

Just Transition  
Commission of Ireland  
Coimisiún na hÉireann  
um Aistriú Cóir

# Introductory Report of the Just Transition Commission of Ireland 2025



Submitted to the Minister for Climate, Energy  
and the Environment in June 2025  
Just Transition Commission of Ireland 2025

## Get in touch!

The Commission is keen to hear from people, communities, organisations and wider societal actors working towards a just transition. We are eager to hear about both the challenges being faced and positive examples of how social and climate goals can be integrated to support action, inclusion, justice and equality. To share your insights or stories, please email us at

[info@justtransitioncommission.ie](mailto:info@justtransitioncommission.ie)  
[www.justtransitioncommission.ie](http://www.justtransitioncommission.ie)

# Just Transition Commission

The Just Transition Commission of Ireland was established in late 2024 as an advisory body to the Irish government. The Commission consists of 10 ordinary Members and Chair, appointed by government for a three-year term (2024-2027).

Five members were nominated by the pillars of social dialogue, also referred to as the Agriculture-, Business-, Community & Voluntary-, Environmental-, and Trade Union pillars, and six are independent experts appointed through an open process.



## Ali Sheridan, Chair

Ali has held a range of senior climate leadership roles and has supported the development and growth of climate programmes including at the UN High Level Climate Champions, Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, IKEA, and Bord Bia, as well as previous roles with the Sustainable Agricultural Initiative and An Taisce.

She has supported a diverse range of organisations and sectors to develop credible and just climate transition strategies, has designed and delivered climate related programmes for a range of universities, and is an occasional lecturer.

Ali holds a MSc Business Sustainability, MSc Sustainable Development, and BSc Environmental Management. She sits on the Advisory Committee of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Advisory Board of the DCU Institute for Climate and Society, and the Board of Common Knowledge. On a local level, Ali has supported her local Sustainable Energy Community, and acted as a Public Participation Network representative.



## Conor Minogue

Conor Minogue is a senior policy executive in the business group Ibec. Since joining the organisation in 2012, Conor has held several policy roles. He now works with Ibec members to develop and promote the energy and climate policy agenda for Irish business. He also provides guidance to industry on climate action and sustainability reporting. He was the lead author of Ibec's Climate Action Toolkit for Business and Ibec's 2019 Low Carbon Roadmap.

Before Ibec, he worked at the EU Embassy in Washington DC. Conor studied history and international relations at University College Dublin, University of California Berkeley, and Cambridge University. He also holds an Advanced Diploma in Planning and Environmental Law from the King's Inns.



## Diarmuid Torney

Dr. Diarmuid Torney is Director of the DCU Institute for Climate and Society and an Associate Professor in the School of Law and Government at Dublin City University.

His research focuses on climate change policy and governance. He is coordinator of a Horizon Europe project called RETOOL, which aims at strengthening democratic governance for climate transitions in Europe, and leads DCU's participation in the Research Ireland funded Co-Centre for Climate + Biodiversity + Water. He is an independent expert member of the National Economic and Social Council and a member of the Executive Group of the All Island Climate and Biodiversity Research Network.

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## Evan Boyle

Dr. Evan Boyle is a Senior Postdoctoral researcher with the MaREI Centre Energy, Climate and Marine co-ordinated by the Environmental Research Institute, University College Cork.

His research focuses on community engagement for energy transitions and transdisciplinary approaches to sustainability. His work has centred on implementing action research methods for co-creating climate action solutions with stakeholders beyond academia through involvement in a number of projects including Dingle Peninsula 2030 (2018-2021), Imaging2050 (2018-2020), and STEPS (2022-2024), and has sought to inform policy on just and inclusive methods for achieving the energy transition.

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## Michelle Murphy

Michelle Murphy is a Research and Policy Analyst with Social Justice Ireland. Michelle provides research, policy analysis and strategic engagement on sustainability, rural development and the impact of policy on income distribution and social inclusion.

She has produced several pieces of social policy research on sustainability and just transition, including policy options to deliver on our climate targets through a just transition framework, the impact of Brexit on a just transition in rural communities in Ireland, the impact of our climate targets on regional development, and trends in income distribution, poverty and social inclusion.



## Oisín Coghlan

Oisín Coghlan is a public policy analyst and advisor, specialising in climate and environment. He currently works with the Stop Climate Chaos coalition, the Irish Environmental Network and The Wheel. Until recently he was the chief executive of Friends of the Earth, where he led the 14-year campaign for a strong climate law which culminated in the 2021 Climate Act.

Previously Oisín worked for 10 years in the overseas aid, human rights and global solidarity sector. He holds an MA in International Relations from DCU and a BA in Sociology and Political Science from Trinity College Dublin.

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## Ryan McKinney

Ryan McKinney is currently Head of Strategic Change at Fórsa, Ireland's second largest union. In this position, he oversees an ambitious and diverse change programme, leads groundbreaking initiatives including a multi-million-euro investment in a bespoke membership system, designing and implementing internationally developed methodology to transform member participation and delivery on the union's current strategic plan.

Ryan has over twenty years' experience in industrial relations and campaigning having held senior roles in the trade union movement in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland.

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## Seamus Boland

Seamus Boland has expertise in rural and agricultural affairs with over 30 years' experience working with communities and policy makers. As CEO of Irish Rural Link, he has helped build a national rural network of 600 community organisations. He was Chair of Pobal and served on the Board of the Wheel.

Seamus is also a farmer who lives in the Midlands. He is Chair of The Irish Peatlands Council, and chairs the government interdepartmental committee responsible for implementation of the Peatlands Strategy. He is in his second term as President of the Civil Society Organisations' Group of the European Economic Social Council.





## Suresh Kumar

Suresh Kumar is the Deputy Director for Innovation, Industrial Transformation and Office of Chief Scientific Advisor for the Scottish government and was previously the Chief Operating Officer for the Max Planck Research Society.

Suresh is an experienced senior leader who worked across policy, strategy and operations in the Universities, Research and Innovation sectors focusing on capital projects, talent, skills, entrepreneurship and job creation pathways and state of the art Industry-University infrastructure. He is an expert in public private partnerships, and a strategist in setting future directions for scientific/technological domains at national, European, and international levels in partnership with Business, Industry and SMEs.

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## Tanya Ward

Tanya Ward is the Chief Executive of the Children's Rights Alliance. Previously, she was the Deputy Director at the Irish Council for Civil Liberties and also worked with the Irish Centre for Migration Studies, the Irish Refugee Council and the Curriculum Development Unit.

A former lecturer in human rights at TCD and the UCD School for Social Justice, she is a graduate from UCC and has a LLM in Human Rights from Queens University Belfast. Tanya has served on the boards of the International Federation of Human Rights, Mental Health Reform, the Law Centre for Children and Young People and is currently Vice President of Eurochild. She was Chair of the National Advisory Council for Children and Young People and is currently a member of the Programme Board on Senior Cycle Reform. Tanya was awarded the Excellence in Leadership Award in 2024.

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## Vanessa Kiely O'Connor

Vanessa Kiely O'Connor is a farmer from Innishannon, County Cork. She has graduated with a Diploma in Environmental Science and Social Policy and holds a Diploma in Corporate Direction (Food Business), from UCC. She also holds a Certificate in Business Strategy from UCD.

Appointed as ICOS representative to Teagasc and chairs Teagasc's Advisory and Education Committee. She is a board director at Bandon Co-operative and also serves on the board of Clona Dairy Products. She is a member of the Women in Agriculture Stakeholder Group and is an ICMSA National Council member, previously serving on their Farm Business Committee.

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**Secretariat to the  
Just Transition  
Commission of Ireland**

The Commission would like to thank its Secretariat for their ongoing support and contributions. The Secretariat is provided by the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment by Greta Szabo, Michael Keegan, Rónán Stokes and Conor Reynolds.

# Foreword from Chair

I was honoured to be asked to chair the Just Transition Commission of Ireland at such a critical time in Ireland's journey towards climate neutrality.

In recent years, Ireland has begun to lay the foundations towards unlocking the ambitious action necessary to help secure a safe and thriving future for all. We now have a Climate Law that sets us on a legally binding path to climate neutrality no later than 2050, and we have committed to a 51% reduction in emissions compared to 2018 by the end of this decade, a deadline which is rapidly approaching.

Having worked on climate issues across many fronts, it is heartening to bear witness to the leadership that is now emerging across all of society in response to the climate crisis, and the opportunities and necessity of an ambitious and fair transition are increasingly clear to see.

However, we are not on track to reduce our emissions in line with existing commitments. Climate breakdown is worsening, and the impacts will be felt more widely and acutely across our country in the coming years. Indeed, the early meetings of the Commission took place against the backdrop of Storm Éowyn, which held up a mirror to our lack of preparedness, the need to significantly enhance our resilience, and the growing risks now posed to the people and places we care about, our communities and companies, and indeed to our lives and livelihoods.

The concept of a just transition is not a new one. However, it is an evolving one and it is timely that the Commission has been established as the global conversation on the need for a just transition rapidly develops, and the norms in terms of how best to approach just transition begin to be established.

In the coming years, more will be asked of Irish society. To rapidly cut our emissions, and maximise our chances of securing a safe future, while at the same time adapting to the impacts of climate change, we will need to accelerate existing efforts as well as take critical and courageous decisions as a country. The opportunities associated with a just transition are immense but there will be trade-offs, and the tension between moving as fast as we now need to, and ensuring the transition is fair, will have to be carefully and proactively managed.

We have a huge opportunity now to not only approach just transition as a process to manage the potential negative impacts of the climate transition, but as a wider lens to inform a new vision for Ireland. To look beyond solely emission reductions towards transforming our society and economy to thrive while meeting social needs and respecting planetary boundaries.

Our early work as a Commission has made clear the goodwill and collaborative nature that exists among Irish society to deliver a just transition for all. It is also clear that there is much to do in better defining, communicating and emphasising the critical role of a just transition in ensuring fairness, equity and unlocking its many opportunities. A role I hope the work of the Commission can actively support.

I am pleased to present our introductory report reflecting on our early months and engagements as a Commission. Our work builds on the efforts and generous engagements of many, and I would like to take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to all who have supported us in our early days.

As we navigate this transformative period, the Commission remains committed to fostering dialogue, understanding, and action that ensures no one is left behind as we move to shape our collective shared future.



# Glossary

<b>Carbon Budget</b>	Ireland's Carbon Budgets provide 5-year economy-wide legally binding sectoral emission ceilings that set out the maximum amount of greenhouse gas emissions that are permitted to be released in different sectors of the economy. Carbon Budgets are prepared by the Climate Change Advisory Council and submitted to government for approval.
<b>Climate Action Plan (CAP)</b>	The CAP aims to provide a decarbonisation pathway to 2030 consistent with Carbon Budgets and an overall aim to achieve climate neutrality in Ireland by 2050.
<b>Climate Change Advisory Council (CCAC)</b>	The CCAC is an independent advisory body providing evidence-based advice and recommendations on policy to support Ireland's transition to a biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable, climate neutral and resilient society.
<b>Climate Crisis</b>	The climate crisis refers to the complex systemic challenges posed by climate change as the defining crisis of our time.
<b>Climate Emergency</b>	The government declared a climate and biodiversity emergency in May 2019, with Ireland becoming only the second country to do so.
<b>Climate Law</b>	Climate Law stands for the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act of 2015 and Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021.
<b>Climate Neutrality</b>	A sustainable economy and society where greenhouse gas emissions are balanced or exceeded by the removal of greenhouse gases. Achieving climate neutrality by 2050 is Ireland's National Climate Objective.
<b>European Green Deal</b>	The European Green Deal is the EU's growth strategy, consisting of a package of policy initiatives, which set the EU on the path to a green transition, with the ultimate goal of reaching climate neutrality by 2050.
<b>EU Just Transition Fund (JTF)</b>	<p>The EU JTF is part of the European Union's Just Transition Mechanism. The Fund's main purpose is to assist the most affected territories in transitioning to a climate neutral economy across the EU.</p> <p>In Ireland, the Fund will provide for investments of up to €169 million, which will be targeted at the economic transition of the designated territory (wider-Midlands region) for the period to 2027 to address the impacts of the ending of peat extraction for energy production.</p>
<b>Greenhouse Gas Emissions</b>	Greenhouse gases are a group of gases that prevent heat escaping into space, raising the surface temperature of the planet. Human-induced increase in their presence in the atmosphere contribute to anthropogenic climate change and global warming.



<b>Just Resilience</b>	While just transition is often seen as a concept for climate mitigation, just resilience can be described as a conceptual framework to drive just and equitable climate adaptation policies and measures.
<b>Just Transition Principles Framework</b>	<p>The Just Transition Principles Framework is made up of four principles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An integrated, structured, and evidence-based approach to identify and plan our response to just transition requirements;</li> <li>2. People are equipped with the right skills to be able to participate in and benefit from the future net zero economy;</li> <li>3. The costs are shared so that the impact is equitable and existing inequalities are not exacerbated; and</li> <li>4. Social dialogue to ensure impacted citizens and communities are empowered and are core to the transition process.</li> </ol>
<b>Just Transition Taskforce</b>	The Just Transition Taskforce was active between September 2023-February 2024, established in line with CAP23 commitments, to build consensus on an agreed approach on the establishment of a Just Transition Commission and to provide advice to the Minister and government regarding the mandate, membership, and structure of the Commission.
<b>National Climate Objective (NCO)</b>	As set out in Ireland's Climate Law, the State shall, so as to reduce the extent of further global warming, pursue and achieve, by no later than the end of the year 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy.
<b>National Dialogue on Climate Action (NDCA)</b>	The NDCA is the government's main forum for public engagement on climate action. The NDCA consists of Climate Conversations, the National Climate Stakeholder Forum and the National Youth Assembly on Climate.
<b>Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)</b>	The Paris Agreement requests each country to outline and communicate their post-2020 climate actions, known as their NDCs. NDCs are submitted to the UNFCCC secretariat every five years and embody efforts by each country to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change.
<b>Paris Agreement</b>	The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty adopted in 2015 to combat climate change. Its primary goal is to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, with a further aspiration to limit the increase to 1.5 degrees.
<b>WEM and WAM Scenarios</b>	Used in emissions projections by the Environmental Protection Agency, WEM (With Existing Measures) scenario is a projection of future emissions based on the measures currently implemented and actions committed to by government. WAM (With Additional Measures) scenario is the projection of future emissions based on the measures outlined in the latest government plans at the time Projections are compiled.

# Key Recommendations

## Recommendation 1

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**The Commission recommends that the government create a strategy that explains its vision for a just transition to a climate-neutral economy.**

There is a need for a strategic approach to put just transition at the heart of climate action, and to go beyond energy transitions, siloed or reactive approaches, and business as usual. This strategy should identify those most at risk and show how the transition will benefit society, especially the people most affected.

## Recommendation 2

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**Strengthen the governance structure and deliverables associated with just transition planning in climate action.**

To support the implementation of the Just Transition Principles Framework and demonstrate how it is an integral part of climate policy, just transition needs to become a more cohesive component of the annual climate governance cycle. The Commission recommends setting just transition targets alongside sectoral actions to guide national and local efforts and track progress toward a climate-neutral economy.

## Recommendation 3

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**Establish Just Transition Indicators to support the monitoring and evaluation of our progress towards a just transition that accounts for those most affected or vulnerable to the transition.**

A robust governance structure, potentially supported by the Commission, can ensure ownership, transparency, and accountability in the implementation of these indicators.

## Recommendation 4

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**Build an understanding of vulnerabilities associated with climate action.**

Identifying vulnerable groups, not just through broad economic categories, but by considering sector-specific and geographic vulnerabilities and intersectionality is required to ensure these groups are not overlooked.

## Recommendation 5

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**Map and review available data and address gaps in collecting key just transition data through collaborative monitoring efforts.**

The absence of robust data hinders the ability to carry out meaningful, evidence-based impact assessments across sectors and the identification of those most affected.

## Recommendation 6

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**Improve the National Dialogue on Climate Action (NDCA) in terms of accessibility, affordability, accountability, and use of findings.**

To ensure the overall purpose, inputs and outputs, and methods of engagement associated with the NDCA account for the most vulnerable, address root causes, and that the voice of impacted cohorts is amplified in future climate policy.

## Recommendation 7

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**Integrate just transition into all messaging and communication around climate action.**

All government departments should work proactively to:

- Better understand current awareness and interpretations of just transition across society.
- Integrate just transition messaging across all climate communication efforts.
- Create practical guides and toolkits to help communities, businesses, and other stakeholders understand their role.
- Use inclusive, accessible language that speaks to diverse audiences and reflects their real-life experiences.
- Offer meaningful ways to hear and understand people's lived experiences.

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# 1. Introduction: How Ireland is Shaping its Approach to Just Transition

Ireland stands at a pivotal moment in its journey to climate neutrality - one filled with unprecedented opportunity.

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**The Commission believes that by placing fairness and inclusion at the centre of climate policymaking, Ireland can not only overcome challenges but also build strong public support and unlock the full potential of the climate transition.**

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The climate crisis is intensifying, with impacts already being felt across all parts of society. 2024 was Ireland's fourth warmest year ever, coming right after the record-breaking heat of 2023. As temperatures rise, extreme weather becomes more likely, highlighting the urgent need to cut greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for the effects of climate change.<sup>1</sup>

Meeting Ireland's legally binding limits on emissions, as set out in carbon budgets agreed by government and approved by the Houses of the Oireachtas, demands a bold, society-wide transformation. These changes will touch every aspect of daily life, especially for the most vulnerable. But with the right leadership, they can also create new, fairer opportunities.

Amid the challenges of rising living costs, now is the time to ensure that climate action lifts people up, rather than leaves them behind.

The 2025 Climate Action Plan (CAP25) reaffirms Ireland's headline climate commitments to achieve a 51% reduction in emissions by 2030 and climate neutrality by 2050 and there are some signs of progress - emissions fell 7% in 2023, wind now provides around 40% of the electricity we use, and over 1,000 homes are retrofitted weekly<sup>2</sup>.

However, the gap between where we need to be and where we are is widening. The Environmental Protection Agency still only projects a 23% cut in emissions by 2030, far short of the target even under the With Additional Measures (WAM)<sup>3</sup> scenario with just 9% emission reductions predicted based on existing measures.

Missing targets and breaching climate limits carry serious consequences for Ireland, potentially resulting in significant financial impacts<sup>4</sup>, but the impact extends far beyond financial burdens. Falling behind could lead to long-term physical changes that bring added challenges and uncertainties across all areas of society. However, this moment also presents a crucial opportunity, to intensify our efforts to close the gap and to ensure that a just transition is placed at the heart of our climate response.

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<sup>1</sup> Met Eireann, Ireland's and Global Climate 2024 (2025): <https://www.met.ie/irelands-and-global-climate-2024#:~:text=The%20black%20line%20is%20a,ever%20recorded%2C%20which%20was%202023.>

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<sup>2</sup> Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, government approved Climate Action Plan 2025 (2025): <https://www.gov.ie/en/departments/publications/publications/climate-action-plan-2025/>

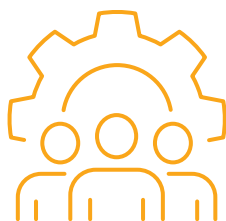
<sup>3</sup> Environmental Protection Agency, Ireland's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections 2024-2055 (2025): <https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring-assessment/climate-change/air-emissions/EPA-GHG-Projections-Report-2024-2055-May25.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Irish Fiscal Advisory Council and Climate Change Advisory Council, A colossal missed opportunity (2025): <https://www.fiscalcouncil.ie/a-colossal-missed-opportunity/>

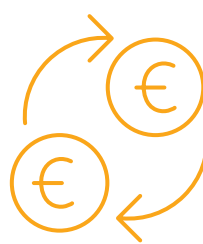




Integrated, Structured  
& Evidence Based



The Right Skills



Shared Costs



Social Dialogue

Pillars of the Just Transition Framework Principles

**A just transition is not only a moral imperative, it is a strategic one. It enables the country to design lasting, inclusive solutions that protect workers, support vulnerable groups, and secure a healthier and livable future.**

A just transition can ensure that the climate transition strengthens communities, protects those most at risk, and builds resilience across society.

Recent research shows strong enduring public support for ambitious climate action across Ireland, across different regions and life stages<sup>5</sup>. This presents a powerful opportunity to engage and empower communities to shape, lead and benefit from the transition.

Centering climate action on a just transition approach is a unique opportunity to deliver climate solutions that not only cut emissions but also enhance lives, by creating better jobs, warmer homes, cleaner air, and a more resilient society. But without a stronger commitment and a clearer strategy for a just transition, the potential of an unjust transition in Ireland will continue to grow.

### 1.1 Existing approach to the integration of just transition into climate policy

The Commission acknowledges the relatively advanced statutory and policy frameworks already in place to support a just transition.

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 mandates the government to have regard to the requirement for a just transition to a climate neutral economy, which endeavors, in so far as practicable to maximise employment opportunities and support persons and communities that may be negatively affected by the transition<sup>6</sup>.

Successive Climate Action Plans, beginning with the 2021 Plan<sup>7</sup>, have articulated a Just Transition Principles Framework aligned with international and EU standards, requiring government ministers to integrate principles such as evidence-informed decision-making, ensuring people have the skills needed to benefit from future opportunities, fair sharing of the costs of the transition across society, and fostering dialogue and consultation with the public<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Environmental Protection Agency, Climate Change in Irish Minds Wave 2 Report 1 (2024): <https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring-assessment/climate-change/climate-change-in-the-irish-mind-insight-report-wave-2-no-1-life-stage.php>

<sup>6</sup> Irish Statute Book, Climate Act and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 (2021): <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2021/act/32/enacted/en/html>

<sup>7</sup> Government of Ireland, Climate Action Plan 2021 (2021) [Climate Action Plan 2021](#)

<sup>8</sup> Just transition actions associated with Climate Action Plan 2025 are available at [gov.ie](https://gov.ie)

While it is welcome to see the Just Transition Principles Framework in place, the Commission notes that it is yet to be understood how effective this approach has been in delivering better outcomes for people and how well the principles have been integrated into both the design and delivery of relevant policies. Embedding a just transition more strategically within policymaking is essential to delivering climate action that is inclusive, fair, and sustainable. The Commission will return to this important issue in future publications.

The Commission also acknowledges the existing and ongoing efforts of diverse groups in contributing evidence and recommendations that can help shape Ireland's approach to a just transition and that have helped inform the early inquiries of the Commission, including those of the Climate Change Advisory Council, the National Economic and Social Council, the National Youth Assembly on Climate and the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

### 1.2 Sectoral considerations

In terms of the just transition approach to different sectors across Ireland, the implementation of these principles is at an early stage and, in the Commission's view, has yet to be fully integrated into the climate policy-making process. The Commission welcomes plans, outlined in Climate Action Plan 2025, to strengthen the application and integration of the Just Transition Principles Framework and looks forward to analysing and supporting work on this carried out by the relevant Departments over the coming year.

### 1.3 International considerations

The establishment of Ireland's Commission comes at an important moment, as global attention on just transition continues to grow. This offers a valuable opportunity to demonstrate Ireland's leadership and commitment in this critical area.

The Commission recognises that just transition remains a central principle of both the European Green Deal and the Paris Agreement. While approaches have been tailored to each country's socio-economic context, there is growing ambition to exchange best practices and highlight shared benefits, including through initiatives such as the proposed EU Fair Transitions Observatory<sup>9</sup>.

At the international level, renewed Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement will be submitted this year, with an increasing expectation that just transition be integrated into these national plans. As of April 2025, 66 countries have explicitly included just transition concepts in their Nationally Determined Contributions, an increase from just one (South Africa) in 2015<sup>10</sup>.

The Commission also looks forward to collaborating with our international counterparts, including with the planned Just Transition Commission in Northern Ireland, to explore opportunities for cooperation on an all-island basis.

<sup>9</sup> European Commission, The Clean Industrial Deal: A joint roadmap for competitiveness and decarbonisation (2025): [https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/9db1c5c8-9e82-467b-ab6a-905feeb4b6b0\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/9db1c5c8-9e82-467b-ab6a-905feeb4b6b0_en)

<sup>10</sup> World Resource Institute, What is a 'Just Transition', and are countries really making progress? (2025): [https://www.wri.org/insights/what-is-just-transition-tracking-progress?utm\\_campaign=socialmedia&utm\\_source=linkedin&utm\\_medium=world+resources+institute](https://www.wri.org/insights/what-is-just-transition-tracking-progress?utm_campaign=socialmedia&utm_source=linkedin&utm_medium=world+resources+institute)

### 1.4 Just transition in practice: lessons from the midlands

Ireland's experience with closing peat-fired power stations and ending commercial peat extraction in the Midlands offers important lessons for how to put just transition into practice.

The Commission recognises that significant resources have been directed toward supporting impacted communities, including through key initiatives such as the National Just Transition Fund, the Midlands Retrofitting Programme, the Enhanced Decommissioning, Rehabilitation and Restoration Scheme for Bord na Móna peatlands, and the EU Just Transition Fund Programme. These efforts aim to help retrain workers, create new jobs aligned with climate action, and support the wider economic transition of the region.

Although investment in the Midlands is ongoing, it is still too early to fully assess its impact. The Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment is currently reviewing the National Just Transition Fund, with findings expected later in 2025.

However, while acknowledging the efforts made to advance a just transition in the Midlands, the Commission notes that important lessons can be learned.

The introduction of the government's just transition initiative after the decision to cease peat extraction, meant it was much more of a reactive than proactive measure, limiting its role in reducing disruption and mitigating impacts on workers, families and communities.

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**The Commission believes that meaningful just transition requires state-led engagement and dialogue well in advance of decisions that will bring about significant change.**

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This approach requires timely political acknowledgement of the level of transformation that will be required throughout society and sectors, and a commitment of state resources to initiate, guide and support this transition.

The Commission looks forward to analysing the evaluation of the National Just Transition Fund, as its findings will be important for informing and guiding future just transition efforts across Ireland.

### 1.5 Role of the Just Transition Commission of Ireland

There is an urgent need for a new vision for climate action in Ireland, one that is fair, inclusive, and adequately ambitious. The Commission hopes to bring a fresh and constructive voice to this national conversation, rooted in fairness, respect, and a clear-eyed understanding of both the challenges we face and the opportunities ahead.

The Commission has been tasked by the government to deliver on an ambitious work programme and to ensure that through our analysis, engagement and recommendations we reflect and amplify the public voice of just transition<sup>11</sup>.

The establishment of this Commission marks a significant step forward, a strong signal of Ireland's commitment to embedding just transition principles at the heart of climate action.

As the Commission begins this journey, this introductory report offers an insight into the mission and guiding principles of Ireland's first Just Transition Commission. It also shares our early reflections on how just transition is currently positioned within climate policy, and the enormous potential it holds for shaping a fairer, more resilient future for all.

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<sup>11</sup> Terms of Reference of the Just Transition Commission (2024): <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/just-transition-commission-terms-of-reference-c1ec21d9-51ef-442a-bbf2-c4061c50e7ff.pdf>

Amid the challenges of rising living costs, now is the time to ensure that climate action lifts people up, rather than leaves them behind.





## 2. The Commission's Mandate and Ways of Working

For its three-year term, the Commission has been tasked by the government with delivering an ambitious and impactful work programme to support a fair and inclusive transition to a climate neutral and climate resilient society<sup>12</sup>.

### 2.1. Work programme

The Commission has been tasked by government to consider four broad areas to provide advice and recommendations on:



1. An analysis of the potential impacts on Ireland's workforce, and policy implications, of achieving the statutory 2050 climate neutrality objective; including examining the potential overall employment implications, which sectors of the economy may be most adversely impacted, which sectors may be expected to see significant employment growth in the decades ahead; and an examination of the geographic distribution of these impacts.



2. An assessment of the degree to which climate action policies already reflect the principles of Ireland's Just Transition Framework, taking account of the policy framework and sectoral emissions ceilings set out in the Climate Action Plan, and advice on any opportunities for strengthening both the principles themselves and the application of the principles into sectoral policies.



3. Advice on the strengthening of the local and community dimensions of just transition and strengthening engagement with vulnerable cohorts into Ireland's climate engagement activities, in particular the National Dialogue on Climate Action, as well as sectoral dialogues.



4. Recommendations on a set of just transition indicators to support measurement of progress, over time, in achieving a just transition.

<sup>12</sup> The Commission's full Terms of Reference is set out in Appendix 1

The Commission's committed and diverse members represent a range of voices and expertise and are guided by a number of principles in conducting our work.

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**Recognising the urgent need for creative and innovative solutions, the Commission is focused on bringing fresh thinking and a constructive, thoughtful approach to meeting this challenge.**

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## 2.2. Vision

The Commission's vision is to support a fair and inclusive "transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral" Ireland "by no later than the end of the year 2050". This is the "national climate objective" in the 2021 Climate Act and can be the foundation for a better future for all where no-one is left behind.

*"The State shall, so as to reduce the extent of further global warming, pursue and achieve, by no later than the end of the year 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy."*

*(Section 5 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021)*

### 2.3. Principles

To effectively fulfil its mandate and respond to both the complexities and opportunities of a just transition, the Commission will be guided by the following principles in how it works:



#### ***Independence***

The Commission will provide strategic, evidence-based advice and recommendations in an **independent and unbiased manner**.



#### ***Inclusive and Transparent Engagement***

While the Commission brings together a broad and diverse group of members, we acknowledge that important voices and perspectives are still missing. The Commission is committed to **actively seeking out and amplifying underrepresented voices and lenses**, remaining **transparent, open, and accessible** throughout all stages of our work, and **advocating for inclusive approaches** in climate policy development.



#### ***Listening to Lived Experience***

The Commission strives to ground its advice and recommendations in the **lived experiences of those most vulnerable** to the social, economic, and environmental impacts of the climate transition and climate breakdown. In doing so, the Commission aims to serve not only as a **public voice for just transition**, but also as a **public ear**, learning directly from those on the frontlines of change.



#### ***Addressing Both Mitigation and Adaptation***

The Commission recognises the **deep interconnection between climate action and just transition**, while also appreciating the **distinct challenges** posed by mitigation and adaptation. Our work will explore just transition issues in both contexts, ensuring policies reflect the full scope of climate impacts.



#### ***Building on What Exists***

To maximise impact and avoid duplication, the Commission will **build on existing research, data, and initiatives**, complementing rather than repeating ongoing efforts.



#### ***Highlighting Challenges and Opportunities***

The Commission is committed not only to identifying and addressing the **barriers to a just transition**, but also to amplifying **positive examples** from across Ireland and internationally. By sharing success stories, we aim to inspire courage, collaboration, and innovation in how the transition is approached.



# 3. Initial Reflections and Recommendations

The Commission has begun its work by reflecting on the current landscape of just transition in Ireland. While we have a growing understanding of what needs to be done to meet our climate targets, the concept of a just transition helps define how we achieve them, by considering the real-life impacts of these decisions on people, places, communities, and livelihoods.

A just transition will not happen on its own. It must be planned, supported, and embedded across all areas of climate action. When done well, it is a powerful enabler of change, helping to drive fairer, faster, and more lasting transformations.

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**Without deliberate action, there is a real risk that the transition to a climate neutral economy will deepen existing inequalities, leave some communities behind, and weaken public support for climate action.**

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The following reflections and early recommendations set out how just transition can help Ireland deliver climate action that works for everyone, ensuring that no one is left behind on the path to a fairer, more inclusive future.

## 3.1 What do we mean when we talk about a just transition?

Just transition is not a new concept in Ireland, but until now it has largely been associated with the Midlands and the shift away from peat-based industries.

So far, experiences with just transition, through consultations, support programmes, and initiatives, have shown some level of skepticism and distrust<sup>13</sup> in the concept. To move forward, it is essential to rebuild trust, learn from past efforts, and broaden the conversation beyond the Midlands, ensuring that just transition becomes a national priority for all of Ireland.

One of the main obstacles to implementing a just transition is the lack of a clear, universally accepted definition. Over time, it has become a broad policy objective, often detached from specific policies, political priorities, or measurable goals. While different interpretations share common ground, contradictions between them create challenges for practical implementation.

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<sup>13</sup> As an example, Climate Conversation 2023 Report noted that 90% of people felt that the impact of climate actions is not distributed evenly across the population, and groups such as disabled people and economically disadvantaged groups felt underrepresented in decision-making. Government of Ireland, [Climate Conversations 2023 Report](#) p13



The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, Climate Action Plans and Just Transition Taskforce have all articulated different working definitions for the Irish context. It is generally understood that, while just transition features in the Climate Action Plans, it is loosely defined<sup>14</sup>. Early discussions within the Commission have shown support for the more holistic definition adopted by the Just Transition Taskforce in its 2024 report to government<sup>15</sup>.

*"A Just Transition to a climate neutral Ireland will build a better future for all and ensure no-one is left behind.*

*This will be achieved through social dialogue, promoting decent living standards, and proactive planning to anticipate change. It will support and develop sustainable and quality jobs and employment opportunities, reskilling and training. Through investment in services, infrastructure and social protection, people and communities that may be affected by this transition will be supported in a manner that is inclusive, equitable and fair."*

*Just Transition Taskforce*

Climate change does not impact all people equally - where someone lives, their job, age, gender, socioeconomic status, and mobility all shape their experience.

The Commission also recognises that critical issues related to just transition such as the need for a new social contract<sup>16</sup>, vulnerability, equity and justice remain open to interpretation, making it difficult to design cohesive strategies.

The Commission sees just transition as both an outcome and a process that should guide climate policymaking. More importantly, just transition is a powerful way of thinking about policy and decisions. If used appropriately, it can help support more equitable and effective outcomes for society, build stronger social consensus and create the momentum needed for effective and lasting climate action.

### Beyond energy transitions

A just transition cannot be reduced solely to energy policy or even climate action; it must integrate various economic, social, and environmental dimensions. While Ireland is not a major fossil fuel producer, this does not mean there is less need for proactive just transition planning. More subtle sectoral transitions should not be conflated with being softer transitions. A deeper understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities across different sectors is essential.

### Beyond mitigation

Currently, just transition efforts are largely focused on climate mitigation. However, as climate impacts intensify, there is an urgent need to broaden this focus to include climate resilience and adaptation. Just transition strategies must evolve to address the growing need to prepare for and respond to climate impacts.

Adaptation measures must be socially inclusive and equitable, ensuring they do not unintentionally reinforce existing vulnerabilities and inequalities or shift risks onto already at-risk communities. The Commission believes that integrating adaptation into just transition planning is essential. Resilience must be viewed as a core component of the broader transition, not as a separate or secondary agenda.

Assessments are needed to understand how adaptation policies affect both adaptation needs and social outcomes and to help strengthen understanding of *just resilience* - how we can prepare for and respond to climate impacts in ways that are fair, inclusive, and supportive of the most vulnerable.

<sup>14</sup> Kelleher, O., Mapping Just Transition Legal Obligations on the island of Ireland (2025): <https://ejni.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Mapping-just-transition-legal-obligations-24.05.25-.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, Just Transition Taskforce (2024): <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-the-environment-climate-and-communications/publications/just-transition-taskforce/>

<sup>16</sup> Please see, among others: Climate Conversation 2023 Report (2024); Social Justice Ireland (2024); Eurofound (2024);

## Beyond siloed approaches

While Ireland's Just Transition Principles Framework provides useful guiding principles, there is a risk that its four pillars could lead to a narrow and rigid interpretation of just transition. Right now, Ireland runs the risk of limiting its just transition approach to softening the negative impacts of existing and planned climate measures.

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**There is an opportunity to go further, and to use just transition as a framework to move towards the positive opportunities that major changes can bring for the country, and to address systemic inequalities and the root causes of climate change.**

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Several ongoing policy discussions and related plans such as the Climate Action Plan, National Development Plan<sup>17</sup>, Social Climate Plan<sup>18</sup>, Land Use Review<sup>19</sup> and Ireland's National Restoration Plan under the EU Nature Restoration Law<sup>20</sup> among others are connected to just transition.

Just transition offers a unique way to integrate various policies and provides a structured approach to ensure these efforts are coordinated and well-implemented.

## Beyond business as usual

The Commission acknowledges that just transition must be grounded in the broader framework of climate justice. This means going beyond economic metrics to focus on fairness, inclusion, and human rights at every stage of the transition.

The common narrative of balancing economic, environmental, and social concerns – often referred to as the eco-social-growth trilemma – remains central to climate discussions. A just transition approach invites us to move beyond this approach and to understand the deep interconnections and interdependencies between these priorities.

## Beyond short-term thinking

Ireland's transition to a climate-neutral economy is guided by carbon budgets, but these do not offer specific guidance for achieving a just transition.

A just transition is not a one-time policy fix, it is an ongoing process. In Ireland, the challenge is particularly complex: while the country enjoys near full employment, economic inequality persists, with growing poverty alongside overall wealth. Risks to multiple sectors are emerging, and a one-size-fits-all approach will not work.

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**To truly deliver a just transition, Ireland must move beyond reactive policymaking and embrace long-term, structural change, ensuring that climate action is not just fast, but also fair, with lasting benefits for future generations.**

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Ireland's approach to just transition must also be seen as part of a global effort to tackle climate change fairly. By reducing our emissions and supporting a fair shift to a climate neutral society, Ireland can contribute meaningfully to a more sustainable and equitable future for everyone.

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17 Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation, Minister Chambers announces a review of the National Development Plan (2025): <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-public-expenditure-infrastructure-public-service-reform-and-digitalisation/press-releases/ministers-chambers-announces-a-review-of-the-national-development-plan/>

18 European Commission, Social Climate Fund: [https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/eu-emissions-trading-system-eu-ets/social-climate-fund\\_en](https://climate.ec.europa.eu/eu-action/eu-emissions-trading-system-eu-ets/social-climate-fund_en)

19 Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment, Phase 2 of Land Use Review commences (2023): <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-climate-energy-and-the-environment/press-releases/phase-2-of-land-use-review-commences/>

20 Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Minister welcomes approval of the Nature Restoration Law in the EU Parliament (2024): <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-housing-local-government-and-heritage/press-releases/ministers-welcome-approval-of-the-nature-restoration-law-in-the-eu-parliament/>

### Recommendation 1

**The Commission recommends that the government create a strategy that explains its vision for a just transition to a climate-neutral economy.**

There is a need for a strategic approach to put just transition at the heart of climate action, and to go beyond energy transitions, siloed or reactive approaches, and business as usual. This strategy should identify those most at risk and show how the transition will benefit society, especially the people most affected.

### 3.2. How can we make sure the right systems are in place to deliver a fair climate transition?

A just transition offers the potential for transformative, whole-of-society change but requires strong commitment and coordination across all levels of government. Ireland has made progress through its Just Transition Principles Framework, with positive examples of implementation. However, clarity and consistency in applying the principles of the Just Transition Framework across sectors remain a challenge.

Effective governance is essential, not just setting up frameworks, but delivering outcomes that people can feel in their daily lives.

The Commission considered whether just transition goals should be captured in a standalone national policy or integrated into existing strategies. It also noted limited coordination across departments on climate action, with even less clarity on just transition responsibilities. A successful just transition depends on input from multiple departments and non-state actors, but without clear coordination, efforts risk becoming fragmented and ineffective.

### Ambitious climate action

A just transition begins with taking bold and ambitious climate action. Ireland has only a few short years left to achieve a 51% reduction in emissions by 2030, yet we are not on track. The EPA projects that Ireland will exceed its first carbon budget (2021–2025) by between 8 to 12 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>eq. The second budget (2026–2030) is now projected to be exceeded by between 77 to 114 Mt CO<sub>2</sub>eq, including carryover from the first Carbon Budget<sup>21</sup>.

In addition, Ireland's first National Climate Change Risk Assessment (NCCRA) was recently published by the EPA, outlining when, where, and how climate risks are likely to affect the country. Spanning all sectors of society, the environment, and the economy, including energy, transport, health, water, and food, the report identifies 115 risks across nine systems, with potential for cascading impacts. Four priority risks requiring urgent action in the next five years are extreme wind, coastal erosion and flooding, flooding, and heat. The assessment also highlights international risks, such as threats to global food security, supply chains, economies, and displacement, with varying impacts on different societal groups.

Urgent and substantial action is needed to meet our legally binding targets, move Ireland away from fossil fuels, protect communities from the worst impacts of climate change, and avoid more drastic measures later.

Only a planned transition can be a fair transition. Without clear, sector-specific pathways to 2030 and 2050, it will be impossible to coordinate the structural changes needed to reduce emissions while safeguarding social and economic equity.

Accelerating climate action also requires rethinking the systems that drive inequality, ensuring that a just transition is both bold and fair, addressing inequality rather than reinforcing it.

21 Environmental Protection Agency, Ireland's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections 2024–2055 (2025): <https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/climate-change/air-emissions/irelands-greenhouse-gas-emissions-projections-2024-2055.php>

## Recommendation 2

### **Strengthen the governance structure and deliverables associated with just transition planning in climate action.**

To support the implementation of the Just Transition Principles Framework and demonstrate how it is an integral part of climate policy, just transition needs to become a more cohesive component of the annual climate governance cycle. The Commission recommends setting just transition targets alongside sectoral actions to guide national and local efforts and track progress toward a climate-neutral economy.

### 3.3. How do we keep track of progress and make sure a just transition is really happening?

We need clear and coherent ways to measure whether our approach to just transition is resulting in positive lived outcomes.

The Just Transition Principles Framework provides an initial structure to guide a fair transition, but it is not being used consistently in climate policy. This creates a gap between climate action and making sure the transition is fair for everyone.

The Climate Action Plan's just transition case studies, while informative and inspirational, do not deepen our understanding of how the Framework is applied to climate policy, do not effectively monitor and analyse whether the Framework has been woven into sectoral climate policy development, and do not address gaps in the application of the Framework into climate policy.

Secondly, the case studies do not specify when consideration is given towards those most vulnerable or impacted by the transition.

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**The question remains - is just transition a part of policy initiation, which allows for just transition to be central to the policy process, or is just transition applied at the end of the process, where the ambition is to limit the negative impacts of the transition.**

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## Just transition indicators

There is a clear need to monitor and evaluate our progress towards a just transition. An indicators framework could support the monitoring aspects of this process.

The Commission notes the ongoing work by government in relation to establishing a set of Just Transition Indicators<sup>22</sup>. By tracking progress with clear, co-created indicators, governments can build trust and demonstrate that the social and economic dimensions of climate policy are being taken seriously. This, in turn, strengthens public support for climate action by showing that the benefits of the transition are tangible, fairly distributed, and responsive to people's needs.

There is also growing momentum at the international level around just transition indicators. Ireland can play a leadership role by aligning with and contributing to this work, while adapting the indicators to our national context.

However, to ensure its effectiveness there are a number of requirements that any such framework must account for.

To effectively measure progress toward a just transition to a climate-neutral economy, Ireland should follow the example of the Scottish Just Transition Commission by first identifying just transition outcomes<sup>23</sup>. These outcomes will provide a clear vision of what a just transition should achieve, guide the development of appropriate indicators, and set measurable targets.

Developing just transition outcomes will also support the progression of the aforementioned CAP governance framework. These outcomes can help define a long-term strategic vision for a just transition and support the creation of targets and actions aligned with sectoral carbon budgets and annual plans.

Each indicator should have a clearly defined baseline, enabling Ireland to track progress over time. Monitoring efforts must prioritise real-world impacts over stated intentions.

<sup>22</sup> Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, Climate Action Plan 2025 (2025); <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-the-environment-climate-and-communications/publications/climate-action-plan-2025/>

<sup>23</sup> Just Transition Commission, Measuring and Evaluating Success in the Scottish Just Transition (2024); <https://www.justtransition.scot/publication/measuring-and-evaluating-success-in-the-scottish-just-transition/>

Importantly, these indicators should be co-developed with affected communities, particularly those most vulnerable to climate impacts and policy shifts. Inclusive engagement will ensure that the indicators are grounded in lived experience and social realities.

When identifying those most affected or vulnerable to the transition, the indicators should apply a social, spatial, and justice-based lens to climate action, taking into account factors such as poverty and affordability.

To ensure a coherent and integrated approach, the Just Transition Indicators Framework must consider how it aligns with existing frameworks including the Wellbeing Framework and Sustainable Development Goals.

As the Indicator Framework evolves, it is essential to coordinate with existing work across government departments and wider stakeholders. This will help avoid duplication, build on current progress, and ensure efficient use of resources.

It will also be critical to ensure just transition indicators are fully embedded in policy evaluation and decision-making, rather than treated as secondary concerns.

### Recommendation 3

**Establish Just Transition Indicators to support the monitoring and evaluation of our progress towards a just transition that accounts for those most affected or vulnerable to the transition.**

A robust governance structure, potentially supported by the Commission, can ensure ownership, transparency, and accountability in the implementation of these indicators.

### Identify and support vulnerable communities

The journey to a climate neutral society will not impact everyone equally. Some will face greater social and economic disruption, particularly those reliant on carbon-intensive industries or in areas vulnerable to climate change. Certain groups such as women, migrants, lone parents, disabled people, people on low incomes, and Members of the Travelling Community are likely to be disproportionately affected. In addition, people's circumstances determine the level of climate action they can take.

More work is needed to accurately identify and support those most at risk, both from the effects of climate policies and from the broader impacts of climate change, and those least able to take climate action.

### Intersectional approach

The Commission believes an intersectional approach to considering just transition offers a valuable framework to improve understanding of how different systems of power, such as gender discrimination, economic inequality, and social class structures overlap to shape unique experiences of climate risk. A just transition must take these overlapping factors into account, ensuring that policies are inclusive, targeted, and responsive to the diverse realities of affected communities.

An intersectional approach also provides the opportunity to explore critical areas such as care work, which have often been overlooked in relation to climate and just transition.

Place-based approaches to just transition are also critical to ensure that local context, identity, and social fabric are considered, not just economic factors, so that no community is left behind in the transition.

### Recommendation 4

**Build an understanding of vulnerabilities associated with climate action.**

Identifying vulnerable groups, not just through broad economic categories, but by considering sector-specific and geographic vulnerabilities and intersectionality is required to ensure these groups are not overlooked.



### Address critical data gaps

The Commission acknowledges the ongoing efforts of various groups in contributing evidence and recommendations to inform Ireland's approach to a just transition.

The Commission has also identified the need to map and review available data and identify gaps in the availability and quality of data needed to assess the social, economic, and regional impacts of climate action. The absence of robust data restricts the ability to carry out meaningful, evidence-based impact assessments across sectors, especially when it comes to understanding who is most affected and why.

To address these challenges, the government should prioritise the development of comprehensive data systems and analytical capacity to collect detailed information on key just transition issues such as household income, gender, disability, ethnicity, human rights, and other key factors.

This could potentially include:

- Compiling all relevant existing data into a central depository.
- Partnering with bodies such as universities, the Central Statistics Office, NGOs, and civil society groups to co-produce data and fill existing knowledge gaps.
- Investing in domestic research capacity, particularly in socioeconomic impact analysis, and geographic vulnerability mapping.
- Engaging local leaders and community associations to better understand how policy changes affect vulnerable populations, including those in the informal economy.

#### Recommendation 5

##### **Map and review available data and address gaps in collecting key just transition data through collaborative monitoring efforts.**

The absence of robust data hinders the ability to carry out meaningful, evidence-based impact assessments across sectors and the identification of those most affected.

### 3.4. How can we improve engagement and communication to support a just transition?

For just transition policies to succeed, public participation must be a foundational element, not just a formality. A just transition cannot be developed behind closed doors, it must be co-created with communities through participatory approaches that go beyond traditional consultation methods.

The concept of a just transition is still evolving and may carry negative connotations, particularly where past efforts have been poorly managed or communicated. Additionally, engagement fatigue is a growing concern. To maintain meaningful involvement, processes must be responsive, transparent, and considerate of participants' time and capacity.

The National Dialogue on Climate Action (NDCA) is currently the government's main vehicle for engaging society at national, regional, and community levels. It aims to strengthen the relationship between the government and the public through shared values of fairness, collaboration, and positive change. A central goal is to ensure that the voice of vulnerable and impacted communities is reflected in future climate policy.

The Commission is tasked with providing advice on the strengthening of the local and community dimensions of just transition and strengthening engagement with vulnerable cohorts as part of Ireland's climate engagement activities, in particular the National Dialogue on Climate Action.

#### Accessibility

The format and logistics of the NDCA should support broad participation, especially from vulnerable groups. Events, engagement methods, and outputs should be designed with accessibility in mind.

To enable this and ensure the NDCA captures the voice of those most impacted and vulnerable to the transition, the NDCA should be resourced to facilitate more regional, place based discussions on climate action.

### Avoiding overemphasis on individual responsibility

It is important to ensure a balanced dialogue among all parts of society, avoiding placing too much focus on individual actions as the primary solution to climate change, and instead addressing its root causes.

Effective climate action requires shared accountability, where governments, industries, and institutions play their part alongside individuals. By broadening the conversation, we can create fairer, more effective solutions that reflect the lived realities of all groups in society.

### Explore affordability

One critical barrier to participation is the affordability of climate action, particularly for vulnerable groups. The NDCA, through initiatives like Climate Conversations and Climate Action Works<sup>24</sup> must explore this issue in more detail to ensure inclusive policy design and better reflect lived experiences.

### Rural populations as a distinct group

The NDCA's iterative approach allows for ongoing inclusion of additional cohorts. For instance, to address the unique challenges faced by rural communities, highlighted recently by Storm Éowyn, there is a need to engage rural populations as a distinct group, separate from farming, coastal, or Midlands communities.

### Use of findings

It is increasingly important to communicate how the NDCA's findings are being used in policymaking. Closing this feedback loop validates stakeholder contributions, fosters trust, and encourages continued engagement.

### Recommendation 6

#### **Improve the National Dialogue on Climate Action (NDCA) in terms of accessibility, affordability, accountability, and use of findings.**

To ensure the overall purpose, inputs and outputs, and methods of engagement associated with the NDCA account for the most vulnerable, address root causes, and that the voice of impacted cohorts is amplified in future climate policy.

### Communicating a just transition

Just transition offers an opportunity to co-create a new vision for climate action in Ireland. However, for a just transition to gain broad support, it is essential that all of society understands both the urgency of the climate crisis and the purpose and potential of a just transition. Without clear, accessible and relatable communication, the concept may be met with confusion or fear.

The Commission acknowledges both the opportunities and challenges associated in communicating just transition and emphasises the importance of highlighting positive stories and successful examples of just transition in practice. To support this, it recommends the development of a central repository of case studies to demonstrate real-world benefits and build public trust.

The Commission also recognises the urgency in needing to take a proactive approach to communicating just transition in order to counter the growing risk of mis and disinformation related to climate action in Ireland.

<sup>24</sup> Department of the Environment, Climate and Communication, Climate Actions Work (2024): <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-the-environment-climate-and-communications/campaigns/climate-actions-work/>

### Recommendation 7

#### **Integrate just transition into all messaging and communication around climate action.**

All government departments should work proactively to:

- Better understand current awareness and interpretations of just transition across society.
- Integrate just transition messaging across all climate communication efforts.
- Create practical guides and toolkits to help communities, businesses, and other stakeholders understand their role.
- Use inclusive, accessible language that speaks to diverse audiences and reflects their real-life experiences.
- Offer meaningful ways to hear and understand people's lived experiences.





# 4. Shaping Ireland's Future Together: A Just Transition for All

Ireland's journey to climate neutrality is underway. Strong foundations have been laid, but we are off track, and there is no guarantee that the outcomes will be fair.

Extreme weather, rising costs, and environmental degradation are already affecting our homes, health, and livelihoods. These impacts are not felt equally, and without careful planning, they risk deepening existing inequalities.

In the years ahead, Ireland will undergo the most significant transformation in its history, changing how we live, work, move, and more. This requires more than just emissions targets. It requires a shared vision and a plan with people at its heart.

A just transition offers us that opportunity: a chance to shape this future collaboratively, ensuring fairness at every step. It means creating space for genuine dialogue, listening to those most affected, and putting robust supports in place for those that need it most.

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**If we approach this transition with intention and care, the benefits will be transformative, empowered communities, reduced costs, warmer homes, better public transport, restored nature, stronger rural economies and a more resilient society.**

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But we won't achieve this by chance. It will take honesty about the scale of change ahead and commitment to managing it proactively and fairly at every stage.

This report provides an insight into the Commission's initial reflections and approach to a just transition. The Commission will continue to explore Ireland's approach to just transition across a number of sectors and themes throughout the rest of our term through research and analysis, sectoral reviews and importantly, through engagements with stakeholders, relevant experts and lived experience.

The Commission is committed to supporting Ireland on this transition and to working with others in shaping a just and inclusive future for all.

# Appendix 1

## Terms of Reference - Just Transition Commission

### 1. Establishment

- 1.1 The Just Transition Commission (Commission) is established on an administrative basis by government Decision 30 April 2024.
- 1.2 The mission of the Just Transition Commission is to support the government in its responsibility to provide that Ireland's transition to the National Climate Objective has regard to the requirement for a just transition to a climate neutral economy, which endeavours, in so far as practicable, to maximise employment opportunities, and to support people and communities that may be negatively affected by the transition. The Commission will be a public voice on planning for just transition, leading in developing a shared understanding, and identifying the challenges, solutions and opportunities for Ireland.

### 2. Functions of the Just Transition Commission

- 2.1 The functions of the Just Transition Commission are:
  - **To prepare and analyse strategic evidence-based research in relation to just transition:** to anticipate and inform long-term climate policy and investment planning, including focusing on the potential impacts, risks and opportunities arising from the climate transition for different sectors of both the economy and society, including the social, economic and employment impacts of this change and the policy responses required.
  - **To evaluate, advise, and comment on** policy planning and implementation and progress on the application of Ireland's just transition principles into national and sectoral climate policies, based on high-quality, evidence-based analysis.

- **To provide strategic advice and engagement on just transition:** the Commission will support the National Dialogue on Climate Action, as well as any dialogues on climate/ just transition matters within individual sectors, in engagement on the implementation of climate programmes agreed by government.
- **Sectoral or regional engagement and road-mapping:** the Commission may, on its own initiative, or at the request of the government, undertake proactive engagement with particular communities, sectors or regions facing specific acute or long-term challenges arising from the transition, and advise government on strategic co-ordination by the agencies of the State, on any interventions or targeted supports which may be helpful to address the challenges being faced by that community, sector or region.

### 3. Work Programme

- 3.1 The work programme for the first term of the Commission shall include, but may not be limited to:
  - An analysis of the potential impacts on Ireland's workforce, and policy implications, of achieving the statutory 2050 climate neutrality objective; including examining the potential overall employment implications, which sectors of the economy may be most adversely impacted, which sectors may be expected to see significant employment growth in the decades ahead; and an examination of the geographic distribution of these impacts.
  - An assessment of the degree to which climate action policies already reflect the principles of Ireland's Just Transition Framework, taking account of the policy framework and sectoral emissions ceilings set out in the Climate Action Plan, and advice on any opportunities for strengthening both the principles themselves and the application of the principles into sectoral policies.

- Advice on the strengthening of the local and community dimensions of just transition and strengthening engagement with vulnerable cohorts into Ireland's climate engagement activities, in particular the National Dialogue on Climate Action, as well as sectoral dialogues.
- Recommendations on a set of just transition indicators to support measurement of progress, over time, in achieving a just transition.

#### 4. Membership and Chairperson

- 4.1 The number of Members, appointed on a part time basis only, shall be comprised of not fewer than eight and not more than ten ordinary Members (excluding the Chair). Appointments to the Commission may be for a term of up to three years, renewable once.
- 4.2 The Minister who holds responsibility for climate policy shall make appointments to the Commission based on objective criteria, with due regard for the benefits of diversity, including on the basis of gender. The composition of the Commission should be balanced, so that the views of members represent a diverse group of stakeholders.
- 4.3 The Minister may appoint one member each from the five pillars of social dialogue, comprised of the Agriculture pillar, the Community and Voluntary pillar, the Employer pillar, the Environment pillar and the Trade Union pillar.
- 4.4 The remaining members shall be recruited through a competitive process to supplement delegated members and to represent a range of expertise and perspectives including human rights and equality, skills development, rural and community development, social inclusion, the green economic transition, and youth perspectives.
- 4.5 The Chair shall be appointed by the Minister either from amongst the appointed members or through a separate competitive recruitment process.

- 4.6 The Chair shall be independent of the government and is responsible for determining the work programme of the Commission, in consultation with the Members, and for the discharge of this work programme, in conjunction with the secretariat.
- 4.7 The Minister may decide to appoint one or more deputy chairs from amongst the Members as required, subject to ultimate accountability remaining with the Chair.
- 4.8 Members and the Chair shall be suitably qualified persons, (for example, but not limited to individuals who have a direct experience of policy issues from a business or societal perspective or in academia).
- 4.9 All appointments to the Commission shall be approved by the government.
- 4.10 Commission Members shall receive a fee and expenses.

#### 5. Independence of Commission

- 5.1 The Commission is an independent body and shall perform its duties in an objective, neutral and fully independent manner, free of any expressed ideology or political position.
- 5.2 The Commission shall have functional autonomy and shall be responsible for the management and direction of its own work programme, save where requested by government to undertake proactive engagement with particular communities, sectors or regions facing specific acute or long-term challenges arising from the transition. The work programme will be shaped by the Chair, in consultation with Members and with the assistance of its Secretariat.
- 5.3 The Commission shall develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the government, through the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, outlining the operational relationship between the Commission and the government, including the provision of secretariat, financial and operational resources to the Commission.





- 5.4 The Commission shall produce independent high-quality, evidence-based analysis on just transition challenges and opportunities and shall report to the government through the Minister with responsibility for climate policy and make this analysis available to the public to inform policy development across government.

## 6. Advisory Representatives

- 6.1 The following Departments\* may attend Commission meetings in an advisory capacity:
- Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine
  - Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
  - Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
  - Department of Finance
  - Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
  - Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
  - Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform
  - Department of Rural and Community Development
  - Department of Social Protection
  - Department of Taoiseach
  - Department of Transport
- 6.2 The Commission may invite additional government departments and Agencies to attend Commission meetings in an advisory capacity where appropriate.
- 6.3 When necessary, alternates may attend on behalf of advisory representatives, with the prior agreement of the Chair.

*\* Department titles at time of establishment of Commission.*

## 7. Relationship with other bodies

- 7.1 The relationship between the Commission and Climate Change Advisory Council will be subject to a Memorandum of Understanding between the two bodies.
- 7.2 The Commission may coordinate its work programme with other advisory bodies to ensure appropriate complementarity, taking account of the Commission's work programme set out in section 3.

## 8. Meetings and Procedure

- 8.1 Subject to the requirements of this Section, the Commission shall regulate its own procedures.
- 8.2 The quorum for a meeting of the Commission shall be not less than six members at the meeting.
- 8.3 The Commission will seek to reach decisions by consensus. Where this is not possible, decisions shall be determined by a simple majority of votes of the members present and, if voting is equally divided, the Chairperson shall have a casting vote.
- 8.4 The Chairperson may at any time call a meeting of the Commission or shall call a meeting of the Commission at any time when requested to do so in writing by any five members of the Commission.
- 8.5 Views expressed by the Commission in publications or by any Member of the Commission speaking on its behalf, shall not be understood as representing the views of the Minister who holds responsibility for climate policy or any Member of the government.
- 8.6 The disclosure of information, except in the exercise of their duties, obtained by any member of the Commission or any committee or consultative group appointed by it, shall be prohibited.

- 8.7 The Commission shall keep the Minister who holds responsibility for climate policy informed of its activities on a regular basis and the Chairperson shall be afforded the opportunity to present the key findings and recommendations of its work to the Minister, at minimum on an annual basis.

## 9. Secretariat

- 9.1 The secretariat to the Commission shall be provided by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications.
- 9.2 Communication between the government, Ministers, government officials and the Commission, save for when the Chair directly engages with such parties, shall be conducted through the Secretariat.

## Get in touch!

The Commission is keen to hear from people, communities, organisations and wider societal actors working towards a just transition. We are eager to hear about both the challenges being faced and positive examples of how social and climate goals can be integrated to support action, inclusion, justice and equality. To share your insights or stories, please email us at

[info@justtransitioncommission.ie](mailto:info@justtransitioncommission.ie)  
[www.justtransitioncommission.ie](http://www.justtransitioncommission.ie)



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