



**NESC Presentation to Joint Committee on Transport, Tourism and Sport**

**Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> June, 10am**

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We would like to thank the Chairperson and members of the Committee for this invitation to the NESC, to speak on NESC's recent work on climate policy.

NESC is a government body which advises the Taoiseach on strategic policy issues. The members are appointed by the Taoiseach and represent business and employers, trade unions, agricultural and farming organisations, community and voluntary organisations, and environmental organisations; as well as heads of Government departments and independent experts. Its composition means it plays an important and unique role in bringing different perspectives from civil society together with Government. Jeanne Moore and I are members of the Secretariat and are attending in that capacity.

There is now a strong and growing consensus, across society, the Oireachtas and government that ambitious and meaningful policy action is urgently needed to address climate change.

The Council in its latest report "*Climate-Policy-Getting the Process Right*", argues that a mission-oriented approach to climate is needed to drive the development of actions and solutions that will decarbonise our economy and society. This will allow us capture the full range of positive benefits from a just transition to a low-carbon future: to our economy, health, well-being, air quality, and enhanced biodiversity. However, it points out that ambitious goals without a rigorous and reflective policy process will not be sufficient to deliver a low carbon transition.

The Council focuses on what needs to happen to ensure that growing ambition is matched by action. It outlines a process of policy development and continuous improvement which it believes can force emissions downwards over time (Figure 1, end of document). This system, uses target setting, action and review, recognising that ambitious actions in climate often come with difficulties, costs and contested ideas which need to be grappled with, not glossed over. It accepts that in many areas of climate policy, the precise details about how to act are not yet fully worked out, but progress has still to be achieved.



***What does this continuous improvement mean, firstly for climate policy generally and, secondly, for transport?***

For climate policy, the Council strongly supports the Government's proposal to adopt a policy and implementation process modelled on the Action Plan for Jobs (APJ). The process it outlines in its report also bears close similarity to the proposal of the Joint Committee on Climate Action to establish a Climate Action Implementation Board. Such a process and structure can provide a mechanism for intensive reporting and monitoring of action.

However, the existing range of *known* actions, even if fully implemented, will not be sufficient. The Council, therefore, recommends that the Action Plan for Jobs (APJ) process, which rightly focuses on checking the implementation of actions and deliverables, should in the case of climate be enhanced to empower government agencies to explore, find, trial and cost *new solutions* tailored to specific contexts. In doing so, the agencies will have to *engage and collaborate* with both each other and with the non-government actors in their respective networks. In this *APJ Plus* process the center of government will have a key role in pooling the learning from action at the front line in various sectors and prompting cooperation between departments and sectors in order find and exploit co-benefits for health, wellbeing and the environment.

In terms of transport, the Council identifies three additional key activities and processes that would support future climate action.

- i) First, the Council supports the creation of taskforces that search for appropriate solutions. One example is the Low Emissions Vehicle Taskforce which seems to have the capacity to grapple with the complexity and uncertainty that characterises the transport sector. Running such taskforces, and learning from their work, should form a core part of the climate policy process, and not be tangential to it.
- ii) Second, the Council highlights the role of departmental and agency led-processes that support breakthroughs and innovation and scale up promising solutions. They can achieve this by using the full range of tools available, including regulation, acting as facilitator and convenor, and the traditional instruments that shape behaviour, such as taxes, charges and subsidies.



iii) Third, the Council recommends an enhanced research and knowledge-generating capacity and capability, as transport currently lacks this, compared with other sectors such as agriculture and energy where Teagasc and SEAI are key resources. What the Council envisage is a research approach and capacity that is close to practice, helps in finding new solutions and identifies obstacles and challenges to progress. Examples of areas for which such research is required includes:

- experimental research and trials, on issues such as parking policy, cycling and safety, prioritising pedestrians, and congestion charges;
- engaging people and communities in finding and seeing the co-benefits of a sustainable mobility system; and
- developing best-practice guidelines and standards, and advisory support, for example, in creating safe walking routes in rural areas.

These three innovations—taskforces which move specific issues forward; using more of the coordinating force and instruments of the State to increase the pace of change; and enhanced and practice orientated research programme—would in the Council’s view create the means of continuously improving the sustainability and quality of our mobility system and wider climate policy process.

To conclude, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to present our work here today. My colleague Jeanne Moore and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Thank-you.

**Figure 1:**

