

Vol. 791  
No. 4



Friday,  
8 February 2013

DÍOSPÓIREACHTAÍ PARLAIMINTE  
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

# DÁIL ÉIREANN

TUAIRISC OIFIGIÚIL—*Neamhcheartaithe*  
(OFFICIAL REPORT—*Unrevised*)

Energy Security and Climate Change Bill 2012: Second Stage [Private Members] . . . . .1010

# DÁIL ÉIREANN

*Dé hAoine, 08 Feabhra 2013*

*Friday, 08 February 2013*

Chuaigh an Ceann Comhairle i gceannas ar 10.30 a.m.

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*Paidir.*  
*Prayer.*

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## **Energy Security and Climate Change Bill 2012: Second Stage [Private Members]**

**Deputy Catherine Murphy:** I move: “That the Bill be now read a Second Time.”

I welcome this opportunity to present this Bill. I am fortunate in that this is the second time I have been able to present legislation to the House on a Friday sitting.

The Bill is very deliberately named the Energy Security and Climate Change Bill, as I wanted to address both issues with one approach. The Bill will have three overall functions. Energy security is already a significant issue but as fossil fuels become ever more scarce, the need for us to ensure that we have a secure and affordable energy supply becomes even more critical for the sustainability of the State. The energy supply must minimise damage to the environment. We have already entered into legal obligations to move to a low-carbon model and reduce carbon emissions. These are legal obligations but I think most of us would accept that we also have moral obligations.

This week the Government decided to reschedule the debt on the promissory notes. Basically, our children and grandchildren will assume responsibility for most of it. It is a debt that they did not choose to incur and neither did we. If we continue to ignore our precarious position on energy security and climate change, we will run the risk of creating a crisis every bit as grave, and difficult to bear, for our children and grandchildren.

The Bill’s third function concerns the huge economic challenges we face both now and in future. We are told that one of the key strategies to deal with these problems is to grow our economy. In order to do so, however, we must have an ample and sustainable energy supply. In fact, there is a great opportunity here. We must change the mindset and examine the opportunities presented by renewable energy. We cannot remain the last country at the end of a gas pipeline. We should see ourselves as becoming an energy exporter, so we need to be the first country on that pipeline.

Ireland has an import dependency on fossil fuels of around 85%, while the EU average is

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50%. We import 93% of our natural gas, although the perception is that we are almost self-sufficient in natural gas. It is important to say what the position is. We have 84 days' of gasoline supplies. One only has to go down to the Clontarf Road, as Deputy Finian McGrath will tell us, and look across at the big fuel containers.

**Deputy Finian McGrath:** Hear, hear. Dublin Bay North.

**Deputy Phil Hogan:** They are a lot happier down there.

**Deputy Finian McGrath:** I am just letting Deputy Terence Flanagan know that we are still around.

**Deputy Catherine Murphy:** Our dependence on fossil fuels means an import bill in excess of €6 billion annually. If it is not substituted by alternative renewable sources, that figure is guaranteed to grow.

It is disappointing that two years into the Government's term in office we still have not had sight of the heads of the proposed climate change Bill. The longer we delay legislation, the further into the future we will place the practical plans that are essential for achieving these targets and - just as importantly - the more it will cost us.

The Bill before the House is intended to deliver a legal framework to reduce emissions and eliminate fossil fuels. It is a two-pronged approach to achieving energy security for Ireland while counteracting climate change. The Bill contains the following specific targets: an interim target of a 40% reduction on the climate change element; an interim target of a 40% reduction by 2030 of six greenhouse gases based on 1990s levels; a primary target of an 80% reduction by 2050 of the same greenhouse gases; and, on the energy security element, a 95% reduction on 1990 levels by 2050, when there might not be many of these fossil fuels left.

The last target concerns fossil fuels and seeks a 95% reduction, which encapsulates the energy security portion of the Bill. To my mind, it is as vital as the emissions reduction target. Our Atlantic coast is currently being explored but one must consider what is happening in some American states with regard to hydraulic fracturing. It is obvious that the easy options are gone and that these resources are in decline.

I have deliberately included specific targets because any Bill purporting to deal with climate change and energy security must contain such figures. I urge Government Deputies, in particular, to pay attention to these targets. There are concerns that the forthcoming Government legislation will not contain specific targets but instead will provide for outline transition plans. I hope the Minister will clarify this point. I do not wish to pre-empt the matter but I would be happy to hear what the Minister has to say about it. I hope he will refer to such targets. A Bill without targets is like setting out on a journey while not knowing the destination. It is essential, therefore, to include targets in the legislation. They are needed as a benchmark for progress.

The Minister runs the lead Department on this issue but there is hardly a Ministry that will not have a responsibility in this matter. They include the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. In addition, the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government deals with water, waste, land use, planning and housing.

Individual Ministers may produce draft plans but if they are to achieve them, they must have

goals to aim for. Given the enormous role the Government plays in encouraging renewable energy capabilities, it is important to give clear signals to the energy industry. A Bill without targets would make a mockery of our international obligations.

We have entered into an effort-sharing commitment on greenhouse gas emissions that is outside the emissions trading scheme. We have also entered into a binding emissions trajectory for the years 2013 to 2020, so we already have legal obligations in this regard. The Minister may argue that a commitment to targets would leave the Government open to litigation, but this issue has been dealt with before. My Bill states that it is the duty of Government to achieve the goals set out, not an obligation. That means that although the Government is legally obliged to make transition plans to lower emissions and fossil fuel use, the targets in themselves are not justiciable. This is a method by which other countries have dealt with or overcome the fear of litigation and is one that also is open to the Government. Moreover, it cannot be an excuse for not including targets.

The Bill makes provision for a national energy security and climate change action plan, which is the master plan. Moreover, a crucial provision of the Bill is the establishment of sectoral plans. I acknowledge the Government has discussed these but there must be a framework into which such sectoral plans adhere and that is where I believe the targets should be positioned. The Bill makes provision for the presentation of an annual transition statement by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to Dáil Éireann and the responsibility will be to Dáil Éireann, rather than to the courts. This is the reason I dealt with the issue of potential litigation. To oversee the plan's implementation, the Bill proposes the establishment of the commission on energy security and climate change. This would be an agency with a ministerially-appointed board, the primary role of which would be to advise and make recommendations regarding progress of the national plan and the sectoral plans. Moreover, such a commission would work with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland to conduct research on the most effective methods the Government can adopt to meet its targets based on a review of the latest scientific data on climate change, which obviously will change over time. It is proposed that the commission must make an annual report to the report summarising progress in that year and it makes sense to deal with it in that fashion.

While Ireland obviously has international obligations, I note, for example, that the Kyoto targets are modest and as most Members are aware, these targets may well be renegotiated in 2015. The targets, which at present specify a reduction in emissions of 20% by 2020, may well actually be increased. The targets may well go far beyond that to reductions of upwards of 25% or 30%, which obviously means we cannot delay in dealing with this issue. I believe that legally binding targets are absolutely essential if this is not aspirational but if it is to be practical. Members have seen how difficult it is to negotiate with the European Central Bank. They should imagine the scenario in which we left it to our children to negotiate with the environment. Those who will come after us will face major ecological challenges unless we deal with them now and we have a moral obligation to so do.

Over the past 15 or 20 years, much of the economy revolved around the construction industry and many of the choices were made in the interests of that industry. It crashed the country and I note some of those who have been most affected by this are construction workers themselves. Members cannot allow no lessons to be learned in respect of one industry dictating how things are to happen. For example, everyone agrees the agriculture industry is of enormous importance. However, it is one of the areas that poses most challenges for Ireland in respect

of climate change. While Members must work with that industry, that must be done in the full knowledge of the challenges that must be met and faced, rather than pandering to the sector because so doing will not be in that industry's interest, just as it was not in the interest of the construction industry to not face up to what are the obligations. We must work with that industry in a determined way to face up to those challenges.

Another key area of consensus on climate change and energy security policy concerns planning at sectoral level and obviously, the Bill makes provisions in this regard. As I stated earlier, each Minister will have an area of responsibility. A little latitude must be given within those targets because one does not know whether a development might have an impact in this regard. For example, some area might exceed the targets set for it in a way that could be offset against another side. When one breaks down the figures regarding Irish emissions, one can see heightened concentrations in transport and agriculture at approximately 21% and 30%, respectively. As each of these areas contributes more emissions by itself than either the industrial or commercial sectors, Ireland is somewhat different to many of the other European countries in this regard.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** Two minutes remain to the Deputy.

**Deputy Catherine Murphy:** I have much more to say and will return to some of it when I wrap up. Unfortunately, as Members await the heads of the Bill from the Government, it is evident that in transport, for example, there has been slippage. Obviously, the economic situation is determining some of it and, for example, much of what little investment there may be is going to road rather than to rail. Similarly services in public transport are being lost and instead of moving people towards a more sustainable pattern of movement, the opposite is in fact happening. In the case of retrofitting, there has been a collapse in the applications of people who wish to insulate their homes because the supports are being cut by the Government but yet, the successor scheme is taking time to deliver. In respect of the European directive on energy efficiency, Ireland is nowhere near achieving the 20% target. Although forestry is very important as a carbon sink, we potentially may be losing control of it because it is up for sale. We are losing control of afforestation, which is really important. No state aid is forthcoming for offshore wind or wave energy, which I believe to be a choice that is deliberate and wrong. As for waste, we have already spent millions on costly incineration proposals that must have guaranteed input as otherwise, the citizens must pay the deficit. Moreover, the environmental benefits of car tax have been reversed and the money raised on carbon tax is not ring-fenced but goes into general taxation. When one starts to consider what is happening in practice, it does not give one a great deal of confidence about what will come about in the future. We will not be able to continue to buy compliance and cannot afford to do so. Moreover, it is not the option that should be taken and so doing would cause problems after 2020, when Ireland's obligations will become much more acute.

I will conclude by noting that one can visualise the impact on our children and grandchildren on foot of the re-engineering of our debts. While I completely accept they have been inherited by the current Administration as an issue to be dealt with, our children will be picking up the tab. We cannot morally oblige them to pick up the tab for our failing to deal in a very deliberate, determined and practical way with this major issue. Unless it is dealt with now, it will be an even greater challenge for them into the future. While this rightly is a legal set of obligations, most of all it is a set of moral obligations that we must assume as a people, unless we are to leave enormous problems for future generations.

**Deputy Finian McGrath:** Hear hear.

**Deputy Brendan Smith:** I am speaking in place of my colleague and party spokesperson, Deputy Cowen, who is unable to attend this morning due to a family bereavement. Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time. It is a challenge that will define the legacy we leave future generations. In the continuing absence of even the heads of a long promised Bill by the Government, I take this opportunity to commend Deputy Catherine Murphy on taking the initiative by publishing a detailed Bill that draws on the work and legacy of the Climate Change Bill that was published in the last Dáil by the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Climate Change and Energy Security, as well as the Labour Party's proposed legislation in that area while it was in opposition. That Bill had the backing of all members of the aforementioned joint committee, including the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Deputy Hogan - who I am glad to note is in the Chamber - as well as the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Deputy Coveney, while they were in opposition. However, the current prevarication on the Government on the issue, despite the existence of a Bill with all-party support, does not bode well for the vigorous pursuit of a climate change policy. The Labour Party's enthusiasm for the project has been strangely sapped by its time in power. I refer to the de-prioritisation of the Bill in 2011, the broken promises concerning the heads of a Bill in 2012 and the continued failure to publish even the heads of a Bill. These delays all indicate a dangerous level of complacency. Such inaction demonstrates clearly that the Government does not give any indication that it is taking climate change seriously.

This Bill hits all the right notes in drawing up a feasible climate change strategy and providing for clear targets defined by a set timeframe and interim measures, a climate change commission and regular reports by the Government to ensure accountability and transparency. I believe they all will combine to create a long-term framework for Ireland to meet the pressing challenges of our responsibilities to a planet in turmoil and to the future generations that will inherit it.

The impact of the recession has touched the lives of all of our citizens. The blight of high unemployment, tragedy of spiralling emigration and burden of mortgage arrears have rightly caused us to concentrate our minds on the immediate problems we face. That is understandable. However, as British Prime Minister Cameron put it earlier this week, for those who say we cannot afford to deal with climate change, the simple truth is we cannot afford not to deal with it. The consequences of failing to deal with the problem are far too wide-reaching and profound to adopt a short-term, ostrich-like approach of burying our heads in the sand.

It is worth reflecting on the immense challenges that we face from the unprecedented man-made changes we are enduring. The pressing global challenge of climate change is the backdrop to our efforts to encourage environmentally friendly driving. The seminal and comprehensive 2006 UK Stern report points out the massive threats that climate change represents and what action we need to take to rise to those challenges. These are lessons upon which we must all reflect and accept.

I will refer to a number of the key points of the report. It argues that all countries will be affected by climate change but the poorest countries will suffer earliest and most. Average temperatures could rise by 5° Celsius from pre-industrial levels if climate change goes unchecked; warming of 3° Celsius or 4° Celsius will result in many millions more people being flooded. By the middle of the century, 200 million people may be permanently displaced due to rising sea levels, heavier floods and drought. Warming of 4° Celsius is likely to seriously affect global



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food production and warming of 2° Celsius could leave 15% to 40% of species facing extinction. Before the industrial revolution, the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere was 280 parts per million, ppm, CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent, or CO<sub>2</sub>e. The current level is 430 ppm CO<sub>2</sub> e. The level should be limited to between 450 ppm CO<sub>2</sub> e and 550 ppm CO<sub>2</sub> e, and anything higher would substantially increase risks of very harmful impacts. Anything lower would impose very high adjustment costs in the near term and might not even be feasible.

Climate change is the greatest and widest-ranging market failure ever seen, and the few years since the Stern report have borne out its findings and fears. The pan-generational geological threat of climate change is evident in the deteriorating and erratic weather conditions we have witnessed across the globe over the past number of years. I spoke to an Australian in the middle of January and asked when that country generally experiences the wet season. He told me that a number of years ago it would have been forecast for the end of November and December but when I spoke to him, the wet season had not yet arrived. It subsequently arrived with much power. In the past the wet season could have been forecast for November and December but that is not the case now.

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC, reiterated the thrust of the Stern report when it issued its fourth report. It declared that the evidence of a global warming trend is “unequivocal” and that human activity has “very likely” been the driving force in that change. The fifth report, due over the coming 12 months, will further chart the deep impact of climate change. Despite this dramatic and arresting burden of proof, the Government continues to hesitate.

The Government is not starting from scratch in shaping a climate change strategy. For example, it inherited a Bill from the previous Oireachtas and a base target through international agreements. The previous Government had undertaken very substantial work and was ready to publish a Bill before the last general election two years ago. Very substantial work had been undertaken by all Departments on the proposed legislation, and I remember the discussions well.

**Deputy Phil Hogan:** It was a shambles all right.

**Deputy Brendan Smith:** No. Under the Kyoto Protocol, Ireland agreed to limit greenhouse gas emissions to a level of 13% above the level of our emissions in 1990. The EU climate change and energy package has set out a number of targets that ensure Ireland has the highest level of target set under the EU burden sharing arrangements. By 2020, our target is to reduce our national greenhouse gas emissions by 20% compared to 2005 levels. Ireland has also agreed that, again by 2020, 16% of our overall energy consumption will come from renewable sources. Against this backdrop the Government has plenty to work with and it is the reluctance to tackle the issue that is preventing action and nothing else.

I will say a few words about the role of the agricultural sector, which produces some 28% of our greenhouse gases and is in a particularly sensitive position with regard to a climate strategy and set targets for emission reduction. The sector has been subject to much unfair and biased commentary. As Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in July 2010 I set out an ambitious plan for the agrifood sector. Food Harvest 2020 set an ambitious but achievable series of specific targets to drive employment in the agricultural area and to increase our food and beverage exports on an annual basis. As it stands the agrifood sector in Ireland contributes a value of €24 billion to the national economy, generates 6.3% of gross value added and provides over 7.4% of national employment. Agriculture provides 60% of employment within the agrifood

sector, which supports over 300,000 jobs across the country. In short, agriculture is the engine of the rural economy and many larger urban centres.

The context of the complex difficulties confronting the agriculture sector is simply the need to produce more food to feed more people. Global demand for food will increase by 70% to meet the demands of a rapidly expanding world population that is projected to increase by 2.1 billion people, from 7 billion today to 9.1 billion by 2050. To give a sense of the scale of this task, the increase is equal to the entire population of the world in 1950.

Adding to the rising demand for food from the increased population is the ongoing task of addressing endemic hunger among vast swathes of the world's population. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations estimates that every day over 1 billion people across the globe - one person in seven - do not have enough food to eat or are malnourished. That is a terrible indictment of the global community. According to the IPCC fourth assessment report the increase in demand for food will result in an increase in agricultural emissions worldwide estimated to be of the order of 48% up to 2030. The pressing question is how we can avoid a Malthusian nightmare while meeting our increased food production requirements. In the 19th century the economist Thomas Malthus argued that the rate of population increase would continue to exceed the rate of growth in food production.

Achieving sweeping reductions in national emissions by 80% to 95% while simultaneously maintaining a vibrant productive agriculture sector will be a major challenge but it must be overcome. In the Irish agriculture sector, emissions reductions of such a scale cannot be achieved without downward pressure on livestock activity, which would in turn have negative implication for the world food supply and on worldwide emissions. If we are pursuing the goal of reducing emissions, we cannot take a short-sighted national approach that ignores the broader international position. Focusing only on our national issues and ignoring the consequences of our decision for the international context will only lead to increased emissions across the globe and defeat the purpose of the whole endeavour. The end result of eroding our own national herd would be a growth in beef imported into the EU, which would be produced in countries with less sustainable farming systems than ours. A decrease in the quantity of Irish-produced beef and the correlating rise in its price would inevitably lead to larger quantities of Mercosur country beef products being imported at cheaper prices but with far greater environmental costs.

Reduced food production in Ireland and the European Union would be taken up elsewhere and result in a heavier carbon footprint, diminishing the prospect of enhanced global food security.

*11 o'clock* It does not make sense to reduce beef production in Ireland when the sector adheres to demanding cross-compliance criteria and greening targets under the Common Agricultural Policy. Importing greater quantities of beef produced using unsustainable practices in other continents and shipping them halfway across the globe to reach our market would substantially increase the carbon footprint.

This does not mean abandoning any hope of greater carbon efficiencies in the agricultural sector. Substantial progress has been made in the farming and agrifood sector in reducing emissions through better farming techniques and improved animal husbandry. The substantial level of investment in innovation, research and development in farming and the agrifood sector in the period from 2000 to 2011 has assisted considerably in the development of new techniques and the work being done on farming and processing in a smarter and more environmentally friendly



manner.

In 2009, Ireland became one of the first countries to join the Global Research Alliance which is committed to the mitigation of greenhouse gases in the agriculture sector. As founding members of the initiative, Ireland and New Zealand are among its leaders. Members of the alliance aim to deepen and broaden mitigation research efforts across the agricultural subsectors of rice, cropping and livestock and the cross-cutting themes of soil carbon and nitrogen cycling and inventories and measurement issues. As Deputy Catherine Murphy noted, carbon sequestration and carbon sinks are key areas that must be factored in to legislation.

A number of groups established to address these areas of work have developed work plans that bring countries and other partners together in research collaborations and to share knowledge and best practices, build capacity and capability among scientists and other practitioners, specifically those involved in primary production and others involved further up the processing process, and move towards breakthrough solutions in addressing agricultural greenhouse gas emissions. Besides this enterprising international work, much is being done on the domestic front and the various farm environmental schemes have been important in this regard. As I noted, the cross-compliance criteria in the EU funded farm schemes that support the agricultural sector place specific demands on the sector and support environmentally friendly practices which are at the heart of farms in every parish.

I also acknowledge the work done on this issue by the Ceann Comhairle when he was Chairman of the Joint Committee on Climate Change and Energy Security in the previous Dáil. I recall meeting the joint committee as Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in the previous Government.

Fostering research and innovation to develop new and exciting strategies to reduce emissions must be a central part of the overall strategy to tackle climate change. We must utilise human ingenuity to develop new ways and ideas to reduce the emissions of agriculture. Our climate change strategy should harness the deep potential of humans to innovate to address pressing problems. It is time to stand up to the demands of climate change, make the most of our resources, set out a clear framework to meet our targets and incentivise innovation in addressing the challenges it generates. I welcome this Bill as a step towards achieving these goals and meeting the obligations we have to the future generations who will share this planet. I hope the Bill will proceed to Committee Stage as my party would like to introduce several amendments that will be crucial to enhancing this important legislative work.

**Deputy Brian Stanley:** I commend Deputy Catherine Murphy on introducing this important Bill, which offers a good basis upon which to build comprehensive climate change legislation.

Nobody can dispute the existence of climate change, a global phenomenon the consequences of which are felt locally. Entire countries are under threat from its adverse effects, with the polar caps melting and the world experiencing flooding, drought and a dangerously high increase in temperature. One does not need to watch David Attenborough documentaries to see the consequences of climate change as there is not a community on the island that has not experienced them. Villages and towns have been flooded.

The previous speaker, a former Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, outlined the position in agriculture. Large areas across the midlands and east, where cereal crops are con-

centrated, have been flooded in each of the past three years. The Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government, Deputy Hogan, will have seen in his constituency of Carlow-Kilkenny summer flooding on land that had not previously flooded. The problem is causing damage to crops, especially cereals, resulting in a major loss of income for farmers. The grazing season is now shorter, which means cattle have to be fed with expensive imported feed, which increases costs and the carbon footprint of cattle production. Feed is being shipped from the other side of the world to feed cattle that must now be housed in sheds from early autumn to late spring when they would have grazed outdoors during much of this period in the past. This change is having a major impact on farm income and a negative impact on the environment.

Doing nothing is no longer an option. We cannot limit our battle against climate change to campaigning for and highlighting the plight of far off peoples. Climate change is affecting the entire island. Each one of us has a responsibility to act and we all have a part to play, whether big or small, because we must all be part of the solution.

As legislators, we have a unique role and must set ourselves the task of drafting and implementing legislation that brings us into line with agreed EU targets. It is ironic that the Minister currently holds the chairmanship of the EU Environment Council given that his long-awaited climate change Bill has not yet seen the light of day. The programme for Government includes a cast iron guarantee to introduce climate change legislation - I checked the position again last week - but two years later the Minister has still not put pen to paper. If he has a Bill, it is one of the country's best kept secrets. The other day, the Minister contradicted me when I stated the roadmap published last year promised that the heads of a Bill would be published by the end of 2012. I waited until Christmas for them to be published and I have still not seen them.

In an attempt to spur the Government into action Deputy Catherine Murphy introduced this Bill and Sinn Féin published a climate change Bill last week. We have worked closely with and received public support from Friends of the Earth and Stop Climate Chaos, a coalition of 27 non-governmental organisations and campaign groups. Our Bill is comprehensive and based on legislation produced by the Joint Committee on Climate Change and Energy Security, of which several senior Ministers in the current Government were members. The Minister opposite, Deputy Phil Hogan, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Deputy Simon Coveney, and the Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Deputy Dinny McGinley, were co-authors of the 2010 Bill and the then Opposition Deputy McGinley, who chaired the joint committee, stated the following in its introduction: "A year ago, in October 2009, the Joint Committee published a report on the case for climate change law and now, with the need for action on climate change ever more pressing, we have followed that with a draft Bill which we offer for consideration." Climate change legislation was considered extremely important at the time and is even more pressing in 2013 because the effects of climate change are being felt in every county, from Kildare and Kilkenny to Laois and Offaly, and across the world. The then Labour Party Deputy Liz McManus, who served as rapporteur for the joint committee, wrote the following in the forward to the committee's report on the Bill: "As the threat of global warming grows inexorably the case for a legislative response is compelling."

There is no reason the Government parties cannot support the Sinn Féin Bill. Unfortunately, as with many other issues, it appears that once the Deputies opposite were appointed to ministerial office, their electoral promises and the commitments they gave in the programme for Government started to slip down the agenda. Fine Gael and the Labour Party were clear on this matter in the programme for Government in which they promised "to publish a Climate Change Bill which will provide certainty surrounding government policy and provide a clear pathway

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for emissions reduction, in line with negotiated EU 2020 targets". We welcomed this commitment, but it has not been fulfilled. Unfortunately, the Government has continued to hide from its commitment to introduce climate change legislation.

**Deputy Phil Hogan:** It is a five-year term.

**Deputy Brian Stanley:** I took the Government at its word last year that it had a roadmap.

**Deputy Phil Hogan:** We will look after it.

**Deputy Brian Stanley:** After two years in government, the Minister has done nothing on this issue and has not produced a Bill. The Government has continued to duck and dive from its responsibility to respond to one of the most challenging and pressing issues for this and future generations.

Sinn Féin has set itself the task of working with people in the environmental sector to ensure that we remind the Government at every opportunity of its responsibility to the public. That is our job. The time for ifs and buts is long over. It is time for action. The Bill being introduced today is further proof, if any were needed, that the Minister is running out of excuses for his lack of a response to this important issue. He now has two Bills to focus his mind, those being, the Sinn Féin Bill and Deputy Catherine Murphy's Bill, two good Bills that, while perhaps not perfect, deserve more than political posturing. They deserve to be debated and sent to committee for further debate and, if necessary, amendment. I appeal to the Minister to work with us in the spirit of cross-party co-operation to style these Bills into legislation that set the standards for others to follow. Having heard from all parties this morning, this topic is the one matter on which there could be a consensus.

The Sinn Féin Bill contains the essentials ingredients. It contains carbon budgets, those being, five-year targets to reduce emissions, although there may be a difference in this respect between our Bill and the Bill under discussion. We maintain that carbon budgets provide a responsible tool by which to measure our progress in reaching our EU agreed limits. It is important that any climate change Bill contain carbon budgets. If we fail to include them, we will be brought to a carbon cliff, in that we will need to do everything in just a few years. Unlike the economy, there are no bailouts for the environment. No troika is waiting in the wings to bail us out from environmental bankruptcy.

The five-year carbon target reductions would ensure that current and successive Governments remained on the road to agreed carbon emissions in line with EU and international agreements. Some 20% would be cut by 2020 and 80% cut by 2050 based on 1990 emissions. If we do not have carbon budgets, Governments can simply kick the can down the road. We know where that can lead. There will be serious consequences. As we get closer to the deadlines of 2020 and 2050, drastic measures will need to be imposed to bring Ireland back into line with agreed targets. We must avoid carbon cliffs. We cannot afford to run into them.

Under our Bill, the Taoiseach would need to present carbon budgets to the Dáil every year. This would allow for scrutiny and transparency in the House.

These measures will be short and sharp. Like all such measures, they will hurt those with the least resources if we allow ourselves to hit a carbon cliff. Unsustainable measures that force households into poverty must be avoided. The reduction in carbon emissions is best managed in achievable, five-year chunks, allowing for measures to be agreed, implemented, evaluated

and, importantly, improved.

Another important aspect of the Sinn Féin Bill is accountability. Our Bill requires the Taoiseach and the Minister to deliver annual reports to the Oireachtas, during which the Taoiseach would be quizzed on the Government's performance in implementing measures to deliver results in line with agreed targets. Accountability and transparency are essential if we are to work together to achieve a low carbon, sustainable society.

An expert authority independent of the Dáil would be established under our Bill. It would be a group comprising independent experts, not stakeholders. This is a key point. Stakeholders will have their own agendas. The group must be independent and science-based. Its economists, environmental scientists and sociologists would produce and publish annual reports. These would be based on evidence and scientific research and would advise the Government before it makes its decisions. The reports would inform and guide the Taoiseach in how to make progress and would advise on what further action needed to be taken to keep us on target for 2020 and 2050.

A science-based target for 2050 is essential if we are to map out what needs to occur in the long term in Ireland and internationally. Our Bill would set a reduction target of 80%, the necessary figure that has been agreed internationally. The date of 2050 would ensure that Governments did not limp from one Dáil term to another. It would ensure that each Government, regardless of party, fulfilled its obligations. We all recognise that the current Government inherited many problems when it entered office and that it has addressed some of them. but we must not allow the issue of climate change to limp along. Doing nothing is not an option.

Our Bill is comprehensive and could be the corner stone on which to base Ireland's low carbon, sustainable economic growth. However, we are debating Deputy Catherine Murphy's contribution to the debate. Sinn Féin will support her Bill and vote in its favour. I hope that those on the Government benches will do likewise. Even if it is just from an economic point of view, we cannot afford to do nothing, stand idly by or coast along. We must provide certainty to the sustainable energy sector, which will not invest in alternative energy if we do not provide for ten-year, 20-year and 30-year targets via legislation. Doing nothing would have negative economic, environmental and social impacts. We must take hold of this issue and act now. I urge the Minister to introduce the heads of his Bill as soon as possible.

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** It would be right of me to begin by acknowledging the work undertaken by Deputy Catherine Murphy in developing and introducing this Bill. I recognise some provisions from the 2010 Bill, which was initiated by the previous Government, but I also see new ideas proposed for inclusion. The Deputy has a deep and genuine interest in climate matters and her ideas are a welcome input to the ongoing debate on the development of climate policy and legislation initiated on foot of the national climate policy review, which I issued in November 2011. The Ceann Comhairle also has an interest in this matter arising from his work as Chairman of the Committee on Climate Change and Energy Security, which proposed legislation some years ago. I assure Deputy Murphy that I am not pandering to any sector. My actions to date are evidence of this. Any effort to funnel the debate in that way will not succeed.

In the 15 months since I initiated the policy review, we have made significant progress, including a period of structured public consultation that attracted an encouraging response. That said, no one is in any doubt about the extent of the challenge that lies ahead. However, I

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am committed to finalising an effective national policy position on a transition to a low carbon future, including appropriate institutional arrangements and the introduction of climate legislation.

Against this background, I regret having to oppose the Second Reading of the Deputy's Bill. If I may, I will explain why I am doing so, particularly given our common ground on many aspects of the climate change agenda. I hope that we will be able to build on that common ground in the future.

The task of finalising a national policy position that will inspire and underpin an effective transition to a competitive but sustainable low carbon future is a matter of the utmost importance on environmental and economic grounds. It is also a priority for the Government, both in terms of ensuring that we complete the process as quickly as possible and, even more critically, that we get the national policy position right from an environmental and economic perspective. I welcome all ideas and inputs that contribute to stimulating constructive debate, but I have been clear from the outset that form must follow function. In planning primary legislation on climate change, whether the proposed provisions relate to mitigation, adaptation or both, we must have clarity on the policy position at the core of the national agenda.

That clarity is essential in determining the structure and individual provisions of the legislation needed to support the climate policy position we ultimately adopt.

In addition to providing clarity on national policy for all stakeholders, including the Members of this House and the general public, I believe the people of Ireland are entitled to know, and indeed must be made aware of, the challenges and opportunities which transition to a low-carbon future present. Progressive transition to a competitive and environmentally sustainable low-carbon future will not happen of its own accord. It will have to be built on foundations that are firmly based on a transparent and inclusive dialogue that encourages and facilitates the emergence of a broad consensus across all stakeholders.

Following a very positive meeting with the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht in November 2011, and in response to a specific request from the committee at that meeting, I issued a two-year programme outlining how I planned to bring forward national climate policy and legislation in January 2012. We are now just over half way through that programme and the next critical stage is structured input by the Joint Committee to the policy and legislation development process. In this regard, I am left with no option other than to conclude that this Bill is slightly premature and to support it would only serve to circumvent and undermine the role I have assigned to the joint committee in the policy and legislation process.

Over the last year or so, I have made it clear that I see a central role for the joint committee in that policy development programme. In this regard, I attach particular priority to the critical issue of coming to a clear national understanding of how we will meet our binding EU and wider-international mitigation commitments, as well as pursuing our national objectives in a low-carbon global economy. My view on the central role of the committee stands and I look forward to receiving the report which it will submit around the middle of this year. That report will be one of the key documents that will inform decisions by Government in finalising national climate policy and legislation in the second half of the year.

The immediate next step in the policy development programme will be the release of the



final policy analysis report from the National Economic and Social Council, NESC, secretariat. Arrangements are at an advanced stage and I will be releasing the report, together with the outline heads of a low carbon development Bill, very shortly. In fact, I expect to bring these matters to the Government next week. The report by the NESC secretariat is an impressive and inspiring piece of analytical work on the longer-term national agenda to 2050. It merits careful and full consideration by the Joint Committee and all stakeholders before any final conclusions are drawn on a national policy position and the primary legislation needed to support it. I am determined that the policy and legislation development process will, in addition to being transparent and inclusive, be as informed as possible and be taken forward together in a mutually supportive way.

In working through the programme for the development of national climate policy and legislation, it is absolutely essential not to overlook the fact that Ireland already has a greenhouse gas mitigation target for 2020, which is binding under EU law. It is a challenging target under which we must reduce our emissions on an annual basis so that, by 2020, our emissions in those sectors of the economy outside the emissions trading system, namely in agriculture, transport, energy and the built environment, must be 20% below their level in 2005. Compliance with that target is not a matter of choice or discretion. It is a binding requirement under EU law and any ambition we set at a national level must, and will, respect compliance with this fundamental mitigation commitment.

The proposed primary legislation which the Government will bring forward will be unequivocal on compliance with existing, and I should emphasise, future obligations of the State under EU law and any international agreement to which the State becomes a party. Ireland has consistently and constructively supported EU leadership in seeking to mobilise an effective global response to climate change and a key objective in initiating the policy and legislation development process was to ensure that we maintain our place among the progressive member states within the EU and progressive parties under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Climate protection and economic competitiveness are not mutually exclusive. They must be progressed in parallel and on a basis that is both balanced and complementary. Our core policy principles must reflect a mature balance between our commitments as a responsible society to sustainable development and our ambition as a competitive economy. While the Bill before the House is strong on the challenge, I am concerned that it does not address the opportunity side of transition or, more critically, the essential balance between challenge and opportunity.

The process of national economic renewal in which we are all actively engaged is a real opportunity to identify the crucial areas where a more environmentally sustainable long-term orientation of the economy can and must begin. The Government has affirmed its commitment to doing just that in a number of ways already, particularly through the new sustainable development framework, *Our Sustainable Future*, which I published last June and in the *Delivering our Green Potential* policy statement which my colleague, the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Deputy Bruton, published late last year, identifying how the green economy can be an engine for jobs and growth.

I firmly believe that any approach to a low-carbon future must address and seek to balance the challenge of greenhouse gas mitigation and opportunity for new growth as the emerging global green economy matures. The response must be approached from both perspectives and the outcome must reflect a credible balance between our commitment to environmentally sus-



tainable development and our ambitions for economic growth and social development.

A specific issue we face in this country, and one which is hugely relevant to the national climate policy development process, is the fact that a gap exists in international and EU policy and legislation in terms of accounting for greenhouse gas emissions and removals related to the use of certain lands, including agricultural land. One would find it hard to find a country anywhere in the world where this specific issue is of more critical importance than in Ireland. It cannot be overlooked or underestimated. Approaches to resolving this gap give rise to potentially profound economic implications for Ireland. We fully support efforts to address and close this international policy gap. Our position on the issue is to ensure that proposed solutions are structured to facilitate and encourage development and growth that is sustainable on both environmental and economic grounds and without wishing to repeat myself, it is a matter of getting the balance right in the international agenda under the UN Convention.

I have received some criticism from certain quarters for raising this issue as something that we need to acknowledge and address. Of course, I could have taken the easy route and just put my head in the sand, ignoring the elephant in the room but as we have learned through many hard lessons in recent times, the easy way is often not the right way. What I have been seeking to articulate is pretty straightforward. It is simply a recognition that our greenhouse gas emissions profile is unique within the EU and, as I have said previously, while we can learn from policy and legislative responses in other countries, it would be unwise to think that what works elsewhere provides an easy or appropriate solution for Ireland. A one-size-fits-all approach to climate policy simply will not work. If it did, we would have no difficulty agreeing global climate treaties. The policies and measures we adopt in Ireland must respond to our national circumstances as reflected in our greenhouse gas profile and the structure of our economy. We are playing our part in the international response to climate change and we will continue to do so, on a fair and open basis in which we embrace change and manage transition sensibly and effectively.

In conclusion, from the outset of the programme on the development of national climate policy and legislation which I announced in January 2012, I have been completely open about the fact that there are no easy answers to the greenhouse gas mitigation challenge we face in the immediate and longer term. My intention is to ensure that the ultimate decisions on the way forward will be taken on the basis of a fair hearing for all stakeholders and will provide a platform for a strong stakeholder and wider-society consensus on the fundamental objective of becoming a low-carbon, climate resilient society with a competitive low-carbon economy over the period to 2050.

All sectors of society must play their part, particularly the key economic sectors. There are no exceptions and there can be no exceptions. In pursuing a progressive national policy position, compliance with current and future targets at EU level is fundamental and I propose to provide explicitly for this in the heads of the Bill which I will bring to Government next week. In tackling and significantly reducing, over the last 20 months, a long list of EU infringement proceedings which I inherited from my predecessors, I have demonstrated my commitment and determination on compliance with environmental obligations under EU law. I fully intend to apply the same rigour to Ireland's greenhouse gas mitigation obligations.

As I indicated to Deputy Murphy in response to a parliamentary question earlier this week, work on developing the provisions of progressive climate legislation is at an advanced stage and I hope to publish outline heads of a Bill and the NESC policy analysis that has been car-

ried out shortly so that the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht and stakeholders can get on with the business of analysing those proposals and coming back to Government during the course of the year. I welcome the indication from the joint committee that it is keen to hear from interested parties who wish to contribute to the debate on formulating national climate policy and legislation and I encourage all stakeholders to respond constructively to that offer. While I am not in a position to support Deputy Murphy's Bill before the House today, I want again to acknowledge the fact that she has made proposals available to the House for discussion today and thank her for her continued work, in a genuine way, on the climate agenda. I look forward to engaging with her and the other members of the joint committee in their deliberations over the coming months. I expect that in many of the areas dealt with in her legislation, she will find the Government in agreement and in other areas, we will be able to tease out all of the issues that are necessary to give us a practical Bill that will meet the requirements from an environmental and economic perspective. I believe that at the end of this process we will have a very good consensus on what is necessary to bring Ireland to a climate-resilient, low-carbon future.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** I am now in a position to call Members who have indicated their wish to speak. They are Deputies Finian McGrath, Broughan, Mitchell O'Connor, Kevin Humphreys, Feighan, Mulherin, Boyd Barrett, Maloney and Joan Collins. While the order of the House provides that 15 minutes is available to each speaker I am obliged to call the Minister at 1 p.m. and to call Deputy Catherine Murphy at 1.15 p.m. I suggest Members make arrangements among themselves to ensure they all get an opportunity to contribute. If they were to take 15 minutes each, some Members would not get an opportunity to contribute. It is a matter for themselves. I call Deputy Finian McGrath.

**Deputy Finian McGrath:** I thank the Chair for the opportunity to speak to this Bill. I welcome the legislation and strongly commend my colleague, Deputy Catherine Murphy, on bringing it before the House. I thank her for the great work she put into this progressive legislation. This is an important debate and it shows once again part of the work done by the Independent Deputies in the Dáil.

Energy security and climate change are hugely important issues in the modern world. We must be radical, creative and open to new ideas for the future of this country. This is common-sense legislation which will make a massive contribution to the citizens of this State. It will also help clean up this country and other countries if they all step up to the mark. It is a very important issue in the environmental debate, just like the local issue in my area of Dublin Bay. It is an example of a natural resource and we must be conscious of the need to protect it in our local community. It is a major issue locally to which I will return.

On the legislation, climate change is a very important issue for me. The impacts of it are being felt every day on every continent. We need strong climate change legislation that ensures Ireland meets its commitments to reduce emissions. I am still waiting for the publication of the heads of the climate change Bill that was promised by the Minister, Deputy Hogan, and I have noted his comments. While we await it, this debate is an excellent opportunity to discuss a strong climate change Bill. To be effective, a strong climate change Bill must contain clearly defined targets for 2020 and 2050 to provide certainty surrounding the Government policy, a five year carbon budget to provide a clear pathway for emissions reductions, and an independent expert committee to advise the Government on climate change. These are very important issues which are contained in Deputy Catherine Murphy's legislation.

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When discussing this issue we must be conscious that when we bring up issue of reductions in emissions and adopting a common-sense approach to climate change and energy security, we must also be conscious of our local environment as part of that debate. We seem to be taking our eye off the ball in this regard at present.

I have strong concerns about the disposal of soil into Dublin Bay generated by the tunneling of the Ringsend wastewater treatment works because dumping at sea never works. It could cause huge damage to Dublin Bay and it is also a major threat to a natural resource. Dumping in the bay would destroy the visibility of scuba divers. The proposed dumping would sweep dirt into the bay at every tide. It would also do major damage to our tourism industry which includes sailing, diving and fishing. I strongly object to the proposal to dump the spoil into Dublin Bay. I have been working with the people of Dublin Bay North, Howth and all who have a genuine interest in saving our bay. There is huge potential to develop the bay further as a natural resource and also having regard to this legislation.

The purpose of this Bill is to ensure greater energy security and to reduce energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions. These are three purposes in the legislation. We should all rally around Deputy Catherine Murphy's Bill and support it. The Government should stop the fudge, stop sitting on the fence and stop saying it likes some of our proposals but it will not accept them next Tuesday. There should cross-party agreement on legislation such as this because there is huge potential in it to do something about this issue.

The Bill aims at accomplishing these goals by establishing a national energy security and climate change action plan. The provisions of the Bill are specific and legally binding with respect to the reduction of the greenhouse gas emissions, and it also sets out specific goals to reduce the 1990 levels of fossil fuel by 95% by 2050. These are the issues covered in the legislation from which we should not run away. It is important we address them.

The Bill's overall effect is to create a specific binding set of targets to reduce the emissions of six types of greenhouse gas that are known to contribute heavily to climate change. The Bill also notes the EU targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 20%, or 30% if the conditions are right, below the 1990 levels, to secure 20% of energy from renewables and to have 20% increase in energy efficiency. These issues are set out very clearly in the legislation. The targets in the legislation propose a 40% reduction by 2030 of six greenhouse gas emissions compared with 1990 levels, an 80% reduction by 2050 of the emissions reduction element and a 95% reduction on 1990 levels of fossil fuel use by 2050. These are the targets in the legislation and we should all work strongly to meet them.

I listened carefully to what the Minister said and there is an element in his response to the effect of: "Thank you much for bringing the legislation in on the Friday, we will listen to what you say but good luck and goodbye". There are serious question marks over the Minister and some of his green credentials. There is a perception, and I would like him to deny this, that he has issues about climate change and about supporting certain sections of society. He is obsessed with this and he has problems because, historically, he just did not like the Green Party. That debate is over. We are dealing with common-sense issues in this Bill. There is a strong role for the Taoiseach and for the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, Deputy Rabbitte. It is a pity these Ministers are not a bit more proactive in regard to their legislation. I know the Minister, Deputy Rabbitte had a tough night last night. He went out to appear on "Prime Time" and then went out to Vincent Browne but was locked out of TV3. They would not let him into the studio. He could focus on these issues as well.

*(Interruptions).*

**Deputy Finian McGrath:** He was on a lap of honour on the debt issue but apparently he got locked out of the Vincent Browne show last night. Deputy Kevin Humphreys-----

**Deputy Kevin Humphreys:** The Deputy should talk to the Bill.

**Deputy Finian McGrath:** -----seems to be doing a lap of honour as well but he should get over it.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** Talk to the Bill.

**Deputy Finian McGrath:** We still have to pay back the €64 billion debt and that is the reality.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** I remind the Deputy that there are other speakers.

**Deputy Finian McGrath:** While I have Deputy Kevin Humphreys's attention, I would like to ask him about the Ringsend wastewater treatment works and the plans to dump all the rubbish from there outside Howth. He will not do it while I am representing the people of Howth. I stand by those people and I will not accept it. The same applies to Deputy Broughan but I know he will stand beside me-----

**Deputy Thomas P. Broughan:** I told the Deputy that.

**Deputy Finian McGrath:** -----and deal with the likes of Deputy Kevin Humphreys.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** Will the Deputy speak to the legislation?

**Deputy Finian McGrath:** To return to the legislation, the target in it proposing a 40% reduction in emissions by 2030 is sensible. I commend Deputy Catherine Murphy's vision and leadership in introducing this Bill. She has put this legislation on the map. I urge the Minister and the Government to cop on and support this legislation. It is common sense and it is a plan for jobs and for the future of the citizens of this State.

**Deputy Thomas P. Broughan:** I warmly welcome this Bill introduced by Deputy Catherine Murphy and congratulate her on it. It is part of her outstanding contribution to Dáil Éireann since she was elected to this house. It is sad that we are still at this stage in regard to climate change legislation. The Green Party, which was in government in the last Dáil, talked about this subject for decades. During its three to three and a half years in government, the Green Party had the opportunity to ensure that action was taken but it did nothing. Of course it assisted Fianna Fáil in wrecking the country financially but it did nothing to advance matters in respect of something which, apparently, is one of its primary aims.

The Minister, Deputy Hogan, who made his contribution earlier, has not brought forward the planned legislation on climate change because he is very opposed to the imposition of binding targets after 2020. I understand that the question of targets actually divides the two parties in government, that the Labour Party is holding out for the imposition of strong targets after 2020, that the Fine Gael Minister is not prepared to accept the latter and that this is the reason behind the delay in introducing the legislation. Perhaps the Minister of State, Deputy O'Dowd, might cast some light on this matter. I commend Labour Party colleagues for holding the line

in respect of this issue. Targets are one of the key elements of Deputy Catherine Murphy's Bill and it is important to make the point that such targets would have to be included in any credible climate change legislation.

The evidence for climate change remains very clear despite the impact of the recession and the fall in emissions. Last week, *The Guardian* newspaper identified flooding as the key risk from and the main evidence of the existence of climate change. Major flooding occurred in the UK in 2009 and again last year and the British Prime Minister was obliged to reverse cuts in respect of flood defences. The reason for the latter is because 600,000 plus homes in the UK are built on flood plains and are at serious risk from the effects of climate change. Super-storm Sandy recently had a devastating impact on New Jersey and other parts of the east coast of the United States. In a typically creative and innovative way, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, has launched his own climate change strategy which is aimed at reducing New York's carbon footprint by 30% by 2020.

Ireland has also experienced devastating floods. In 2009, for example, Cork city was in terrible danger of being devastated by major flooding. Dublin was affected by what has come to be known as the "monster rain" of 2011, when my constituency, that of Deputy Kevin Humphreys and other places throughout the four local authority areas in the county suffered greatly as a result of very unusual floods which occurred in rivers such as the Tolka and the Dodder. Dublin City Council estimates that on the night of 24 October 2011, 90 mm of rain fell. This was four times the amount which would usually fall during the heaviest spells of rain.

There continues to be strong evidence for climate change. For example, Met Éireann estimates that the average temperature in Ireland increased by 0.75° Celsius in the past two decades and that this country is approximately 5% wetter than was the case 30 years ago. Various modelling estimates carried out by our universities - including by the Ryan institute at NUI Galway - indicate that sea levels on our coasts will probably rise by 18.5 inches by the end of the century. This prompts one to inquire as to the position with regard to the Government's Bill and why it has been necessary for the leader of the Independent group to come forward with comprehensive legislation. If the Minister introduced the legislation, he would then be able to work closely with local authorities on this matter in the way Deputy Kevin Humphreys and I did when we led the Labour Party's representation on Dublin City Council and tried to encourage the latter to obtain those kinds of local responses.

Energy security is clearly very important. When I served as the Labour Party's energy spokesperson, I felt that the escalating price of energy formed part of the overall picture. The impact of such an escalation on poorer families is of grave concern. It is important that Deputy Catherine Murphy has made provision in this regard in her Bill.

Members have been briefed on the issue of climate change by various campaigning groups, including Christian Aid, Stop Climate Chaos and Friends of the Earth. The nub of the issue appears to be that the Minister is balking at introducing binding targets. Perhaps the Minister of State will address that matter during his contribution. Section 4(2)(a) and (b) are very important and set out the legally-binding clause that emissions should be reduced by at least 40% on the 1990 level, a 40% plus reduction by 2030 and an 80% reduction by 2050. Section 5 sets out that the Minister must establish a national energy and security plan within a year of the legislation coming into force and that this would then be renewed every five years. It also provides that the Minister should publish a draft national plan on energy security and climate change.



Section 7, which is one of the best aspects of the Bill, relates to the establishment of a commission on energy security and climate change. When I introduced my own Private Members' Bill last year, I proposed that a new national body be set up. People are often fearful of establishing further quangos. However, an independent body of the type suggested by Deputy Catherine Murphy and me would be important in the context of showing how we are seeking to develop policies in this entire area.

Another aspect in respect of which the Bill before the House makes provision is an annual statement. One of the Green Party's achievements in the previous Dáil was to ensure that a carbon budget was introduced each year. While it had little impact and bore scant resemblance to reality, it was useful - in the absence of climate change legislation - to examine the carbon budget each year. I hope the Minister will make provision for an annual statement in the Bill he brings forward.

I reiterate that Deputy Catherine Murphy is to be commended on bringing forward this Bill. The provisions it contains in respect of legally binding targets, the drafting of a national energy security and climate change plan and the establishment of an independent commission on energy security and climate change are very important. Perhaps the Minister could not accept the fact that the House has been presented with this comprehensive legislation and this is preventing him from incorporating its provisions in the heads of the Bill on climate change he proposes to present to the relevant committee. I congratulate Deputy Catherine Murphy on the Bill and thank her for giving the House the opportunity to discuss this matter.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** Hilary Clinton is on record as stating, "Often times when you face such an overwhelming challenge as global climate change, it can be somewhat daunting - it's kind of like trying to lose weight". I have similar views to those of Hilary Clinton on many issues, including diet, and on climate change we certainly agree. Climate change is a daunting social policy issue to tackle. To an untrained mind, the debate in respect of it is complex, daunting and, as Hilary Clinton stated, an overwhelming challenge.

It is evident that we need a sustainable environmental policy. This Administration recognises the importance of a national climate policy and made provision for this in the programme for Government. I am completely in favour of enhancing our commitment to making Ireland more energy efficient, lowering our greenhouse gas emissions and adopting a climate change action plan. I endorse the sentiments expressed by Bill Gates when he stated "Climate change is a terrible problem, and it absolutely needs to be solved. It deserves to be a huge priority". However, I cannot support the legislation before the House because I am aware that rushing in to fix a problem when not armed with the relevant facts leads to failure. While I acknowledge Deputy Catherine Murphy on the work she has done in bringing forward the Bill, I am of the view that it was drafted without the relevant facts being to hand. The final report of the secretariat of the National Economic and Social Council, NESCC, has not been published and is scheduled for release prior to the end of this month. Furthermore, input from the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht has not been received.

The Bill also appears to be ill-informed in respect of three crucial areas. First, an energy demand reduction target is already in place and was approved by Government. Second, non-renewable energy use reduction targets have not been agreed at EU level. It would be premature for Ireland to adopt a target pending development of EU policy and legislation. Third, enshrining non-EU related obligations in primary legislation could, if not achieved, expose the State to financial risks.



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The Government is desperately trying to minimise the financial risk left by the previous Administration. We do not propose to expose the country to any further unnecessary losses due to reckless decisions. This Government is prudent and it gives mature consideration to issues on the table. It does not run into solutions simply because it is the popular thing to do.

As noted by David Attenborough there is no question that climate change is happening. Representing a coastal constituency I am mindful of the rise of flooding. It is predicted by the EPA that climate change will result in increased flood events during the winter while drier summers will put pressure on the water supply infrastructure. It is predicted by Met Éireann that towards the end of the century there will be a 10% to 15% increase in precipitation and in summers there will be a 10% to 18% decrease. The frequency of very intense cyclones affecting Ireland is likely to increase. Our sea levels are rising and its temperature is rising.

For the residents of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, tourist operators in the area and those in the fishing industry these changes are potentially huge. I am mindful of the very real consequences climate change brings to my constituency. It is for this reason that I cannot and will not support the Bill. The residents and businesses of Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown need more considered legislation underpinned by well founded research.

I thank the House for the opportunity to contribute on this important global issue.

**Deputy Kevin Humphreys:** Perhaps the Ceann Comhairle would remind me when my time has expired as many other Members wish to contribute.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** I certainly will. We are moving on nicely.

**Deputy Kevin Humphreys:** I thank Deputy Catherine Murphy for introducing the Bill. This is an opportunity to frame the debate around what I hope will be the heads of Bills published next week. I acknowledge the work the Deputy has done on the Joint Committee on the Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht to highlight the need for the roadmap.

Originally, climate change for me was like listening to David Attenborough speak about the water gently hitting against the South Sea island and say that in ten years time the island would be under a meter of water. It was something in the distance, an issue we did not have to deal with on an urgent basis. That all changed when, in my constituency, I saw areas of Ringsend destroyed by flood events. Ballsbridge was flooded soon after and later Harold's Cross where not only property was lost but lives were lost. We look at flood events on a daily basis whether it is a 100 year flood event in Australia or fire storms. Recently on "RTÉ Nine o'clock News" we saw rowing boats being used in the west to deliver feed to cattle and to deliver necessary supplies to residents who were isolated. We no longer have the privilege to longfinger the issue. I welcome the Minister's remarks to the effect that the heads of Bills would go to Cabinet on Tuesday and would be published shortly thereafter.

There are a number of international agreements in place, including the Kyoto Protocol 2012-2020. I will work with Deputy Catherine Byrne to ensure Ireland meets the international targets it has entered into. Not only must those targets be achieved but they must be surpassed. I would welcome if through the European Union, the Kyoto Protocol or international agreements those targets were increased. The Minister should be answerable to the House and the people in respect of those targets being achieved on an annual or quarterly basis.

There is a need for a strong expert group which would have a clear role, part of which would

be to validate that Ireland is achieving its international commitments. A narrative is required outside the House to say that Ireland is achieving its targets but needs to do more or that Ireland is not reaching its international targets and must improve.

I am committed to working with all parties and none to achieve our targets. This goes far beyond Ireland. The contribution from Fianna Fáil focused on food security and food security around the world. There are people who are starving. Crops cannot be harvested because of climate change. Climate change is moving rapidly. Ireland can play a lead role in this area. We have signed up to those international targets and must work to achieve and even surpass them. To do that we must work with, for example, Friends of the Earth, the parties in the House, many other groups which have contributed and all groups in Ireland because of the need for a grand coalition and the need to bring people with us on the issue but we must move speedily. Given that the heads of Bills are going to the committee, there is an opportunity to work to improve on them. I do not think the Minister will say he is the font of all wisdom but he has engaged in recent weeks with a view to strengthening the heads. I hope the Minister will be open with the committee and that we can work together to improve the heads of Bills with a view to the emergence of strong legislation in the coming year.

**Deputy Frank Feighan:** As I wish to share time with other Members perhaps the Ceann Comhairle would remind me when my time has expired.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** That is fine.

**Deputy Frank Feighan:** I acknowledge the Government's interest in democracy. That it provides for an extra sitting on Fridays is an opportunity for Government backbenchers and many other Members to speak on issues in which they have an interest. Today is one such day.

I acknowledge the work done by Deputy Catherine Murphy in bringing the Bill to the House. The Bill contains many new ideas which are close to my views. In regard to the climate change agenda, there is much common ground between all parties. We should be able to build on this common ground to ensure we can address energy security and climate change in the future.

In 2007, I saw the Green Party come into power in the previous Government. The first change in the House was the installation of low energy bulbs in all the chandeliers. It was its way of saying it was in government and would make a difference. Certainly the Green Party tried to push its agenda. However, just one aspect of its agenda does not bring everybody on board. We all want climate change and a climate change Bill that stops climate change and we all want energy security, but not in my back yard. As politicians we have to consider what is the best way to bring everyone on board to address this very serious issue.

A positive meeting of the Joint Committee on the Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht took place in 2011 at which the Minister, Deputy Phil Hogan, introduced a two-year programme to try to bring forward national climate change legislation. I would like to work with all Members to ensure we can have an input into that programme. We have to meet our binding EU and wider international mitigation commitments.

In 1997 the vast majority of people signed up to cessation of turf cutting on 31 of the raised bogs in my area.

*12 o'clock* That was signed up to and money was paid over to the IFA or Department and it

was not an issue. For ten years the last Government told us a derogation was in place and it was okay to cut turf so everyone continued to cut it. Then I went to Brussels last year and said to Mr. Potocnik that we had assumed office and would like to know what we could do over perhaps the course of a year only to find out that the last Government had not had any derogation. Commissioner Potocnik was shocked that we thought there was a derogation. The last Government was made up of Fianna Fáil and the Green Party and it told a complete untruth that there had been a ten year derogation for turf cutting. If the Green Party was in government, it should not have allowed that untruth because it caused a lot of problems and undermined their reputation for commitment to environmental protection.

We all want protection against climate change but we do not want it in our own backyard. It is up to Government and political representatives to work with everyone to ensure we get the best possible solution. I remember the flooding in the Shannon area three years ago. People thought it was due to climate change and it is very possibly it was but it was also a result of how we addressed the issue. ESB, the local authorities, the OPW, the Shannon Navigation Authority all failed to liaise with each other. There must be a multi-agency approach and cross-party approach to climate change.

**Deputy Michelle Mulherin:** This is a pressing issue and I compliment Deputy Catherine Murphy for introducing this Bill because it allows us to debate climate change. If any issue joins us with our fellow men, women and children on the rest of the planet, it is global warming. The challenges posed by global warming make us feel small. There are challenges for countries, individuals and lifestyles. There are different approaches and we are aware that certain parts of the planet face catastrophic effects, with floods taking place and famines occurring as a result of populations being unable to harvest crops. We will see more food shortages and increased loss of species. This is a major issue.

It is also an issue at individual level because it speaks to our decisions on how we live our lives and the choices we make that contribute to the problem or that address and reduce it. That is a challenge for everyone in the country. Why is it so difficult to make the right choices when we are aware of the massive implications if we do not take measures to control carbon emissions from business, transport and agriculture? The technology and lifestyles we enjoy and the way business has developed are all dependent on fossil fuels. Fossil fuels are king. We only need to look at a graph to see that although we are doing great and can say 18% of our electricity is derived from renewable energy sources, it is a mere point on the graph of energy use across the planet that is predominantly fossil fuel-based. This is a big problem.

We want to be able to flick a switch without thinking about where the energy comes from. If we had thought ahead 50 or 60 years ago, when we harnessed much of the potential offered by oil, not to put all our eggs in one basket, and had started to develop alternative technology, wind might not only be emerging now as an industry and we would not need to pay refit costs to support renewable energy sources that are much more expensive than oil. That will be the case for a long time to come.

Also, the debate on peak oil has not been decided. Some claim we are running out of oil but there seems to be a lot more oil than was previously acknowledged. That does not take from the problems carbon-based fuels cause for the planet. If we had made better decisions on oil in the past, perhaps there would not be so many wars in the Middle East and elsewhere solely based on oil.

We in the west are more affluent and have the luxury of the choice to be more energy efficient, although sometimes we are too lazy to make that choice. There are those, however, who make those choices for themselves and their families and who push this agenda and they are to be commended because it is very important. At the most basic level, the green schools initiative teaches young children about the environment and how we depend on it. Without a clean environment, we are not healthy. The kids are taught about recycling, water conservation and energy efficiency; they are being empowered with life skills beyond the normal curriculum through our schools. They are the citizens of the future and that gives me great hope.

The problems, however, remain. The costs are a consideration. People cannot afford to change their heating systems. Businesses cannot afford to buy technology to allow them to use renewable energy when it is so expensive and margins are so tight. The same is true for agriculture. People fear that cuts in the national herd will be needed if we are to meet some targets. This is a complex topic for us as a country that is so dependent on agriculture economically.

When we say we should be achieving targets, that is correct and no sector should be exempt. There must be leadership in all areas. If we are to be conscious of where we are getting our electricity, we must accept wind turbines. People cannot continue to object by saying that it is not possible to get wind and wave energy into the grid. We do not want to cut back on our lifestyles so we must show leadership here. If we are to reduce greenhouse emissions, we cannot object to grid or wind turbines being installed in our areas. If we are serious, politicians must show leadership and must take the tough decisions to make sure our energy is coming from sustainable and renewable sources. Deputy Catherine Murphy quite correctly pointed out our massive dependence on imported fossil fuels. The more we displace them with renewable energy, the more jobs we will create and the more money there will be in our economy. It speaks for itself.

On the Bill, earlier we heard from the Minister, Deputy Hogan, the commitment of Government to finalising an effective national policy position and to introducing climate legislation as a matter of priority. As he acknowledged, there is much in common between what Deputy Catherine Murphy set out in her Bill and his position. This common ground is good and we should build on it. However, the Minister has already in place a two-year programme or pathway to develop national climate policy and legislation. He is only halfway through that programme and the next critical stage is structured input by the joint Oireachtas committee on energy. In this regard, Deputy Catherine Murphy's Bill is premature and to support it would only serve to circumvent and undermine the programme agreed with the joint committee.

It is essential not to overlook the fact that Ireland has already a greenhouse gas mitigation target for 2020 which is binding under EU law. It is a challenging target. We must reduce our emissions on an annual basis so that, by 2020, our emissions in those sectors of the economy outside of the emissions trading system are 20% of their 2005 level.

The proposed primary legislation which the Government will bring forward will be unequivocal on compliance. That assurance was repeated by the Minister today. The legislation will contain a commitment to deliver on existing and future obligations of the State under EU law and any international agreement to which the State becomes party. Compliance with current and future targets at EU level is fundamental and explicit provision will be made for these in the heads of the Bill which the Minister will bring forward shortly.

It is my contention that the Government is serious about us being responsible in this country,

but doing so inclusively involving dialogue with all of the businesses and sectors that will be affected. This cannot be done with a sledge-hammer. We must bring people along.

**Deputy Joan Collins:** I congratulate Deputy Catherine Murphy for bringing forward this legislation.

The Bill is specific. Section 3, as has been mentioned, refers to specific objectives such as energy efficiency, reducing energy demand and reducing fossil fuel dependency. Section 4 sets the targets and sections 5 and 6 set out the national plan to achieve those.

It is strange to hear Deputy Mulherin state the Bill is a little premature when, four years ago to a week, the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Deputy Gilmore, brought in a similar Bill containing specifically targets that Deputy Catherine Murphy has raised in her Bill. There was also a cross-party Bill, drafted by Deputy Gilmore, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Deputy Coveney, and the Minister, Deputy Hogan, which also contained targets.

Friends of the Earth has contacted us, as I am sure Members will be aware, stating that a climate change Bill with no targets would be laughable and it appears that is the line the Minister, Deputy Hogan, is taking. He does not seem to want to include targets. Perhaps we can get more clarity from Deputy Hogan on that. All four climate change Bills initiated in the Dáil since 2009, including the Bill being debated today, had an 80% target for 2050. This is the least Ireland must do by 2050. The European Council of EU leaders has already endorsed the target of 80% to 95%. Friends of the Earth makes the point that it is inconceivable that the Government would propose a Bill without targets and to do so while Ireland holds the Presidency of the European Union would be deeply embarrassing. The Bill is quite timely on the issue of targets on climate change and how we go about reaching them.

If the Minister is aware of the following matter, perhaps he would refer to it in his response. I refer to the BER rating on the insulation of homes, both the interior and exterior, introduced in 2010 and the corresponding grants to encourage householders to insulate their homes, bring down carbon emissions and, obviously, use less energy. Anybody to whom I have spoken who has got this job done, in particular the external insulation, finds it efficient and effective. It has reduced their bills quite considerably and that can only be good in the context of reducing consumption of energy, particularly fossil fuels. What more can the Minister do in that regard? Householders get grants for such work. Whereas in the past replacement of a home's electricity box was done without charge, I note now this is being charged for. Such little changes are putting householders off going down the road of insulating their homes.

A question I submitted to the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government sought a report on the amount of local authority housing tenants who have reported problems with condensation and moisture. It is a big issue, particularly in my constituency, perhaps due to the age of the housing in the areas of Drimnagh and Crumlin, some of which is 70 or 80 years old. The problem of the build-up of moisture is significant. It has got to a stage where every week families are having to remove their children from these homes to try to clean them down to remove the moisture and they need ever more heating to try to clear the moisture.

I believe that all local authority housing that is been done up must have the BER rating and work is done on that, but existing homes cannot avail of that. In this regard, there is something of a problem or, to a certain degree, an inequality because tenants cannot apply for grants to



insulate their homes. They are in no man's land from the point of view that their homes need it, they cannot access the grants and the local authorities will not support them in any way, even in giving a loan which they could pay back on their rent. I am probably going into too much detail here. If we had a national public programme of insulation of homes and schools, it would play an important part in this. For example, the energy rating of Our Lady of the Wayside school in Bluebell is low because the school is so old. I proposed that it contact the Department about the grant that can be got for installing energy-saving insulation in schools. Schools and public buildings would benefit greatly from reduced energy usage if there was a public programme in that regard. That is something that must be done. It is a basic improvement that can be achieved. Has the Minister thought about giving local authorities the authority to apply for grants to insulate their tenants' homes? It is related to what we in the United Left Alliance have always called for, a programme of public works putting people back to work on public buildings, schools and local authority housing. This would go a long way.

Without repeating much of what has been stated already about national climate change policy, I want to raise this aspect of it and ask the Minister and the Ministers of State what they are doing in that regard. Are they looking at allowing the local authorities play some role in solving this considerable problem? We have seen it in St. Michael's Estate, St. Teresa's Gardens and all the big flat complexes, residents of which have brought cases on moisture and dampness in their homes to the European Court. Is there a way in which the Department could allow local authorities to look for grants and link-in with the tenants to insulate their homes and the flat complexes?

**Deputy Eamonn Maloney:** It is to be welcomed that any Member of the Oireachtas highlights the difficulties that we, as a country, have on climate change and energy security and, like others, I commend Deputy Catherine Murphy for initiating today's debate on it. As a Labour Party member, I welcome that the Government proposes to introduce a Bill dealing with these two principle issues and other environmental issues. As other Deputies have stated, while there has been a volume of speak on this issue inside and outside this House, a Bill on it has yet to be finalised. However, both parties in Government are committed to the publication of a climate change Bill, which I look forward to debating. Many of us have different ideas in terms of emphasis on particular issues within the overall environmental area, which no doubt will be reflected during the debate on that Bill.

I was encouraged to hear the Minister, as he has done previously, remind people inside and outside this House that they can make submissions on this matter to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht. Not all the good ideas come from within this House. There are many people outside this House who are committed to, and have in many cases devoted all of their lives to, the protection of the environment, which is a good thing. In terms of environmental protection, we are coming from behind some of our European neighbours, the reasons for which I will not go into now. Most people know what they are. As emphasised by other speakers, we must bring all society with us.

I know a little about this issue having spent 26 years of my life working for an environmental company. We have some ground to make up, be it in the area of climate change, recycling and so on. It must be acknowledged that Irish people have changed and we have made gains. However, we have some way to go. The proposed legislation in this area is much needed. We can no longer ignore this issue. It is no longer enough to only talk about it; we must confront it. In my view, it is the responsibility of Government and of other Members of this Parliament to do so and we will do that when the Bill is presented.



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I look forward to the introduction of the climate change Bill, which will generate an interesting debate. It is hoped it will be legislation that encompasses all sectors of society and not only farming, industry and so on. It is important all sectors are included, as has been done in other jurisdictions, particularly in the UK. Its legislation is interesting in many ways and is the type of legislation we need.

**Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett:** I commend Deputy Catherine Murphy on bringing forward this Bill and on the obvious hard work and research she put into it. This is a comprehensive Bill, dealing with an incredibly important subject not alone for Ireland, but for the whole world and future generations. This Bill is a wake up call for the Government and society in terms of the urgency to address the issue of climate change.

Thankfully, we have moved on from the situation when concern was first raised about the issue of climate change by environmentalists and those in the establishment, politics and, in particular, business sought to deny the reality of climate change. We have come a long way from that, with few people remaining who do not acknowledge the serious problem of climate change and the threat it represents to our civilisation and planet, which if not addressed means society will soon be in deep trouble.

I would like to put the issue in historical context so that people understand the gravity of what we are dealing with. I do not know if people ever question why the great civilisations of Mesopotamia, Egypt and Rome collapsed. Given the very advanced nature of those societies thousands of years ago, why did they collapse? It was because they neglected the environment and operated to the short term advantage of the elites which ran them. Early great civilisations were based on a system of irrigation of canals out of great rivers such as the Euphrates and the Nile. Through a system of irrigation of the canals, they created fertile zones around the rivers, which became the basis for the development of those societies. These systems of irrigation, which were a technological leap forward, laid the basis for the tremendous civilisations and major advances in science, technology and so on that occurred as a result. These civilisations collapsed because the elites who ran them became more concerned over time with protecting their privilege and interests and celebrating their own importance and failed to invest in the infrastructure of their economies. In other words, they spent more time building pyramids to celebrate the importance of the pharaohs and kings and failed to invest in the canal infrastructure. This led ultimately to the collapse of those societies. An environmental catastrophe led to the fall of those civilisations.

**Acting Chairman (Deputy Peter Mathews):** Somebody's mobile telephone is causing interference.

**Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett:** It is not mine.

The consequences of the failure and collapse of these great civilisations, including Egypt or Mesopotamia, was localised because they did not span the whole planet and the level of technology at the time was not capable of damaging the entire planet. As other parts of the world developed later, what happened in those civilisations was not a catastrophe for the whole world. The difference today is we live in a global system where the level of technological development is such that if we get this wrong it means not only will localised civilisation collapse, with devastating consequences, but civilisation on a globalised level will collapse. That is the stake. Sadly, the same type of short-term thinking which led to the collapse of those great civilisations continues in the minds of the global elites of today, including governments and

large institutions. This failure to understand the need to think about and invest in the future and to secure and underpin the basis of our civilisation was reflected in the Minister's justification for rejecting the Bill. He set economic growth against the issue of having strict targets when it comes to the reduction of CO2 emissions and fossil fuel use. He said it nicely and diplomatically, but the bottom line of what he said in his speech was that we must be careful about how we balance these things and let us not have too stringent targets which might damage economic growth. This is a completely false dichotomy as there will not be an economy if we do not deal with this problem. The economic damage being done as a result of climate change is apparent throughout the world and we have started to see it in a serious way in this country with the issue of serious flooding and the huge costs resulting from it. We see it on a far greater scale in places such as Bangladesh and other parts of the world. We must absolutely not set against one another the issues of economic growth and development and dealing with climate change.

The truth is the opposite of the dichotomy the Minister suggested. It would be extremely good for our economy and its economic development to address as a matter of urgency the issue of climate change and move to the development of sustainable renewable energy sources which do not do economic damage and which can underpin an economy in the long term. The Minister implied it would be even more difficult for Ireland because of the nature of the Irish economy but the opposite is the truth. We are perfectly positioned - we are probably better positioned than any country in Europe - to move rapidly towards the development of renewable energy resources, and even more so given the economic and unemployment crises we now face whereby 430,000 people are unemployed and tens of thousands of people with skills and education are flooding out of the country. These people could deploy these skills in developing sustainable energy sources and addressing climate change which would also be good for the economy. There are several such areas including forestry. It is crazy that we are discussing selling the harvesting rights of our State forests when forestry is key to addressing the issue of climate change and could also be a rich mine for employment prospects and developing sustainable industry and enterprise. We are going to give it away to global asset strippers who have no interest in the development of our forests and have no understanding or interest in their importance in dealing with climate change and creating carbon sinks.

The painfully slow roll out of retrofit insulation is ridiculous given its importance in reducing energy use and the huge amount of employment which could be generated if we rolled out a national scheme and invested in a huge programme of retrofit insulation. We need massive investment in wind, wave and current power but the policy of the Government is primarily to facilitate gas and oil companies in pillaging our gas and oil resources, from which we will get virtually no revenue, and no policy is in place to demand that any revenues the State does derive from gas and oil, which are damaging fuels, should be ring-fenced to invest in renewable energy resources to ensure we move away from the use of fossil fuels. Public transport is being cut and moves are being made towards privatisation when what we need is enormous State investment in the expansion of cheap public transport which would move people out of cars and into a form of transport which is less damaging to the environment. On all these fronts governments are failing and the Government's refusal to sign up to stringent targets is indicative of the lack of seriousness with which it is looking at this issue which is critical to our future.

**Acting Chairman (Deputy Peter Mathews):** I call Deputy Eoghan Murphy who will share this slot with Deputy Brendan Griffin.

**Deputy Eoghan Murphy:** I welcome the opportunity to speak on the Bill and I commend Deputy Catherine Murphy for bringing it to the House. The opportunity to bring forward leg-

isolation as a backbench Deputy or a Deputy who is not a member of a Government party is a great opportunity and should be recognised as such. When I had the opportunity to do so prior to Christmas I found it very exciting. All those who criticise Friday sittings should recognise them as an opportunity for people to bring forward legislation and have it properly debated with spokespersons from all of the parties and the Minister in attendance and get some proper work done. I would like to see more of it. We should increase the number of Bills taken on Fridays and increase the number of Friday sittings. It is positive for the work we do in the House.

There is a practice on Fridays which is quite welcome and I would like to see it done on other days. A Deputy wishing to speak in the debate on Friday must wait to be called based on the order of entry into the Chamber. On other days we apply for a speaking slot two days in advance, and this is when we come in to speak after which we leave. It is not constructive to positive debate as we do not listen to each other. It is no good to walk in here, give a speech and leave. It does not serve anything except putting something on the record.

**Acting Chairman (Deputy Peter Mathews):** Deputy Murphy's comments are interesting but he must stick to the content of the Bill.

**Deputy Eoghan Murphy:** Climate change is a huge area and from today's debate we see how it touches every aspect of what we do and the role a government has. It is important we work together with other countries and international organisations, but we should not set our pace for change by their watch because it can be slow. Anyone who has worked with an international organisation knows that moving at the pace of 27 countries or 180 countries can be slow. If we think we can move quicker and forge a better path then we should do so, cognisant of what is happening abroad and what other countries are trying to achieve. Why not be ambitious ourselves and go for it? We must be smarter about energy in this country with regard to what we use and how we use it. Fighting to protect the environment, improve it and make our presence in it more sustainable has value, and while it is an end in itself it is also fundamental to many other aspects of our lives including reducing waste, reducing costs, becoming more efficient, improving our health and happiness and achieving food and water security which is crucial and will become more important in the coming decades. It is also important for increasing investment in our economy and job creation: if Dublin is to be a great capital it must be a green capital and we need to recognise this. We should be pursuing this agenda for selfish reasons as well as for the greater good.

I have limited previous experience in this area having worked for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation in Vienna which aims to end nuclear weapons testing with a view to improving security in the world by abolishing nuclear weapons. It also recognises the great poison nuclear weapons tests were to the world. In hundreds of tests over the past 70 years we have released poison into the atmosphere which has done incredible damage to people, local environments and the ecosystem. Unfortunately countries such as North Korea continue to poison us. From a research and development perspective, the system we built to monitor when nuclear weapon testing occurred had an unintended consequence which was a global monitoring system for the health of the environment and the Earth. We did not know this would come about but it did, and now we use it and it has benefits such as tsunami warnings and examining changes in environmental patterns in local ecosystems and regional areas. In that regard, research and development is important. Continued investment of public money in science research and development is essential. We must ensure that bodies such as the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies receive appropriate necessary funding for the work they do, which is essential to everything we are discussing here. They require funding to continue to

advance our understanding of the technologies and mitigation measures involved, as well as ways of improving energy usage.

The Bill contains some very good ideas which I like. I hope we can take some elements of it forward. The setting of national targets to reduce energy demand is a very good idea, as is having targets for reducing non-renewable energy. I note the Bill provides for a five-year national action plan, but ten years might be preferable, with medium-term plans every three years and key performance indicators being reviewed annually. We should perhaps be more ambitious and set it on a longer timeframe because these issues require consideration and we are talking about changes over a long period.

The presentation of an annual transition statement to the Dáil is a good idea also, as is the establishment of an independent commission producing independent reports. It is important for such a commission's integrity to have such independence so that we can have faith in, and trust, its advice. It should be able to challenge the Government on these issues. The Government does not have a monopoly on information and advice.

Previous contributors to this debate have mentioned incidents in their own constituencies, which are evidence of climate change. We have had severe flooding in Dublin, including my own constituency of Dublin South East. Sadly, it has seriously affected many people. Extreme weather happens, however, and it is not new to the 21st century. Neither is it necessarily, *de facto*, because of what we did in the 20th century. Whatever the cause of these events, we must recognise our own role in these disasters, including bad, wrong or over development which can drastically affect the impact of these events. This was certainly the case in Dublin in recent years but have we learned the lesson? I do not think we have.

I commend the significant amount of work that has been done to date in this area by the Minister, Deputy Hogan. He is fully committed to this matter and we have discussed it in detail on many occasions. I absolutely support his approach on a macro level.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the Poolbeg incinerator which is a local issue but is, nonetheless, important to the Dublin region. I do think it is the wrong plant, the wrong size and in the wrong area. I would also caution against an extension of the Ringsend wastewater treatment plant. I do not mean to be local about this but it is not often that we have the chance to address these issues in the Chamber.

I fully support the Minister's approach and what he is trying to do in his framework plan. I look forward to the Government Bill coming before the House when I will contribute to the debate, bringing some of the ideas we have heard today to that discussion.

**Deputy Brendan Griffin:** I commend Deputy Catherine Murphy on bringing this Bill before the House. In concurrence with Deputy Eoghan Murphy, I think the Friday sitting is useful in this regard. I echo his calls to extend the Friday sitting to perhaps cover two Bills. Maybe we could consider taking Bills on Tuesday mornings as well.

**Acting Chairman (Deputy Peter Mathews):** The Deputy is going into new territory now.

**Deputy Brendan Griffin:** We have a long list of Bills waiting to be cleared from Members on both sides of the House.

As regards the Bill before us, I have been contacted by a large number of constituents in

Kerry who have asked me to speak on their behalf. I am happy to do so. I welcome the opportunity to discuss this important matter. I echo the calls to the Minister, Deputy Hogan, to do everything in his power to bring forward the Government Bill as soon as possible. When I was canvassing around Kerry this time two years ago, I was asked quite a lot about this matter on the doorsteps. It is an important issue for people.

The world is a small place when it comes to considering the overall global climate. What we do here can have an impact on other countries and *vice versa*. We all have to play our part and pull our weight in the world. In the mid-1980s, when I was a child, I remember the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster. Sheep grazing on the mountain beside where I live died as a result of that nuclear accident, even though it occurred thousands of miles away. It is an indication of how small the world is when it comes to environmental issues, including climate change.

Deputy Eoghan Murphy has enjoyed swimming off Inch beach during the summer. The rise in sea temperatures, however, has attracted some rather unusual jellyfish specimens and other sea creatures that would not have been seen in Irish waters before now. If that is not an indication of sea temperatures rising, what is? It might not be so pleasant for Deputy Eoghan Murphy to jump into the water off Inch strand in future should this trend continue. Perhaps the Minister could address that matter in the Government Bill also by way of the jellyfish amendment.

**Deputy Phil Hogan:** We have enough political creatures to deal with.

**Acting Chairman (Deputy Peter Mathews):** The Minister is not responsible for the rain.

**Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett:** Do not forget the oil rig in Dublin Bay either.

**Deputy Phil Hogan:** They include the likes of the Deputy protesting outside a very important facility in his constituency.

**Deputy Brendan Griffin:** I have been asked by constituents to ensure that the forthcoming Government Bill would contain clearly defined targets for 2020 and 2050 to provide certainty surrounding Government policy. In addition, it should provide for five-year carbon budgets to provide a clear pathway for emission reduction and an independent expert committee to advise the Government on climate change. These requests have been made by many constituents of mine, so I am referring them to the Minister, Deputy Hogan.

I again commend Deputy Catherine Murphy on bringing this Bill forward. I call on the Minister to do everything in his power to try to progress the Government Bill as soon as possible.

**Deputy Andrew Doyle:** I welcome the Bill and commend Deputy Catherine Murphy on introducing it. Anything that keeps this item on the agenda is to be welcomed as it opens up discussion on it.

The work of Friday sittings falls somewhere between the collegiate work we do in committee and the more adversarial work on the floor of the House during the week. In the last Dáil, both the Minister and I were members of the Committee on Climate Change and Energy Security. It was called that for a particular reason as both issues are inextricably linked. With that in mind, we produced draft legislation, including the heads of a climate change Bill. The latter legislation was prepared by my then constituency colleague, the former Deputy Liz McManus. We also produced a foreshore licence Bill to deal specifically with offshore wind energy and



allow it to be expedited in a more timely fashion. It was considered that there were too many constraints on the development of such energy projects at the time. We also produced a marine Bill along the lines of what was produced in the House of Commons. To be fair to the last Administration, it did intend to bring out its own climate change legislation but events superseded it and time ran out. It is not that climate change legislation was not planned, but it has not been produced to date.

Regardless of whether climate change was an issue, we must look to the future and consider how we will provide food and energy for a global population that is forecast to grow by approximately 2 billion in the next 40 years. Climate change is an issue, however. It is hard to get away from the evidence that mankind's lifestyle over the past 100 years has put extra pressure on the climate as well as on the earth's finite resources. If we wear this planet out we cannot move to another one, so we must face challenges, including future production of food, water and fuel.

There are things we will have to change no matter what else happens, regardless of climate change. The climate change targets are binding up to 2020, although we have hit some of them due to very slow economic growth. If, as we all hope, our economic fortunes improve, the knock-on effect may be that some of those climate change targets will become more of a challenge. Therefore, we must examine the matter in that context. Part of this will pertain to our own lifestyle and lifestyle expectations and we will be obliged to manage that. At one of the aforementioned meetings, we were asked the provocative-sounding question as to whether birth control should be introduced in African nations. Justin Kilcullen, who was present, observed that the carbon emissions of people on the continent of Africa were one twentieth and one fortieth of the equivalent emissions of people in Europe and the United States, respectively. He then challenged us by asking where birth control should be introduced. I reiterate we must change our habits.

I come from a farming background and believe these issues are being considered in individual silos. Instead, we should consider how food and fuel can be produced in a way that is sustainable and works with the earth. This can be done and consideration should be given to a total resources usage policy that would include the wind, the waves and the soil. I will cite a simple example. A cow that produces milk is also a producer of food, that is, meat. If a single animal is fed in the right way and its nutrition is looked after, one can ensure a reduction in the amount of methane it produces. One dairy company in China is supplied by 2 million cows, which is the same population as the entire herd in Ireland. I do not mean to say this as a criticism but the manner in which they produce milk probably is highly inefficient. They simply pump in food and turn out milk. Ultimately, this will come down to money and were they able to save 20 cent per day on 2 million cows - more could be saved - that equates to €400,000 per day. However, by improving their efficiency like that, they also would reduce significantly the methane emissions from those 2 million animals and every little helps, to borrow a phrase from a retail outlet that has been in the news for other reasons. This is how the subject must be approached. Change will be achieved in small increments and all over the place. I acknowledge that climate changes but as an eminent expert observed at a summit some years ago, if one accepts that mankind is responsible for this and if one compares it with a moving train, slowing down that train to a stop will take 50 years and it will take another 50 years to go back. Members should bear this point in the overall context.

I am glad Deputy Boyd Barrett has returned to the Chamber because I listened with intrigue to his history lesson on the pharaohs, which was fascinating.



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**Acting Chairman (Deputy Peter Mathews):** Hear, hear. As is the Deputy's.

**Deputy Andrew Doyle:** However, one must consider the here and now and how 7 billion to 9 billion people will cohabitate with the Earth itself. While climate change is a consequence, I refer to the manner in which we approach our interaction with the Earth itself. I could be accused of being in the wrong political party unless I am careful but I commend it-----

**Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett:** There is plenty of room over here.

**Acting Chairman (Deputy Peter Mathews):** We are all part of mankind.

**Deputy Andrew Doyle:** -----because I feel passionately that we can do this. As for the relative significance of agriculture, transport and industry, Members should not get caught on the percentages. I appeal to them not to consider them simplistically because the big four nations of the European Union have a heavy industrial base and consequently, while their agricultural sectors are significant, they are not as significant as is the case in Ireland. If one has a smaller industrial base, obviously one's agriculture figures will be higher. Members should consider the example of Stockholm. That city powers its bus fleet from methane from grass and slurry and we could do that too. It will come down to economics and we must make it economically viable because ultimately, that is the only way in which we can roll this out at the necessary level. I apologise for speaking at such length. I probably have gone over five minutes although I had thought I would run out of things to say after two.

**Acting Chairman (Deputy Peter Mathews):** I call on the Minister to make his concluding remarks.

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** I again thank Deputy Catherine Murphy for introducing this legislation and I thank Members on all sides for their contributions. There is a considerable amount of agreement on many of the issues put forward by Deputy Murphy. I believe the constructive way in which Members can approach this in a non-political way is welcome and I hope this trend can continue when they come to consider the policy analysis that has been carried out by all the stakeholders through the National Economic and Social Council, NESC, process and when the Government is in a position to publish the heads of the Bill, which hopefully will be next week. Thereafter, the engagement can commence with the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht. Obviously, stakeholders also will then have an opportunity to have an input with that committee. Ultimately, I envisage 2013 as being a year in which statutory underpinning can be given to a lot of issues on which we have failed in the past. In that regard, I include political parties that were in this House and comprised people who were expected to be able to deliver on the environment but failed to do so. I do not wish to see a repetition of the shambles that was evident at the end of the last Dáil and this is the reason I have appealed to people not to pander to any particular sector. I will not and I hope the same can apply across the board, no matter what view one takes on these proposals on this particular topic. Moreover, I hope that a measure of agreement will be reached that will meet our climate change objectives and will recognise the importance of dealing effectively and strongly with all the sectoral plans that must be implemented to meet the legally binding targets we already are obliged to meet by 2020. Deputy Catherine Murphy might note that as part of Ireland's Presidency programme, I have facilitated a discussion at our informal Environment Council meeting next April on a higher level of ambition on the mitigation that is required for the European Union to consider into the future.

**Acting Chairman (Deputy Peter Mathews):** I invite Deputy Catherine Murphy to make her concluding contribution.

**Deputy Catherine Murphy:** First, I thank the Minister and all Members who made an input. I also thank Members for the support that came from the Opposition benches, including Deputy Smith on behalf of Fianna Fáil and Deputy Stanley on behalf of Sinn Féin. However, there were quite a number of others. Obviously, I am disappointed the Minister does not intend to support this legislation. I would be okay with that, had I heard the Minister use the word “targets” in his conclusion even once. I am really concerned that no legislation will be forthcoming that will be practical and will have the roadmap I suggested. I want Members to be leaders and not followers in this regard and I believe they can be leaders and can be ambitious. Most Members will recall comments made on the day they entered the Dáil by people on the Government side, who stated they do not have a monopoly on wisdom. I do not have such a monopoly either and I certainly believe that is the purpose of Committee Stage. While I accept completely the point made by Deputy Eoghan Murphy on the value of the Friday sittings, this value is being underexploited because Members are not going that stage further. They are not taking the legislation to Committee, Report and Final Stages. Members are under utilising this Oireachtas, which is being dominated by the Executive. I had hoped this would change but I do not think we will disagree on that point.

There have been some extremely useful contributions and I have been taking notes as the debate progressed this morning. I noted that Deputy Broughan first elevated me to being the leader of the Technical Group. Allow me to put on record that the Technical Group does not have a formal leader. We have people who-----

**Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett:** We are all leaders.

**Deputy Catherine Murphy:** Yes, we are all leaders. I had better address that before I get my head chopped off.

**Deputy Eoghan Murphy:** Deputy Catherine Murphy should seize her chance.

**Deputy Phil Hogan:** The personnel often change over there.

**Deputy Catherine Murphy:** However, Deputy Broughan did refer to the issue of energy costs and even if one considers it on a practical level, I note that people get it and are way ahead of the curve. They understand that fossil fuels are expensive and are becoming more expensive. They understand this because it is having an impact on their budgets on a weekly basis. In the credit union reports produced quarterly, this issue comes up repeatedly as being a major source of concern. Deputy Kevin Humphreys stated he was committed to working with all parties and none. I completely take this at face value and it is really important that Members engage in this together in an honest way. Deputy Joan Collins spoke in a practical way about the importance of measures such as insulation in the home. They are fairly basic measures and unless such measures are taken in a systematic way, we will run into difficulties.

*I o'clock* Australia and Britain have been referenced with regard to the visible impact of climate change, and they are First World countries. We could see the effects with fire storms and floods but the effects in poorer countries are not so visible. Food security is also of significant importance, as climate change will have a serious impact.

Deputy Boyd Barrett mentioned the big civilisations of the past, which was a useful input

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in that it indicated how we must plan for the long term by taking short-term steps. Planning is a key issue. Targets are not a straitjacket but they relate to leadership. I accept Deputy Doyle's point about having some flexibility in targets, and this Bill sought to bring that about. I welcome that both Deputies Eoghan Murphy and Brendan Griffin agreed about the need for targets, and it seems there is some consensus in that regard within some of the political parties. The last Administration seemed to be very close to producing legislation, and we may have been discussing a different range of issues if it had done so.

There will be deeper obligations after 2020, which is why planning is so important. If the choices we make now are correct, there may well be a cumulative effect, making it easier for us to deliver on our obligations into the future. We must examine what we do and consider using leading edge technology. In my constituency, Intel does not speak of research and development but rather leading edge technology, which is a phase beyond research and development and there is production direction from innovation. That is why the company is a world leader and we must understand such thinking.

I will refer to some of the points made in the debate. Our emissions have fallen in the past few years because of a fall in economic activity in the country. Our ambition is to grow the economy to get out of our economic mess, so it is paradoxical to rely on a fall in economic activity when we are trying to achieve the opposite. We must exchange a drop in economic activity with different initiatives to help us achieve targets. The Kyoto Protocol targets may be revised in 2015 and there is every expectation that it will be an upward revision. There will be greater expectations of delivery than is currently the case.

Science is developing in the climate change area. If something looks and quacks like a duck, it is a duck, and if we can see massive changes in the weather systems, that should tell us something. I need not say how expensive it is to address such problems. For example, we can consider how buildings were placed on flood plains, and in my constituency good - albeit expensive - work has been done by the Office of Public Works to overcome some problems. We cannot continue to do this, and prevention will only come about through dealing with obligations and seeing ourselves as part of the international community.

Our economy cannot afford to ignore a process of making changes. In 2004, crude oil was \$30 per barrel, and the same barrel was \$144 in 2008 and \$100 today. We must pay attention to the cost of fuels. If we provide renewable resources for the future, doing business in the country will become cheaper, so we must examine the leading edge technologies. One can consider the behaviour in Japan after the nuclear plant catastrophe, as a light bulb is not left on for longer than required, with people becoming very conscious of how important it is to conserve energy. That is a key issue in changing behaviour. Energy scavenging has become a real practice, with people trying to use small sources, such as thermal energy. Devices on the roadside, for example, use solar energy for fuel. There is much to be done to integrate renewable systems into the carbon generators, and there will be space for energy conservation, with demand reduction a critical path of innovation. Work is ongoing in colleges but this could be ramped up and seen as an investment.

Private sector investment will be required with direct investment in innovation. It is important that we do not allow opportunities to dry up by allowing people to go elsewhere, and it is important that we send the right signals. We want to be at the leading edge. Interconnectors are very important, and we have great natural assets like wave power on our Atlantic and east coasts.

Deputy Doyle mentioned that the majority of our emissions do not come from the classic sources as they do in the big industrial countries on mainland Europe. Some 72% of our total emissions are outside the emissions trading system, with transport, residential and agricultural sectors being the bigger culprits. Transport and agricultural sectors account for 50% of total national emissions in 2009, and the percentage climbs when we exclude emissions trading system, ETS, emissions.

A review of national climate change policy published by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government in 2011 states:

In terms of national policy development, mitigation across the non-ETS side of the economy is an immediate priority given the unusual national emissions profile and an extremely challenging mitigation target for the sector under EU law - a 20% reduction on 2005 levels by 2020. Notwithstanding the fact that the economic downturn has led to a reduction in anticipated emissions, substantial mitigation policy actions are required in order to deliver compliance with this target.

Elsewhere, the same document states:

When greenhouse gas emissions from Irish installations participating in the ETS are excluded from the national profile, the mitigation agenda is dominated by emissions from the agriculture and transport sectors. Recent greenhouse gas emission projections from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) [the agency that is, for want of a better description, keeping tabs on us] show that, even under the most optimistic scenario, Ireland cannot meet its 2020 mitigation target on the basis of existing policies and measures, and a further deepening of these measures would be required to achieve compliance domestically.

This is the view of the Department. In April 2011, the Environmental Protection Agency warned of the difficulty of achieving the 20% target.

**Deputy Phil Hogan:** Who produced the document?

**Deputy Catherine Murphy:** It was produced by the Minister's Department in 2011.

**Deputy Phil Hogan:** At least the Deputy and I are on the same page.

**Deputy Catherine Murphy:** The longer we delay, the greater will be the challenge. My Bill was published last May. I had hoped the Minister would have produced a Bill by now and while he and I agree on some issues, it will be extremely disappointing if his legislation does not contain targets. Leadership is needed on this issue and I hope the Minister's Bill will include targets when it is published, hopefully next week.

Question put.

**Acting Chairman (Deputy Thomas P. Broughan):** In accordance with Standing Order 117A (iv), the division is postponed until immediately following the Order of Business on Tuesday next, 13 February 2013.

The Dáil adjourned at 1.15 p.m. until 2 p.m. on Tuesday, 12 February 2013.