder noted that, as far as they are aware, this is on track. [Eirgrid expects](#) construction of the North-South interconnector to begin in 2024 and take three years. However, media reports suggest there is [significant local opposition](#) to the installation of pylons on private land. In July 2023, Minister Ryan produced a [policy statement](#) which considered further interconnection with France, Spain, Britain, and Belgium or the Netherlands. A stakeholder noted that the [MaresConnect](#) interconnector between Britain and Ireland is in regulatory discussions.

8g. "Finalise and publish the Wind Energy Guidelines, having regard to the public consultation that has just taken place."

2021-2023 Progress: In [March 2023](#), the 2006 Wind Energy Guidelines remained in place.

Stakeholders expressed concerns in relation to this commitment, highlighting that its completion should have been “*straight forward*”. This commitment was viewed as a “*frustrating delay*”.

2024 Progress: Minister O’Brien [stated](#) that his department is working toward the publication of updated Wind Energy Development Guidelines in Q4 2024. Minister Ryan [has stated](#) that offshore wind energy marine planning guidelines are expected to be finalised by Q4 2024. One stakeholder shared that they “*would be very surprised*” if either the onshore or offshore wind energy guidelines are completed in these timelines. They also noted that the delay is a “*real frustration*” and getting it done as quickly as possible is important.

8h. “Develop a Solar Energy Strategy for rooftop and ground based photovoltaics, to ensure that a greater share of our electricity needs is met through solar power.”

2021-2023 Progress: A source indicated this commitment was addressed in Climate Action Plan 2021. Microgeneration grants, microgeneration clean export premiums, and clean export guarantees with RESS will include small-scale generation, and consultations will be part of the solar strategy by Q3 2022. One stakeholder noted progress could be seen through the [abolishment of VAT on solar panels on houses and public buildings](#). Positive progress was acknowledged by stakeholders regarding rooftop [solar and other](#) solar projects with an “*enormous pipeline to come*”. [Support](#) was available for businesses in relation to taking up solar. [There was also a focus on accelerating the development of solar farms](#).

2024 Progress: It appears that no overarching Solar Energy Strategy has been developed. However, as of February 2024, [1GW of solar energy was connected](#) to the grid, less than two years after the connection of Ireland’s first solar farm. In July 2024, the [ESB announced](#) that 100,000 microgenerators were connected to the electricity grid and that 750 connections were taking place each week. A stakeholder noted that domestic and commercial supports are established and that solar has been the fastest renewable to get up and running and has gone from a standing start five years ago to now making a significant contribution to Ireland’s electricity supply.

8i. “Continue Eirgrid’s programme ‘Delivering a Secure, Sustainable Electricity System’ (DS3).”

2021-2023 Progress: DS3 was completed in 2020 and has been replaced by ‘Shaping Our Electricity Future Version 1’. The progress in relation to this commitment was acknowledged by stakeholders as “pretty good” with extra projects underway.

2024 Progress: ‘Shaping Our Electricity Future Version 1.1’ as an update to version 1 [has been launched](#). One stakeholder considered this commitment ‘achieved’. In April 2024, the [ESB announced](#) that 1GW of energy storage had been connected to the electricity grid. Another stakeholder believed the Government is continuing to support this.

8j. “Ensure that the energy efficiency potential of smart metres starts to be deployed in 2021 and that all mechanical electricity metres are replaced by 2024.”

2021-2023 Progress: Smart metre installation was on track with over 750,000 smart metres installed by mid-2022, expected to rise to 1.1 million by the end of the year. The National Smart Metering Programme, overseen by the CRU, [“will roll out and install 2.3 million metres by 2025”](#).

2024 Progress: Despite progress installing smart meters, one stakeholder pointed out that the tariff design does not ensure the realisation of the energy efficiency potential of smart meters. According to [media reports](#), only 11% of electricity users have signed up for smart tariffs. The stakeholder also pointed out the lack of progress on dynamic tariffs. [CAP24 includes an action](#) to “*publish a regulatory decision on dynamic green electricity tariffs*.” The CRU has published consultations on [incentivising the uptake of time of use tariffs](#) and on [dynamic pricing tariffs](#). Another stakeholder stated that 1.7 million smart metres are now installed. They also noted that there has been a push to get the benefits of the metres to people.

8k. "Invest in research and development in 'green' hydrogen (generated using excess renewable energy) as a fuel for power generation, manufacturing, energy storage and transport."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2022, the [Green Hydrogen Strategy Bill 2022](#), introduced in February 2022 was before second stage of the Dáil aiming to publish a hydrogen strategy within six months. Stakeholders felt green hydrogen required more policy support. Ireland is viewed as "behind the curve" in comparison to other EU members. However, a [review](#) of energy security supply presented an array of measures mentioning hydrogen. A "[joint declaration of intent on cooperation in the field of green hydrogen](#)" was signed between Ireland and Germany. The [National Hydrogen Strategy](#) was published in July 2023. The strategy focused on decarbonisation and improving Ireland's energy supply security. However, it may take 1-2 years to deliver this strategy. There will be a focus on three areas: "infrastructure, where it will come from, and how it will be handled".

2024 Progress: One stakeholder noted that the National Hydrogen Strategy was 'relatively progressive' and that they were not aware of any subsequent developments. Another stakeholder said that "there is a degree of frustration that everything is moving quite slowly in that context" and that things have not progressed as far as they would have liked.

8l. "Produce a longer-term plan setting out how, as a country, we will take advantage of the massive potential of offshore energy on the Atlantic Coast. This plan will set out how Ireland can become a major contributor to a pan-European renewable energy generation and transmission system, taking advantage of a potential of at least 30GW of offshore floating wind power in our deeper waters in the Atlantic."

2021-2023 Progress: In May 2021, DECC published a [framework](#) for Ireland's future offshore electricity transmission system. According to a source, most of the resources in offshore renewable energy (ORE) development were dedicated to achieving the 5GW target in CAP21. In December 2021, the Government published a [Policy Statement "on the facilitation of Offshore Renewable Energy by Commercial Ports in Ireland"](#). Additionally, "[A number of ports and private entities are already progressing plans](#)" to support offshore renewable energy. In Q1 2023, a [consultation](#) was run in relation to offshore renewable energy development.

2024 Progress: In May 2024, the Future Framework for Offshore Renewable Energy [was published](#), focusing on renewable electricity targets after 2030, outlining the potential for Ireland to become an exporter of renewable electricity. One stakeholder noted that they "would have liked to have seen it earlier in the Government's term of office" and would like to see it moving ahead more quickly, especially the development of Designated Maritime Area Plans for the West Coast. In March, 2024 '[Powering Prosperity – Ireland's Offshore Wind Industrial Strategy](#)' was published, including 40 actions to be implemented in 2024 and 2025 to build a strong offshore wind supply chain in Ireland. The [Draft First Revision to the National Planning Framework](#) aims to support "the progressive development of Ireland's offshore renewable energy potential", including development of enabling grid and port infrastructure as a National Policy Objective. However, [recent media coverage](#) indicates Ireland currently does not plan to join in with floating offshore wind development in the Atlantic until sometime in the 2030s and unfortunately possibly closer to the 2040s as floating offshore wind in the Atlantic faces challenges, particularly due to the harsh environment of the Atlantic Ocean off the west coast of Ireland.

8m. "Increase the target for the number of Sustainable Energy Communities."

2021-2023 Progress: The Government's [Interim Climate Actions progress report](#) (May 2021) aimed for a target of 1,500 Sustainable Energy Communities by 2030. A source highlighted several community projects currently under construction and a move from "auction to a feed-in tariff type approach". [Climate action proposals](#) were published to support sustainable energy communities, highlighting the need for further resources and the introduction of a "new local energy action fund".

2024 Progress: The [target of 1,500](#) sustainable energy communities has not changed from the target

in [Climate Action Plan 2019](#). [According to the SEAI](#), there are now over 800 communities, up from 297 in July 2019.

8n. "Prioritise the development of microgeneration, letting people sell excess power back to the grid by June 2021."

2021-2023 Progress: The [Micro-Generation Support Scheme](#), published in 2022, laid out a structure for [supporting micro-generation in Ireland](#). The tariff amount is set by each provider at an expected *"fair market rate"*. SEAI grants for new microgeneration projects (both domestic and non-domestic) and the CEP tariff will be gradually phased out from 2024 onwards, a move criticised by the Micro Renewable Energy Federation (See Commitment 1.2e). One stakeholder felt that *"micro-generation in terms of solar panels is a small and significant success story in making those connections among ordinary people"*. The next phase of the scheme was expected to be published in summer 2023.

2024 Progress: The sale of excess power back to the grid has been possible since 2022. In January 2024, grants for domestic solar PV installations were reduced by €300 to a [maximum of €2,100](#). In July 2024, the [ESB announced](#) that 100,000 microgenerators are now connected to the electricity grid and that 750 connections are taking place each week. In June 2024, the Commission for Regulation of Utilities published [Clean Export Guarantee - Enduring Arrangements to Remunerate Customers for Microgeneration Exports](#) as a long term continuation of the original interim arrangements published in 2022.

8o. "Ensure that community energy can play a role in reaching at least 70% renewable electricity, including a community benefit fund and a community category within the auction."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2020, the SEAI and DECC [launched a €28 million](#) Community Energy Grant Scheme for community energy projects across Ireland. The enabling framework commenced for the 2030 national target of 500MW. Seventeen projects were contracted through RESS.

2024 Progress: The Government published the [Small-Scale Renewable Electricity Support Scheme](#) to support farmers, businesses, and community energy projects. The Irish Farmers' Association [commented](#) that the rates offered for farmers under this scheme are too low for many projects to be economically viable. Eight community projects [signed](#) agreements to deliver energy under RESS2. Under RESS auctions, a [community benefit fund](#) has been required since 2021. However, one stakeholder noted that substantial obstacles remain for communities to produce their own energy. Another stakeholder noted that the Government would miss community energy targets ([500MW by 2030](#)) by a 'stratospheric figure' and that further support needs to be offered to communities earlier in the process. This stakeholder did acknowledge that the community benefit funds for offshore wind farms are the most generous they had ever heard of. They also stated that more should be done to ensure these funds are distributed in a way that supports the Just Transition and not just existing well organised clubs and organisations, which are used to applying for grant funding.

8p. "Support a new Green Flag programme for communities, building on the successful programme in schools."

2021-2023 Progress: [Green Flag awards were held](#) in 2022. One stakeholder confirmed [this commitment is referred to in An Taisce's Legacy4Life](#) Green Communities Project Proposal. This project is funded by DHLGH and DECC. Furthermore, this funding aids research on how to deliver this commitment. This support was in place in 2022 and 2023. A report was to be sent to these departments at the end of 2023 to *"consolidate the Green Communities Low Carbon Plan"* permanently. In 2020, there was a focus on including Green Flags in communities. An Taisce administered the Foundation for Environmental Education Green Schools Green Flag Programme.

2024 Progress: A new Green Flag awards scheme was [launched](#) for parks and green spaces by An Taisce.

8q. "Conclude the review of the current planning exemptions relating to solar panels, to ensure that households, schools, and communities can be strong champions of climate action."

2021-2023 Progress: Stakeholders highlighted extreme delays in removing planning requirements for rooftop solar panels as a particular failure. However, one stakeholder commended the Government in removing obstacles in accessing solar panels. Changes to planning law are taking place to allow people to have more exemptions in putting solar on their rooftops. Budget [2023](#) will enable 6KW output for photovoltaic panels in [schools](#).

2024 Progress: As of October 2022, rooftop solar panels [have been granted an exemption](#) from planning permission unless near aviation sites, protected structures, and Architectural Conservation Areas. In July 2024, the [ESB announced](#) that 100,000 microgenerators were connected to the electricity grid and that 750 connections were taking place each week.

8r. "Develop new stress tests for financial institutions to look at the impact of tangible risks of higher temperature scenarios and involvement with the fossil-fuel economy on their portfolios, as recommended by the Taskforce on Climate Financial Disclosures."

2021-2023 Progress: Financial Stress Tests were conducted by the European Central Bank and were the first to incorporate climate criteria. Relevant EU legislation was being drafted in this area and due to be published by mid-July 2022. Irish banks participating in this scheme included [Bank of Ireland and AIB](#). [A financial sector assessment program-technical note on stress testing](#) took place in Ireland. One stakeholder expressed concern in relation to this commitment due to the risk of "greenwashing" and felt there was a limited amount of evidence of this sector divesting fossil fuel assets. The [banking sector](#) will face climate obligations and [reporting](#) under EU directives, such as the [Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive](#). [An update](#) was made to Ireland's finance strategy in 2023 with mention of risks involving climate change.

2024 Progress: One stakeholder noted that, as far as they were aware, no further progress has been made on this commitment. Another stakeholder commented that stress tests are being developed across financial institutions at EU level and as such will then percolate into the Irish situation. [In response to a Parliamentary Question](#), Minister Jack Chambers noted that the European Central Bank is the competent authority to carry out stress tests on Significant Supervised Institutions (including Bank of Ireland and AIB). The Minister also stated that Irish banks are part of the European Commission's "One-off Fit-for-55 climate risk scenario analysis", which is to be published in January 2025 and that the Central Bank is working "on the banking sector's exposure to climate risks."

8s. "Develop a regulatory environment to support the development of district heating."

2021 - 2023 Progress: A [District Heating Steering Group](#) was established under CAP21. In November 2020, DECC published 'Geothermal Energy in Ireland - A Roadmap for a Policy and Regulatory Framework', outlining how geothermal energy could be harnessed for district heating projects. [A Heat and Built Environment taskforce](#) was established in 2023 to further progress of district heating. [CAP23](#) mentions plans to develop district heating.

2024 Progress: A District Heating Steering Group [Report](#) was published in July 2023 which sets out recommendations for the development of district heating in Ireland. The report recommended that DECC bring forward legislative proposals to create a proper regulatory environment for the sector. [Ireland's first](#) large scale district heating network was launched in Tallaght in April 2023. A National District Heating Centre of Excellence was [established](#) within SEAI to centralize the development of district heating networks. The centre will focus on the development of national strategy for long-term growth, amongst other things. The District Heating Steering Group has now been reconstituted as a working group under the [Heat and Built Environment Taskforce](#) to implement its Group Report. The Commission for Regulation of Utilities was named the [regulatory body](#) for district heating in the second half of 2023. The necessary [regulatory framework](#) is currently being developed. One

stakeholder noted that this is an area where they are not critical of the Government as they have been active on it. A stakeholder noted that the CRU has a district heating manager and team in place developing a regulatory environment for it. The [Draft First Revision to the National Planning Framework](#) includes supporting the growth and development of efficient district heating as a National Policy Objective. However, the Climate Change Advisory Council's 2024 [Built Environment Review](#) found that just two projects, representing 2.8% of the 2030 district heating target, are likely to be in operation by 2030. Their review states that challenges which need to be addressed include enabling legislation, regulation and governance among other factors. It also states that *"the publication of the National Heat Policy Statement and the enactment of the Heat Bill are urgently required to support the accelerated delivery of district heating schemes, implement the recommendations of the District Heating Steering Group and respond to the findings of SEAI's Heat Study in a national policy for district heating."*

8t. "Develop efficiency standards for equipment and processes, particularly those set to grow rapidly, such as Data Centres."

2021-2023 Progress: Growth in data centres resulted in increased demands on electricity, which put pressure on the security of supply. Additionally, the drive for the development of more data centres was highlighted as *"one of the most glaring inconsistencies" and a "contradiction"* in Irish climate policy. In May 2022, EirGrid announced they had cancelled the development of 30 data centre projects. This followed a de facto moratorium on new data centre projects announced in November 2022 by the CRU. [Large data centre owners](#) must publish their energy usage under EU guidelines as of March 2023. A [moratorium](#) was put in place in Dublin on new data centres being connected to the grid. One stakeholder felt this ban was due to the inability of the grid to cope with new connections rather than climate concerns. Stakeholders felt that while data centres are "efficient" energy users, they remain huge consumers of energy by volume and expressed concerns over the pressure data centres are placing on the electricity grid.

2024 Progress: An updated [EU Energy Efficiency Directive](#) was adopted in September 2023, introducing performance monitoring requirements and the EU Commission has [commissioned a study](#) into potential minimum performance standards for data centres. [A statement](#) on the role of data centres in Ireland's Enterprise Strategy was published in July 2022 containing a self-regulatory pact, including efficiency targets. The CRU [has concluded public consultation](#) on a 'Large Energy Users Connection Policy' and is expected [to complete the policy this year](#). The [Climate Change Advisory Council recommends](#) that, *"the Government should ensure pricing incentives for data centres and other large energy users to shift electricity usage to times of low carbon emissions and to give the public access to data on their energy efficiency and sustainability performance"*. One stakeholder felt data centre development is counteracting gains made in rolling out renewable energy generation and that there should be a ban on the construction of new data centres.

8u. "Develop expectations for 'Obligated Entities' to leverage carbon credits."

2021-2023 Progress: The Energy Efficiency Obligation Scheme was [finalised](#) in October 2022. Carbon farming was to be included as a part of agriculture, but this was not expected to be completed until 2024. [In November 2022 the carbon farming proposal](#) was viewed as needing a lot more assessment and "disappointing" to the IFA. Following this, the implementation of carbon farming was expressed as being [undetermined and with significant challenges](#) remaining. [A report released in May 2023](#) noted that carbon farming was expected to be an "enterprise" soon. [In May 2023, a debate](#) confirmed that carbon farming is being developed in Ireland with further mention of the need for a consultation on carbon farming initiatives for farmers.

2024 Progress: [New legislation](#) redesigning the Energy Efficiency Obligation Scheme was passed in October 2022, which allows for the exchange of energy credits but does not mention carbon credits. A stakeholder did not believe this had been done. DAFM launched a [consultation on a National](#)

[Carbon Framework](#), focused on carbon farming in September 2023. In January 2024, Minister McConalogue [gave no timeline](#) for the framework's completion, saying that further research was required. A stakeholder noted that, beyond the EU Emissions Trading Scheme, there is no use of carbon credits by Obligated Entities other than companies purchases from voluntary carbon markets.

8v. "Develop a policy framework for low emission zones."

2021-2023 Progress: An interim policy was completed and low-emission zones will be incorporated into the Clean Air Strategy. [A National Demand Strategy](#) was expected to be complete by the end of 2023 to deal with congestion issues. [The Clean Air Strategy](#) references development of a National Demand Strategy, incorporating low-emission zones. Multiple stakeholders expressed concerns over this commitment, feeling the Government's will to implement low emission zones was not apparent.

2024 Progress: The Department of Transport published the '[Moving Together](#)' strategy on national demand management, which provides a framework for councils to act on managing and reducing congestion. The strategy refers to low emission zones and congestion charges as policy options.

8w. "End the issue of new licences for the exploration and extraction of gas, on the same basis as the recent decision in relation to oil exploration and extraction."

2021-2024 Outcome: The issuing of new licences for the exploration and extraction of oil and gas were formally banned by legislation amending the Petroleum and Other Minerals Development Act 1960. This legislation was included in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Amendment Act 2021. The Government introduced a ban on new oil and gas exploration licences (amending the 1960 Petroleum Act) in conjunction with the 2021 Climate (Amendment) Act. This commitment has been completed with a [ban on new licences for exploration and extraction of gas](#) and oil and was evaluated in the 2023 assessment. Stakeholders regarded completion of this commitment highly. However, there was concern that the ban focused on new licences and did not include existing licences though [reports](#) indicated existing licences for gas and oil exploration were being refused.

8x. "Ensure that Bord na Móna is required to take into account climate, biodiversity, and water objectives, as they deliver on their commercial mandate, through an amendment to the Turf Development Acts 1998."

2021-2023 Progress: The Turf Development Act was not amended. However, a stakeholder commended the reduced bog cutting and ending of peat sales by Bord na Móna. One stakeholder felt Bord na Móna demonstrated an "extreme turn around for what was a fossil fuel company". [Media reports](#) confirmed the closure of the last remaining peat factory in June 2023.

2024 Progress: The Turf Development Act 1998 has still not been amended. Minister Noonan [has stated](#) that Bord na Móna is "using best practice to rehabilitate post-production peatlands at a serious scale and is working with the NPWS on several peatland restoration projects." One stakeholder noted that Bord Na Móna had made particular progress on bog rewetting and in taking investment decisions in the interest of climate and biodiversity.

8y. "We shall withdraw the Shannon LNG terminal from the EU Projects of Common Interest list in 2021."

2021-2024 Outcome: Shannon LNG was not on the sixth PCI list, However, there remained a risk that Shannon LNG could retain certain benefits under EU law as a result of being on the previous list. This commitment is complete and has been [removed from the PCI list](#). It was evaluated as part of the 2023 assessment. Multiple stakeholders were concerned about applications being reviewed for LNG terminals in other parts of the State.

8z. "We do not support the importation of fracked gas and shall develop a policy statement to establish that approach."

2021-2024 Outcome: In May 2021, the Government published a [Policy Statement](#) on the Importation of Fracked Gas, which brought a moratorium on the importation of fracked gas and LNG, pending an ongoing energy security review. Despite this statement, Shannon LNG was still in a position to reapply. Stakeholders acknowledged the completion of this commitment and it was evaluated in the 2023 assessment. However, concerns were expressed over the remaining possibility of an LNG facility and that LNG cannot fully be ruled out. An NGO representative noted the ban on LNG as a positive result for this commitment.

9. Agriculture and Forestry

9a. "Carry out a baseline biodiversity survey on every farm to inform future policy development."

2021-2023 Progress: In December 2021, Minister Charlie McConalogue and Minister Pippa Hackett introduced the pilot [Farm Environmental Study \(FES\)](#), with a €5 million budget to create a baseline database across approximately 6,500 farms. In May 2022, applications to participate in 'Farm Environmental Surveys' (FES) [closed](#) with the aim to "set a baseline biodiversity database for agricultural land". Results were expected by the end of 2023.

2024 Progress: In November 2023, the [Teagasc National Farm Survey 2022 \(NFS\)](#) of 85,860 farms was published. While there were mentions of environmental and sustainable issues, there was no mention of biodiversity. In May 2024, the [Teagasc National Farm Survey Small Farms Report 2022 \(SFS\)](#) stated "Work is ongoing in the development of an indicator of biodiversity within the NFS [...] This will require access to relevant data." The [4th NBAP](#) has the target that by 2030 habitat biodiversity assessments will be conducted on all NFS farms. There was no update on the Farm Environmental Study as of July 2024.

9b. "Publish a new National Pollinator plan and encourage public bodies to promote and protect biodiversity."

2021-2024 Progress: See [Commitment 2f](#).

9c. "Complete a national hedgerow survey."

2021-2023 Progress: No national hedgerow survey was completed or announced. However, Monaghan County completed a local hedgerow survey in 2021 as part of the Monaghan Biodiversity and Heritage Strategic Plan. In 2021, the draft Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) introduced an [Area Monitoring System \(AMS\)](#) for simpler review of land use changes, such as unauthorised hedgerow removal. The transitional period of the policy was expected to finish in 2024.

2024 Progress: There has been no national hedgerow survey, but under the [Local Biodiversity Action Fund](#), a number of counties have plans to undertake a Hedgerow Survey. In June 2024, a Help Guide for Area Monitoring Systems (AMS) Notifications was [published](#), giving more details to farmers regarding AMS. The use of AMS became mandatory in January 2023. From 2024 onwards, all area-based schemes will be monitored under AMS.

9d. "Incentivise the rewetting of carbon-rich soils."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, contracts for peatland rewetting were [awarded and signed](#). A separate results-based initiative, FarmPeat, was officially launched by Minister Hackett in July 2021. In 2022, EU-funded and co-funded LIFE projects were progressing work on peatland rewetting. Several new NPWS projects were examining incentivisation of peatland rewetting through farming schemes and also incentivising Bord Na Móna through just transition funding to re-wet bogs. The focus of this commitment has mainly been on peatlands rather than non-peat carbon rich soils. In 2023, efforts from Bord Na Móna and FarmPEAT continued to drive peatland restoration and rewetting efforts. In

May 2023, then Taoiseach Leo Varadkar [expressed concern](#) over massive rewetting efforts on farmlands, stating it was too excessive.

2024 Progress: [Ireland's 4th National Biodiversity Plan](#) has a target that, by 2025, there will be significant progress to restore and rewet bog protected areas. Applications are now open for the new [community led peatlands and natura community engagement scheme 2024](#). The [Wetlands Restoration Scheme](#) opened under the EU Just Transition Fund. DHLGH and NPWS were awarded €12m to implement restoration works on a range of sites, including Natura 2000 sites. NPWS is currently recruiting a manager for this project. In July 2024, [Minister McConalogue stated](#) that the Government secured 'additional flexibilities' in the legal text of the Nature Restoration Law and the targets will now be 50% rather than 70% by 2050, with a third to be rewetted rather than half.

9e. "Invest in research in the agri-food sector, prioritising investment in areas such as climate and the bioeconomy."

2021-2023 Progress: Budget 2021 [provided an extra €4m in funding to Teagasc](#), as well as an increased allocation of €3m for the DAFM's competitive research funding programmes. The 25% emissions reduction target for the agricultural sector was announced in July 2022, but it was unclear how this will impact future research in the agri-food sector. In March 2023, DAFM [announced](#) their biennial research funding application period, providing opportunity for research awards in the agri-food, forest and bioeconomy sectors. In June 2023, a €32 million investment into the agri-food sector was [announced](#) by Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment Simon Coveney and Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine Charlie McConalogue as part of the €100 million Capital Investment Scheme for the Processing and Marketing of Agriculture products.

2024 Progress: In April 2024, the [Policy and Strategic Research Call \(PSSRC\)](#) called for research in a range of areas in the agri-food sector. A stakeholder commented that there have "been funding opportunities, particularly last year". DAFM announced an [ICT-AGRI-FOOD Joint Call](#). This project has a total of €1M in funding, with a maximum budget of €500K per project. In May 2024, UCD launched the [Co-Centre for Sustainable Food Systems](#) of €35m. This collaboration will spread across Ireland, Northern Ireland, and Britain with a focus on pushing change in food systems to achieve climate neutrality by 2050.

9f. "We will implement the National Policy Statement on the Bioeconomy, providing the agri-food sector with new opportunities, using biological resources from the land and sea in a sustainable and circular manner."

2021-2023 Progress: The first meeting of the National Bioeconomy Forum [took place in July](#) 2021. In 2022, there was strong representation of stakeholder groups within the forum. The new forum had met but the National Policy Statement had not yet been implemented. Following the National Policy Statement on the Bioeconomy in 2018, the Government launched the [High-Level Bioeconomy Implementation Group](#), with representation from DAFM and DECC. The group met fourteen times between 2018 and 2023. As a vital tool for the transition to a circular economy, bioeconomy policy development plays a major role in the [Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy 2022-2023](#). The Bioeconomy Action Plan consultation period closed in January 2023. In May 2023, the first report from the [Bioeconomy Stakeholder Forum](#) was published, while the Bioeconomy Implementation Group Second Progress Report was published in April 2023.

2024 Progress: Under the [4th NBAP](#), there is a target that by 2027 there will be feasibility assessments for bioeconomy projects. These assessments will be in line with the sustainability principles set out in the National Policy Statement on the Bioeconomy and seek to ensure that bioeconomy projects include environmental and social feasibility. [The Bioeconomy Action Plan 2023-2025](#) was published in October 2023, containing 33 actions across seven pillars. The purpose of this plan is to further develop Ireland's bioeconomy in line with the 2018 National Policy Statement on the Bioeconomy.

9g. "Explore and develop potential opportunities for farmers from anaerobic digestion."

2021-2023 Progress: [In July 2022, the Government announced](#) additional resources and commitments to scale up progress on anaerobic digestion, agreed as part of the sectoral emissions ceilings. This included up to 5.7 TWh of biomethane as part of a new "Anaerobic Digestion for Nature" programme. In May 2023, the [Joint Oireachtas Committee](#) on Agriculture, Food and the Marine discussed the development of a working group between DAFM and DECC to establish a national biomethane strategy. This working group will "*define the strategic direction for the production and delivery of the 5.7 TWh of indigenously produced biomethane*".

2024 Progress: [Ireland's National Biomethane Strategy](#) (NBS) was published in May 2024. The Government committed to supporting the delivery of up to 5.7TWh of indigenously produced biomethane by 2030. The mission of the NBS is that these changes will be agri-led and farmer-centric. However, a stakeholder commented that in reality the anaerobic digestion industry is becoming far more centralized due to the scale. Approximately 19 anaerobic digestion plants are either under construction or have planning secured could be eligible under the Biomethane Strategy. [An anaerobic digestion training course began in June](#), organised by the International Biogas and Bioenergy Centre of Competence (IBBK) and the Irish Bioenergy Association.

9h. "Develop climate action 'signpost farms' to provide on-farm experience of the benefits of farming sustainably."

2021-2023 Progress: Teagasc's Signpost Programme was launched in May 2021 with 100 demonstration farms. In June 2023, Teagasc announced the creation of a free Signpost Advisory Programme, which will support the advisory and training of participating farmers.

2024 Progress: In 2023, the [Signpost Programme](#) published results from their first year of operations, demonstrating that Signpost Farmers were producing milk, meat and grains with a lower carbon footprint than reported for the average Irish farmer, yet noting that Signpost Farmers could still make further progress in reducing emissions.

9i. "Establish an 'Energy Efficient Farming' scheme, to include a farm efficiency rating, educational support and grant subsidies for onsite renewable energy options and the promotion of energy efficient technology for farm use."

2021-2023 Progress: No such scheme was announced in 2021 or 2022. However, in February 2023, the Targeted Agriculture Modernisation Schemes (TAMS 3) began accepting applications for new solar grants under the [Solar Capital Investment Scheme](#) to implement solar infrastructure on farms, across buildings and equipment. According to a source, uptake and interest remained high in these solar grant programmes for farmers. Furthermore, in 2023, the SEAI offered financial [vouchers](#) to farmers for free energy audits.

2024 Progress: There is no specific Energy Efficient Farming scheme. However, there are a number of grants that encompass some goals of this scheme. The [second phase](#) of the [Small Scale Renewable Electricity Support scheme \(SRESS\)](#) had [high expectations in the farming community](#), but there are concerns that the low tariff rates will make farm-scale projects non-viable. Wind Energy Ireland shared their concerns regarding the low tariff rate to the [Irish Farmers Journal](#). One stakeholder commented that there is interest from farmers in renewable energy, including wind, but the energy needs of farms are too low for wind energy to be a viable option, thus solar farms are more feasible. The [Climate Action Plan](#) has set targets for 8 GW of solar power by 2030 to achieve the goal of increasing the share of renewable electricity by 80%. Despite the demand, the TAMS III Solar Capital Investment Scheme has an extremely [low application approval rate](#) with only around 19.6% of applications.

9j. "Expand programmes such as the Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme (ASSAP), working with farmers, industry, and advisory services to deliver real improvements in water quality."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2022, there were discussions about expanding programmes such as the ASSAP, but this was questionable due to uncertainty about effectiveness. See [Commitment 3.1.2d](#) & [Commitment 9.2.7k](#). In a February 2023 Parliamentary Question, Minister Charlie McConalogue discussed the [successful results](#) of ASSAP implementation and how it has resulted in significant funding for a Water European Innovation Partnership (EIP).

2024 Progress: See [Commitment 3.1.2d](#) and [Commitment 9.2.7k](#).

9k. "Implement the climate adaptation plan for the agri-food and seafood sector and assist these sectors to adapt with the changed environment."

2021-2023 Progress: There was no information available regarding the extent to which the plan was implemented. There did not seem to be any major policies addressing climate adaptation publicised by the Government, with the National Adaptation Framework and all Sectoral Adaptation plans carrying over from the previous Government. The [Climate Change Advisory Council's 2022 Annual Review](#) confirmed that "despite some progress at sectoral and local level, adaptation is still not adequately considered or represented in a range of policies or initiatives", noting "Limited progress" in the agriculture, forestry and seafood sector.

2024 Progress: 2024 was an extremely difficult year due to weather conditions, resulting in [poor overall returns](#) in farming. In April 2024, [Deputy Martin Heydon](#) spoke of the crisis farmers are facing, highlighting that farms with the best of land are now ruined and waterlogged. A new [National Adaptation Framework](#) was published in July 2024 referencing sustainable agriculture as central to climate adaptation for Ireland, with mentions of agroforestry, soil health, and reducing crop vulnerability to extreme weather. Teagasc held a [Farming for a Better Future Open Day](#) to support farmers in dealing with the aftermath of the difficult weather conditions.

9l. "Review pesticide use across the agricultural sector, while acknowledging the comparatively low level of pesticide use in Ireland; and provide supports to farmers who are undertaking these practices to reduce their dependence on such chemicals."

2021-2023 Progress: During [Minister's Questions in May 2021](#), Minister McConalogue stated "a number of measures are in place to review pesticide use across the agriculture sector. These include collection and analysis of pesticides sales data on an annual basis, a rolling programme of pesticide usage surveys, covering all main crops, and calculation of Harmonised Risk Indicators for assessing trends in risk from pesticide use." In 2022, no progress was available re-examining pesticide use. In June 2023, Minister Charlie McConalogue [shared](#) that DAFM is working with DECC, the EPA, and stakeholders to generate a plan for sustainable pesticide use, collection and disposal.

2024 Progress: [In October 2023](#), Minister McConalogue stated that the DAFM was collecting pesticide usage data covering pesticide use on grassland and fodder crops. As of 2023, chemical pesticide usage was down by 49% compared to the baseline 2015-2017. In February 2024, the [European Commission](#) withdrew its proposal to reduce the use of chemical pesticides in the EU by 50% by 2030. One stakeholder commented that Ireland has done little to reduce pesticide use in agriculture and that the Government providing alternative options to pesticides is not enough when the market is pushing farmers towards pesticide dependence.

9.1. Flagship Environmental Scheme

9.1a. "We will design a flagship environmental scheme under the new CAP that is user friendly for farmers, delivering broader environmental and biodiversity benefits and aligning financial support with climate, forestry, and land use objectives."

2021-2023 Progress: The [public consultation](#) on the proposed interventions outlined in Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan (CSP) 2023-2027 took place in 2021. The 1.5 billion euro "Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme" (ACRES) [was announced in June 2022](#) and was ["cited by the Government as a new REPS"](#). The scheme was composed of a focused Cooperation Projects scheme targeted towards specific geographical areas, which garnered €700 million of funds and a general scheme open to all farmers. The ICSFA argued that this scheme brought less benefits for farmers "who want to go the extra mile" compared to the previous REPS. The ACRES contracts started in January 2023 and all qualifying applicants were expected to be accepted in 2023. ACRES [Tranche 2](#) was expected to open Q4 of 2023. The [Basic Income Support for Sustainability](#) (BISS) programme closed May 2023.

2024 Progress: In February 2024, [Minister McConalogue announced that Interim payments are to be issued to ACRES participants](#). ACRES Tranche 1 contracts are still being processed with the intention to begin making payments to all eligible participants in June 2024. As of March 2024, [RTE has reported 9,000 farmers to be accepted into ACRES](#). The Irish Natura & Hill Farmers Association [critiqued the delay in ACRES](#) for Non-Productive Investments (NPIS), including hedgerows, woodland planting, bird boxes, etc. As of May 2024, there were an estimated 4,500 ACRES farmers awaiting clearance for NPIS. Delays in approvals were a continuous issue that stakeholders have pointed out across many of these commitments.

9.1b. "This will be complemented by an ambitious ECO-scheme under Pillar 1 of the CAP, rewarding farmers who deliver enhanced environmental performance." AND

9.1c. "We will pilot this agri-environment scheme during the CAP transition period, supported by additional exchequer funding. The scheme will seek to include farmers not currently in GLAS, who previously participated in AEOS, and those exiting GLAS. This pilot will inform the shape of the flagship agri-environment scheme for the next CAP."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, there was progress towards a new results-based programme for Irish farmers to replace the Green Low-carbon Agri-environment Scheme (GLAS), with the Results Based Environment Agri Pilot Programme (REAP). The scheme was oversubscribed, indicating farmers were keen to do their part. A separate results-based initiative, [FarmPeat](#), was launched for farmers with peat soils with €1.2 million in funding. In 2022, the REAP scheme continued with [3,740 farmers participating as of July 2022](#). The [National Peatlands Strategy Mid-Term Review and Implementation Plan](#) timeline included a target to develop an agri-environment framework with a Results Based Payment Scheme for improved blanket bog biodiversity. The framework was anticipated to be completed by Q4 of 2022.

2024 Progress: Minister McConalogue confirmed that not all farmers in the [2023 eco-scheme will receive a payment](#) due to issues with applications or technical issues with the Farm Advisory System (FAS) advisor. In February 2024, €1.1 million was paid to farmers under the eco-scheme. Within the [Wild Atlantic Nature project](#), farmers receive results-based payments for changes they make on their farm which benefit biodiversity. As of May 2024, 802 farmers have participated, with more than €3 million in payments made. The Government says that the knowledge gained has informed the development of the ACRES Cooperation Project.

9.2. National agri-food policy

9.2a. "Publish a successor strategy to Foodwise 2025, within six months of government formation, providing an ambitious blueprint for the industry for the years ahead, adding value sustainably in the agri-food sector into the future, and supporting family farms and employment in rural Ireland." AND

9.2b. "Ensure that, in addition to growing international markets and value-added export as a key priority, a strategic focus of the Foodwise 2025 successor strategy will be on environmental protection, reversing biodiversity decline and developing additional market opportunities for primary producers, closer to home."

2021-2023 Progress: In August 2021, the Government approved [Food Vision 2030](#). The Environmental Pillar reluctantly withdrew from this committee, concluding the draft strategy was *"woefully inadequate to meet the social and environmental challenges we face"*. An NGO representative stated that the Government had *"absolutely, categorically failed"* on this commitment, commenting that Food Vision 2030 was a document that engages in greenwashing to a large degree and the agri-food strategy perpetuated the agricultural model which is directly responsible for escalating nitrogen and phosphorus pollution and damaging the environment. The first [annual report](#) for Food Vision 2030 was launched in May 2023.

2024 Progress: The [second annual report of Food Vision 2030](#) was published in June 2024. One stakeholder commented that Food Vision 2030 does not deliver for farmer families and that many are struggling to remain viable due to the business-as-usual, market driven approach that Food Vision takes.

9.2c. "Build upon schemes such as Areas of Natural Constraint, the Beef Data and Genomics Programme, Beef Environmental Efficiency Programme (Suckler), the Knowledge Transfer Scheme and the Sheep Welfare Scheme, in a way that enhances farm incomes, while contributing to climate change, biodiversity and animal welfare objectives, and recognising their significant contribution to net farm incomes."

2021-2023 Progress: There were continued expansions in funding for a number of these. However, NGO representatives expressed concerns over their environmental impact, arguing these programmes may increase overall emissions. In May 2023, Minister McConalogue [announced](#) the launch of a new world-first genotyping programme for Irish cattle with a €23 million budget.

2024 Progress: [The annual budget for Areas of Natural Constraint is 250 million euro](#). In 2023, 99,256 applicants were paid approximately €248 million. DAFM are working on a design of measures [for a new Beef Welfare Scheme](#) operating in 2024 worth €20 million to eligible beef farmers. The Department is currently waiting for the terms and conditions to be confirmed along with EU state aid rules. The national scheme is set to complement the Suckler Carbon Efficiency Programme and there will be no conflicts for farmers participating in both. €200 per cow will continue to be delivered for suckler farmers. In April 2024, the [New National Sheep Welfare Scheme](#) was published with a budget of €15m. With four possible measures, participants are expected to complete two actions to receive the full payment per ewe. The applications closed May 2024.

9.2d. "The Government will undertake a national land use review, including farmland, forests, and peatlands, so that optimal land use options inform all relevant government decisions. The review will balance environmental, social, and economic considerations and involve a process of evaluation of the ecological characteristics of the land."

2021-2023 Progress: In March 2023, the Government [published](#) Phase I of the National Land Use Review, which *"gathered evidence about stakeholders; existing policy; and environmental, social and economic characteristics of land use to date."* Results reflected that 78% of Irish land is privately owned, 8% is publicly owned, and 14% is unable to be categorised. Questions were raised by

stakeholders about the level of relevant data gathered in the review.

2024 Progress: In October 2023, [phase 2 of the Land Use Review commenced](#). In the first phase of the review, the focus was on evidence gathering and was completed earlier in 2023. Phase 2 seeks to identify the key demands on land (private and public) to inform policy, with a focus on improving socioeconomic, climate, biodiversity, water, and air quality. Phase 2 also seeks to inform the preparation of future Climate Action Plans. Currently there are no results of the review.

9.2.1. Dairy

9.2.1a. "Invest strategically in the future development of the dairy sector, focusing on greater efficiency and sustainability."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2022, investments in the dairy sector occurred but did not deliver on environmental objectives. In April 2023, Minister McConalogue stated that investments in agricultural sustainability were '*larger than ever*'. Minister McConalogue specified that the dairy sector received investments for solar implementation and the Low Emission Slurry Spreading programme. Under TAMS III, the [Dairy Equipment Scheme](#) allows farmers the opportunity for funding to improve farm equipment technology.

2024 Progress: In February 2024, Minister McConalogue stated that the [dairy sector is already very sustainable](#), and that policies such as Food Vision 2030 aim for Ireland to be a leader in sustainable food systems. He also stated that he has no doubt that livestock farmers will take up diversification options that are promoted by the Government such as, organic farming, forestry, tillage, and anaerobic digestion. [As of April 2024](#), there have been 541 applications to the Dairy Equipment Scheme. There has been a decrease in these applications from Tranche 1 to Tranche 3. One stakeholder commented that investment has not been strategic as it has emphasised efficiency while neglecting to address the total environmental impacts.

9.2.1b. "Encourage investment in renewable infrastructure on farms to reduce energy costs."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2022, some progress was made in the area of renewable infrastructure on farms, including a [Bill on microgeneration combined with rooftop solar](#) (June 2022).

A source confirmed that significant progress was made to achieve this commitment. The Targeted Agriculture Modernisation Schemes (TAMS) II was closed, with [TAMS III](#) application dates published. TAMS provides a 60% grant for the installation of solar infrastructure on farm buildings with a €90,000 investment ceiling through the [Solar Capital Investment Scheme](#). In February 2023, applications opened. One stakeholder expressed concern that rural farmers will not be able to put energy back into the grid if the farm is too isolated. There was tax relief for renewable energy companies to buy solar farms, which was described as noncontroversial and in demand.

2024 Progress: In June 2024, Minister Ryan garnered approval for the [New Accelerating Renewable Electricity Taskforce Implementation Plan](#), which focuses on speeding up delivery of Ireland's renewable electricity, including "*developing a sustainable community energy sector and providing businesses and farms with opportunities to generate their own clean energy*". In March 2024, [RTE](#) reported on the growing interest amongst farmers to obtain solar panels. Teagasc's Barry Caslin stated that the interest is seen in beef and sheep farmers, with sheep farmers in particular seeing a higher return from solar panels than the typical returns from that of the sheep industry. While there are no obvious numbers on farmers with solar, it is clear that there is an opportunity for great expansion on Ireland's agricultural land.

9.2.2. Tillage

9.2.2a. "Work to increase the adoption at farm level of Teagasc recommendations for climate-smart cultivation methods."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, the Signpost Programme included the tillage sector among others. In December 2022, the [Signpost Programme](#) published tillage soil test results, with 'Soil Organic Carbon (SOC) and Tillage Soils' being measured as a means to combat climate change. In June 2023, a €10m [Tillage Incentive Scheme 2023](#) opened for applications. Minister McConalogue stated that the scheme was successful with a [6% increase](#) in tillage area.

2024 Progress: In February 2024, the IFA reported the need for funding for a new tillage Incentive and Sustainability Scheme for 2024. 2023 was a [difficult year](#) for the tillage industry due to weather and, according to the IFA, the Government needs to lend more support to secure the industry's long term viability. Teagasc hosted its first ['Train the Trainer' workshop](#) for the Climate Smart Advisors Project in March 2024. This workshop brought together 40 advisors from 27 countries across Europe together to support farmers in the transition to climate-resilient practices.

9.2.3. Horticulture

9.2.3a. "Review the supports available to the horticultural sector and encourage greater expansion and growth in this sector, supplying both the domestic and international market."

2021-2023 Progress: The Scheme 'Investment Aid for the Development of the Commercial Horticulture Sector' was [introduced in 2020](#) with [€5 million](#) allocated over the period 2020-2027. In 2022, additional funding was made available for the horticulture sector to maintain the industry. Food Vision 2030 called for a horticulture strategy, which was published in May 2023 as the [National Strategy Horticulture 2023 to 2027](#). If all actions are completed, the horticulture sector is expected to grow 30% in farmgate value from "[€529 million in 2022 to €688 million by the end of 2027](#)."

2024 Progress: In April 2024, Minister McConalogue discussed the range of [initiatives that DAFM has to support horticulture](#). The [2024 Scheme of Investment Aid for the Development of the Commercial Horticulture Sector](#) was announced in November 2023 with a budget of €10 million in 2024. Under the [CAP Strategic plan](#) and the EU funded Producer Organisational Scheme for Fruit and Vegetables there are supports for horticulture growers. In 2023, over €6 million was paid under this scheme. Growers are also eligible under the BISS scheme, ACRES, the Organic Farming Scheme, and TAMS. The Minister recognised the challenges faced by the horticulture sector in 2023 and secured an additional €2.38 million in funding under the [EU Agricultural Reserve for the Horticulture Crisis Fund](#).

9.2.4. Organic Farming

9.2.4a. "We will set an ambitious new target for organic farming, to meet changing consumer trends in this area." AND

9.2.4b. "We will commit to aligning Ireland's organic land area with that of the current EU average over the lifetime of this Government."

2021-2023 Progress: Food Vision 2030 set a target of at least 7.5% of agricultural area farmed organically by 2030. The Organic Farming Scheme [re-opened for applications](#) in March- April 2021, with a budget of €4 million. As of 2022, this commitment was improving incrementally. In March 2023, Minister McConalogue stated that the Organic Farming Scheme had [grown massively](#) over the last two years. The December 2022 application period saw 3,423 eligible applications. As of March 2023 there were 200,000 hectares under organic production, representing approximately 4% of the utilisable agricultural area, still below the CAP23 target of 10% by 2030. Minister McConalogue secured €256m for additional programmes to support development in the organic sector.

2024 Progress: In February 2024, [Minister Hackett announced that 1,050 additional farmers will be](#)

[participating in the Organic Farming Scheme](#). Thus, there will be over [5,000 participants in the scheme and a tripling of the area being farmed organically since 2020](#). The number of organic farmers has doubled to 4,000 in 2023 and the TAMS III Organic Capital Investment Scheme has the highest percentage of application approval at 72.5%. The [media](#) has widely [reported](#) this increase in numbers. However, one stakeholder shared concerns that the uptake of organic farming may not continue at the rate needed to reach the 2030 targets.

9.2.5. Animal Welfare

9.2.5a. "Extend the badger vaccination programme nationwide and end badger culling as soon as possible, consistent with the best scientific and veterinary advice."

2021-2023 Progress: According to the Irish Wildlife Trust, badger vaccination was rolled out in 2021, albeit slowly. While the badger culling numbers were declining, they remained around 5,000 per annum. Stakeholders did not see any indication that pressure was coming from the Government to accelerate this to the point where [culling will end any time soon](#). According to one stakeholder, this commitment was nowhere near being fulfilled in 2023. In a July 2023 article, the [Irish Wildlife Trust](#) discussed how there was an increase in culling numbers from 2020 to 2021 and called this a "serious fail (not only for badgers) on the Government's side."

2024 Progress: [In 2023, around 9,062 badgers were vaccinated](#), a significant increase from 7,000 in 2019. DAFM had captured and vaccinated 5,046 badgers as of May 2024. On average, approximately 5,500 are culled year on year. In 2023, there were 5,462 badgers culled and as of May 2024 there have been 2,451 badgers culled. The [Irish Farmers Journal](#) reported in defence of culling, stating that it is vital to reducing bovine TB. However, a stakeholder shared their concern over badgers becoming a scapegoat and their culling being used to ignore the impact of increasing livestock numbers restrictions on their movement is a significant contributor to the rise in bovine TB. [In Q1 of 2023, herd incidence in Bovine TB increased to 4.99%](#) and has been on the rise in Ireland since 2018. The expenditure on the National Tuberculosis Programme from 2021 to the end of Q1 2024 has reached €21.9 million, an 11% increase since 2023.

9.2.6 Young Farmers

9.2.6a. "Ensure an increased emphasis, through our agricultural colleges, on education in the areas of sustainability, agroecology, climate action and biodiversity, and the link to land use, soil health and agriculture."

2021-2023 Progress: No announcements were made regarding this commitment as of 2022. According to a source, an additional 2,000 farmers joined the organic farming industry in 2023 through the Organic Farming Scheme, which required farmers to partake in a 25 hour training course on organic practices. In February 2022, Minister Pippa Hackett launched the first MSc in Organic and Biological Agriculture with Waterford Institute of Technology. Several stakeholders commented that, despite not being aware of concrete examples, this did not mean progress was absent.

2024 Progress: A [number of universities](#) have launched programs and modules on sustainability, biodiversity, agroecology, etc. For example, [UCD's MSc\(Agr\) Sustainable & Rural Development](#) and the [UCC Sustainable Farming Academy](#). One stakeholder questioned to what extent the Government has facilitated the creation of these programs and stated that society has moved in this direction and thus the demand for such courses is simply higher.

9.2.7. Soil Health and Nutrient Management

9.2.7a. "Deliver an incremental and ambitious reduction in the use of inorganic nitrogen fertiliser through to 2030."

2021-2023 Progress: Food Vision 2030 restated this ambition, promising a reduction in emissions associated with chemical fertiliser by more than 50% by 2030. The CSO [reported](#) that nitrogen fertiliser sales went down 18% in 2022 and declined [56%](#) between October 2022 and March 2023. It is unclear if this was due to Government intervention or increasing cost of nitrogen fertiliser due to global concerns over gas shortages.

2024 Progress: [In 2023, fertiliser sales in Ireland declined 18% according to DAFM figures.](#) The EPA also released these figures in the July 2024 [Provisional Greenhouse Gas Emissions](#) report. It was reported that the total emissions from the Agriculture sector in 2023 decreased by 4.6% from 2022, the decrease in nitrogen fertilizer was cited as the most significant driver. This is a [31% decrease since 2018.](#) [Teagasc](#) indicates that the reduction was due to a combination of aspects including, the higher prices, changed practices, the tailoring of fertiliser plans, and an uptake of soil sampling. Chemical nitrogen use of 280,569 tonnes is below the Climate Action Plan target of 300,000. However, stakeholders are concerned about a potential rebound when prices stabilize.

9.2.7b. "Publish a National Soils Strategy that will assess all appropriate soil health parameters and will inform future policies on good soil-management practices."

2021-2023 Progress: A new soil survey was launched in 2021. In 2022, there was limited focus on soil health in the National Soils Strategy, but the survey had circulated and Minister Charlie McConalogue [launched a €10 million investment](#) for a soil sampling and analysis pilot programme. There was little evidence of further improvement in achieving this commitment as of 2023. However, land and soil surveys were included in EPA soil monitoring systems and the EU Common Agricultural Policy.

2024 Progress: [Phase 2 of DAFM's Soil Sampling and Analysis Programme began in January 2024.](#) This Programme will see approximately 90,000 soil samples taken in 2024. It is aimed at putting soil health, soil fertility, and soil carbon at the heart of Ireland's agricultural future. [In April 2023, new soil data, maps, and research findings were released at the final conference of the Terra Soil Project.](#) These resources are the results of a five-year project carried out by Geographical Survey Ireland and Teagasc to help farmers with their soil management and enhance soil health. A proposed Directive on Soil Monitoring and Resilience (Soil Monitoring Law) on an EU level was 'welcomed' in an [Opening Statement](#) by the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food, and the Marine.

9.2.7c. "Review the effects of the nitrates derogation on water quality, in conjunction with the EPA, which will inform future policy in this area."

2021-2023 Progress: Although this review was mentioned in Food Vision 2030, there was no evidence of the review having been commenced in 2021 or 2022. The Nitrates Action Plan was released and, according to a stakeholder, there was little noticeable change from the last plan, besides an increase in climate and water ambitions. In January 2023, applications for the 2023 Nitrates Derogation programme opened. One stakeholder expressed concern about the poor impact this programme could have on water quality.

2024 Progress: [In October 2023, DAFM published a Nitrates Derogation Map.](#) This map identifies areas subject to limitation in 2024. The EU Commission made it clear, in spite of Minister McConalogue's ask for flexibility, that the EU derogation decision would not change. The current [Nitrates Derogation](#) allows farmers to exceed the limit of 170kg of livestock manure nitrogen per hectare up to a maximum of 220 kg or 250 kg per hectare, subject to adherence to strict criteria. In

March 2024, the Nitrates Derogation Applications, Dairy banding were opened. Also in March, [DAFM provided a statement](#) regarding Compliance with the Nitrates Directives and the implications for Ireland, stating that the Department had conducted over 500 nitrates inspections on behalf of Local Authorities. In April 2024, Tirlán launched the [Farming for Water: River Slaney Project](#) to enhance water quality across the Slaney River Catchment area supported by Teagasc, Local Authorities Water Programme, and the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council. In June 2024, the Better Farming for Water campaign was launched by Teagasc to support and accelerate the reduction ["of nitrogen, phosphate, sediment and pesticides entering our river network through either diffuse or point source pathways from agricultural sources."](#)

9.2.7d. "Work with nitrates derogation farmers to improve environmental outcomes on their farms, ensuring the sustainable use of the derogation, in line with our environmental objectives."

2021-2023 Progress: The [terms and conditions](#) of the Nitrates Derogation were updated for 2021. In 2022, no significant shift in environmental requirements occurred from the Nitrates Derogation. The [2023 Nitrates Derogation](#) applications opened in January 2023, which included the new opportunity for dairy farmers to participate. In March 2022, An Taisce [opposed](#) the Nitrates Action Programme (NAP) 2022 - 2025, stating that *"necessary safeguards for water quality are not in place."*

2024 Progress: For 2024, [DAFM has released 12 terms and conditions for Nitrates Derogation](#) as mandatory requirements to gain the Nitrates Derogation: compulsory liming; low emission slurry spreading; reduction in crude protein; compulsory environmental training course; grassland management; clover and grass seed mixtures; commonage lands; farm biodiversity; soil sampling; sloping roadways for water quality; fencing and drinking points for bovine; and spacing of water troughs. In 2024, Nitrates Derogation farmers must also apply for the 2024 BISS scheme for their direct income support for sustainable practices. In February 2024, Oireachtas, [Minister McConalogue](#) stated that grassland farmers seeking a Nitrates Derogation license must submit a Nutrient Management Plan as well as providing soil samples. June 2024, [Better Farming for Water campaign](#) was launched by Teagasc, which promotes a number sustainable practices for use of the derogation, which are similar to the terms and conditions DAFM has released, but also include over-winter green cover, buffer strips, etc. to mitigate nutrient loss.

9.2.7e. "Encourage farming practices, which preserve or enhance soil organic matter."

2021-2023 Progress: Various stakeholders commented that this commitment was fairly vague and there had been limited advice surrounding farming practices and soil health.

2024 Progress: [Meade Farm](#) is currently running an online competition regarding the addition of organic matter to soil and using more biofertilizers. There are a few initiatives regarding [Soil Organic Carbon](#), but several stakeholders stated that this commitment was either vague or they had not heard of anything from Government related to soil organic matter.

9.2.7f. "Introduce a national liming programme to improve nitrogen-use efficiency."

2021-2023 Progress: [As of August 2021](#), all nitrate derogation farmers had to adopt a farm scale liming programme based on a Nutrient Management Plan and soil analysis. Aside from the encouragement of farmers to adopt farm scale liming, there was limited progress. In 2023, Minister Charlie McConalogue [launched](#) the National Liming Programme with a budget of €8 million (€16 per tonne). According to an ENGO representative, the status of liming policy was getting worse as the dairy herd increased.

2024 Progress: In December 2023, Minister McConalogue announced the [commencement of payments](#) under the National Liming Programme 2023. He stated that an excess of 14,500 submitted payment claims under the Liming Programme and as of December 2023, 12,500 applicants had received payments, valuing at more than €6.6 million. Due to the extreme weather conditions in 2024, the [deadline for the spreading of lime had been extended to October 2024 in](#) order for farmers to wait for favourable ground conditions.

9.2.7g. "Encourage the use of protected nitrogen (urea) on grassland and greater take up of low emissions slurry spreading."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2022, increased use of protected urea and low emissions slurry spreading was mandatory for Nitrates Derogation farmers. In the new nitrates action programme, limits were introduced for farmers over a certain intensity to use low emissions slurry spreading. Awareness raising efforts via Teagasc advisory services and the Signpost Programme led to an increased uptake of these technologies. The [Low Emission Slurry Spreading Scheme](#) was launched in May 2023, providing the opportunity for farmers to purchase slurry-spreading equipment through LESS. This facilitated reduction in soil nitrates. In February 2023, Teagasc [stated](#) that protected urea increased by 59%, while ordinary use increased by 28% and straight nitrogen reduced by 22%.

2024 Progress: In February 2024, Minister McConalogue [stated](#) that "From 2024 all slurry must be applied using Low Emission Slurry Spreading equipment on all farms with a grassland stocking rate of greater than 130 kg of organic nitrogen per hectare before exports are taken into consideration." In March 2024, [Teagasc virtual soil health conference](#) confirmed that N fertiliser has fallen in Ireland from 400,000t to 300,000t in 2023. However, if usage rebounds due to cheaper prices this year, there is a possibility that the farming industry may face Government intervention via regulations, according to Pat Murphy, Teagasc Head of Environment Knowledge Transfer. There has been a [significant reduction in the sale of nitrogen fertiliser](#) of almost 31% since 2018. In 2023, nitrogen fertiliser sales decreased below the target level for 2030 set in the Climate Action Plan. The use of [protected urea](#) has increased significantly. In 2023, protected urea displaced 44% of calcium ammonium nitrate (CAN) sales, and approximately 86% of straight urea displaced by protected urea.

9.2.7h. "Improve nutrient management planning and investigate and support dry manure systems for housed livestock."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, Teagasc advisory services worked with farmers to develop nutrient management plans, completing almost 5,000 plans for farmers within Nitrates Derogations.

2024 Progress: In January 2024, [Teagasc](#), responding to changes under Ireland's Fifth Nitrates Action Programme 2023, made nutrient management a requirement for dry stock farmers nationally. Nitrogen Derogation farmers will have to follow nutrient management plans in the derogation plans.

9.2.7i. "Encourage better grassland management and support the use of clover and other mixed species in grass reseeding and the protection of older swards."

2021-2023 Progress: There was no obvious progress in 2021 beyond the launch of Teagasc's Signpost project. In 2022, more farmers were switching over to the use of clover and other mixed grass species. In a November 2022 Joint Oireachtas debate, Teagasc Director Frank O'Mara [stated](#) that Teagasc planned to establish the National Agricultural Soil Carbon Observatory (NASCO) in 2023. Minister Charlie McConalogue originally [announced](#) the creation of NASCO in November 2020 with expectations of grassland data collection.

2024 Progress: The [2024 Multi Species Sward Measure](#) applications closed in May 2024. These applications are made via the BISS application system with a payment of €300 per hectare up to 20 hectares for the establishment of Multi Species Swards. One stakeholder commented that the war in Ukraine has pushed farmers to rethink their dependence on synthetic fertilisers. However, another stakeholder felt the protection of old swards contradicts the establishment of more species as it encourages the removal of the older swards for newer mixed species.

9.2.7j. "Invest in research and innovation in areas such as feed additives, protected nitrogen, and other climate-action areas of advancement."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2022, there was an endorsement for feed additives. Additionally, there was an uptake in the use of protected nitrogen. According to a source, DAFM committed approximately €4 million in funding to research directed into five projects in 2023 related to

feed/slurry additives, including [SmartSward](#) with focus on multi species swards; [MethAbate](#) project testing feed and slurry additives to reduce methane emissions; [SeaSolutions](#) programme and SeaFeed project to examine how seaweed bioactives can reduce enteric methane emissions and antimicrobial resistance; and the GRA Flagship on Feed Additives project. For protected nitrogen and urea research, DAFM invested €1.8 million towards three projects. The DAFM 2021 Research Call resulted in 15 projects on environment and climate-related research, approximately €15.8 million of the €29.6 million total.

2024 Progress: In June 2024, [Minister McConalogue](#) stated that DAFM is investing in ongoing research in feed additives and Teagasc piloted a [methane-reducing feed additive](#), which is very close to being used in dry cow diets, as announced at a Teagasc Signpost webinar. It remains to be seen how these additives will be incentivised once ready for use. One stakeholder commented that feed additives are “*technological, quick fixes*” and solutions of these kinds are extremely popular.

9.2.7k. "Focus on improving knowledge transfer in the area of nutrient management and soil health."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, Teagasc advisory services worked with farmers to develop nutrient management plans for farms, completing almost 5,000 plans for farmers within Nitrates Derogations. A Nutrient Use Efficiency training course was developed for farmers with a focus on the efficient use of Nitrogen and Phosphorus in grassland systems. As of 2021, advisors had [trained approximately 2,500 farmers](#). Teagasc continued to host [knowledge transfer programmes](#), like Soil Fertility and Nutrient Management Planning and Biodiversity and Landscape sub-programmes. In May 2023, Teagasc and University College Dublin were accepting applications for the [Knowledge Transfer Masters Programme](#), focusing on agricultural advisory services.

2024 Progress: In February 2024, Teagasc held a [Virtual Soil Fertility Conference and their](#) knowledge transfer programme is ongoing. DAFM's [Knowledge Transfer Programme 2024-2026](#) was published July 2023 as an ongoing three year project.

9.2.7l. "Publish a roadmap with specific targets and actions on each of these measures within the first 100 days of Government."

2021-2023 Progress: ‘Ag Climatise’, the National Climate and Air Roadmap for the Agriculture Sector, was [published in December 2020](#). The Environmental Pillar [warned that the roadmap](#) “*perpetuates business-as-usual practices that will continue to wreak havoc on our environment and prevent us from meeting our climate targets.*” In September 2022, the Environmental Pillar and Stop Climate Chaos Coalition shared their [co-sponsored submission](#) to the Ag-Climatise draft from 2020. The submission provided suggestions for agricultural emissions ceilings. In December 2022, Teagasc shared plans to develop the [Teagasc Climate Action Strategy](#) - The Road Map for Agriculture.

2024 Progress: [Climate Action Plan 2024](#), published December 2023, lays out a roadmap of action that will lead Ireland to its climate objectives, including goals and plans for the agricultural industry.

9.3. Forestry

9.3a. "Publish a successor forestry programme to deliver an ambitious afforestation plan reviewing grant and premium rates across all categories in this area, with a particular focus on an increased farmer rate of support."

2021-2023 Progress: Minister Pippa Hackett established Project Woodland in 2021, bringing various parties together to work towards the fulfilment of this commitment. The outcome of Project Woodland was unclear and Ireland continued to [fall short of afforestation targets](#). In 2022, poor forestry licences were still being issued to plant trees on high nature value farmland and important sites for ground nesting birds. There were serious concerns that the significant pressure and threat of afforestation in inappropriate places was not being taken seriously by the Government.

In November 2022, the new Forestry Programme was launched and sent to the European Commission for State Aid review. This caused a delay in publication of the new Forestry Strategy. **2024 Progress:** A new [Forestry Strategy](#) was published in September 2023 after the Commission approved schemes for State Aid. Stakeholders have brought up issues with licensing delays, but one stakeholder attributed this to the delay in the Commission granting state aid. In January 2024, [Minister McConalogue](#) stated that DAFM plans to issue 4,2000 new licenses in 2024 to meet the annual target of 8,000 hectares of new forestry. The Minister stated that the new programme offers 12 forestry types and generous incentives in the form of increased premia rates and longer premia terms. A stakeholder felt that since the delays with the programme have been addressed, we should see a higher uptake over the next few years. The Programme also contains a new Native Tree Area Scheme. In 2023, only 88 new afforestation licences were granted by DAFM. [EPA emissions](#) inventories reported LULUCF's 2023 emissions increased 40.9% from 2022 due to lower planting rates, increased harvesting rates, and an increase in organic soils emissions on forested land.

9.3b. "Implement the MacKinnon Report and review the forestry appeals process, to ensure that it is aligned with other comparable appeals processes and that the licensing system is sufficiently resourced to clear the existing backlog, with the prompt issuing of licences in the future."

2021-2023 Program: According to [media reports from July 2021](#), 1,836 forestry licences had been issued since the start of the year, with 40% of the target of 4,500 forestry licences to be issued. These licences covered 2,695ha of potential new forestry, an increase of 21% on the area licensed to the same date in 2020, and a 5% increase in the number of afforestation licences issued. The Forestry Licensing Plan 2022 was launched in February 2022. In July 2023, the [Irish Farmers Journal](#) reported that the number of afforestation licences issued for tree planting was down over 93% in the first half of 2023, compared with the same period in 2022. In February 2023, Minister McConalogue stated that in 2023 so far the DAFM issued [404 licences](#).

2024 Progress: To date, farmers and landowners have not engaged with the Forestry Programme to the extent required to achieve the rates of afforestation needed to meet the target of 8,000 ha per year, as specified within the Climate Action Plan. In June 2024, according to [DAFM data](#), the total number of licenses issued (afforestation, felling private, felling Coillte, and roads) is 1,665 out of 2,019 applications received. [DAFM](#) published a [Forestry Licencing Plan](#) (December 2023). The Plan estimates that DAFM will issue 4,2000 new forestry types in 2024, including 1,000 afforestation licenses. Approximately 3,900 ha were approved for planting Afforestation Schemes since the commencement of the Forestry Programme. As of June 2024, 218 of 345 afforestation were approved for 1,817 ha. Under the Native Tree Area scheme, 223 approvals were issued. At the publication of the [Forestry Licencing Plan](#), farmers accounted for 84% of applicants to the new afforestation scheme, with approximately 46% of the new applicants seeking to plant spruce and 43% choosing to plant native forests. A stakeholder commented that the review of the licensing system introduced un-democratic fees and barriers to public participation, which is not aligned with transparency and democratic freedoms, thus they felt that even if licensing has gone up, the Government has still failed to address the root problem.

9.3c. "Support the development of on-farm forestry initiatives through the new CAP, aligning agri environment schemes with climate-change objectives and investing further in knowledge transfer." AND

9.3d. "Incorporate afforestation into the new CAP to provide incentives for farmers to plant woodland on their farms, acting as a carbon store, helping to promote wildlife corridors, and providing a future fuel source for the household." AND

9.3e. "Actively promote and support farm forestry/rewilding options that do not impact on agricultural production and support biodiversity and habitat creation. We will incentivise the option of small-scale (e.g. one hectare) forestry/rewilding."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2022, under the new CAP, there was mention of farmers planting their land for agri-environmental measures. [Climate Action Plan \(CAP\) 2023](#) included actions to adopt the CAP Strategic Plan and agri-environmental measures, including the Low Input Peat Grassland Measure under the Agri-Environment and Climate Measure.

2024 Progress: [CAP 2024](#) has key messages for increased focus on knowledge transfer in forestry and sustainable land management. A stakeholder commented CAP 2024 incorporated the smallest scale of tree planting and has had one of its greatest breakthroughs by resolving cross compliance land eligibility issues, which destroyed habitat. The new [CAP 2024](#) offers leeway for keeping naturally occurring habitats, such as scrub habitats, according to this stakeholder. Another stakeholder commented that there has not been an active promotion of rewilding, but there has been for forestry. [DAFM spent €37.8m on afforestation in Q1 2024](#), which is down 4% on the same period last year. A total of €39 million has been spent for all of the different forestry schemes.

9.3f. "Embark on an ambitious programme of afforestation on state-owned lands, building on the Coillte/Bord na Móna initiatives."

2021-2023 Progress: In August 2020, the Woodland Creation on Public Lands scheme was [announced](#). Funding was provided to public bodies for native woodland planting on a per hectare basis. In 2022, there was little to no uptake of the scheme and no indication that Woodland Creation on Public Lands was still being pursued. The Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss recommended that [state-owned](#) woodlands should be managed by the Government long term.

2024 Progress: In June 2024, [Forest Statistics Ireland 2024](#) reported that, of the total forest area in Ireland, 49.1% is in public ownership (mainly Coillte). Since the foundation of the State, state-owned forest area increased 63% from 242,056 ha to 396,168 ha. Over 7,683 ha were reforested on public lands in 2023, nearly the [8,000 ha per year target](#). However, the EPA reported that Ireland will need to plant far more than 8,000ha per year to meet its [climate action commitments](#).

9.3g. "Task Climate Action Regional Offices to work with public bodies to review land available for planting providing feedback on the potential in this area, by the end of 2020."

2021-2023 Progress: While there were [media reports in November 2020](#) detailing how Cork County Council's Climate Action Regional Office was contacting all public sector landowners in the county to develop a database of areas suitable for planting native woodland trees, the Government did not publish a wider status update on this commitment. In May 2021, applications for 88ha of planting had been received under this scheme, but there were no announcements on this commitment.

2024 Progress: Minister Ryan announced over [€3 million to support CAROs](#) to strengthen response to climate challenges in the Eastern and Midlands regions. A review of the CAROs will take place later this year. Stakeholders confirmed there has been no announcement of a review of land for planting.

9.3h. "Institute a state-sponsored national Tree Planting Day and provide communities across the country with trees to plant on this day annually."

2021-2023 Progress: 1st of October 2020 was the first National Tree Day with 1,500 native tree saplings available through the campaign website for primary schools. In 2022, a public awareness campaign was undertaken and there is now an [annual National Tree Planting Week](#). National [Tree Week](#) took place between March 19-26, 2023, with planting events taking place across the country.

2024 Progress: [National Tree Week 2024](#) took place in the first week of March with the theme 'Planting Trees for a Greener Future', emphasising the importance of trees and forests to help mitigate climate change and promote biodiversity. Coillte donated [150,000 tree saplings](#) to local community groups and schools to be planted during Tree Week.

9.3i. "Engage with local authorities and local communities in a radical expansion of urban tree planting and neighbourhood and community forests."

2021-2023 Progress: There was no obvious "radical expansion" in this area in 2021- 2023.

2024 Progress: There was no goal for expansion of urban tree planting in Climate Action Plan 2024. However, the [Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027](#) has a target for Forest Creation on Public Lands, which mentions urban tree planting. In 2023, the [Green Party](#) launched the '[Urban Tree Protection and Sites Locally Important for Ecology Bill 2023](#)'. One stakeholder discussed how, given the housing crisis, there are initiatives targeting use of urban green spaces for the building of new homes. They also mentioned the removal of mature trees in cities for bus and cycle lanes.

9.3j. "Promote close to nature-continuous cover forestry systems to ultimately create permanent biodiverse forests containing trees of all ages." AND

9.3k. "Encourage the private sector to meet corporate social responsibility or sustainability objectives by investing in native woodlands, building on the Woodland Environmental Fund." AND

9.3l. "Promote planting of 'protection forests' along rivers and lakes to protect water quality and assist in managing flood risks."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2022, according to an NGO representative, continuous cover forestry was not promoted. There was no noticeable progress on the Woodland Environmental Fund and little to no promotion of planting protection forests.

2024 Progress: The new [Forestry Strategy](#) acknowledged that the future of forestry includes continuous cover forests and offers options for this type of forestry. The [Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027](#) has an objective to encourage continuous cover forest management practices and the [Woodland Improvement Scheme 2023-2027](#) has an element specifically for continuous cover forestry. However, a stakeholder felt that this is a massive failure as the provision of options within the forestry programme cannot count as an active promotion by Government. Teagasc held a free online course on continuous cover forestry called the [Teagasc Forest Mooc For Change 2024](#).

9.3m. "Provide increased support for the development of agroforestry/silvopasture on Irish farmlands."

2021-2023 Progress: There has been no major expansion of supports for agroforestry/silvopasture. The [Forest Strategy 2023-2027](#) included funding for agroforestry development. but there was no mention of silvopasture development. One stakeholder stated that the new Forestry Programme provided more support for agroforestry and silvopasture.

2024 Progress: The [Irish Agroforestry Forum](#) launched their Cultivating Resilience through Organic Farming with Trees (CROFT) project to promote agroforestry and organic farming practices funded by DAFM and the Marine Organic Promotion Fund. In April 2024, the [Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027](#) included an objective to increase the uptake of agroforestry systems for biodiversity, carbon sequestration, animal welfare, and the production of high quality timber. Teagasc held a [Forestry Open Day 2024](#) in July with a section on agroforestry but no mention of silvopasture. A stakeholder

commented that this commitment is difficult to achieve as there are a lot of trust issues amongst stakeholders regarding agroforestry and silvopasture, given the historical changes in forestry advice.

9.3n. "Continue to uphold the objectives of the Forest Consent System, the Bird and Habitats Directive, the catchment management approach of the Water Framework Directive and the Forest Law and Enforcement Governance Trade regulation (FLEGT)."

2021-2023 Progress: As of 2022, there were significant problems with licensing systems and how environmental assessments were carried out, particularly the EIA appeals system, with licences paused and sent back to the department for inaccurate completion. As of 2023, stakeholders were concerned that improvements in catchment management were not happening.

2024 Progress: Problems remain with licensing in forestry. However, DAFM has published the [Forestry Licencing Plan 2024](#) and plans to reach 4,200 licences in 2024. The backlog has been a [major concern](#) for the timber industry and farmers. A stakeholder commented that the Forest Service has fought against any new safeguards within the forestry program, and there has been a consistent push back against the implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directive. There was also a comment that working to reduce public participation in the forestry licensing system is also an attack on environmental compliance. Thus, the stakeholder felt that it would be impossible to conclude that the State has delivered on this objective.

9.3o. "Invest in schemes that promote recreational forestry and work with Coillte on projects such as Coillte Nature to provide the public with access to recreational forests across the country."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, recreational forestry applications fell under a number of ongoing schemes, and Coillte Nature continued work in this area. In 2022, Coillte Nature's projects remained relatively small, completing a handful of restoration and biodiversity projects in 2023.

2024 Progress: Coillte has a number of [ongoing projects](#), such as the Dublin Mountains Makeover, Restoring Hazlewood, and Midlands Native Woodland project. There are [260 recreational Coillte forests](#) in Ireland as of 2024. The new [Forest Strategy](#) mentions recreational forestry as an economic, physical, social, and recreational benefit to Ireland.

9.3p. "Expand the NeighbourWood Scheme, providing communities with amenity woodlands for local access, enjoyment and increasing tourism opportunities."

2021-2023 Progress: There was no major expansion of this scheme announced with little funding going towards the NeighbourWood Scheme.

2024 Progress: The NeighbourWood Scheme is now under the [Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027](#) with a grant of €10,200/ha with annual premium of €1,142/ha for 15-20 years. The [Donegal Bonny GlenWood NeighbourWood](#) forest opened in 2024 and has received some attention in the Co. Donegal. [Teagasc](#) held a farm walk and a panel discussed the pros and cons of the NeighbourWood Scheme, but the NeighbourWood Scheme was not mentioned in the [Forestry Strategy](#).

9.3q. "Ensure that Coillte's remit supports the delivery of climate change commitments and the protection of biodiversity. We are fully committed to the retention of the commercial forests of Coillte in public ownership."

2021-2023 Progress: Coillte Nature expanded to include legacy plantations in the West of Ireland, but, [according to the Irish Wildlife Trust](#), if the potential scale of this is to be achieved, the Government needs to step in. As of 2022, there was no review of Coillte's remit. Coillte launched a public consultation on a new strategy in 2022. In January 2023, Coillte made it clear that "Of the State's overall national target of 450,000 hectares of new forests by 2050, the fund will plant less than 1% of that total." Despite committing to completing a review of Coillte, one stakeholder stated that the Government had yet to complete this review as of 2023.

2024 Progress: A stakeholder commented that there has been no Government review of Coillte's remit as of July 2024. [Senator Higgins](#) put forth a bill that would review Coillte's remit in May 2023,

but there has been no clear progression of that bill or the delivery of the commitment. One stakeholder stated that Coillte's remit is not aligned with the delivery of climate and biodiversity commitment.

9.4. EU Common Agricultural Policy

9.4a. "Seek reforms to the CAP to reward farmers for sequestering carbon, restoring biodiversity, improving water and air quality, producing clean energy, and developing schemes that support results-based outcomes." AND

9.4b. "Continue to support farmers to embrace farming practices that are beneficial environmentally, that have a lower carbon footprint, and that better utilise and protect natural resources." AND

9.4c. "Advocate for a fair system of eligibility conditionality, under the reform of Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition rules, recognising that farmers should not be unfairly penalised for maintaining land that contributes to biodiversity principles."

2021-2023 Progress: The CAP negotiations concluded in June 2021. In 2022, according to a journalist, Ireland managed to gain extensive flexibility in the percentage of farms that need to be left to nature conservation or contain biodiversity-related projects. It was clear that Ireland wanted the lowest percentage allowed, which led to the European Commission scolding the inadequacy of Ireland's plan. Ireland's [CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027](#) was approved by the Government in October 2022, with the Minister stating that *"It will deliver some €9.8 billion to our farm families over the next five years to support them to continue to produce world-class, safe and sustainable food as well as supporting them in their important work of meeting our climate ambitions."* The new [Common Agricultural Policy](#) commenced in January 2023. In July 2023, the [Irish Wildlife Trust](#) expressed concern over the fact that only 15% of CAP funding will be used towards 'results-based measures'.

2024 Progress: In September 2023, a [report by ARC2020](#) stated that Ireland's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Strategic Plan 2023-2027 contains 'fair-washing tricks' with continued efforts to meet only the minimum requirements of the EU legislation, explaining that, *"although the capping of direct payments was maintained and improved in Ireland, the threshold was set up so high for the average Irish farm size that the actual money shifted through this tool is ultimately minimal or symbolic."* In May 2024, the [Council of the EU](#) adopted a targeted review of CAP to simplify, reduce burdens, and provide flexibility in the CAP. In [April 2024](#), Depute Murphy brought forth concerns regarding these simplifications, stating that it was *"a race to the bottom"*. Minister McConalogue responded that the proposal presented by the Commission was focused on giving flexibility to Member States. However, Deputy Murphy stated that this simplification *"paved the way for anti-democratic, anti-environmental, and above all, anti-farmers legislation"* and that any agri-environmental achievements should be credited to farmers not the Government.

10. Other Commitments

10.1 Public Procurement

10.1a. "Seek to minimise the environmental impact and optimise the community benefit of products and services procured." AND

10.1b. "Support innovation in supply markets to increase the availability and effectiveness of sustainable solutions." AND

10.1c. "Encourage suppliers to adopt practices that minimise their environmental impact and deliver community benefit." AND

10.1d. "We will task the Office of Government Procurement to update all procurement frameworks, in line with green procurement practice over the next three years."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021 and 2022, the EPA updated the guidance for public officials on Government Public Procurement (GPP). In 2023, the EPA published the [second report](#) on GPP activity by Government Departments for the reference year 2021. The report showed that, of the €528 million spent on contracts over €25,000, only 10% included green criteria.

2024 Progress: In April 2024, DECC published the Green Public Procurement Strategy and Action Plan 2024-2027, including 54 actions to be taken on green public procurement, sectoral/product targets, and minimum environmental criteria for public procurement of goods and services. In June 2024, the [Government announced](#) that it will develop a new Public Procurement Strategy which will integrate green public procurement. In June 2024, the Office of Government Procurement launched a new framework [allowing public bodies to purchase remanufactured laptops](#), providing €30 million in funding to purchase an estimated 60,000 laptops over the next 4 years.

10.2 National Development Plan

10.2a. "We will bring forward the planned review of the National Development Plan (NDP) from 2022. We will use the review to set out an updated NDP for the period to 2031." AND

10.2b. "The review of the NDP will be consistent with the ambition of the Programme for Government. The updated NDP will be aligned with the National Planning Framework (NPF)."

2021-2023 outcome: This commitment was completed and assessed in 2023. The review of the National Development Plan was held with a [public consultation](#). [The revised NDP 2021 - 2030](#) was published in October 2021. Alongside the NDP review, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform published a [‘Climate & Environmental Assessment of NDP Review Spending Proposals’](#).

10.3. Tourism

10.3a. "Develop a Sustainable Tourism Policy document, and in advance of this an Interim Action Plan."

2021-2023 Progress: In April 2021, Minister Catherine Martin stated *"the development of a new national tourism policy, with sustainability at its core, will commence later this year when the sector begins to recover from the COVID-19 crisis"*. In 2022, [a working group was established](#) under the Tourism Action Plan 2019-2021 to review and propose a strategy for sustainable tourism. In March 2023, Minister Catherine Martin spoke about the [development of a new national tourism policy](#), building upon the work achieved by the Sustainable Tourism Working Group.

2024 Progress: In February 2024, Minister Martin [stated that](#) her *"Department is progressing with the development of a new national tourism policy framework that will seek to mainstream*

sustainability – environmental, economic and societal – across the entire tourism sector.” A [public consultation](#) for this policy closed in late April 2024. A source stated that the Department has recently completed an analysis of responses to the consultation and that Minister Martin hopes to publish the Policy Framework shortly.

10.4 A Shared Island

10.4a. “Explore how bodies established under the Good Friday Agreement can ensure that there is a joined-up approach to environmental issues on an all-island basis and seek to develop an all-island strategy to tackle climate breakdown and the biodiversity crisis.”

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, these bodies met once but there were no significant outcomes. In April 2022, a [report by NESC](#) was published, supporting an all-island approach to economic, social, environmental, and well-being challenges facing the island of Ireland. In December 2022, the Taoiseach announced over [€50m in new funding for Shared Island programmes](#), €11m of which was allocated for all-island biodiversity actions on peatlands restoration and biosecurity.

2024 Progress: The North-South Ministerial Council Environment Sectoral meeting [was held in](#) June 2024. [The Ministers noted](#) opportunities to work together on research funding, air quality and water quality, noting in particular challenges surrounding Lough Neagh. More than [€4 million has been allocated to the Loughs Agency](#) (a North-South body) for the conservation, management and regulation of Ireland’s inland fisheries.

10.4b. “Promote an all-island approach to land-use planning and river-basin management plans to stop cross-border pollution.”

2021-2023 Progress: No progress was made on this commitment on a government level. However, in September 2021 [a 2022-2027 River Basin Management Plan](#) was published and was undergoing public consultation. An NGO report [Linking the Irish Environment](#) was published in June 2023 to investigate how to enable the environment sector across the island of Ireland.

2024 Progress: At the June 2024 [North-South Ministerial Council Environment Sectoral meeting](#), Ministers “welcomed the opportunity for cross-jurisdictional collaboration in the pilot catchment work plan to be undertaken in the Newry, Fayne, Glyde and Dee catchment.” They also noted challenges surrounding Lough Neagh and the ongoing sharing of knowledge and expertise in addressing them. A stakeholder stated that “there has been very little progress in this term of government in relation to an all Island approach to water management”. They went on to note that “in the upcoming River Basin Management Plan, there is going to be a document coming out called ‘Our Shared Water’,” but that there is no timeline for its publication nor is there an indication of its contents. The [Draft First Revision to the National Planning Framework](#) states that coordination between Northern Ireland and Ireland will be ensured by “aligning planning policies and river basin catchment management plans for whole river systems under the Water Framework Directive.”

10.5 Rural Development

10.5a. “Publish and implement a new Rural Policy to build on the progress of the Action Plan for Rural Development to promote rural recovery and development in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis.”

2021-2023 Progress: In March 2021, “[Our Rural Future](#)”, a new rural development policy was published. [Our Rural Future 2023 Work Programme](#) outlined the proposed actions taken in 2023 with 296 actions scheduled for completion, 17 of which will support implementation of 11 new policy initiatives. A number of actions carried over from 2022 were allocated revised delivery timelines.

2024 Progress: [Our Rural Future 2024 Work Programme](#) added 6 new measures to the previous work programme.

10.6 Local Government

10.6a. "Build the capacity of local authorities to lead locally and engage citizens on climate change and biodiversity."

2021-2023 Progress: In 2021, [27 of the 31 Development plans](#) were reviewed and adopted in the context of Local Authority Climate Action Plans. In 2022, [according to Councillor Nicholas Crossan](#), all local authorities co-signed the Climate Action Charter for Local Authorities.

2024 Progress: All 31 Local Authority Climate Action Plans were [launched](#) in April 2024. In 2023, [a new Service Level Agreement](#) was signed with Climate Action Regional Offices, allocating them €12m for the period 2023 – 2029. The Local Government Management Agency [developed](#) a new strategy, 'Delivering Effective Climate Action 2030', to deliver on the Climate Action Charter and Climate Action Plan. One stakeholder noted that there are now over 60 people employed in climate action related roles in Local Authorities, and research indicates that some citizen engagement is occurring. However, they noted that there is significant scope for this to be improved and that all the climate roles are on temporary contracts but these contracts need to be made permanent.

Appendix 1: Analysis on progress of specific commitments

Table 1 Programme for Government commitments that have not progressed based on information provided in the 2024 compendium

Category	Compendium code	Programme for Government commitment – Not progressed
Climate	1.3b	<i>"We will ensure that each Sectoral Adaptation Plan identifies the key risks faced across each sector and the approach being taken to address these risks and build climate resilience for the future."</i>
Nature	2q	<i>"Legislate to designate our western lakes as salmonid lakes."</i>
Water	3.1.4a	<i>"Implement the recommendations of the Committee on Future Funding of Domestic Water Services in relation to excess use."</i>
	3.1.4b	<i>"Advocate at EU level for more water and energy-efficient white goods."</i>
	3.1.4c	<i>"Conduct a feasibility study examining how further assistance can be given to low-income households for the installation of water efficient appliances."</i>
	3.2a	<i>"Develop a new integrated marine sustainable development plan, as a successor to Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth, focusing on all aspects of the marine, with a greater focus on sustainability and stakeholder engagement and centrally coordinated by the Department of the Taoiseach, to be implemented over the life of the Government."</i>
Energy	8g	<i>"Finalise and publish the Wind Energy Guidelines, having regard to the public consultation that has just taken place."</i>
	8m	<i>"Increase the target for the number of Sustainable Energy Communities."</i>
Agriculture & Forestry	9.2.7e	<i>Encourage farming practices, which preserve or enhance soil organic matter."</i>
	9.3g	<i>"Task Climate Action Regional Offices to work with public bodies to review land available for planting providing feedback on the potential in this area, by the end of 2020."</i>
	9.3k	<i>"Encourage the private sector to meet corporate social responsibility or sustainability objectives by investing in native woodlands, building on the Woodland Environmental Fund."</i>
	9.3l	<i>"Promote planting of 'protection forests' along rivers and lakes to protect water quality and assist in managing flood risks."</i>
	9.4c	<i>"Advocate for a fair system of eligibility conditionality, under the reform of Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition rules, recognising that farmers should not be unfairly penalised for maintaining land that contributes to biodiversity principles."</i>
Other	10.1b	<i>"Support innovation in supply markets to increase the availability and effectiveness of sustainable solutions."</i>

Table 2: Programme for Government commitments with low progress based on information provided in the 2024 compendium

Category	Compendium code	Programme for Government commitment – Low progress
Climate	1.1l	<i>"We will conduct a review of greenhouse gas emissions on a consumption basis, with a goal of ensuring that Irish and EU action to reduce emissions supports emission reductions globally, as well as on our own territories."</i>
	1.3a	<i>We will continue to take climate adaptation measures to ensure that the State helps protect people from the effects of climate change in Ireland which are already locked in, and we will take steps to limit any damage caused. These measures will continue to build upon the National Adaptation Framework (NAF)."</i>
	1.4d	<i>"Prioritise Green Finance strategic actions that are developed in line with climate justice targets and Sustainable Development Goals."</i>
	1.4.1b	<i>"We will legislate to hypothecate all additional carbon tax revenue into a Climate Action Fund raising an estimated €9.5 billion over the next ten years. Funds will be utilised over that period to:</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Ensure that the increases in the carbon tax are progressive by spending €3 billion on targeted social welfare and other initiatives to prevent fuel poverty and ensure a just transition.</i> <i>2. Provide €5 billion to part fund a socially progressive national retrofitting programme targeting all homes but with a particular emphasis on the Midlands region and on social and low-income.</i> <i>3. Allocate €1.5 billion to a REPS-2 programme to encourage and incentivise farmers to farm in a greener and more sustainable way. This funding will be additional to funding from the Common Agricultural Policy. It will include incentives to plant native forestry and to enhance and support biodiversity tenancies."</i>
Nature	2b	<i>"Promote biodiversity initiatives across primary, post-primary and third-level sectors, and ensure that schools, colleges, and universities across the country play an active role in providing areas to promote biodiversity."</i>
	2k	<i>"Encourage and support local authorities to reduce the use of pesticides in public areas."</i>
	2n	<i>"Continue to raise awareness of biodiversity through initiatives like the Annual Biodiversity Awards Scheme."</i>
	2p	<i>"Appoint Education Liaison Officers in each of our National Parks to work with schools across the country, to promote the importance of biodiversity and the natural world, and to involve pupils in the work that goes on in our National Parks."</i>
Water & Marine	3.1.1j	<i>"We will review and work to improve the inspection regime for the 500,000 domestic wastewater systems and incentivise upgrading works."</i>

	3.1.1k	<i>"As a very significant user of electricity, we will review the electricity requirements of water and wastewater treatment plants and carry out a series of pilot projects to incorporate onsite renewable energy generation."</i>
	3.1.2a	<i>"Ensure that Irish Water progresses works to reduce the number of schemes on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Remedial Action List."</i>
	3.1.2c	<i>"Ensure that the State complies with the EU Water Framework Directive"</i>
	3.1.4d	<i>"We fully support the work of the Water Services Innovation Fund, which aims to investigate solutions to promoting greater efficiency in water usage."</i>
	3.1.4f	<i>"We will commission a range of research projects to explore innovative ways of improving our water infrastructure and reducing consumption."</i>
	3.2b	<i>"Ensure that inshore waters continue to be protected for smaller fishing vessels and recreational fishers and that pair trawling will be prohibited inside the six-mile limit."</i>
	3.2c	<i>"Aggressively tackle the issue of waste, ghost nets and illegal dumping in the marine environment, through rigorous implementation of the Port Reception Facilities Directives and by requiring all Irish fishing trawlers to participate in the Clean Oceans Initiative, ensuring that plastic fished up at sea is brought ashore."</i>
	3.2.1d	<i>"Work to eliminate illegal fishing and promote a culture of compliance by all EU vessels in our 200-mile zone, in order to protect the fish stocks on which the Irish fishing industry depends."</i>
	3.2.2a	<i>"We support the principles and ambition of the EU Biodiversity Strategy and will develop comprehensive legislation for the identification, designation, and management of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in Irish territorial waters."</i>
	3.2.2c	<i>"This will be done on the basis of scientific expertise and in close consultation with all stakeholders, in particular the fishing industry, as well as environmental and community representatives. This consultation process will begin in the first 100 days of Government."</i>
Waste & Circular Economy	4f	<i>"Continue and expand the Clean Oceans Initiative to collect, reduce and reuse marine litter and clean up our marine environment."</i>
	4g	<i>"Examine changes to the tax system to encourage the efficient use of resources."</i>
	4i	<i>"Phase out the use of single-use plastics."</i>
Air Quality	5b	<i>"Develop a regional approach to air quality and noise enforcement."</i>
Transport	6b	<i>"Legislate to ban the registration of new fossil-fuelled cars and light</i>

		<i>vehicles from 2030 onwards and phase out diesel and petrol cars from Irish cities from 2030."</i>
	6l	<i>"Support EU and international action to reduce aviation emissions, in line with the aims of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change."</i>
	6.2.2b	<i>"Task the NTA to produce a park and ride implementation plan for each of the five cities to help reduce congestion and journey times. These will integrate car parking facilities with public transport and cycling networks and will include the provision of secure lockers for bicycles."</i>
	6.2.2f	<i>"Ensure a national integrated public transport system with an integrated timetable, one tag on ticketing system and coordination between bus and rail timetables of all operators."</i>
	6.2.3b	<i>"Continue to fund safety works and capital improvements to the rail network, expand the Irish Rail fleet and progress the electrification of rail services to decrease journey times and emissions."</i>
	6.2.3d	<i>"Consider the report on the future of the Western Rail Corridor and take appropriate action."</i>
Buildings	7e	<i>"4. Developing easy pay-back mechanisms (i.e. through utility bills)."</i>
	7r	<i>"Ensure that development of sustainable communities is the core objective of the LDA, delivering sustainable, climate resilient, low-carbon housing."</i>
Energy	8l	<i>"Produce a longer-term plan setting out how, as a country, we will take advantage of the massive potential of offshore energy on the Atlantic Coast. This plan will set out how Ireland can become a major contributor to a pan-European renewable energy generation and transmission system, taking advantage of a potential of at least 30GW of offshore floating wind power in our deeper waters in the Atlantic."</i>
	8t	<i>"Develop efficiency standards for equipment and processes, particularly those set to grow rapidly, such as Data Centres."</i>
	8u	<i>"Develop expectations for 'Obligated Entities' to leverage carbon credits."</i>
	8v	<i>"Develop a policy framework for low emission zones."</i>
	8x	<i>"Ensure that Bord na Móna is required to take into account climate, biodiversity, and water objectives, as they deliver on their commercial mandate, through an amendment to the Turf Development Acts 1998."</i>
Agriculture & Forestry	9a	<i>"Carry out a baseline biodiversity survey on every farm to inform future policy development."</i>
	9c	<i>"Complete a national hedgerow survey."</i>
	9k	<i>"Implement the climate adaptation plan for the agri-food and seafood sector and assist these sectors to adapt with the changed environment."</i>

	9l	<i>"Review pesticide use across the agricultural sector, while acknowledging the comparatively low level of pesticide use in Ireland; and provide supports to farmers who are undertaking these practices to reduce their dependence on such chemicals."</i>
	9.2c	<i>"Build upon schemes such as Areas of Natural Constraint, the Beef Data and Genomics Programme, Beef Environmental Efficiency Programme (Suckler), the Knowledge Transfer Scheme and the Sheep Welfare Scheme, in a way that enhances farm incomes, while contributing to climate change, biodiversity and animal welfare objectives, and recognising their significant contribution to net farm incomes."</i>
	9.2.6a	<i>"Ensure an increased emphasis, through our agricultural colleges, on education in the areas of sustainability, agroecology, climate action and biodiversity, and the link to land use, soil health and agriculture."</i>
	9.3i	<i>"Engage with local authorities and local communities in a radical expansion of urban tree planting and neighbourhood and community forests."</i>
	9.3n	<i>"Continue to uphold the objectives of the Forest Consent System, the Bird and Habitats Directive, the catchment management approach of the Water Framework Directive and the Forest Law and Enforcement Governance Trade regulation (FLEGT)."</i>
	9.3q	<i>"Ensure that Coillte's remit supports the delivery of climate change commitments and the protection of biodiversity. We are fully committed to the retention of the commercial forests of Coillte in public ownership."</i>
	9.4a	<i>"Seek reforms to the CAP to reward farmers for sequestering carbon, restoring biodiversity, improving water and air quality, producing clean energy, and developing schemes that support results-based outcomes."</i>
	9.4b	<i>"Continue to support farmers to embrace farming practices that are beneficial environmentally, that have a lower carbon footprint, and that better utilise and protect natural resources."</i>
Other	10.3a	<i>"Develop a Sustainable Tourism Policy document, and in advance of this an Interim Action Plan."</i>
	10.4a	<i>"Explore how bodies established under the Good Friday Agreement can ensure that there is a joined-up approach to environmental issues on an all-island basis and seek to develop an all-island strategy to tackle climate breakdown and the biodiversity crisis."</i>
	10.4b	<i>"Promote an all-island approach to land-use planning and river-basin management plans to stop cross-border pollution."</i>



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