

**Joint Committee on Environment and Climate Action**  
**Opening Statement by Department of the Environment, Climate and**  
**Communications**  
**Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> May, 2022**

Good morning, Chair and members of the Committee. Thank you for the invitation to address this morning's meeting on local authority and community-led climate action. I am joined by my colleagues Justina Corcoran, Principal Officer in the National Climate Policy Division and Rory Somers from the Retail Energy Policy Division.

**CAP**

The Climate Action Plan highlights that the transition to climate-neutrality will require changes across our society and economy, including in the built environment, energy, transport, waste, and agriculture. This will require a collaborative effort by all levels of government, communities, business and individuals to implement new and ambitious policies, technological innovations, systems and infrastructures. It makes it clear that this will also require changes in individual behaviours, including how we work, heat our homes, travel, consume goods and services, and manage our waste.

**Role of Local Authorities**

The Local Authorities have a particularly important role in the delivery of both climate mitigation and adaptation.

This is reflected in the provisions of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act, 2021, under which Local Authorities will have to prepare Climate Action Plans. These Plans will set out the mitigation and

adaptation policies, measures and actions required at local level to drive the achievement of our national climate ambition.

The Department is fully committed to ensuring that Local Authorities are adequately funded to fulfil this important mandate. Significant funding is already in place to support both climate mitigation and adaptation at Local Authority level.

In 2018, the Department entered into a five-year financial commitment of €10 million to establish four Climate Action Regional Offices (or CAROs). The CAROs co-ordinate actions between Local Authorities and assist in the development and monitoring of implementation of 31 Local Climate Adaptation Strategies which are currently being delivered.

Since 2019, the Department has also funded and engaged with the CAROs in relation to the implementation of an extensive Local Authority climate action training programme. Over 13,000 Local Authority staff received training in 2021 and further courses are in development.

### **Role of Communities and supports from DECC**

Empowering local communities to address the challenges they face in transitioning to carbon neutrality is central to the delivery of the Climate Action Plan. The National Dialogue for Climate Action is the key mechanism through which climate actions related to public engagement, participation, community action, networking and capacity building are delivered.

As well as acting as the coordinating structure facilitating societal engagement on climate action, the NDCA will also provide financial supports for local innovations through the Climate Action Fund.

In November 2021 Minister Ryan launched the Community Climate Action Programme (CCAP), with funding of €60 million over 3 years from the Climate Action Fund. The purpose of this funding is to facilitate eligible organisations to collaboratively develop supports, tools, know-how and approaches to assist local communities to take climate action.

### **National Retrofit Plan, SECs and CEG**

The National Retrofit Plan was published last year as part of the Climate Action Plan 2021. This Plan sets out the Government's approach to retrofitting 500,000 homes to a Building Energy Rating of B2 and installing 400,000 heat pumps in existing homes by 2030.

An unprecedented €8 billion of National Development Plan funding will be available to support implementation of the Plan through SEAI residential and community retrofit schemes to 2030.

A total of €267 million has been allocated for these schemes this year. This is the highest ever allocation for SEAI retrofit schemes and will support almost 27,000 home energy upgrades in communities across the country. Local authority retrofit funding is in addition to this amount and is provided by the Department of Housing.

Funding of €43million has been allocated to the Community Energy Grant Scheme in 2022. This represents a 43% increase on the 2021 allocation and is the largest ever budget for the scheme.

Under the National Retrofit Plan, Sustainable Energy Communities (SECs) will be supported by Government to continue and expand their roles as ‘activators’ in their community. The Plan includes a target to grow this number to 1,500 by 2030.

I understand that Ciaran Byrne from the SEAI will provide further detail on these initiatives in his opening statement.

### **Micro Generation**

Micro- and Small-scale Generation will also have a key role to play in helping to achieve overall renewable electricity and climate targets and will allow citizens, businesses, communities and local authorities to take part in the energy transition.

The introduction of the Clean Export Guarantee (CEG) tariff represents the first phase of a comprehensive enabling framework for micro-and small-scale generators in Ireland that allows them to receive payment from their electricity supplier for all excess renewable electricity they export to the grid, which reflects the market value of the electricity.

The Government also approved the Micro-generation Support Scheme (or MSS) last December which provides supports for up to 380MW of micro-generation by 2030, primarily for self-consumption. Funding of €16m has been allocated in 2022 to the Scheme, which provides capital grants for new domestic solar PV installations and will also provide grants for new small non-domestic, including public and Local Authorities, solar PV installations later this year.

Larger non-domestic users, including farms, businesses, public and community buildings, who install new larger installations will be able to avail of a Clean Export Premium tariff which will provide a fixed tariff for 15 years for electricity exported to the grid in conjunction with the Clean Export Guarantee.

The Climate Action Plan 2021 also commits to the development of a support scheme for small-scale generators that are above 50kW but smaller than those supported by the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS). This is expected to become available by early 2023.

### **Closing**

In conclusion, we are working closely with colleagues across Government, in local authorities and in communities throughout the country to further build momentum and ensure that we meet our 2050 net zero commitments.

My colleagues and I are happy to address any questions the Committee may have.

Thank you.