

# PUTTING CLIMATE ACTION PLANS STRATEGICALLY IN PLACE

Ireland's four Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) have been co-ordinating the local authority response to climate change since 2018. The structures deployed have proved highly effective and may be utilised to direct local authority actions within the Climate Action Plan.

In recognition of the significant obligation to develop and implement climate action measures, the four Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) are working to their mandate to co-ordinate engagement across the varying levels of government and help build on experience and expertise that exists in the area of climate change and climate action.

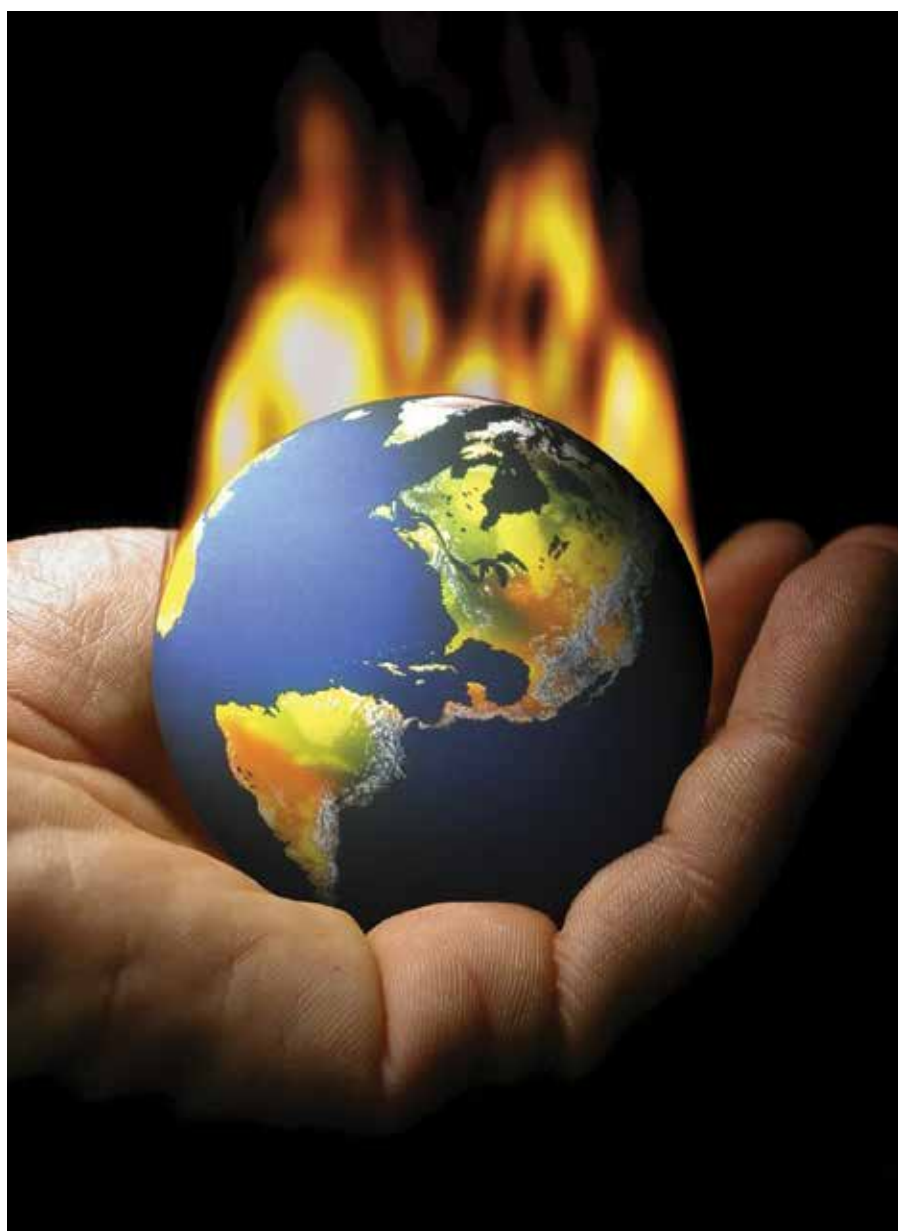
The work programme, as agreed by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, includes a number of tasks under the following six work packages:

1. Establish the Regional Offices
2. Local Authority and Sectoral Adaptation Planning
3. Project, Research and Regional Specialisms
4. Communication and Behavioural Change
5. Training, Education and Resources
6. Climate Change Mitigation

The four offices are now fully established in the lead local authorities of Cork County Council for the Atlantic Seaboard South Region, Mayo County Council for the Atlantic Seaboard North Region, Dublin City Council for the Dublin Metropolitan Region and Kildare County Council for the Eastern and Midlands Region. Kildare County Council is supported by Kilkenny County Council as a partner authority in the Eastern and Midland Region.

## ADAPTATION STRATEGIES

Work continues on the development of Local Authority Climate Change Adaptation Strategies in accordance with the provisions of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015. The timeframe for the completion and approval of all Local Adaptation Strategies is 30 September 2019. This timeframe mirrors the deadline for the completion of the government sectoral adaptation plans.



The CAROs have been working very closely with local authorities in the preparation of their strategies through the various stages of the process. Consultants procured at regional level for the purposes of the Strategic Environment Assessment

## CLIMATE ACTION

(SEA) and Appropriate Assessments (AA) have completed their initial screenings to inform the draft strategies for engagement with the prescribed environmental authorities as set out under the SEA Regulations. Public consultation and stakeholder engagement has been ongoing across the local authorities taking varying forms.

Submissions and commentaries on the draft adaptation strategies were invited, and encouraged to help shape each final strategy.

Taking into consideration all submissions to help shape the final strategy it is anticipated that all local authorities will be presenting to elected members for their approval on or before 30 September.

This will open the process further through to implementation stage where local authorities will put in place appropriate governance structures, convene climate action teams and focus on the task of the practical implementation of actions.

Adaptation actions are orientated with a focus on governance arrangements, research and raising awareness to capitalise on opportunities that may arise to ensure cost-effectiveness by local authorities, promote efficiencies and build capacity within local authorities and within communities.

Work is also ongoing on increasing the actions on climate change mitigation in conjunction with energy agencies (where they are in operation), the SEAI and other stakeholders. The CAROs will continue to assist local authorities and provide guidance where possible in the practical implementation of the adaptation and mitigation actions.

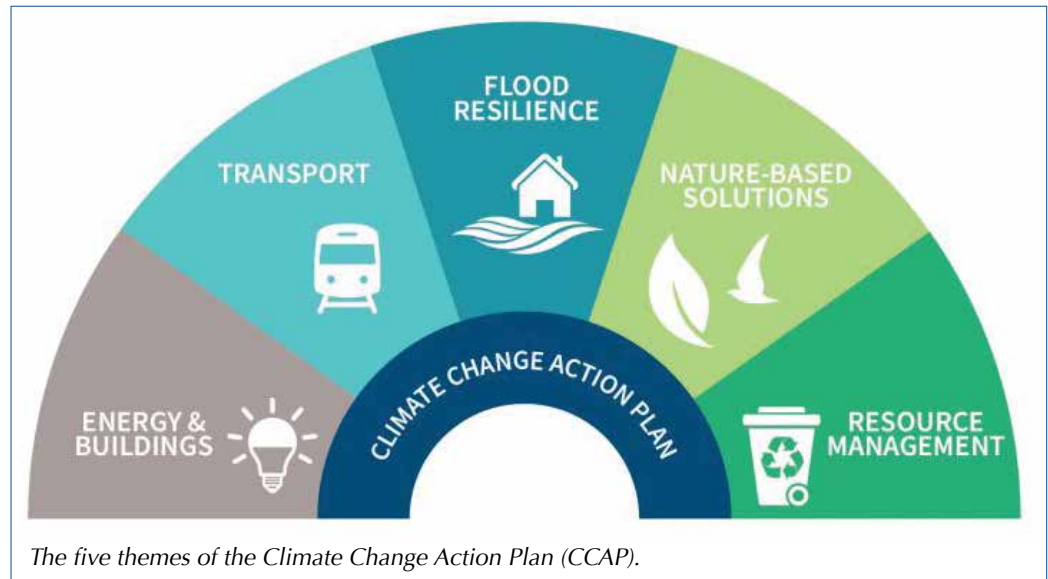
### DUBLIN LOCAL AUTHORITY PLANS

The four Dublin local authority Climate Change Action Plans (2019-2024) were approved by elected members in May 2019. Over 560 public submissions were received across the four plans, during the six-week public consultation period during February-March 2019.

Throughout the public consultation on the Draft Climate Change Action Plans (CCAPs), each local authority hosted a range of drop-in information sessions, organised in partnership with Codema (Dublin's Energy Agency) and the Dublin CARO.

At these interactive events members of the public could meet with council staff across the five theme areas of the CCAPs – Energy and Buildings, Transport, Flood Resilience, Nature-Based Solutions and Resource Management.

The 'face to face' public consultation events were supported by a range of online tools, the promotional videos had over 6,600 views during the public consultation period and 4,000 individual users accessed the dedicated CCAPs website during



that time. Dublin's CARO was also officially launched at a public consultation event hosted by Dublin City Council at The Mansion House on Saturday 16 February 2019.

On completion of the public consultation process, each local authority prepared a 'Chief Executive's Report on Submissions' which summarised the submissions received, set out the Chief Executive's recommendations on submissions received and included any proposed amendments to the CCAPs.

The elected members considered this report, together with the Draft Plans, in advance of approving the plans at the series of council meetings in May.

The Dublin local authority CCAPs were finalised in July and climate teams are now in the process of preparing implementation strategies.

The finalised versions of the Dublin local authority CCAPs, together with accompanying environmental reports, are available to download at [www.dublinclimatechange.ie](http://www.dublinclimatechange.ie)

### TRAINING FRAMEWORK

The CAROs developed a 'Local Authority Staff Climate Action Training Framework' as part of Work Package 5: Training, Education and Resources of their Work Programme as agreed by the DCCAE.

This work package seeks to deal with capacity building within the Local Authority Sector in order that LA staff can assist with the required transition to a low carbon economy both within their own workplace and as influencers in local communities.

The Framework follows on from the 'Local Authority Climate Action Training Strategy' which identified key training partners and stakeholders. It envisages that staff will engage in three levels of training which will consist of:

- Continued Professional Development training (CPD) hosted by professional bodies such as Engineers Ireland.
- Certified technical short duration training through training partners such as the Environmental Services Training Group (ESTG) and the Institute of Public Administration (IPA).
- Longer term professional and academic training provided by



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third level partners.

The provision of training to Local Authority Elected Members and local communities will also be developed to provide for greater understanding of climate change and its impacts, influence positive behaviour and encourage meaningful action in local communities.

#### **The plan identifies the following to define the focus of training:**

1. Community Engagement & Behavioural Change
2. Climate Change Awareness Building
3. Climate Change Mitigation
4. Climate Change Adaptation

It is a priority to upskill the staff in the sector on climate actions at a senior, frontline and technical level to augment the leadership role of local authorities in climate action.

The CAROs in partnership with Climate Ireland are rolling out the next suite of regional workshops for staff involved in the development of the local authority adaptation strategies in autumn 2019. The focus of the next workshop is on practical implementation and on the role of local authorities in the area of mitigation.

Climate Ireland is a research service that connects and integrates scientific research, policy making and adaptation practice for the purposes of enhancing adaptation decision making in Ireland. Climate Ireland is inspired by the needs of stakeholders and their experiences of Climate Change Adaptation

#### **RESEARCH PROJECT**

The Local Government Management Agency (LGMA), in partnership with the CAROs and on behalf of the CCMA, commissioned a Research Project on Climate Action. As part of this, a survey was circulated to all local authorities in February 2019 seeking to establish a baseline assessment of all climate action activities and responses following extreme weather events

that local authorities are currently engaged in.

The first draft of the ‘LGMA Research Report on Local Authority Climate Actions 2018’ is soon to be published. The findings and information collated is important in identifying baselines as well as presenting an opportunity for the sector to demonstrate local government as a leader in climate action.

#### **CLIMATE ACTION PLAN**

The all-of-government *Climate Action Plan 2019 – To Tackle Climate Breakdown* – was published on Monday 17 June. Launched by Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment Richard Bruton, who described the plan as “ambitious but realistic”, it sets out an ambitious course of action over 12 sectors and charts a course towards decarbonisation targets.

The plan acknowledges the significant step up in efforts and commitment to tackle the cause and impacts of climate change. The role of the local authorities as leaders and key mobilisers of action at local and community level is recognised.

Rising to the challenge of Ireland’s ambition to 2050 the Climate Action Plan calls on the local government sector to meet the required level of emissions (i.e. 30% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030 and a 50% improvement in energy efficiency within the same timeframe).

It addresses the role of the CAROs in assisting local authorities in building capacity to engage effectively with climate change. The CAROs will lead a step-up in climate action within local authorities to activate meaningful citizen engagement, community leadership and capacity building using the National Dialogue on Climate Action, and linking in with existing and new local authority structures.

Opportunities exist to reorient and strengthen the local authority sector to make a positive contribution and lead the way in not only reducing their own emissions but also stimulating and inspiring action across communities.