

At a glance: Climate Action Plan 2024

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2023 was Ireland's warmest year on record 'by a large margin' beating the previous warmest year (2022), with the warmest June and the wettest March and July on record. The country was also directly affected by eleven named storms ([Met Éireann 2024](#)).

This climate blog informs readers on the Climate Action Plan 2024 and related resources, as follows:

- Irish, European and global commitments to climate action,
- Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions profile and climate assessment,
- The Climate Action Plan 2024 (and new high-impact actions), and
- Progress made in the Climate Action Plan 2023.

Irish, European and global commitments to climate action

Under the [Climate Action and Low Carbon Development \(Amendment\) Act 2021](#) Ireland is committed to reducing its greenhouse emissions by 51% by 2030 (relative to 2018 levels) and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. The European Union, under the European [Green Deal](#) also commits to being climate neutral by 2050 (and increases the EU-wide greenhouse gas emissions reduction target to at least 55% for 2030 [compared to 1990 levels] under the '[Fit for 55](#)' package). Globally, a deal was reached at the 28th United Nations Climate Change Conference ([COP28](#)) in December 2023 to take action to reduce emissions by 43% by 2030 and to accelerate emissions reductions towards net zero by 2050.



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Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions profile and climate assessment

According to the [Environmental Protection Agency \(2023\)](#), Ireland is not on track to meet its 2030 greenhouse emissions targets – while our greenhouse gas emissions decreased by 1.9% from 2021 to 2022, they have increased 9.2% from 1990 to 2022 with agriculture remaining the largest contributor (38.4%) followed by transport (19.1%), energy (16.6%) and residential (10%) sectors.

The Environmental Protection Agency has just published [Ireland's Climate Change Assessment \(ICCA\)](#) which is the first assessment of its kind. Highlighting Ireland's limited progress in reducing emissions, ICCA stresses the importance of '*deep, rapid, immediate and sustained emissions reductions*' if we are to stay within safe limits for the climate and protect Ireland from higher temperatures, increased risk of flooding, storm surges and extreme waves as sea levels continue to rise.

The need for rapid, effective implementation of climate action is echoed in the European Scientific Advisory Body's recent report (2024), [Towards EU climate neutrality: progress, policy gaps and opportunities](#).

The Climate Action Plan 2024

The latest [Climate Action Plan \(2024\)](#) was approved by Government on 20 December 2023 and is the third annual update to the Climate Action Plan 2019 and the second statutory update to the Climate Action Plan since the [Climate Action and Low Carbon Development \(Amendment\) Act 2021](#) was passed. It aligns with legally binding [carbon budgets](#) and [sectoral emissions ceilings](#) approved and agreed respectively by Government in 2022. Public consultation on the Climate Action Plan 2024 is expected to commence early this year.

The Climate Action Plan 2024 aims to close the emissions gap and provide the roadmap for delivering on Ireland's climate action ambitions. However, to do this, as well as accelerating the full implementation of existing measures under previous Climate Action Plans (see progress made in Climate Action Plan 2023 below), Ireland must now rapidly and fully implement the actions and policies set out in the 2024 Plan.

New high-impact actions

While the '*full roadmap of actions to support the delivery of our climate targets*' is within the 2024 Plan itself, if the reader is short on time, and is primarily interested in reviewing the **new, high-impact actions**, you may prefer to go directly to the [Annex of Actions](#). Some examples from the Annex of Actions include:

- **Adaptation:** Develop a new National Adaptation Framework, improve resilience of Ireland's water infrastructure using nature-based solutions and assess the potential impacts of climate change on flooding and flood risk across Ireland.
- **Agriculture:** Develop ecosystem services through a new national carbon farming framework and incorporate the [Teagasc 2023 marginal abatement cost curve](#) into the Plan.
- **Built Environment (residential):** Develop legislation to regulate for a district heating model that delivers consumer protection and a vibrant district heating industry and increase the number of registered [One Stop Shops](#) and [Sustainable Energy Communities](#).

- **Circular Economy:** go-live on the Deposit Return Scheme ([now live as of 1 February 2024](#)) and develop a new levy on single-use packaging, focusing on disposable cups for cold drinks.
- **Citizen Engagement:** support climate literacy through primary, secondary and third-level education.
- **Electricity:** Adopt the Electricity Storage Policy Framework, incentivise and enable large energy users to join flexible demand initiatives, publish Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines for onshore wind, and deliver onshore and offshore Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) auctions as per the annual RESS auction calendar.
- **Industry:** develop a work programme to implement the [National Hydrogen Strategy](#) and implement the Decarbonisation Roadmap for Industrial Heat based on the recommendations of the [Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland National Heat Study](#).
- **Just Transition:** develop green skills and capacities required for a net-zero economy through Education and Training Boards, and specifically for the Midlands - support economic diversification and the restoration & rehabilitation of degraded bogs.
- **Local Government:** adopt all local authority climate action plans and develop decarbonising zones.
- **Land Use and Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF):** Implement the new [Forest Strategy Implementation Plan](#) (including the latest Forestry Programme).
- **Marine Environment:** Design and initiate the national process for achieving 30% Marine Protected Areas coverage by 2030.
- **Public Sector leading by example:** roll-out climate related training for all civil service grades.
- **Research and Innovation:** progress developing the proposed offshore renewable energy innovation park, and
- **Transport:** focus on alternative fuels, enhance rail to port connectivity and speed up implementation of smart and sustainable mobility projects.

Progress made in the 2023 Climate Action Plan

The Climate Action Plan 2023 [Progress Report Q3 2023](#) (November) and the subsequent [press release for the 2024 Plan](#), (20 December), sets out, among other things, the progress from measures carried out in 2023 across various sectors including:

- Introduction of a National Fertiliser database,
- Launch of the Forestry Programme 2023-2027,
- Delivery of the Onshore Renewable Electricity Supply Scheme (RESS) 3 Auction **and** the completion of the first Offshore RESS Auction as well as the establishment of the new maritime area regulatory authority [MARA](#) (which assesses maritime area consent (MAC) applications for offshore renewable energy projects among other things),
- Over 43,000 home energy upgrades supported by SEAI by end November,
- 7% decrease in electricity emissions in first six months of 2023, and
- A rapid increase in the adoption of electric vehicles.

Overall, implementation of Climate Action Plan 2023 stood at 67% (87 of 129 actions put into effect) at the end of Quarter 3, 2023.

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