

UPDATE FROM CLIMATE ACTION REGIONAL OFFICES

As Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) continue to support Ireland's local authorities in adapting to climate change, David Dodd, Regional Co-ordinator for Dublin Metropolitan CARO, outlines the highlights of their climate action plans and policy developments, in addition to the plan of action for 2021.



Like all sectors in society, 2020 was a different type of year for the Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs). Within a few short weeks at the start of the year, we had moved almost entirely to working from home and conducting all of our engagement with stakeholders remotely.

Furthermore, there were many developments in climate legislation and policy to keep abreast of, and we continued our core work in assisting and supporting local authorities with the implementation of their climate adaptation/action plans.

As detailed in previous issues of 'Council Review', a lot of work went into preparing a Climate Action Strategy and the business case for the local authority sector with the CCMA and LGMA, to meet the scale and ambition of the Climate Action Charter and to identify how local authorities could deliver much wider change in the years ahead. This strategy and an accompanying business case have been submitted to government

for consideration.

Highlights during the year included supporting local authorities with their annual progress reports, the advancement of the CARO training plan and the development of a number of partnerships to support climate action at a community level.

LEGISLATION AND POLICY

Climate action featured prominently in the new Programme for Government with commitments in relation to climate legislation, carbon taxation, renewable energy targets, sectoral emission reduction targets, increased funding for sustainable transport and a focus on the retrofitting of private houses.

The Climate Action Plan also commits to delivering a 'Just Transition', recognising the significant level of change required and that burdens borne must be seen to be fair across society.

Developing the opportunities in a decarbonising economy is

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A key task of the CCAC is to conduct an annual review of progress made in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and furthering the transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient and sustainable economy and society by 2050.

recognised as a key pillar to the Climate Action Plan and in this regard the plan envisages that existing initiatives and structures will be mobilised to maximise enterprise opportunities.

Kieran Mulvey, the former Director General of the Workplace Relations Commission, was appointed 'Just Transition' Commissioner by the Government in early 2020, followed by the launch of a new Just Transition fund for the Midlands region in June 2020.

The Eastern & Midlands CARO successfully engaged with the first call under this fund for the development of community climate action training across each of the effected communities all eight counties.

The Climate Change Advisory Council (CCAC) published its 2020 annual review in late September.

A key task of the CCAC is to conduct an annual review of progress made over the previous year across all sectors, in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and furthering the transition to a low-carbon, climate-resilient and sustainable economy and society by 2050.

A recommendation in the Council's 2020 review noted: *"In order to better prepare for future climate extremes and limit their impact we need to move from adaptation planning to adaptation action implementing the priorities of existing sectoral adaptation plans and local adaptation strategies..."*

NATIONAL 2050 OBJECTIVE

The Draft Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill 2020,

published in October 2020, aims to enshrine in law the approach and actions outlined in the National Climate Action Plan.

The Bill puts into law a commitment for net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, through the establishment of a National 2050 Climate Objective that the State will pursue the transition to a 'climate resilient and climate neutral economy' by the end of 2050.

The draft Bill also includes the requirement for local authorities to prepare a Climate Action Plan addressing both climate mitigation and adaptation measures not later than eighteen months after the passing of the amendment.

These climate change action plans will contribute to the National 2050 Climate Objective and shall be reflected specifically within the development planning processes.

CARO WORK PROGRAMME

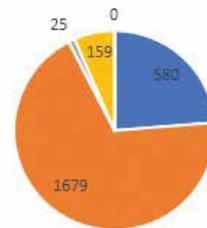
All local authorities were required to submit the first annual progress reports for their climate adaptation strategy/ climate change action plans to the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications by the end of October.

The CAROs supported all local authorities with their reporting requirements in 2020 by providing templates and collating reports.

The Local Authority Adaptation Strategy Progress Report gives a summary of 2,451 actions from the 31 local authorities. It shows how the sector is engaging with climate adaptation and progressing the actions in their adaptation

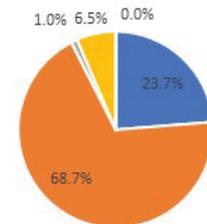
Figure 1: Progress of climate actions by local authorities (2019-2020)

Action Progress By Number of Actions



■ Not Started ■ Ongoing ■ Postponed
■ Completed ■ New

Action Progress by Percentage of Actions



■ Not Started ■ Ongoing ■ Postponed
■ Completed ■ New

strategies and action plans (see Figure 1) both in support of their own functions and many other sectors.

CLIMATE ACTION TRAINING

The development of the Local Authority Climate Action Training Programme is ongoing at present. It is a culmination of efforts from a range of contributors, managed by the CAROs and the Local Authority Services National Training Group (LASNTG) and is supported by the Department of Environment, Communications & Climate.

The programme with its initial series of training courses under six unique pillars, serves to underpin the commitments set out under Action 150 of the Climate Action Plan, to strengthen and empower local authority climate action leadership and build capacity within the sector to further reinforce the delivery of effective climate action.

Training courses are in development, and a number of pilots took place in the fourth quarter of 2020, with a view to

Training & Education



**LOCAL AUTHORITY
Climate Action
Training Programme**

 <p>Championing Leadership Local Authority Climate Action Training Programme</p> <p>Training to harness the leadership role of local authority elected members and senior staff in driving effective climate action</p>	 <p>Empowering Change Local Authority Climate Action Training Programme</p> <p>Training to empower local authority staff to promote behavioural change and encourage positive climate action across local communities.</p>
 <p>Raising Awareness Local Authority Climate Action Training Programme</p> <p>Training (online) to raise awareness of the role of local authorities in leading on climate action at local and community levels</p>	 <p>Delivering Action Local Authority Climate Action Training Programme</p> <p>Training to mobilise local authority staff to implement practical outdoor climate action measures</p>
 <p>Building Capacity Local Authority Climate Action Training Programme</p> <p>Training to build capacity of climate action teams to deliver local climate action measures across all local authority functions</p>	 <p>Implementing Action Local Authority Climate Action Training Programme</p> <p>Training specifically targeted to embed climate action into particular local authority functions</p>

mainstream roll-out from early 2021 to the targeted groupings across the local authority functions.

Climate Ireland has been a key partner for the CAROs in this training programme, in particular the online training modules. The format of some of the training programmes had to be revisited and modified to suit online delivery due to Covid-19 restrictions.

CLIMATE ADAPTATION PLANS
Regional and local roads have been identified in the Climate Adaptation

Strategies/Action Plans of all local authorities as being one aspect of their critical infrastructure, which is at a significant risk to climate change.

To assist in addressing this risk, the CAROs have developed a project to scope and develop guidance and resources for Climate Adaptation for Regional and Local Roads.

The project aims to:

(1) Inform roads staff of the importance of appropriate planning for climate change and implementation of climate adaptation

procedures; and

(2) Develop a range of design, maintenance and rehabilitation strategies and approaches to adapt the regional and local road network for climate events and reduce the risk of damage and loss of function.

A Working Group has been established with representatives from DTTAS, the Roads Management Office, Cork Institute of Technology, CAROs and senior personnel from the Local Authority Roads Directorates.



Former Wexford hurler Diarmuid Lyng pictured with Ciarán Hayes, Chair of the National Local Authority Climate Action Steering Group, John Horan, President of GAA, and Michael Walsh, the then Chairman of CCMA, at the launch of the GAA – Local Authority Strategic Development Goal initiative at Croke Park in January 2020.



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DECARBONISING ZONES

The CAROs, while more focussed on adaptation, have been working with and supporting the local authorities to manage and develop energy efficiency projects.

Action 165 of the Government's Climate Action Plan (CAP) requires local authorities to identify and develop a Decarbonising Zone. The CAP did not contain guidance on what a Decarbonising Zone entails. To address this deficit CARO and Codema have prepared a briefing paper on decarbonising zones.

Work to date has included substantial engagement with key stakeholders, including Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHPLH) local authorities, regional assemblies and Codema. A working group has also been set up by DHPLH on the implementation of Action 165.

The paper aims to provide guidance to local authorities on how a Decarbonising Zone (DZ) could be defined and implemented in the Irish context, and to signpost and facilitate further discussion across a range of stakeholders.

The paper considers the policy and legislative context, the importance of local energy planning, relevant case studies from Ireland and elsewhere, energy master-planning and policy development, highlights thematic areas and data analysis. Further guidance for Local Authorities is to issue from DHPLH and SEAI on Decarbonising Zones.

WEATHER IMPACTS REGISTER (WIRE) APP

The CAROs, with the support of the Public Service Innovation Fund, have developed a Weather Impacts Register mobile app (WIRE) for local authority staff to capture the impacts of weather events with an associated Map Viewer and Data Dashboard to view and analyse the collected data.

Climate Ireland was a strategic partner in developing the App. Beta testing of the App was carried out from June to October 2020 which involved 23 local authorities. A survey has been issued to gather the feedback and any modifications to the App are expected to be completed by the end of 2020.

The App can be rolled out across the sector in the first quarter of 2021. One of the challenges going forward will be to ensure a strong uptake of the App across the sector, but already, some local authority staff are starting to see the benefits derived from the dataset.

GREEN CLUB TOOLKIT

The CAROs have worked to develop a number of partnerships to support climate action at a community level. The CCMA, supported by the CAROs, have partnered with the GAA on an initiative to promote sustainability and climate action through the GAA network at national, regional, county and community levels.

The partnership has capitalised on the leadership roles that both the local authority sector and the GAA have within their communities, and the potential they have to engage with citizens of all ages to promote sustainable local development, environmental awareness and climate action.

A steering group, composed of representatives from the local authority sector, CAROs, the GAA, LGFA and the Camogie Association, together with a suite of expert partners, have worked

on the development of a Green Club toolkit, which will be piloted in 2021 ahead of the roll-out of a National Green Club Support Plan in late 2021.

The toolkit focusses on the key action areas of energy and water efficiency, biodiversity, waste and transport. In total, 45 GAA clubs across Ireland have been invited to participate in the pilot. The expert partners engaged in the programme are:

- The National Transport Authority and the Road Safety Authority
- Sustainable Energy Association of Ireland
- The National Biodiversity Data Centre
- Irish Water and the Local Authorities Waters Programme
- Regional Waste Management Offices

Finally, we aim to launch our new website in January which will be a resource for the local authority sector and others on climate action.

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The CAROs were established in 2018 in response to Action 8 of the 2018 National Adaptation Framework (NAF) – Planning for a Climate Resilient Ireland. The CAROs are mandated 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 offices have a role in driving climate action at both regional and local levels, including implementation of local adaptation plans/Climate Change Action Plans.

The composition of the four Climate Action Regions has been determined by the geographical and topographical characteristics, vulnerabilities and shared climate risks experienced across local authority areas.

Each CARO is led by a Director of Service from the lead authority and a Regional Co-ordinator. The CARO teams consist of staff members with a wide range of local authority experience in science, engineering, planning, administration and communications.

The work programme is agreed by service level agreement with the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications. The offices were established on a predominately climate adaptation basis. However due to recent legislative and policy developments, much of the recent work undertaken by CARO has been on energy and mitigation related issues.

