



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Local Authority Climate Action Plan Guidelines

Ambitious

Action-focused

To reflect the leadership role and to help realise the pivot the transformative measure presented by climate change objective, thereby reflect

To realise specific and mitigation measures at organisational and

Using the most grounded risk empirical evidence mitigation and

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Overview

Our Climate is Changing

Climate change is increasingly understood to be the most critical, long-term global challenge of our time. The Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) of the United Nations (UN) Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)¹ points to the further rise in global temperatures. Changes occurring, consequent to the rise in global temperatures, are now considered '*irreversible*' in terms of melting ice sheets, rising sea levels, warming oceans and further devastation from the consequences of extreme weather events in every region of the world². Ireland's climate is changing in line with global trends³ and the impacts of these changes will be felt by every community, impacting on human and natural systems and incurring huge costs to our economy and society⁴. Refer to appendix 1 of these guidelines for the scientific context of climate change.

Ambition is Essential

The need for immediate and urgent responses to combat the acceleration of global temperature rise is now clear. At global, European Union (EU) and national levels, evolving policy responses are strengthening, which are devoted to identifying urgent solutions to both reducing greenhouse gas emissions (mitigation) and planning for and addressing the inevitable impacts and risks of climate change (adaptation). The context for these strengthened policy responses is the internationally accepted and legally binding framework provided by the Paris Agreement 2015. Through two clearly defined goals the Paris Agreement strives for progressive and ambitious climate action over time to avoid dangerous climate change by:

- (i) holding global average temperature increase to well below 2°C and pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, and
- (ii) increasing the ability to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and foster climate resilience⁵.

¹ Published 9th August 2021

² Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC] (2021 pg. 38 and 10): Summary for Policymakers. In: Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge University Press. In Press.

³ Government of Ireland, EPA (2021): Climate Status Report for Ireland 2020: EPA Research Report 386. Available at: [Research Report 386.pdf \(epa.ie\)](https://www.epa.ie/research/reports/386.pdf)

⁴ Government of Ireland (2021): Climate Action Plan 2021, Securing our Future.

⁵ UNFCCC (2015): Paris Agreement: Available at: [ADOPTION OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT - Paris Agreement text English \(unfccc.int\)](https://unfccc.int/paris_agreement)

To translate the type of ambition required into delivery, the EU adopted a legislative proposal for the European Climate Law on the 24th of June 2021 to frame the climate neutrality objective by 2050 across the EU with an intermediate target of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030⁶. The European Commission (EC) is clear on the commitment required by all Member States and the use of all policy levers and instruments to fight against the urgent challenge of climate change and to activate leadership efforts to reach climate neutrality by 2050⁷.

Framing Ireland's Ambition

Climate policy in Ireland now reflects the ambition of the EU and that required to confront the challenges of climate change. The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act, 2021 enshrines the National Climate Objective to *pursue and achieve, by no later than the end of 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy*⁸. The Amendment Act frames Ireland's legally binding climate ambition to delivering a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of 51% by 2030. This will place the country on a trajectory to achieving climate neutrality by no later than the end of 2050.

Through progressive economy-wide carbon budgets, sectoral ceilings, a suite of strategies devised to promote a combination of adaptation and mitigation measures, and robust oversight and reporting arrangements, climate policy is working to scale up efforts across all of society and to deliver ambitious and transformative climate action to 2030 and beyond to 2050.

Section 16 of the Climate Action Amendment Act 2021 provides for the addition of Section 14B (1) of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015 which sets out the provisions governing the establishment and operation of a local authority climate action plan. Each plan will drive the adaptation and mitigation measures required at local level, and define the clear pathway for each local authority to;

⁶ Compared to 1990 levels.

⁷ European Union (2021): REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality and amending Regulations (EC)No 401/2009 and (EU)2018/1999 ('European Climate Law') Brussels, 25 June 2021 2020/0036 (COD).

⁸ Oireachtas (2021 s.3) Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, House of the Oireachtas: Available at: [pdf \(irishstatutebook.ie\)](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2021/en/act/3/)

- actively translate national climate policy to local circumstances with the prioritisation and acceleration of evidence-based measures,
- assist in the delivery of the climate neutrality objective at local and community levels.
- identify and deliver a Decarbonising Zone (DZ) within the local authority area to act as a test bed for a range of climate mitigation, adaptation and biodiversity measures in a specifically defined area through the identification of projects and outcomes that will assist in the delivery of the National Climate Objective.

Refer to Appendix 1 of these guidelines for the policy context of the local authority climate action plan.

Climate Leadership by Local Government

Set against the backdrop of an evolving and more rigorous framework of national climate policy, local government maintains a strong commitment to pursuing a leadership role on climate action. In *Delivering Effective Climate Action 2030* (DECA 2030), the local government strategy on climate action, an overarching commitment on leadership is highlighted to ensure a coherent approach to climate action across the administrative and political structures of all 31 local authorities⁹.

This commitment acknowledges how well positioned local authorities are in their close relationships with their communities. It builds upon their extensive knowledge of the natural and built environments within their functional areas. It acknowledges their already established engagement in climate action measures with examples such as: emergency response to severe weather events, flood alleviation measures, infrastructural provision, supporting the transition to sustainable transport, protection of the natural environment, energy efficiency and reduction and housing retrofits for social housing and privately owned property.

Local Authority Climate Action Planning

The local authority climate action plan is a key instrument that strengthens the links between national and international climate policy and the delivery of effective climate action at local and community levels, through place-based climate action. The intrinsic value of the local authority climate action plan is that it plays a significant role in reinforcing the commitment by the local government sector to lead on climate action at local and national levels, as reflected in the local government strategy DECA 2030.

⁹ County and City Management Association [CCMA] (2021): *Delivering Effective Climate Action 2030: Local authority sector strategy for delivering on the Climate Action Charter and Climate Action Plan*. Dublin: Local Government Management Agency [LGMA]. Available online at: [delivering-effective-climate-action-2030.pdf](https://www.lgma.ie/publications/delivering-effective-climate-action-2030.pdf) (lgma.ie)

Over its preparation and implementation, the climate action plan offers an opportunity to bring together critical stakeholders across communities and businesses to build a vision for a climate neutral future.

As part of the climate action plan, the individual local authority will be responsible for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from across its own assets and infrastructure, whilst also taking on a broader role of influencing and facilitating others to meet their own targets. This is necessary to ensure that the environmental, social and economic benefits that come with climate action can be fully realised. While each local authority may deploy its own approach to the style and structure of their climate action plan, all of them must demonstrate alignment with the key principles of these guidelines to ensure that the local authority climate action plan is: **Ambitious, Action-focused, Evidence-based, Participative and Transparent.**

1.0 Local Authority Climate Action Planning

1.1 Introduction

Climate ambition in Ireland is captured by a legally binding target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 51% by 2030. This ambitious target brings forward the need for transformative climate action efforts across society. As ambitious as the target is, it is only one part of the overarching and legally binding pathway local authorities must follow to achieving the national climate objective for the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy by no later than the end of 2050¹⁰.

Local authorities are at the forefront of climate action in Ireland. They play a significant role in terms of delivering adaptation and mitigation measures at local and community levels. They are entrusted to work through their regulatory and strategic functions to operationalise the ambitious national climate targets and policy at local levels to assist in the delivery of the national climate objective.

To continue the work of local authorities in this regard, the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Amendment Act 2021¹¹ prescribes that:

14B (1) *Each local authority shall prepare and make a plan relating to a period of five years (... referred to as a 'local authority climate action plan') which shall specify the mitigation and the adaptation measures to be adopted by the local authority'*

(2) A local authority shall make a local authority climate action plan—

(a) in the case of the first such plan, within 12 months of the receipt of a request from the Minister, which request shall be made not later than 18 months after the coming into operation of section 16 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, and

(b) in the case of each subsequent plan, not less than once in every period of five years.

(3) A local authority climate action plan shall, in so far as practicable, be consistent with the most recent approved climate action plan and national adaptation framework, and in making a local authority climate action plan, a local authority shall have regard to-

¹⁰ Oireachtas (2021) Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, House of the Oireachtas. Available at: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/bills/bill/2021/39/>

¹¹ Section 16 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 which provides for an additional Section 14B(1) of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015

- (a) the most recent approved national long term climate action strategy,
- (b) the most recent approved sectoral adaptation plans, and
- (c) any policies of the Minister or the Government on climate change¹².

Building on Action 165 of the National Climate Action Plan 2019¹³, Action 80 of the National Climate Action Plan 2021¹⁴ integrates the development of decarbonising zones into the statutory guidelines for local authority climate action plans. It is important to note therefore that each local authority will take forward their decarbonising zone as part of their local authority climate action plan.

Through the development and implementation of specific, action-focused, time-bound and measurable actions, the local authority climate action plan will:

- Provide a strong emphasis on a place-based approach to climate action, delivering a better understanding of greenhouse gas emissions and climate-related risks at a local level, while addressing context-specific conditions and support for locally tailored policy making.
- Deliver and promote evidence-based and integrated climate action by way of adaptation and mitigation measures, centred around a strong understanding of the role and remit of the local authority on climate action.
- Translate and provide strategic direction at local and community levels on the delivery of the national climate objective which is seeking to curb further global warming and to transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy by no later than the end of 2050.

1.2 Legislative Basis of Local Authority Climate Action Plan

Local authority climate action plans are given statutory authority through the provisions of Section 16¹⁵ of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021¹⁶.

¹² Oireachtas (2021 S.16) Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, House of the Oireachtas. Available at: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/bills/bill/2021/39/>

¹³ Requires each local authority to 'identify and develop plans for one Decarbonising Zone' within their respective administrative area. Government of Ireland (2019): Climate Action Plan 2019 - *to Tackle Climate Breakdown*. Available at: [gov.ie - Climate Action Plan 2019 \(www.gov.ie\)](http://gov.ie - Climate Action Plan 2019 (www.gov.ie))

¹⁴ Action 80: Support, Monitor and Assess Local Authority Climate Action. Government of Ireland (2021): Climate Action Plan 2021 - *Securing our Future* and accompanying Annex of Actions. Available at: [gov.ie - Climate Action Plan 2021 \(www.gov.ie\)](http://gov.ie - Climate Action Plan 2021 (www.gov.ie)).

¹⁵ Section 16 of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 amends the Principal Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act of 2015 by the insertion of section 14B.

¹⁶ Oireachtas (2021): Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, House of the Oireachtas, Available at: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/bills/bill/2021/39/>

These provisions provide explicitly for the duration, preparation, content, adoption and any subsequent variation of the plan. These guidelines are issued under the provisions of the Amendment Act and therefore should be regarded as statutory in nature.

1.3 Purpose and Structure of Guidelines

These guidelines have been developed in response to Section 16 of the Climate Amendment Act 2021 and are intended to support local authorities in both the **content and preparation** of their local authority climate actions plans. They aim to ensure that a coherent and consistent approach to climate action planning is adopted by local authorities by setting out suggested approaches and frameworks, but seek to avoid being prescriptive, for example, by determining the specific content or providing sector specific information.

There are five distinct elements to these guidelines that culminate to provide robust guidance in the development of local authority climate action plans:

1. **Local Authority Climate Action Plan Guidelines** (this document) gives an overview of the concepts behind the local authority climate action plan and outline the components of the plan. This document is structured around a four step-cycle for plan development and implementation – see section 1.6.
2. **Technical Annex A: Developing and Implementing the Local Authority Climate Action Plan** provides guidance on managing the process of developing the plan from the advance planning phase through to the iterative statutory plan-making phase, and onwards to the implementation and reporting phase.
3. **Technical Annex B: Climate Change Risk Assessment** provides guidance on how to undertake a qualitative (Tier-1) climate risk assessment, explaining how to assess current climate impacts to establish an adaptation baseline assessment and an approach to assess future climate risks.
4. **Technical Annex C: Climate Mitigation Assessment** provides guidance on how to develop a county/city-wide baseline emissions inventory as a tool to inform and shape relevant and targeted mitigation actions. Similarly, it provides guidance on how to develop a more detailed baseline emissions inventory for the decarbonising zone. This guidance takes account of the different starting points and experience of individual local authorities on planning for climate mitigation.
5. **Technical Annex D: Decarbonising Zones (DZs)** provides information and guidance on developing DZs as part of the local authority climate action plan, setting out their context as well as their potential scope.

The guidelines have been developed specifically with the knowledge that each local authority is coming from a differing starting point on climate action planning. The guidelines are premised to encourage greater ambition on climate action, to build consistently and progressively over time.

1.4 Scope of the Local Authority Climate Action Plan

These guidelines identify the core elements and steps for each local authority in the development and implementation of their climate action plan. It is recognised that each local authority will tailor their climate action plan to reflect the local and regional context in delivering on the national climate objective at a local level. However, it is also recognised that there can be significant expectations by stakeholders of what the local authority could or should deliver in terms of local level climate action. At times these can be in areas where local authorities do not have the authorisation, mandate or capability to deliver. Thus, a key initial step in climate action planning is identifying and understanding the scope of the local authority's responsibility on climate action and the scope of the climate action plan.

Developing a good understanding of the scope of the local authority on climate action and consequently the scope of the climate action plan will help to:

- Clarify the role of the local authority on climate action, areas of responsibility and authority,
- Support meaningful engagement on the plan with relevant stakeholders during its preparation,
- Develop a relevant climate action evidence base to inform the development of an action-focused approach to climate actions, and,
- Facilitate the effective monitoring and reporting on the performance of the local authority in the delivery of actions.

Each local authority will need to apply an inward (organisational) and an outward (community) focus on building resilience to the negative impacts of climate change and in tackling the causes of climate change.

Local authorities are responsible for approximately 11% of all public sector emissions¹⁷.

Local authorities are accountable for and have authority over the management and reduction

¹⁷ Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (2020): Energy in Ireland 2020 Report. Available at: <https://www.seai.ie/publications/Energy-in-Ireland-2020.pdf>

of these emissions, in line with the 51% target prescribed to 2030 and the trajectory towards the goal of climate neutrality by 2050.

In addition, protecting and managing the human and infrastructural assets of the operational area from the negative impacts of climate change, while safeguarding the delivery of essential functions and services, is also the full responsibility of the local authority. The plan will need to comprehensively acknowledge these respective internal responsibilities.

The local authority also plays a much more significant leadership role in driving the climate agenda to realise ambitious, transformative and practical climate action at local and community levels. Through this leadership role the local authority takes on responsibility to address the unprecedented challenges of climate change by advancing mitigation and adaptation actions in the many distinct and diverse ways available to them.

Local authorities have significant scope to maximise their regulatory and strategic functions to influence and support the reduction of emissions across all sectors of society at local level, while supporting communities to adapt and build resilience to the impacts of a changing climate. Local authorities can utilise key strategic and regulatory powers and instruments to mainstream climate action into their broad range of functions such as spatial planning, infrastructural provision, housing, transport, and local economic and community development to prompt and promote local responses. In addition, local authorities can secure elevated protection and enhancement of the natural environment and biodiversity, continue their proactive engagement on flood risk management, source funding and investment, as well as coordinate and work in partnership with other stakeholders to facilitate and enable the delivery of appropriate climate initiatives and infrastructure.

Sector Example: Transport Focus

Local authorities have significant potential to directly support national climate action in the transport sector by taking both an inward (organisational) and an outward (community) focus, promoting and implementing sustainable settlement patterns and compact growth. This can be achieved through the spatial and land use planning system and the delivery of transport infrastructure to encourage people to switch from the private car to more sustainable modes of transport. Specific measures may include:

- Local authorities can lead by example in their organisations by decarbonising their own vehicle fleets.
- Local authorities also have an important role in developing local area networks for EV charging infrastructure to meet the needs of their residents who cannot charge their vehicles at home.
- Local authorities have a key role in delivery of active travel programmes by expanding walking and cycling facilities in their functional areas and enhancing the public realm to increase safety and connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists by retrofitting existing infrastructure and providing new infrastructure.
- Local authorities can facilitate the integration of safe and convenient alternatives to the private car into the design of local communities in line with Transport-Orientated Development principles and by prioritising walking and cycling accessibility to both existing and proposed developments.

Figure 1 below illustrates the scope of the local authority on climate action allied with their key responsibilities and authority held by local authorities.

Local Authority Scope on Climate Action

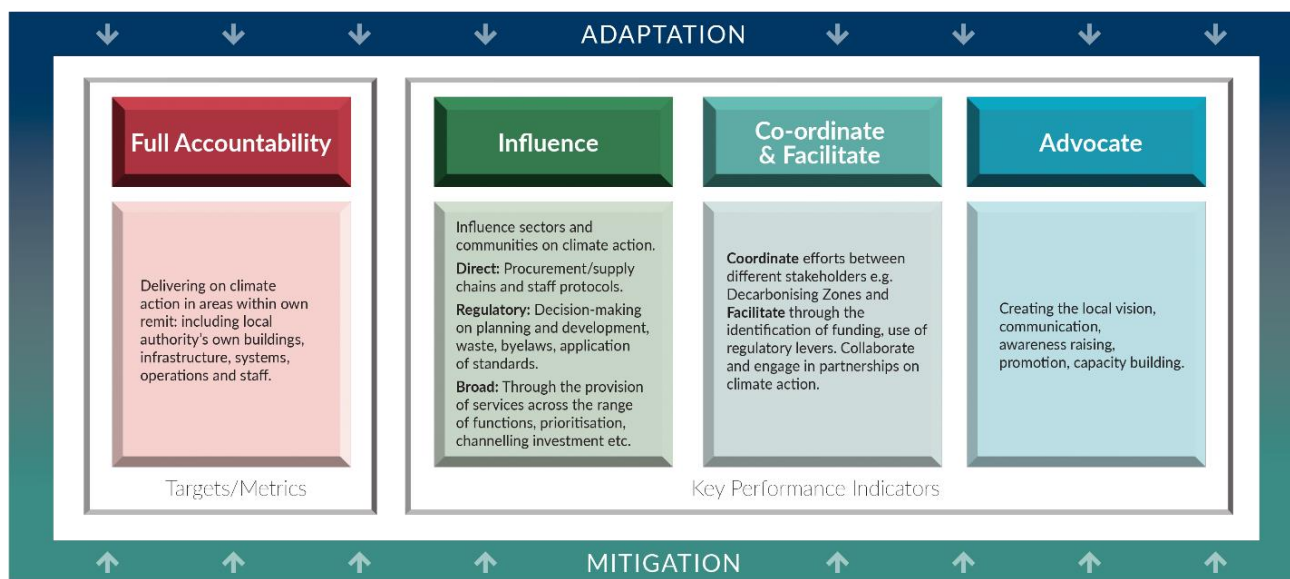


Figure 1: Local authority scope on climate action (source CCMA/CARO).

The scope includes areas for which a local authority will have a full mandate, can exert its influence more broadly to maximise and support the climate action efforts of other stakeholders and can assume a co-ordination and facilitation role, as well as a broader advocacy role on climate action.

For the purposes of the local authority climate action plan and informing how actions are devised, it is important to define the four scales at which local authorities maintain responsibility on climate action:

1. **Full accountability** for climate action within the local authority, which includes tracking and reporting on the reduction of emissions from their own internal operations, buildings and facilities (including transport fleet, public lighting, retrofitting social housing, the provision of infrastructure etc.) in addition to building resilience to the negative impacts of climate change, within the organisation, through the range of services and functions provided.
2. **Influence** sectors, business, communities and individuals in the delivery of local climate action through the various functions and services provided, as well as using many regulatory levers and the sector's broader remit to enable, facilitate and support them.

3. **Co-ordinate and facilitate** by bringing together key stakeholders, engaging in partnerships to maximise efforts and creating interactions that will yield successful initiatives and projects which may not otherwise occur.
4. **Advocate** for climate action by raising awareness, communicating and engaging in open dialogues on climate related issues and responses.

1.5 Guiding Principles

The local authority climate action plan is part of longer-term efforts that will require a sustained and planned response to support the delivery of the climate neutrality objective at local and community levels. These guiding principles serve as a benchmark for local authorities on climate action planning. The local authority climate action plan should be:



Figure 2: Guiding principles of the local authority climate action plan

1.6 How to use these Guidelines

The guidelines are structured around a 4-step cycle for the development and implementation of the local authority climate action plan and these are:

- 1) Preparing the ground,
- 2) Building the evidence base,
- 3) Developing the framework of climate actions, and
- 4) Implementation and reporting.

The four steps are described briefly below. Each of these four steps are supported by and linked to more detailed guidance provided in the technical annexes. Figure 3 highlights the 4 step-cycle and where guidance from the relevant technical annex is applicable.

Where relevant, the following icons indicate the technical annex that applies:



Technical Annex A: Developing and Implementing the Local Authority Climate Action Plan.



Technical Annex B: Climate Change Risk Assessment.



Technical Annex C: Climate Mitigation Assessment.



Technical Annex D: Decarbonising Zones.

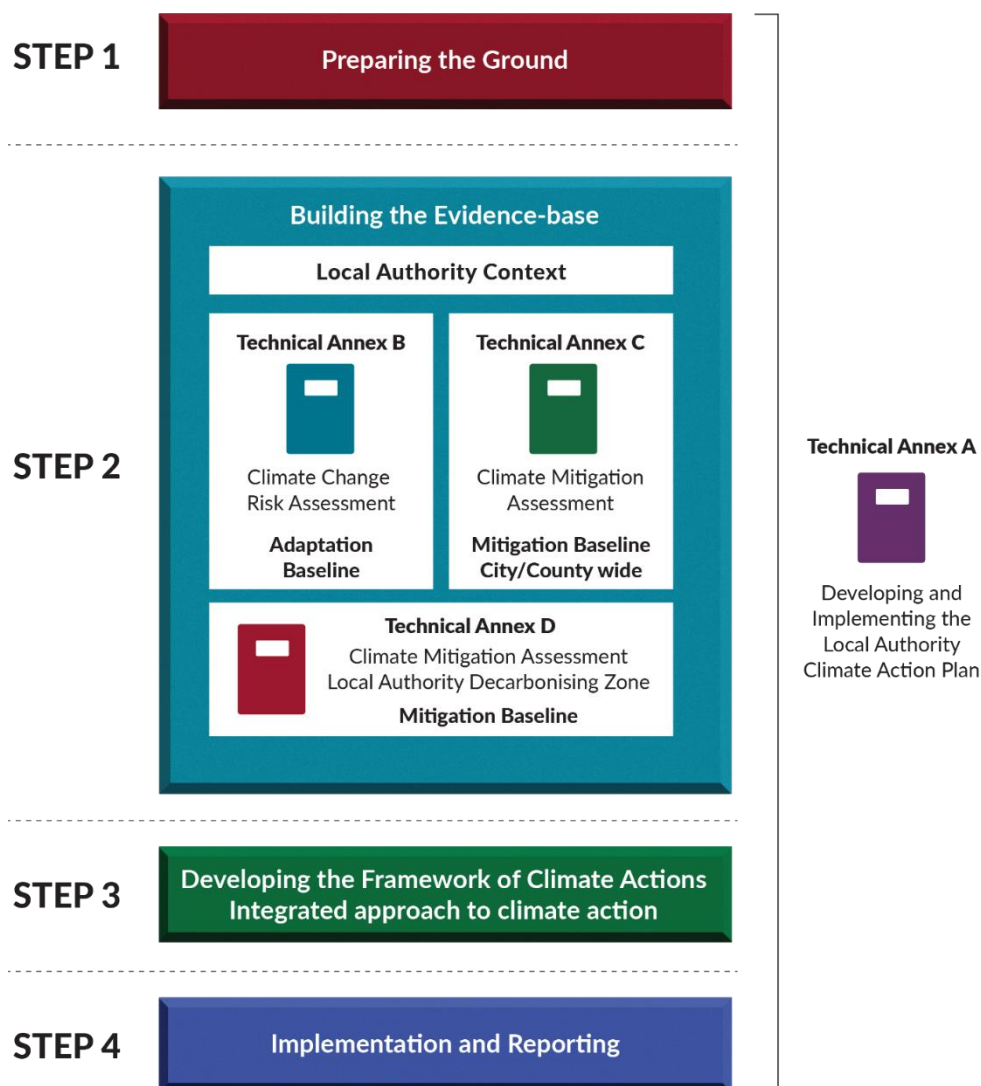


Figure 3: 4-step-cycle for development of the local authority climate action plan.

1.6.1 Step 1: Preparing the Ground

The first step in climate action planning is to create the right foundation and conditions for success in both the preparation of the climate action plan and the implementation of its actions. Robust organisational support and governance and stakeholder engagement is required across the entire process of climate action planning and implementation.

- ➔ **Organisational support and governance:** Within each local authority, organisational support and climate action governance are integral to the effective design, development and implementation of the local authority climate action plan. Each local authority should work to create enabling conditions that supports a multidisciplinary approach to climate action, delivered through a clearly defined governance structure. Mobilising the capability within the local authority to support

and enable the preparation of the climate action plan and its implementation is an important early task in the process and should be treated as an organisational priority.

- **Stakeholder engagement:** An inclusive, collaborative process for climate action planning builds widespread community and political support, fosters credibility, strengthens the climate action plan and mobilises support for decisions that need to be made.



Refer to **Technical Annex A** for guidance on tasks related to organisational support and governance and stakeholder engagement.

1.6.2 Step 2: Building the Evidence Base

A local authority climate action plan must be underpinned by a robust evidence-base. Building the evidence base enables local authorities to apply a systematic approach to better understanding the challenges, identify synergies and opportunities, and leverage mechanisms and actors in the delivery of effective climate action. Building the evidence base includes:

- Establishing the local authority context,
- Developing a county/ city wide baseline emission inventory,
- Developing a baseline emissions inventory for the DZ,
- Assessing climate change risks and impacts, and
- Exploring the broader policy context of the climate action plan.

Conventionally, climate change mitigation and adaptation have been approached as two distinct agendas. The local authority climate action plan presents an opportunity to deliver both agendas in an integrated way. Building the evidence base forms the basis for integrated local level climate action and consequently, stronger place-based climate action. At the local scale this approach supports:

- Developing a better understanding of greenhouse gas emissions and climate-related risks,
- Assessing local conditions and contexts,
- Translating and tailoring the broader policy context and framework for ambitious, climate policy responses to local level.

- ➔ **Establishing the local authority context:** The climate action plan should be tailored to the social, environmental, and economic contexts of the local authority area, as well as a more focused approach on the decarbonising zone. Developing an understanding of the context of the local authority and DZ and employing this information in mitigation and adaptation planning is essential to provide a grounded assessment of emissions and current and future risks.



Refer to **Technical Annexes A and D** for guidance on information to review the contexts of both the local authority area and DZ, as part of the evidence base.

- ➔ **Climate policy context:** The local authority climate action plan is set within a broader international, EU, national and sectoral climate policy context. A review of this broader climate policy context informs the plan of the need for strengthened local level policy responses, where the climate action plan can translate national climate actions and priorities and influence, mainstream and support other local level policy.



Refer to **Technical Annex A** for guidance on reviewing climate policy as part of the evidence base.

- ➔ **Climate change risk assessment:** It is necessary to understand the current and future risks posed by climate change to local authority assets and activities. A climate change risk assessment (CCRA) enables the local authority to understand the likelihood of current and future climate hazards, the potential impacts of these hazards at local and community levels and support the development of adaptation actions to avoid or reduce the impacts of climate risks.



Refer to **Technical Annex B** for guidance on how to undertake a climate change risk assessment.

- ➔ **Climate mitigation assessment:** Each local authority needs to develop an understanding of the sources of greenhouse gas emissions within their 1) own control and remit, 2) administrative area and 3) the identified DZ. A climate mitigation assessment supports each local authority to develop a baseline emissions inventory for:
 - county/city wide emissions
 - decarbonising zone emissions

A climate mitigation assessment also supports local authorities to determine where best to focus mitigation efforts and apply best practice actions to directly reduce or to enable reductions in emissions and monitor progress.



Refer to **Technical Annexes C and D** for guidance on how to develop a climate mitigation assessment for both county/city wide emissions and DZ emissions.

1.6.3 Step 3: Developing the Framework of Climate Actions

Supported by a robust evidence base, the framework of climate actions configures the arrangement of actions within a defined structure, ensuring alignment between potential on the ground actions and the vision that the plan aspires to deliver.

The framework comprises:

- An overarching **Vision** that reflects the shared perspective of a climate resilient and climate neutral future.
- A plan **Mission** that speaks practically to the grounded purpose of the local authority in delivering effective climate action.
- **Strategic Goals** that set the context for the climate actions and establish a structured or thematic arrangement of actions.
- High level **Objectives** that support the delivery of the strategic goals whilst framing the appropriate emphasis of the actions.
- **Actions** that are specific, action-focused, time-bound and measurable reflecting a scaling up of ambitious local level climate action.

The framework forms the basis for implementation and the reporting mechanisms required over the duration of the five-year plan period.

In tailoring actions as part of the place-based approach to climate action, the SMART approach to the development of actions is encouraged whereby actions identified are **Specific, Measurable, Assigned, Realistic, Time-bound**.



Refer to **Technical Annex A** for guidance on developing the framework of climate actions.

1.6.4 Step 4: Implementation and Reporting

Commitment to delivering the local authority climate action plan comes through a structured process of implementation with ongoing monitoring and progress reporting. Implementation is recognised as a complex process influenced by numerous elements including: human and financial resources, governance, relevant expertise, involvement of stakeholders, organisational priorities, motivation and support. The approach to implementation should be informed by and linked to establishing governance frameworks at national level and systematic reporting requirements to include the use of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) at local authority level at the four scales at which local authorities maintain responsibility for climate action, at local government sectoral level, and at national level.

Strengthened reporting and monitoring frameworks are fundamental to accountability on climate action. Each local authority must provide for reporting arrangements which demonstrate accountability for the delivery of climate action at various levels including;

- Reporting within the local authority to elected members, strategic policy committees or other fora,
- Reporting at a sectoral level to aggregate towards the performance of the local government sector on climate action in line with the ambitions of DECA 2030, and
- Reporting at national level, as part of the delivery of the national climate objective, to the existing reporting structures for the national climate action plan and additional reporting on the local Climate Action Plan.



Refer to **Technical Annex A** for guidance on implementation and reporting.

1.7 Other Legislative and Regulatory Considerations

While the content and preparation of the local authority climate action plan is the main focus of these guidelines, there are other legislative and regulatory instruments that must be considered by local authorities in the process also. These include, but are not limited to:

- **Strategic Environmental Assessment:** The local authority climate action plan is subject to compliance with the EU Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (SEA Directive 2001/42/EC) on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment¹⁸. This Directive is implemented in Ireland through

¹⁸ Refer to Technical Annex A for further information on SEA requirements.

Statutory Instrument (SI) No.435 of 2004 European Communities (Environmental Assessment of Certain Plans and Programmes) Regulations 2004 (as amended).

- **Habitats Directive-Appropriate Assessment:** The local authority climate action plan is subject to appropriate assessment under Article 6(3) of the EU Habitats Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC) to determine if its implementation is likely to have significant effects on any Natura 2000 sites¹⁹.
- **Spatial Planning:** Section 18, Part 3 of the Climate Acts 2015-2021 provides that local authorities should take account of their climate action plans when making development plans. In this regard, section 10(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 has been amended, to provide for that purpose²⁰. Local authorities must be cognisant of this provision and forge a strong link between spatial planning and positive climate action ensuring that landuse planning and development integrates considerations of adaptation and mitigation. This enables spatial planning to be used as a key enabling instrument for emission reductions and prevention and supports climate resilient communities to protect and enhance the natural environment.
- **Official Languages Act 2003 (as amended):** Local authorities must ensure that they adhere to the provisions of the Official Languages Act 2003 (and related legislation) for the publication of the local authority climate action plan²¹.

1.8 Evolving Scientific and Policy Context

These guidelines have been developed against a backdrop of continually evolving scientific, regulatory and policy contexts, emission factors and methodologies and other considerations. The same will apply to the local authority climate action plans. Thus, local authorities must make every effort to work with the best data and information sources as they emerge and ensure that such data and information is relevant and obtained from reliable sources.

These guidelines reflect the most up to date and available data and information as of February 2023. Other valuable sources will emerge over the duration of the making of the climate action plans and this should be factored in by local authorities as part of the plan

¹⁹ Refer to Technical Annex A for further information on compliance with Habitats Directive and Appropriate Assessment.

²⁰ Oireachtas (2021): S.18: Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, House of the Oireachtas: Available at: [pdf \(irishstatutebook.ie\)](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2021/en/act/s18/). Wording as follows: “reduce anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and address the necessity of adaptation to climate change, taking account of the local authority climate action plan (within the meaning of section 14B of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015), where such a plan has been made for the area in question.”.

²¹ Oireachtas (2003): Official Languages Act 2003. Available at: [ACTS03\\$U32 \(irishstatutebook.ie\)](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2003/en/act/s03/)

making process. The four Climate Action Regional Offices (CARO) will support local authorities in ensuring that the best available data and information from reliable sources is used.

1.9 Supporting Role of Climate Action Regional Offices (CARO)

The Climate Action Regional Offices (CARO) were established in 2018 by the local government sector and the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC), recognising the need to provide for a coordinated approach on climate action across the local government system. The four CAROs are mandated to co-ordinate engagement across the varying levels of government, to promote the sharing of knowledge and ideas, facilitate effective collaboration on actions and help build on experience and expertise that exists in the area of climate change and climate action.

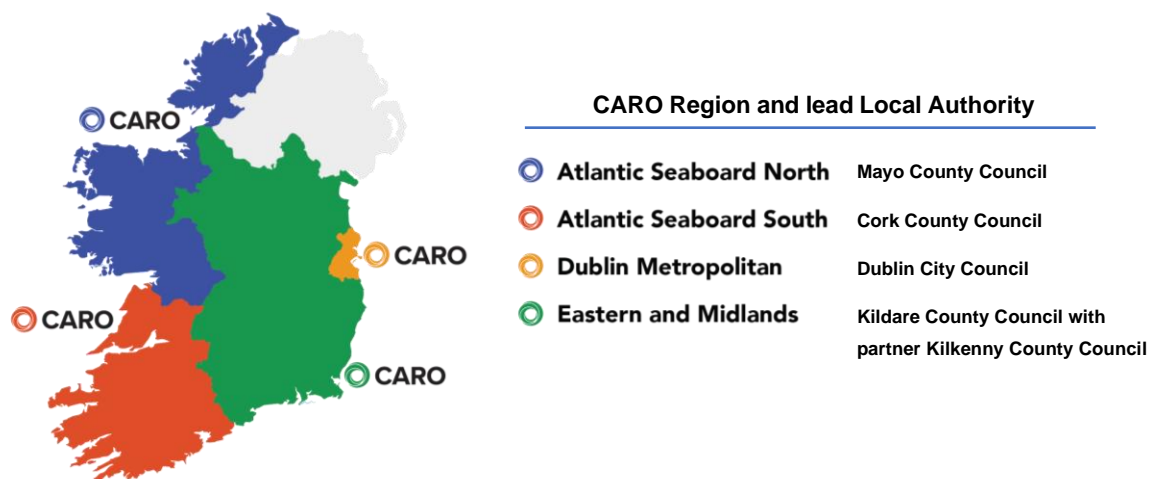


Figure 4: Four Climate Action Regional Office (CARO) areas

The CAROs will continue the strong working relationships established with local authorities to assist in the development of the local authority climate action plans and will provide a strong support function to the local authorities within their functional area in this regard.

- The CAROs will facilitate coordination between local authorities to promote the sharing of information, ideas and knowledge, and help avoid duplication of efforts, and ensure the collaborative development of actions of scale between local authorities.
- They will monitor and circulate new emerging data sources and encourage local authorities to use these where relevant to the making of the climate action plans.

- Local authorities are encouraged to make provision for frequent engagement with their adjoining local authorities in the interest of effective co-operation and co-ordination. The CAROs will play an integral role in facilitating this.
- The CAROs will liaise with relevant stakeholders, sectors, other agencies and bodies to assist local authorities in the development and delivery of actions of the climate action plan.
- The CAROs will help to ensure consistency across the local authorities on the local plans and bring added value at a regional level to include sharing resources and learning between local authorities.
- Provide a coordination function with the Department by liaising with the local authorities within their region and reporting back.

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Appendix 1

Scientific and Policy Context for Local Authority Climate Action Plan

Scientific and Policy Context for Local Authority Climate Action Plan

The local authority climate action plan is set within both a scientific and policy context. These contexts are outlined below.

Scientific Context

Human-induced warming of the climate system is unequivocal with observed changes in the earth's climate system observed across every region. The scale of recent changes across the climate system and the present state of many aspects of the climate system are unprecedented in thousands if not hundreds of thousands of years. Since the start of the Industrial Revolution, it is estimated that the levels of greenhouse gases (GHGs) we have already emitted to the atmosphere has warmed the world by an average of 1.1°C. In addition, oceans have warmed, the amounts of snow and ice have diminished, and sea levels have risen. Human-induced climate change is already affecting many weather and climate extremes in every region across the globe. There are observed changes in extreme events such as heatwaves, heavy precipitation, droughts, and tropical cyclones.

Global surface temperature will continue to increase until at least the mid-century under all emissions scenarios. Many changes in the climate system become larger in direct relation to increasing global warming, with increases in the frequency and intensity of hot extremes, marine heatwaves, and heavy precipitation, agricultural and ecological droughts in some regions, and the proportion of intense tropical cyclones, as well as reductions in Arctic sea ice, snow cover and permafrost²².

²² IPCC, 2021. Summary for Policymakers. *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. [online] Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. Available at: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/>.

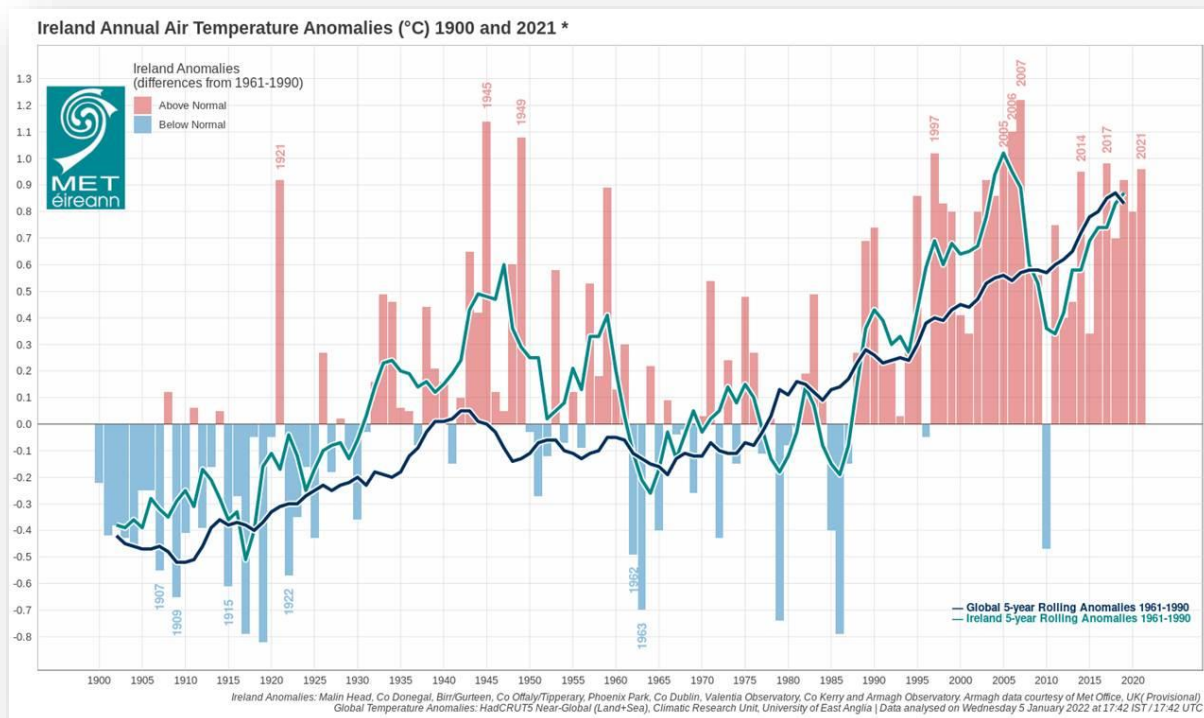


Figure A1: Annual mean surface air temperature (1900–2021) for Ireland showing an approximate 0.9°C increase over the last 120 years, Source: Met Eireann, National Climate Framework for Climate Services (NFCS).

Observed changes in Ireland's climate are in line with global trends. Average surface temperatures have increased by approximately 0.9°C since 1900, sea levels are rising and seasonal patterns of storms and precipitation are changing. Projections indicate that this trend will continue and intensify into the future; on average, Ireland's climate is projected to become warmer and drier, rates of sea level rise will increase, and the frequency of extreme weather events is also expected to increase. Impacts due to these changes will have a wide range of consequences to Ireland's social, environmental, and economic sectors.

Table A1: Summary of climate observations and projections for Ireland. Observation and projection data from Cámara García and Dwyer (2021)^{23*}, Nolan and Flanagan (2020)^{24†}, Feser et al. (2015)^{25‡}, IPCC (2021)^{26§} and Olbert et al. (2012)^{27#}. RCP = Representative Concentration Pathway, SSP = Shared Socioeconomic Pathway.

Parameter	Observed	Projected
Temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The annual average surface air temperature has increased by approximately 0.9°C over the last 120 years, with a rise in temperatures being observed in all seasons* The number of warm spell days has slightly increased over the last 60 years* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mid-century mean annual temperatures are projected to increase by 1–1.2°C and 1.3–1.6°C for the intermediate (RCP4.5) and high (RCP8.5) emission scenario† Heatwave events are expected to increase by mid-century; over the 20-year period (2041–2060) increases in number of events range from 1 to 8 for the intermediate emission scenario (RCP4.5) and from 3 to 15 for the high emission scenario (RCP8.5)†
Precipitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual precipitation was 6% higher in the period 1989 to 2018, compared to the 30-year period 1961 to 1990* The decade 2006 to 2015 has been shown to have been the wettest on record (1711–2016)* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is an indication of a slight reduction in the annual precipitation of ≈0–6% for the RCP4.5 scenario. However, projected reductions are small (≈0%) over most of the country for both RCP4.5 and RCP8.5 scenarios. Substantial decreases in precipitation are projected for the summer months with reductions ranging from ~0% to 11% for the RCP4.5 scenario and from 2% to 17% for the RCP8.5 scenario. The frequencies of heavy precipitation events show notable increases over the year, and in the winter and autumn months “likely” projected increase in the number of very wet days of 5–19%†
Wind Speed and Storms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No long-term trend in wind speed can be determined with confidence based on the limited analysis carried out to date* Storm tracks over the North Atlantic-European sector shifted northward as indicated by multi-proxy indicators over the North Atlantic § Most long-term studies show decadal variability for the last 100–150 years, and that there is no evidence of a sustained long-term trend in number of storm events‡ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projections indicate a slight reduction in wind speed (10 m) of 1–2.7% for the intermediate (RCP 4.5) and 1.6–3.3% for the high (RCP 8.5) emission scenarios † The results show an overall reduction of ~10% in the numbers of storms and suggest an eastward extension of the more severe windstorms over Ireland from mid-century. It should be noted that since extreme storms are rare events, the storm projections should be considered with a level of caution†

²³ Cámara García, W., Dwyer, N. and Gault, J., 2021. *Climate Status Report for Ireland 2020*. [online] EPA, Marine Institute, Met Éireann Research. Available at: <https://www.epa.ie/publications/research/climate-change/Research_Report_386.pdf>.

²⁴ Nolan, A.P. and Flanagan, J., 2020. *High-resolution Climate Projections for Ireland – A Multi- model Ensemble Approach*. [online] EPA Research. Available at: <https://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/research/climate/researchreport339/Research_Report_339_Part1.pdf>.

²⁵ Feser, F., Barcikowska, M., Krueger, O., Schenk, F., Weisse, R. and Xia, L., 2015. Storminess over the North Atlantic and northwestern Europe-A review. *Quarterly Journal of the Royal Meteorological Society*, 141(687), pp.350–382

²⁶ IPCC, 2021. Summary for Policymakers. *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. [online] Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. Available at: <<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/>>.

²⁷ Olbert, A.I., Dabrowski, T., Nash, S. and Hartnett, M., 2012. Regional modelling of the 21st century climate changes in the Irish Sea. *Continental Shelf Research*, 41, pp.48–60.

Sea-level and Sea Surface Temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satellite observations show sea level has risen by ca. 2-3mm/year since the early 1990s* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relative to 1995-2014, the likely global mean sea level rise by 2100 is 0.44-0.76 m under the intermediate emissions scenario (SSP2-4.5), and 0.63-1.01 m under the very high emissions scenario (SSP5-8.5)[§]
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average sea surface temperature at Malin Head have been 0.47°C higher over the last 10 years compared to the period 1981-2010* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sea surface temperatures are projected to continue warming for the coming decade. For the Irish Sea, projections indicate a warming of 1.9°C by the end of the century[#]

Climate change, and its impacts, is now recognised as a significant challenge that requires action at global, national, and local scales. Climate action includes mitigation which aims to limit or prevent GHG emissions by reducing the sources of these gases, e.g. the burning of fossil fuels for electricity, heat and transport and by enhancing sinks that remove, accumulate and store GHGs from the atmosphere, e.g. forest, peatlands and soil²⁸.

However, even if actions aimed at mitigating the causes of climate change are successful, many of the impacts are locked-in for decades to come. We can manage these impacts by adaptation (Figure A2) which aims to better prepare society to cope with, manage or adjust to changing climatic conditions and can be considered as the “process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects.”²⁹

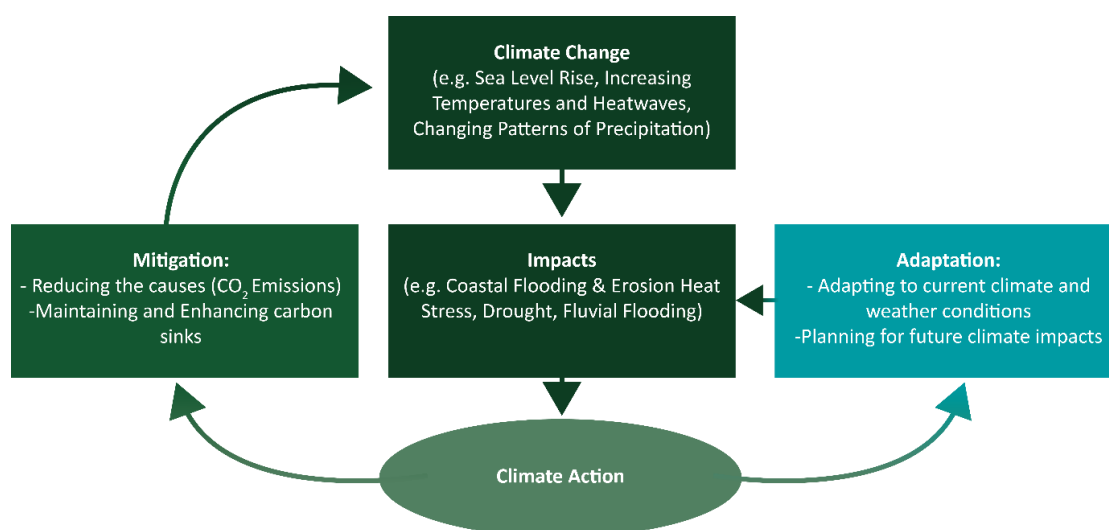


Figure A2 The roles of mitigation and adaptation actions in managing the causes and impacts of climate change.

²⁸ IPCC, 2014. *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. [online] *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA. Available at: <papers2://publication/uuid/B8BF5043-C873-4AFD-97F9-A630782E590D>.

²⁹ In human systems, adaptation seeks to moderate or avoid harm or exploit beneficial opportunities. In some natural systems, human intervention may facilitate adjustment to expected climate and its effects Ibid, 2014

Policy Context

Policies at the international, national, and local levels have been created to support and promote climate action. The role of local government on climate action is clearly recognised in the policy context on climate action at all levels.

International policy context

The **Paris Agreement** was signed in December 2015³⁰ by 195 parties in Paris at the Conference of the Parties (COP) 21. It marks the third stage of the International Climate regime of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The Agreement is a legally binding international treaty. By its own definition it is a legal framework designed to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change. It sets the long-term goal of substantially reducing global greenhouse gas emission to limit the global increase in this century to 2° Celsius above while pursuing efforts to limit the increase to 1.5° Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

The Paris Agreement works on an ambition mechanism whereby each country submits an updated National Determined Contribution (NDC) every five years to communicate actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and measures to build resilience to adapt to the impacts of rising temperatures and climate change³¹.

The Agreement strives for progressive climate ambition over time and acknowledges the *'importance of the engagement of all levels of government... in addressing climate change'*³². Specifically, it recognises the need to strengthen the efforts of local communities, welcoming cities and local authorities (identified as *'sub-national authorities'*) to *'scale up their efforts and support actions to reduce emissions and/or to build resilience and decrease vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change'*³³.

Agenda 2030: *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* also underscores the key role of local authorities in scaling up action, effecting change and securing sustainable human settlements across the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which climate action is a part of (Goal 13: climate action). The SDGs provide a universal ambition and valuable framework for all levels of government to align global,

³⁰ Paris Agreement entered into force on 4th November 2016

³¹ United Nations (2015): Paris Agreement: Available at: [ADOPTION OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT - Paris Agreement text English \(unfccc.int\)](#)

³² United Nations (2015, pg.2): Paris Agreement: Available at: [ADOPTION OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT - Paris Agreement text English \(unfccc.int\)](#)

³³ United Nations (2015, pg.19): Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (decision 1/CP.17). Adoption of a protocol, another legal instrument, or an agreed outcome with legal force under the Convention applicable to all Parties. ADOPTION OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT. Paris: UNFCCC.

national and sub-national (local government) priorities within policies striving to leave no-one behind³⁴.

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. The Sendai Framework emphasises the importance of local action in reducing disaster risk. Risk from climate change is stated to provide a unique opportunity to enhance coordination and coherence within and across all sectors at all levels. It recognises that disaster risks have local and specific characteristics that must be understood for the determination of measures to reduce disaster risk while acknowledging that empowering local authorities to reduce disaster risk, through resources, incentives and decision-making responsibilities is crucial³⁵.

European Policy Context

In December 2019 the European Union introduced the European Green Deal. The European Green Deal is an ambitious package of measures ranging from significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, scaling up on adaptation measures, and concerted efforts to reserve Europe's natural environment³⁶. Climate change is a central consideration of the European Green Deal.

First climate action initiatives under the Green Deal include:

- **European Climate Law** that enshrines the 2050 climate neutrality objective into EU Law and sets the intermediate target of reducing net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030, compared to 1990 levels for all member states³⁷.
- **2030 Climate Target Plan** to further reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% by 2030³⁸.

³⁴ United Nations, (2015 pgs.34 &52): *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Available at: [United Nations Official Document](#)

³⁵ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015): Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. Available at: [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 - 2030 \(preventionweb.net\)](#)

³⁶ European Commission (2021) A European Green Deal: Striving to be the First Climate-Neutral Continent, European Commission. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

³⁷ European Commission (2021): Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 June 2021 establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality and amending Regulations (EC) No 401/2009 and (EU) 2018/1999 ('European Climate Law'). Available at: [Publications Office \(europa.eu\)](#)

³⁸ European Commission (2020): Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Stepping up Europe's 2030 climate ambition Investing in a climate-neutral future for the benefit of our people. COM/2020/562 final. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0562&from=EN>

- New **EU Strategy on Climate Adaptation** to make Europe a climate-resilient society by 2050, fully adapted to the unavoidable impacts of climate change³⁹.
- **Fit for 55** is a package that aims to bring the EU's climate and energy legislation in line with the 55% emission reduction target set by the EU for 2030⁴⁰.
- **EU Biodiversity Strategy** for 2030 to protect nature and reverse the degradation of ecosystems putting Europe's Biodiversity on a path to recovery by 2030 through specific actions and commitments⁴¹.

National Policy Context

Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021: In line with European Union climate action efforts, Ireland is setting about building a framework to support ambitious climate action to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, signed into law on the 23rd July 2021, brings forward the commitment from the Government for the ambitious reduction of emissions by 51% by 2030 and the National Climate Objective for the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable, and climate neutral economy by no later than 2050.

The Act provides for the development of carbon budgets and sectoral emission ceilings covering successive five-year periods up to 2050 with the first two aimed at achieving a 51% reduction by the end of 2030. Commitment is also enshrined to prepare an annual National Climate Action Plan and a National Long Term Climate Action Strategy to support the journey to achieving targets. The role for local authorities prescribes the development of a Local Authority Climate Action Plan promoting the delivery of local level climate action to meet the national climate commitments⁴².

National Adaptation Framework 2018: Ireland's first statutory National Adaptation Framework, published in 2018, sets the context to ensure key sectors and local authorities can assess the key risks and vulnerabilities of climate change, implement climate resilient

³⁹ European Commission (2021): Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions Forging a climate-resilient Europe - the new EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change. COM/2021/82 final. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52021DC0082&from=EN>

⁴⁰ European Commission (2021): Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions 'Fit for 55': delivering the EU's 2030 Climate Target on the way to climate neutrality. Available at: [chapeau.communication.pdf\(europa.eu\)](https://chapeau.communication.pdf(europa.eu))

⁴¹ European Commission (2020): Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 Bringing nature back into our lives, COM(2020) 380 final. Available online at: [resource.html\(europa.eu\)](https://resource.html(europa.eu))

⁴² Oireachtas (2021) Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, House of the Oireachtas, Available at: <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/bills/bill/2021/39/>

actions and ensure climate adaptation considerations are mainstreamed into national, regional and local policy making.

Local Government Context

Local Authority Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, prescribed by the National Adaptation Framework and undertaken by all local authorities, takes on the role as the primary instrument at local level to:

- (i) ensure a proper understanding of the key risks and vulnerabilities of climate change;
- (ii) advance the implementation of climate resilient actions in a planned and proactive manner;
- (iii) ensure that climate adaptation considerations are mainstreamed into all plans and policies and integrated into all operations and functions of the local authority.

The **Local Authority Climate Action Charter** represents a commitment by all local authorities to scale up efforts and play a key leadership role locally and nationally in delivering effective climate action. The charter was signed by all local authorities in October 2019 and provides for a commitment to monitor, evaluate and report annually on the implementation of activities in the charter, including the implementation of climate adaptation and mitigation actions.

Delivering Effective Climate Action 2030 (DECA) is the local government strategy on climate action published in April 2021. The strategy represents an overarching sectoral commitment to ensuring a coherent approach to climate action across the administrative and political structures of all 31 local authorities. The strategy communicates a strategic intent to engage the local authority network in effective climate action through an envisaged leadership position. The strategy represents a top-level consensus on the approach to climate action and a strong commitment to the prescribed leadership role within the sector. The strategy is a stated roadmap for local authorities in delivering the required decarbonisation and adaptation responses to climate change⁴³.

⁴³ County and City Management Association [CCMA] (2021): *Delivering Effective Climate Action 2030: Local authority sector strategy for delivering on the Climate Action Charter and Climate Action Plan*. Dublin: Local Government Management Agency.

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