

Compendium on the status of environmental commitments made in Ireland's 2020 Programme for Government.

Final Compendium - August 2, 2023

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Overview: The Government of Ireland's Programme for Government (PfG), published in 2020, contains nearly 300 environment or climate related commitments. The purpose of this compendium is to summarise the most up-to-date status of all environment or climate-related commitments in Ireland's 2020 Programme for Government (PfG). The compendium was compiled based on extensive stakeholder consultation and independent research by the authors named above. The research team contacted 86 expert stakeholders across all sectors, including from within Government, civil society organisations, industry bodies, and opposition political parties. Forty three stakeholders agreed to be interviewed, resulting in approximately 23 hours of transcripts which informed this compendium. Following this qualitative data collection, the team conducted additional research in the grey literature, including through Oireachtas testimonies, Government press releases, media coverage and Government reports.

Within this compendium, the Government's PfG commitments have been divided into nine categories: *Climate; Nature and Biodiversity; Waste and the Circular Economy; Water and Marine; Air Quality, Transport, Buildings, Energy, and Agriculture and Forestry*. In each category, relevant commitments within the PfG have been identified (*in blue italics*) and status updates on each commitment have been developed in consultation with stakeholders. Special attention was paid to each commitment's progress, process and outcomes.

In July 2023, Friends of the Earth commissioned three academic experts to independently assess the Irish Government's performance on environment and climate relative to commitments in the PfG. This is the third year such work has been commissioned. The three experts used the information in this compendium, along with their own knowledge of Government policy, to score each of the nine categories. Their assessment will *not* evaluate whether commitments contained in the PfG were adequate, but rather how well the Government is keeping its word on their *own* climate and environmental promises. The latest assessment will account for the fact that the current Government has served for three years while their PfG was developed with up to a 5 year timescale. Government performance will be evaluated based on the level of policy development and implementation that can reasonably be expected within three years. It is anticipated this assessment will continue to be conducted annually over the duration of this PfG.

A 2021 version of this compendium was compiled by Seán McLoughlin for the first evaluation, available [here](#) along with the first Report Card of Government conducted in 2021. The 2022 version of the compendium was compiled by Rebecca Bailey and Peter Stevenson (UCD Environmental Policy Programme), which is available [here](#).

Disclaimer: This report was developed with the input of many organisations and does not represent the views of any specific individual or organisation. In making their evaluation, academic experts will be free to use information beyond what is presented in this document.

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1. Climate

1.1. Climate Governance

1.1a "Introduce the Climate Action (Amendment) Bill 2020 into the Dáil within 100 days. It will:"

2021-2023: The [Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2021](#) was signed into law on the 23rd of July 2021. This commitment has been completed and was considered as part of 2021 assessment.

1.1b "1. Set a target to decarbonise the economy by 2050 at the latest."

2021-2022 Progress: This target was established in the Act, and officially completed in 2021 through primary legislation, committing Ireland to meet net-zero emissions targets by 2050 through climate actions outlined in the Climate Action Plan 2021. Ireland's Long-Term Strategy (LTS), as required under the Regulation on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action, was due to be submitted to the European Commission by January 1st 2020. In 2022, Ireland was among the few countries which had not submitted their LTS.

2023 Progress: [The Long Term Strategy on Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions](#) was approved by Government on the [25th of April 2023](#), more than 3 years after the European Commission [Deadline of 1 January 2020](#). The first public consultation for the LTS was held in 2019. Submissions for the [second public consultation](#) closed on July 7th 2023, which will be used for an updated LTS, due to be published by the end of 2023. The updated Strategy will then be submitted to the European Commission. [In a letter to Minister Eamon Ryan](#) from June 2023, The Climate Change Advisory Council (CCAC) addressed flaws in the draft LTS which required consideration for the updated Strategy. A source stated that they were happy with the legislation and plans introduced by the current Government, but unhappy with the rate at which actions are being implemented.

1.1c "2. Make the adoption of five-year carbon budgets, setting maximum emissions by sector, a legal requirement."

2021-2022 Progress: The Act mandates the setting of five-year carbon budgets. On the 6th of April 2022, the first set of carbon budgets, approved by the House of the Oireachtas, were adopted. Sectoral emission ranges were set out in the 2021 National Climate Action Plan (NCAP21). Sectoral targets were agreed on the 29th of July 2022. A statement by the Chair of the CCAC, Marie Donnelly, [expressed concerns](#) with the Government's sectoral emissions targets. The agreed sectoral targets "only amount to a reduction of 43%", below the 51% target outlined in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act.

2023 Progress: The 2023 [Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections report](#), published by the EPA, has projected that the first carbon budget from the 2021-2025 period will be exceeded by 45 Mt CO₂ equivalent in the 'with existing measures' scenario, and by 37 Mt CO₂ equivalent in the 'with additional measures' scenario. The sectoral emissions ceiling for the Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry sector have not been set. In April of 2023, [Minister Eamon Ryan stated](#) that this ceiling will be determined in 2023. A source commented that the unallocated emissions savings of 5.25 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent included in the carbon budgets, which have been assigned to the second carbon budgetary period of 2026 to 2030, should be partially or entirely allocated by the Autumn of 2023. The CCAC has continued to [raise concerns](#) regarding how carbon budgets are to be allocated to sectors with uncertainties relating to the Land Use sectoral emissions ceiling and the unallocated savings for the second carbon budget period.

1.1d "3. Establish the Climate Action Council on an independent statutory footing and ensure greater gender balance and increased scientific expertise in its membership."

2021-2023: The Act mandates that the Minister and the Government “use their best endeavours” to ensure that the membership of the Climate Advisory Council has an appropriate balance of scientific expertise, and an equitable balance between men and women. The 14 members of the [Climate Change Advisory Council](#) are evenly balanced as of June 2023. This commitment is deemed complete and was considered as part of the 2022 assessment.

1.1e "Update the Climate Action Plan annually and report progress quarterly."

2021-2022 Progress: The development of a new Climate Action Plan was undertaken in 2021. The [CAP21](#) was published on the 4th of November 2021, with the first quarterly report published in June 2022. A second progress report was published in [July 2022](#). In May 2022, the EPA [published a report](#) stating that if all plans and policies in CAP21 are fully implemented, Ireland could deliver emission reductions of 28% (4% per annum) by 2030. These reductions would be in compliance with EU targets. However, they would be below the 51% emission reduction targets outlined in CAP21.

2023 Progress: [The Climate Action Plan 2023 \(CAP23\)](#) was published in December 2022. [The first quarterly progress report](#) was published in May 2023. CAP23 builds upon the previous two climate action plans, taking account of sectoral emissions ceilings and carbon budgets, while maintaining the targets of a 51% emissions reduction by 2030 and the achievement of carbon neutrality by 2050. In June 2023, [the EPA published a report](#) stating that if all plans and policies in CAP23 are fully implemented, Ireland could deliver emission reductions of 29% by 2030. A [consultation for expert evidence](#) for Climate Action Plan 2024 closed on July 14th 2023.

1.1f "Maintain the existing Climate Action Delivery Board model."

2021-2022 Progress: The Climate Action Delivery Board’s terms of reference were [updated in November 2021](#) to include the monitoring of sectoral emissions ceilings and carbon budgets. The CCAC welcomed that the Delivery Board was now meeting regularly. However, the [CCAC urged](#) that the reporting analysed by the Delivery Board should be focussed on the most critical 20% of actions to maximise the impact that such a body can have on the acceleration of delivery.

2023 Progress: In May 2023, [Taoiseach Leo Varadkar](#) confirmed that the Climate Action Delivery Board was meeting quarterly. In April 2023, the CCAC [released a letter](#) urging the Board to ensure no further delays in delivering actions and to provide explanation as to why actions have been delayed in 2023 and details as to when these actions will be delivered. CAP23 states that in order to achieve the ambitions it lays out, “*strengthening the role of the Climate Action Delivery board to ensure better alignment with the Cabinet Committee on the Environment and Climate Change and enable cross-governmental ownership of the plan*” is a key area of change needed.

1.1g "Propose that the Oireachtas should establish a standing Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action, with powers similar to the Public Accounts Committee."

2021-2022 Progress: The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action with similar powers to the Public Accounts Committee was not established in 2021 or 2022, with no clear progress being made in either year. The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2021 specifies that a Joint Oireachtas Committee will be continuously involved in various aspects of climate action.

2023 Progress: [The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Environment and Climate Action](#) was established on the 24th of May 2021, previously named the [Committee on Climate Action](#) (established in July

2020). The committee has no special powers, and stakeholders remarked that it was unclear as to which powers were actually “similar to the Public Accounts Committee”.

1.1h "Ensure that the Department of Climate Action has the capacity and expertise to manage the transition in energy efficiency and renewable energy and to carry out its expanded function in relation to carbon budgets."

2021-2022 Progress: Under Budget 2022, €858 million was allocated to the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC), an increase of 19% from the previous year.

2023 Progress: Under Budget 2023, DECC was allocated an additional €150 million in 2023, with expenditure totalling €1.038bn.

1.1i "Review on an ongoing basis the structure and operations of state agencies that will be responsible for delivery of increased targets under this plan."

2021-2022 Progress: In July 2022, the Government published a new [Public Sector Climate Action Mandate](#). In 2022, the EPA state agency review was completed.

2023 Progress: In May 2023, the [Public Sector Climate Action Mandate for CAP23](#) was approved by Government. The Act requires that all public bodies perform their functions in compliance with national climate ambitions. In June 2022, the SEAI launched its new [Statement of Strategy 2022-2025](#). The SEAI [Monitoring and Reporting system](#) requires all public bodies and schools to report their energy performance annually.

1.1j "Work with the European Commission to advance a stronger National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) for 2030, consistent with the ambition of this programme."

2021-2022 Progress: The strengthened NECP was not submitted in 2021 or 2022.

2023 Progress: The strengthened NECP was not submitted in 2023. Minister Eamon Ryan [stated](#) that a draft NECP is planned to be released later this year, prior to a public consultation and carrying out the necessary environmental assessments. The European Parliament [required a draft NECP](#) to be submitted by June 30th 2023, with the final NECP due on the 30th of June 2024.

1.1k "Respond to the OECD review of the Environmental Protection Agency and ensure that our legislative framework for licensing pollution is fit for purpose."

2021-2022 Progress: No response to the OECD review was published in 2021 or 2022.

2023 Progress: In July of 2021, DECC agreed a revised Performance Delivery Agreement (PDA) with the EPA, which was last updated in December 2022. [Annex 5](#) reviews the recommendations made by the OECD review. The EPA [stated](#) that the recommendations made in the OECD review were considered in their [Strategic Plan 2022-2026](#).

1.1l "We will conduct a review of greenhouse gas emissions on a consumption basis, with a goal of ensuring that Irish and EU action to reduce emissions supports emission reductions globally, as well as on our own territories."

2021-2022 Progress: A review of greenhouse gas emissions on a consumption basis was not published in 2021 or 2022.

2023 Progress: In November 2022, the ESRI published a paper, funded by the EPA, titled [‘The Global Emissions Impact of Irish Consumption’](#), which used a consumption based accounting method for greenhouse gas emissions.

1.1.1. Just Transition

1.1.1a "Publish a Just Transition Plan, to frame the work of a permanent Commission for Just Transition. The plan will identify and prepare for challenges that will arise in a number of sectors and regions, recognising that there will be a variety of different transitions, and that it is clear that there will be no simple one-size fits all approach."

2021-2022 Progress: There was no "Just Transition Plan" published in 2021 or 2022.

2023 Progress: [Ireland's Territorial Just Transition Plan](#) was approved by the Government on the 29th of November, 2022 and subsequently adopted by the European Commission. Public consultation on the plan took place between December 2021 and February 2022. The most negatively affected territories, which are addressed in the plan, include counties Offaly, Laois, Longford, Westmeath, and Roscommon, as well as the Municipal Districts (MDs) Ballinasloe (Co. Galway), Athy and Clane-Maynooth (Co. Kildare), Carrick on-Suir and Thurles (Co. Tipperary).

1.1.1b "Establish the Just Transition Commissioner as a statutory office, with appropriate staffing and resources. The experience of the Just Transition Commissioner's work in the Midlands and the work of the National Economic and Social Council will inform the approach."

2021-2022 Progress: The Just Transition Commissioner was not established as a statutory office in 2021 or 2022. In NCAP21, the Government committed to establishing a statutory Just Transition Commission. In June 2022, Minister Eamon Ryan stated that *"a policy approach for the mandate of the proposed Commission"* was being developed. The Just Transition Alliance [called for the Government](#) to immediately establish the Commission, in advance of formal legislation, based on social dialogue and comprised of representatives of Government, trade unions, employers, affected communities and civil society. In 2022, Kieran Mulvey was [reappointed](#) as the Just Transition Commissioner, following the completion of his two year term.

2023 Progress: The Just Transition Commission was not established in 2023. The [CAP23 Annex of Actions](#) states that this commission was due to be established in the second quarter of 2023. In June 2023, Minister Eamon Ryan [stated](#) he was *"continuing to progress the development of proposals in relation to the establishment of the Commission. This work has included engagement with relevant stakeholders to inform my approach to the mandate of the Commission, including through the National Climate Stakeholder Forum, the most recent meeting of which took place on 10 May last."* A source confirmed the establishment of the commission is in progress. NESC has continued to undertake analysis related to the Just Transition. In April 2023, [the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission stated](#) that the Just Transition Commission must be established as a matter of priority for the Government.

1.1.1c "Ensure financing is available and continue to grow the size of the Just Transition Fund."

2021-2022 Progress: In June 2020, it was announced the Just Transition Fund was [€11 million](#), an increase from the [€6 million](#) fund in Budget 2020. In March 2021, [Minister Eamon Ryan stated](#) that 16 'strand 1' projects had concluded Funding Agreements with his Department, to a total value of €1.2 million. In November 2020, further provisional funding offers for 'strand 2' projects were made to 47 projects, totalling €27.8 million. Under Budget 2022, €34 million was allocated to Just Transition Projects. Ireland has secured €84.5 million from the EU Just Transition Fund for the period of 2021-2027, which will be matched by the Exchequer for a total of €175 million.

2023 Progress: According to CAP23, The National Just Transition Fund has committed to providing €22.1 million in grant funding to projects until 2024. In June 2023, Minister Ryan [stated](#) that to date,

the fund had disbursed €5.1 million to participating projects. [Budget 2023](#) details the allocation of €6 million worth of carbon tax funds to the National Just Transition Fund. Following the European Commission's adoption of the Territorial Just Transition Plan in December 2023, €84.5 million from the EU Just Transition Fund was incorporated for the period of 2021 to 2027. Additional national co-financing will provide the Programme with a total of up to €169 million for investments. In February 2023, Just Transition [Commissioner Kieran Mulvey criticised banks](#) for failing to provide funding for Just Transition projects.

1.1.1d "We will ensure that the Just Transition in the Midlands works inclusively by (1.1.1e-i):"

1.1.1e "1. Supporting the Just Transition Commissioner in designing a comprehensive and inclusive response."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2022, four '[Just Transition Progress Reports](#)' were published by the Just Transition Commissioner, Kieran Mulvey. Recommendations from these reports include engagement with the Midlands Regional Transition Team, adequately resourcing National Just Transition Fund Projects, and providing greater access to education opportunities.

2023 Progress: The Just Transition Commissioner, Kieran Mulvey, published the final 'Just Transition Progress Report' in April 2022.

1.1.1f "2. Publishing and implementing a detailed all-of-government implementation plan consistent with the recommendations of the first report of the Just Transition Commissioner."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2022, [according to DECC](#), the recommendations of the Just Transition Commissioner were incorporated into Chapter Seven of NCAP21, entitled "A Just Transition Plan for the Midlands Region".

2023 Progress: The Just Transition Commissioner released the final progress report in April of 2022. CAP23 states all four reports were considered in the formulation of the Government's Implementation Plan for the Midlands, published in the Climate Action Plan 2021.

1.1.1g "3. Conducting a feasibility study into the establishment of a Green Energy Hub/Renewable Energy Hub in the Midlands, using the existing infrastructure in this region."

2021-2022 Progress: In March 2021, Minister Eamon Ryan stated that a feasibility study into the establishment of a Green Energy Hub, using existing infrastructure at the West Offaly and Lough Ree sites, had been underway over the preceding months. This was [overseen by a steering group](#) chaired by ESB. In June 2021, the ESB stated that "[following a comprehensive feasibility study in recent months, both our sites at Shannonbridge and Lanesborough have the potential for providing energy services which would facilitate the growth in renewable generation](#)".

2023 Progress: This feasibility study was published in 2022. The development of three new green energy hubs in the midlands are in progress, as outlined in the EirGrid report "[Shaping Our Energy Future](#)" and confirmed by a source. The Bord na Móna Energy Park is one project aiming to cover 3,000ha of land in Offaly, Westmeath and Meath into a range of low carbon energy generation assets.

1.1.1h “Support for the workers, sectors, and regions most exposed, in order to help them to benefit from the new economic opportunities afforded to us by the transition to a low-carbon, digital economy.”

2021-2022 Progress: In July 2021, the Taoiseach, Minister Ryan and Bord na Móna CEO, Tom Donnellan, announced [885 additional jobs in the Midlands were planned to be created over the next 4-5 years](#), as Bord na Móna transitioned to a “climate solutions company”. In June 2022, [Minister Ryan stated](#) €20.5 million was committed across 55 projects in the wider Midlands region, which was estimated to create 154 ‘direct’ and 932 ‘indirect’ jobs.

2023 Progress: In May 2023, [Minister Ryan stated](#) that projects committed across the Midlands region were estimated to create 178 ‘direct jobs’ and 999 ‘indirect jobs’. The Territorial Just Transition Plan stated that the EU Just Transition Fund will be directed towards skills and training support for those who have been most affected by the just transition process. Stakeholders criticised the narrow scope of the Government’s approach to the just transition, highlighting sectors such as agriculture and marine, which must be considered in the transition towards a low-carbon economy.

1.1.1i “And protection for vulnerable families and communities least equipped to make the transformation.”

2021-2022 Progress: In January 2022, Niamh Garvey of the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) stated that [“Further work is required to scope out the outcomes and processes appropriate for impacted individuals and communities”](#). In May 2022, Deputy Darren O’Rourke (Sinn Féin) [stated that current Government policy regarding the Just Transition is “leaving people behind”](#). This sentiment was echoed by civil society representatives consulted as part of this assessment in 2022.

2023 Progress: In 2022, researchers in UCD published the journal article [‘How just are just transition plans? Perceptions of decarbonisation and low-carbon energy transitions among peat workers in Ireland’](#), which found a disparity between the “theory” and “practice” of the just transition. Peat workers from the case study felt the promises of the just transition were not upheld.

1.1.2. Climate Engagement

1.1.2a “Sustained leadership from Government and the Oireachtas.” AND

1.1.2b “Sustained engagement with citizens, sectors, and regions.”

2021-2022 Progress: In March 2022, the first National Climate Stakeholder Forum was held as part of The National Dialogue on Climate Action. The second National Climate Stakeholder Forum was held in [July 2022](#). In 2022, the Government created six [“acceleration taskforces”](#) to ensure that actions which reduce carbon emissions across all sectors of the economy were scaled up over the next three years. In July 2022, the Government announced the [“Climate Conversation 2022”](#), consisting of an online questionnaire where respondents evaluate the Government’s approach to climate change. These responses were used in the formation of NCAP22.

2023 Progress: In 2023, DECC published the [National Dialogue on Climate Action Monitoring and Evaluation Report 2022](#). The third National Climate Stakeholder Forum was held on the 10th of May 2023. The purpose of the forum was to gather perspectives from stakeholders and policy makers on how the Government can progress climate action delivery, focusing on the six acceleration taskforces. The online questionnaire for Climate Conversations 2023 opened on June 27th, 2023 and will close on September 8th. The questionnaire includes questions on shopping, reuse and recycling, food and food waste, household heating and sustainable living, local environment and climate change. An NGO representative commented that Government engagement with the NGO sector was poor, with DECC providing no sense of a desire to co-produce solutions. An opposition party member

expressed concerns regarding poor engagement with civilians. A source acknowledged shortcomings in communicating climate action with the public and fostering community support on initiatives.

"We will develop a new model of engagement with citizens, sectors, and regions as an early priority for Government, building on the learning of recent years. It shall embrace (1.1.2c-e):"

1.1.2c "1. Dialogue on a structured basis, so that the diverse elements of society can contribute to the process. There will be a specific youth dialogue strand."

2021-2022 Progress: In early 2021, the National Dialogue on Climate Action consulted with young people as part of the Climate Action Plan 2021. An Advisory Group of young people were formed to guide the development of a permanent Youth Climate Council by Q3 2021. In March 2022, The National Youth Assembly of Ireland met as the Youth Assembly on Climate. In July 2022, a representative of The National Youth Assembly presented a report at the 2nd National Climate Stakeholder Forum.

2023 Progress: [The National Youth Assembly on Climate](#) (NYAC) took place in March 2023. The NYAC was co-designed by a Youth Advisory Group, consisting of eight young people. A report from the NYAC will be used to inform the National Climate Action Plan 2024. Representatives from the National Youth Assembly spoke at the 2023 National Climate Stakeholder Forum. In 2023, DECC launched the [Climate Youth Delegate Programme](#), which appoints two delegates between the ages of 18-25 for a 20 month period to engage in Ireland's climate action efforts.

1.1.2d "2. A process of accountability on progress, including an annual review."

2021-2022 Progress: Quarterly progress reports for NCAP21 were published in June 2022, July 2022, and November 2022.

2023 Progress: The final progress report of NCAP21 was published in February 2023. The first quarterly progress report of NCAP23 was published in May 2023. An independent review by the CCAC is carried out each year, with their [latest response](#) to NCAP21 published in August 2022. The EPA's latest [Greenhouse Gas Assessment Report](#) was published in June 2023 and stated that the implementation of all plans and policies in NCAP23 could achieve a 29% emissions reduction by 2030, falling short of the Government's 51% emission reduction target.

1.1.2e "3. The promotion of citizen, sectoral and regional involvement in delivering actions within their own sphere of influence."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2021, through the NCAP21 Interdepartmental Engagement and Consultation Steering Group, DECC invited 26 Public Participation Networks (PPNs) to take part in a series of workshops as part of the on-going Climate Conversation. In March and April of 2021, sixteen PPNs took part in workshops. An additional eight PPNs were invited to take part in in-depth focus groups. In March 2021, the Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) launched a website, [caro.ie](#), to support all county and city councils in leading Ireland's climate action efforts. In November 2021, the Community Climate Action Programme was launched to provide eligible organisations with resources to assist local communities in climate action initiatives. In 2021, [more than 13,000 local authority staff](#) received training in climate action through engagement with the CAROs and DECC. Nine 'Regional Enterprise Plans' were published in 2022, which included decarbonisation objectives for each region and climate resilience measures. An NGO representative commented that the structure of climate action engagement could be improved.

2023 Progress: Each of the four CAROs ran until June 2023 and a new five year Service Level

Agreement (SLA) was established in July 2023. Stakeholders expressed concerns regarding local authority staffing, with levels remaining below pre-recession standards. In May 2023, [Minister Ryan acknowledged](#) the difficulties local authorities were facing in recruiting and sustaining staff. As set out in the Act, each local authority is required to publish a [Local Authority Climate Action Plan](#). DECC published [guidelines](#) for these plans in February 2023, and each of these plans are due by February of 2024. [The Local Authority Climate Action Training Programme](#) has committed €1.575m over the period of 2021-2023 to fund upskilling and capacity building.

1.1.3. European Green Deal

1.1.3a "We will support the European Green Deal."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2021, NGO representatives felt the Government of Ireland was supporting climate action at a European level to an extent that had not been seen since 2011. In 2022, NGO representatives expressed concerns regarding the Government's position on the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). In CAP negotiations, the Government highlighted that it would adhere to the CAP legal instrument, but not the non-legally binding EU Green Deal components.

2023 Progress: Ireland has continued to adhere to the terms of the European Green Deal, through the actions laid out in the Climate Action Plan. The [final progress report](#) for the 2021 Climate Action Plan, published in May 2023, found an overall implementation rate of 79%, however emissions continued to rise. The proposed [Nature Restoration Law](#) is a centrepiece of the EU Biodiversity Strategy, which falls under the European Green Deal. The law proposes a restoration objective of 20% of Europe's land and sea areas by 2030, and all ecosystems in need of restoration by 2050. Ireland [voted in favour](#) of the law. However, Ireland received [significant pushback](#) from the European People's Party, of which Fine Gael is a member. The final report of the Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss [included a recommendation](#) to support the Nature Restoration Law. The Irish Wildlife Trust have supported the recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly and have [stated that](#) "It is in Irish interest to have this law adopted", adding "Without this law, we fail to establish a normative response to the biodiversity crisis, which will set us back decades." On the 12th of July 2023, [the Nature Restoration Law was approved](#) by the European Parliament in a narrow 324-312 vote, with 12 abstentions.

1.1.3b "We will direct any relevant funding under the European Green Deal towards decarbonising projects such as renewable energy, retrofits, ecosystem resilience and regeneration, clean research and development spending, and reskilling needs to address unemployment from COVID-19 and structural shifts from decarbonisation."

2021-2022 Progress: According to a source, funding was being directed appropriately. However, an NGO representative commented that more focus and reflection was required on where the funding is directed.

2023 Progress: According to a source, funding is being directed appropriately. Opposition politicians commented that the European Green Deal still requires translation into more concrete national climate actions.

1.2. Greenhouse Gas Emissions

1.2a "We are committed to an average 7% per annum reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions from 2021 to 2030 (a 51% reduction over the decade) and to achieving net zero emissions by 2050. In setting the initial carbon budget, we will incorporate measures that will initiate significant change in line with this ambition."

2021-2022 Progress: The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 established a system of three 5-year economy-wide budget periods. These budgets were approved by the Houses of the Oireachtas on the 6th of April 2022. Emissions allowed under the 2021-2025 Budget Period are 295 Mt of CO₂ equivalents, representing an *"average reduction in emissions of 4.8% per annum for the first budget period"*. In July 2022, Sectoral emission ceilings were agreed upon. The CCAC noted these targets would achieve a 43% emissions reduction by 2030, below the 51% stated in NCAP21. Despite 2021 being the first official year of the carbon budget, Ireland's emissions *rose by 4.7% compared to 2020*, surpassing pre-Covid levels by 1.1%.

2023 Progress: Emissions decreased by *1.9 per cent* in 2022 driven by higher fuel prices, increased renewable energy, behavioural change and regulation. According to the EPA's 2022 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Projections, if all plans from CAP23 were implemented, a 29% reduction in emissions would be achieved by 2030, falling short of the 51% target. CAP23 states that the 5.25 Mt CO₂ equivalent which remains unallocated, included in the carbon budget, will be assigned to sectors prior to the 2026-2030 carbon budget period.

1.2b "We will directly draw on the National Economic Plan and associated funding to front load investment that is directly aligned with our climate ambitions."

2021-2022 Progress: The National Economic Recovery Plan was published in June 2021. The plan outlined how the Government will allocate €915 million in funding received to the European Recovery and Resilience Facility. Advancing the Green Transition was labelled "Priority 1", with €503 million in funding provided. This level of spending on climate action was an EU requirement. In October 2021, The National Economic Recovery Plan was superseded by the National Development Plan. National Strategic Outcome (NSO) 8, "Transition to a Climate-Neutral and Climate-Resilient Society", anticipated that €500 million will be accrued to the Climate Action Fund by 2027 and stated that €186 million had been committed to climate-relevant projects.

2023 Progress: The terms of the National Development Plan and NSO 8 remain unchanged. The plan states that DECC will receive an additional €5 billion from 10 years of carbon tax receipts and a total indicative allocation of €12.9 billion from 2021-2030.

1.2c "Scale up Enterprise Ireland support for smaller companies to invest in technology for clean processes, waste, and energy efficiency."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2021, applications were opened for client companies wishing to apply to the €10 million Climate Enterprise Action Fund. In June 2022, a €55 million Green Transition Fund was announced. This fund consisted of the Climate Planning Fund for Business, which aimed to assist businesses with creating strategic initiatives to reduce emissions and the Enterprise Emissions Reduction Investment Fund, allowing manufacturing companies to invest in CO₂ reducing technologies.

2023 Progress: In December 2022, [Taoiseach Leo Varadkar stated](#) that €1,024,796 had been allocated towards 66 projects availing of the Green Transition Fund. Enterprise Ireland has set a

target of 425 climate interventions with companies over the course of the 2022-2025 funding period. In 2022, Enterprise Ireland approved 126 projects, valued at €1.4m, across their climate initiatives. Funding under the Green Transition Fund is capped at €1m, larger projects must avail of the Environmental Aid Scheme. In 2022, there were three further Environmental Aid approvals valued at €12.8m. [According to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment](#), the Climate, Sustainability and Agritech sector saw a 13% increase in employment in 2022.

1.2d “Devising a systematic programme of sectoral audits of the commercial and industrial sector to underpin, area by area, strategies to meet the new national targets. These will be developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders in those sectors to meet targets consistent with our national climate objectives (with particular potential in food, cement, and refrigeration).”

2021-2022 Progress: According to a source, eleven working groups within the Civil Service and the Government were set up to identify sectoral opportunities for emission reductions. The output of this was included in the Climate Action Plan 2021.

2023 Progress: Energy audits are administered through the SEAI. The [Support Scheme for Energy Audits](#) provides a €2,000 grant for energy audits for public and private sector organisations with an annual energy expenditure exceeding €10,000, which are not already required to carry out an energy audit under the European Energy Efficiency Directive. In 2023, [the budget](#) for this scheme increased from €1.75m in 2022 to €2.3m. CAP23 states that energy audits will be mandatory for organisations whose energy usage exceeds 10TJ.

1.2e “Expanding and incentivising micro generation, including roof-top solar energy.”

2021-2022 Progress: In February 2021, a public consultation on a micro-generation scheme was opened for submissions. In February 2022, the legislation for the Clean Export Guarantee tariff was [signed into law](#). This allowed domestic customers to receive remuneration for excess energy generated and exported to the grid. Beginning in 2024, grants for microgeneration projects will be gradually reduced as they are superseded by a [new microgeneration support scheme](#).

2023 Progress: The final Micro-generation Support Scheme (MSS) design was [approved in December 2022](#) and is currently running. In October 2022, Minister Eamon Ryan announced [grants of up to €2,400](#) for the installation of solar PV panels for businesses, public organisations, and community groups. In April 2023, [a zero VAT rate](#) was approved for the cost of supply and installation of solar panels for private households, saving consumers €1,000 on average. In July 2023, Minister Ryan announced [further grants for businesses](#), ranging from €2,700 to €162,600. A source stated that, as of May 2023, there were 61,000 micro-generation connections in Ireland.

1.2f “We shall evaluate, before the end of 2020, whether Ireland should include wetlands in its land use inventory notified under EU regulations.”

2021-2023: From the [beginning of 2021](#), Ireland opted to include the impact of managed wetlands on greenhouse gas emissions and removals in its accounting under EU regulations. This commitment is now considered complete and was considered in the 2022 assessment.

1.2g “Every minister will make climate action a core pillar of their new departmental strategies, which must be produced within six months of the Government taking office.”

2021-2022 Progress: This commitment was not fulfilled by all Government departments. In 2022, a new [Climate Action Division](#) was established within the Dept. of Public Expenditure and Reform.

2023 Progress: While there is no coordinated Government approach towards fulfilling this

commitment, in May 2023, [Taoiseach Leo Varadkar stated](#) that the Department of the Taoiseach drives climate action across all departments through its work with the Cabinet committee on the environment and climate change. According to a source, all departments responsible for sectoral emissions ceilings have established climate action teams.

1.2h “Each minister will direct each of the agencies and offices under their department to adopt a climate mandate, under which those bodies will seek to support climate action within their own operations and among their clients and suppliers.”

2021-2022 Progress: This commitment was addressed in the Climate Action Plan 2021 under Section 9.3.2. ‘A Public Sector Climate Action Mandate’. In July 2022, a new [Public Sector Climate Action Mandate](#) was published.

2023 Progress: This decision has been maintained. In August 2022, the Government approved a [Climate Action Framework for the commercial and semi-state sector](#), which concerns carbon pricing, carbon footprint measurement, and green public procurement. In March 2023, the EPA released its [second report on Green Public Procurement](#), which found that, of the reported spend of €528 million on projects exceeding €25,000 across 18 Government departments, only 10% of contracts included green criteria. EPA Director General, Laura Burke, commented *“It is disappointing that there has been a low level of implementation of Green Public Procurement in Government Departments in 2021, even lower than that reported in 2020.”*

1.3. Climate Adaptation

1.3a “We will continue to take climate adaptation measures to ensure that the State helps protect people from the effects of climate change in Ireland which are already locked in, and we will take steps to limit any damage caused. These measures will continue to build upon the National Adaptation Framework (NAF).”

AND 1.3b “We will ensure that each Sectoral Adaptation Plan identifies the key risks faced across each sector and the approach being taken to address these risks and build climate resilience for the future.”

2021-2022 Progress: In 2022, a review of the National Climate Adaptation Network was initiated. According to the CCACI’s 2021 annual review, a [“significant gap remains between the ambition of the National Adaptation Framework to deliver climate resilience, and its implementation”](#). The Council found [a disparity](#) in how adaptation was prioritised and resourced across Government departments, highlighting concerns that adaptation is not sufficiently mainstreamed across policy implementation.

2023 Progress: In September 2022, the [review of NAF](#) was published. The CAP23 Annex of Actions stated that the draft for a new NAF is due by Q4 of 2023. The review of NAF includes 33 recommendations which should be considered for a new NAF. The [2023 Annual Review by the Climate Change Advisory Council](#) found itself unable to give the highest score for adaptation progress to any sector and “remains concerned about the understanding of adaptation and the capacity of all sectors to respond in a comprehensive manner” and continues to call for a revised NAF. According to a source, the formation of a new NAF is in progress though some are concerned about the lack of focus placed on nature based solutions.

1.3c “We will maintain a multi-annual investment programme in flood relief measures to protect communities.”

2021-2022 Progress: In 2021, the Government maintained flood relief investment at a level consistent with the €1.3 billion committed to the period of the 2018-2027 National Development Plan. This was maintained under the [National Development Plan 2021-2030](#).

2023 Progress: This decision has been maintained. As of June 2023, [53 flood relief schemes](#) have been completed, which provide protection to over 12,000 properties. There are currently [98 active flood relief schemes](#) which are at various stages of development.

1.4. Climate Funding

1.4a “We will establish the Climate Action Fund in law within 100 days, through the early enactment of the National Oil Reserves Agency Bill. We will quickly launch a second call under the Climate Action Fund.”

2021-2022 Progress: In July 2020, The Climate Action Fund was legally established with the enactment of the [National Oil Reserves Agency \(Amendment\) and Provision of Central Treasury Services Act 2020](#). In 2022, the second call for climate action funding was reported to be delayed but in progress.

2023 Progress: There was no second call for the Climate Action Fund in 2023. A source commented that the structure of the fund has changed, from a few very large calls to multiple small calls. This includes the Community Climate Action Programme and the Creative Climate Action Programme. [The call for strand 2](#) of the Creative Climate Action Programme was launched in December 2022.

1.4b “We will also launch a call under a Local Environmental Innovation Fund to enhance community participation.”

2021-2022 Progress: In 2021, there were no public calls under a fund titled the “Local Environmental Innovation Fund”. In 2022, a source stated that this call had been developed, but not yet launched, for small-scale projects.

2023 Progress: In February 2023, [€24m in funding](#) for local authorities was announced under the Community Climate Action Programme.

1.4c “We will expand the Environment Fund, taking account of the consultation process that has been completed, through the introduction of new levies; and we will ring-fence this money for investment in biodiversity and climate initiatives, including a parks fund to support the development of new parks and wildlife areas.”

2021-2022 Progress: In 2021, there was no public evidence of the expansion of the Environment Fund. In 2022, the [Environment Fund was moved to the Circular Economy Fund](#), under the Circular Economy and Miscellaneous Provisions Act. Remaining funds accrued to the Environment Fund were transferred to the Circular Economy Fund.

2023 Progress: The Circular Economy Fund will expand through the introduction of levies, such as the upcoming [‘Latte Levy’](#), which will levy 20 cents on single-use cups. In June 2023, Minister Eamon Ryan stated that progress is being made on a [Waste Recovery Levy](#), which aims to incentivise recycling and re-use.

1.4d. “Prioritise Green Finance strategic actions that are developed in line with climate justice targets and Sustainable Development Goals.”

2021-2022 Progress: In July 2022, the [International Climate Finance Roadmap](#) was published. This outlined how the Government will meet the annual €225 million international climate financing target by 2025 and align finance with the aims of the Paris Agreement and the SDGs.

2023 Progress: In 2023, [Ireland’s Climate and Environmental Finance Report 2021](#) was published. A total of €99.6m of the €225m target was provided. An NGO representative commented that research shows Ireland’s contribution should be closer to €500 million when historic emissions and the wealth of the country are accounted for.

1.4.1. Carbon Tax

1.4.1a “Increase the carbon tax to 100 euro per tonne by 2030, informed by the findings of an ESRI study, to be published by October 2020 on how best to prevent fuel poverty. This increase is to be achieved by an annual increase of €7.50 per annum to 2029 and €6.50 in 2030.”

2021-2022 Progress: This commitment was fulfilled with an increase of the carbon tax by €7.50 in Budget 2021. A further €7.50 increase was provided in Budget 2022, raising the tax from €33.50 to €41.00.

2023 Progress: In 2023, the carbon tax rate increased by €7.50, from €41 to €48.50 per tonne.

1.4.1b “We will legislate to hypothecate all additional carbon tax revenue into a Climate Action Fund raising an estimated €9.5 billion over the next ten years. Funds will be utilised over that period to:

- 1. Ensure that the increases in the carbon tax are progressive by spending €3 billion on targeted social welfare and other initiatives to prevent fuel poverty and ensure a just transition.**
- 2. Provide €5 billion to part fund a socially progressive national retrofitting programme targeting all homes but with a particular emphasis on the Midlands region and on social and low-income.**
- 3. Allocate €1.5 billion to a REPS-2 programme to encourage and incentivise farmers to farm in a greener and more sustainable way. This funding will be additional to funding from the Common Agricultural Policy. It will include incentives to plant native forestry and to enhance and support biodiversity tenancies.”**

2021-2022 Progress: In 2021 and 2022, there was no progress on the legal hypothecation of carbon tax revenue specified under this commitment. Annual increases of the carbon tax were legislated in the [Finance Act](#). The Budget 2021 document “[The Use of Carbon Tax Funds](#)” laid out hypothecation of the revenue from the 2020 and 2021 carbon tax increases. This document estimates proceeds of €238 million from the 2020 and 2021 carbon tax increases. Under Budget 2022, the allocation of the carbon tax revenues were €202 million in “Investment in Residential & Community Energy”, €174 million on “Targeted Social Protection Interventions”, and €36 million for the “Continuation of the 2020 and 2021 Carbon Tax Investment Programme”.

2023 Progress: The carbon tax is [not legally hypothecated](#). The Budget 2023 document [The Use of Carbon Tax Funds](#) details the allocation of carbon tax revenue for 2023, and the spending over previous years. In 2023, the carbon tax rate increased by €7.50, from €41 to €48.50 per tonne, bringing the total carbon tax financed expenditure to €623m, consisting of €90m from 2020, €148m from 2021 and €211m in 2023. In 2023, €291m of the carbon tax revenue was allocated to investment in residential and community energy efficiency; €44m towards targeted social welfare

protections; €81m towards incentivising green and sustainable farming; and €412m towards the continuation of the 2020-2022 Carbon Tax Investment Programme.

2. Nature and Biodiversity

2a. "Progress the establishment of a Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity."

2021-2022 Progress: The Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss commenced in May 2022.

2023 Outcome: Between May 2022 and January 2023, the Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss met six times. The Citizens' Assembly published their [final report](#) in April 2023, including 159 recommendations for the State. The Assembly concluded that the State has [failed](#) to preserve Ireland's natural environment and protect its biodiversity. The final report is currently being reviewed by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Environment and Climate Action. In October 2022, the Children and Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss took place over two weekends, with 35 participants aged 7-17 and concluded with 58 recommended actions published in a [final report](#).

2b. "Promote biodiversity initiatives across primary, post-primary and third-level sectors, and ensure that schools, colleges, and universities across the country play an active role in providing areas to promote biodiversity."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2021, there was some progress on this commitment, but it was difficult to ascertain the extent to which action was driven by Government. As of 2022, the Higher Education Authority Bill was before the Seanad, stating that institutions will be provided with support to enable "all learners to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote environmental development and sustainability", which includes "actions in respect of social, economic, cultural and environmental development, climate and biodiversity". Initiatives in other levels of education were expected to be addressed in the 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan.

2023 Progress: In 2022, the OPW Biodiversity Action Strategy 2022-2026 [contained actions](#) to further promote biodiversity education across school levels. In 2023, it is unclear if these actions have effectively been implemented. The desire to promote biodiversity education is reflected in the final recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss, in particular with "[1.8 Public Engagement, Education, and Awareness](#)." The report includes recommendations on required biodiversity training for civil or public servants, educational opportunities for local communities at Natura 2000 sites, and expanding biodiversity curriculum to early childhood, primary, and post-primary education. The 4th National Biodiversity Action Plan remains [in progress](#), following a public consultation period that closed in November 2022. One stakeholder stated that biodiversity education is one of the biggest emerging issues and priorities in the biodiversity sector, but there is a lack of adequate expertise in this area across policymaking.

2c. "Review the remit, status and funding of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), to ensure that it is playing an effective role in delivering its overall mandate and enforcement role in the protection of wildlife."

2021-2022 Progress: The first phase of the NPWS review was published in October 2021 and described the NPWS as an "under-resourced" and "neglected" public service. The final phases of the NPWS review, published in February 2022, were similarly critical. This led to the [creation of the Strategic Action Plan](#), which was submitted to and approved by the Cabinet. To implement the actions outlined in the plan, a €55 million investment package was [announced at the National](#)

[Biodiversity Conference](#) in June 2022. The level of funding allocated to the NPWS was nearly doubled to €29 million in Budget 2021. However, this was still [significantly less than the funding of €46 million provided in 2008](#) and, according to NGO representatives, this could be deemed insufficient for the NPWS to play an effective role in delivering its extensive mandate. Twenty-five new park and wildlife ranger jobs were also created. Under Budget 2022, €47 million was allocated to the NPWS, bringing funding back up to pre-2008 levels. Furthermore, staffing was at pre-2008 levels, with [approximately 400 staff members](#) employed by the NPWS.

2023 Progress: In a March 2023 [written debate response](#), Minister Charlie McConalogue discussed the 2022 review of the NPWS and the Strategic Action Plan. Ultimately, the Strategic Action Plan resulted in fifteen primary recommendations for the NPWS. Minister McConalogue stated that the plan has since been accepted by the Government and is in its implementation stage. In June 2023, the NPWS Strategic Plan 2023-2025 was [published](#), designating the organisation as an executive agency of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. In June 2023, the Government also released [a progress report](#) on the actions outlined in the Strategic Action Plan, with 20 out of the 31 actions for which progress has been captured and officially completed. The one action that has yet to be started is, “Government may also wish to consider the wider issue of the roles and functions of public bodies in relation biodiversity and nature at this juncture.” An additional 15 actions are scheduled to be completed by March 2024. One stakeholder stated that they were happy with the progress of the NPWS reform programme.

2d. "Ensure that all local authorities have a sufficient number of biodiversity and heritage officers among their staff complement.

2021-2022 Progress: Since September 2021, [all County Councils](#) have had a dedicated Heritage Officer. As of June 2022, there were only [five biodiversity officers employed by city and county councils](#). In June 2022, Minister Noonan announced [six new biodiversity officers](#) would be recruited in local authorities as part of a pilot scheme ahead of a planned national roll-out in 2023/2024, which would deliver 31 officers over the following three years. €600,000 was allocated to accelerate the pilot scheme.

2023 Progress: In February 2023, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage [announced](#) that 11 local authorities were awarded funding to appoint biodiversity officers, bringing the total to 25 biodiversity officers in local authorities across the country. These positions are anticipated to be fully appointed by September 2023, while the [national rollout](#) of advisors is expected to be finished in the next two years. These biodiversity officers will take on responsibility for implementing Biodiversity Plans in their local communities, in addition to supporting biodiversity policy making in local legislation and planning. A source shared that this commitment is very nearly completed. One stakeholder said that although this is great progress in the number of biodiversity officers, there needs to be a significant increase in the number of biodiversity personnel in local Government.

2e. "Support biodiversity data collection."

2021-2022 Progress: This is a legal requirement under various EU Directives. In 2021, there were no announcements detailing additional funding for biodiversity data collection. In March 2022, a grant scheme of up to €5,000 for biodiversity recording was [announced](#), aimed at citizen science programmes and voluntary organisations to support species identification. The National Biodiversity

Data Centre continued to develop new projects. A lack of ICT capacity was described as a limiting factor in biodiversity data collection and dissemination. The modernisation of ICT under the [Strategic Action Plan](#) for the NPWS aimed to alleviate this.

2023 Progress: In May 2023, Minister Malcolm Noonan [announced](#) €2.7 million in funding for biodiversity projects and grants schemes, including a small recordings grant scheme. This scheme provides the natural history recording community an opportunity to apply for funding in biodiversity data collection, with a total of €193,000. This has since increased from 2022's allocation of €70,000. The data collected in this scheme will then be used by the NPWS. Similarly, in the same [press release](#), Minister Noonan relaunched the Local Biodiversity Action Fund, which has been run since 2018 and provides funding opportunities for local authorities to participate in biodiversity data collection. In December 2022, Minister Noonan [announced](#) the restructuring of the National Biodiversity Data Centre, which designated greater oversight faculty to the Government by the Heritage Council. One stakeholder highlighted significant progress in the restructuring of the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

2f. "Publish a new National Pollinator Plan and encourage public bodies to promote and protect biodiversity."

2021-2022 Progress: In early 2021, a [new All-Ireland Pollinator Plan \(AIPP\) 2021-2025](#) was launched with support from both the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the National Parks and Wildlife. The AIPP is voluntary, and this was a concern among stakeholders. While the new National Pollinator Plan was not a Government plan, the Department of Heritage supported it "[where \[they\] could](#)" and representatives of the Department sit on the steering committee. One stakeholder stated that more than 7,000 actions were implemented across the country stemming from the AIPP. The source also stated there was funding from the NPWS for a Communities Officer and from the Department of Agriculture for a Farmland Officer. NPWS and DAFM contributed to a pilot scheme that was rolled out in 2022 (the [Irish Pollinator Monitoring Scheme](#)). All but three of the local authorities in Ireland signed up to support this pollinator scheme.

2023 Progress: In conjunction with the AIPP 2021-2025, Minister Malcolm Noonan and Minister Pippa Hackett [supported](#) the adoption of a pilot pollinator monitoring scheme. This pilot [National Pollinator Monitoring Scheme](#) is now managed by the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

2g. "Review the protection (including enforcement of relevant legislation) of our natural heritage, including hedgerows, native woodland, and wetlands."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2022, a review of the Wildlife Act and Birds and Habitats Regulations was in progress but at a very early stage. This work was expected to take several years to complete. The [Flora \(Protection\) Order, 2022](#) (signed May 2022) added protection to additional 25 vascular plants within the State. However, there were some bureaucratic difficulties in bringing natural heritage protection back into focus. There was no evidence of a legislative review of natural heritage protection as of 2022.

2023 Progress: In June 2023, the Court of Justice of the European Union [ruled](#) that Ireland had failed to effectively protect conservation land areas and species under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives by [failing to protect](#) "217 out of 423 defined as so-called special areas of conservation (SAC) identified in 2004." In reaction to this, Minister Malcolm Noonan issued [a statement](#) explaining that the Court's judgement is based upon the position of Ireland in January 2019, while the current Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the National Parks and Wildlife Service has made enormous strides since 2019. [Tenders](#) for woodland site assessment [were put forth](#) by the

Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the NPWS in 2021. Reviews of the Wildlife Act and the Birds and Habitats Regulation are currently underway as of June 2023.

2h. "Develop a new National Invasive Species Management Plan."

2021-2022 Progress: In February 2022, [the European Commission called out Ireland](#) for its failure to “establish, implement and communicate to the Commission an action plan... to address the most important pathways of introduction and spread of invasive alien species of concern”. Under the current legislative framework, responsibility for invasive species management [rests with the landowner](#). According to a source, as of June 2022, this plan was still “at an early stage” and was anticipated to be published in 2023. While it intended to address invasive species management at a national level, it was not known what measures will be outlined in the plan.

2023 Progress: According to a source, the National Invasive Species Management Plan is a stepwise process and it is now at an advanced stage. There is a new directorate in place for invasive species management and wildlife crime enforcement. The National Biodiversity Centre has made great strides to bring forth meaningful policies and programmes. In 2022 and 2023, the NPWS released invasive species pathways plans, which target the reduction of pathways through public awareness and preventative actions. In July 2022, the Invasive Species Aquatic Pathway Action Plans (2022-2027) were [published](#). In May 2023, Ireland’s Invasive Alien Species Soil and Stone Pathway Action Plan 2023-2027 [opened for public consultation](#) and concluded in June 2023. Local authorities have taken strong action in invasive species management, like the Cork County Council’s [Invasive Species Management Plan](#).

2i. "Coordinate the actions in the Programme for Government regarding peatlands to maximise the benefits for biodiversity."

2021-2022 Progress: In November 2020, [€108 million of funding was approved for Bord Na Móna’s Bog Rehabilitation Scheme](#). The funding was provided by the European Union, as part of its NextGenerationEU recovery package for Europe. Grant funding of c.€230,000 was awarded to 25 local community groups for peatland projects in Q1 2021. [The Living Bog Project](#) also continued to be supported by the Government. As of 2022, the fulfilment of this commitment was being coordinated through the interim review of the National Peatlands Strategy.

2023 Process: In May 2023, the National Peatlands Strategy Mid-Term Review and Implementation Plan were [published](#), outlining the current progress of commitments in peatland management, including efforts in biodiversity. Appendix 2 of the midterm review included a progress report of actions that directly support this commitment. According to the Review, the Peatlands Strategy Implementation Group has numerous efforts that are ongoing to support the biodiversity conservation in peatlands, such as an all-island approach to peatland management. In May 2023, Dr. Mark McCorry of Bord Na Móna [shared](#) that they have rewet approximately 13,000ha of peatlands, spanning across 38 bogs, as part of the Bog Rehabilitation Scheme. The Climate Action Plan 2023 [outlines](#) restoration plans for the rehabilitation of 33,000ha of Bord Na Móna boglands by 2025. In a February 2023 debate, Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, Ossian Smyth, provided the example of the [Lough Boora Discovery Park](#), as rehabilitated peatland with thriving biodiversity.

2j. "Introduce policies on supports for urban biodiversity and tree planting."

2021-2022 Progress: Urban tree planting is primarily the remit of the relevant local authority. Lack of national progress surrounding urban biodiversity support was [criticised as a missed opportunity](#),

particularly as there is [great interest](#) from the public to implement such initiatives.

2023 Progress: In May 2023, Minister Malcolm Noonan announced €2.7 million in funding for the [Local Biodiversity Action Fund](#), which funds urban biodiversity efforts. Despite this, numerous stakeholders provided feedback that the urban tree planting effort was not being prioritised to the same extent as Ireland's afforestation and LULUCF management efforts. However, a source indicated that the draft Nature Restoration Law published by European Commission includes ambitious legally binding targets for urban tree planting and urban biodiversity.

2k. "Encourage and support local authorities to reduce the use of pesticides in public areas."

2021-2022 Progress: No obvious progress was made in 2021, apart from some awareness raising by the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan team. As of 2022, the Government's position was that the use of herbicides in public areas is permitted provided it complies with the Sustainable Use Directive and that pesticides should not be used ["unless a risk assessment has shown that their use is necessary"](#). DAFM engaged with local authorities through presentations and regular inspections. Petitions to ban the use of herbicides in public areas were [discussed](#) by the joint Committee on Public Petitions.

2023 Progress: In February 2023, the public consultation period [closed](#) for the European Commission proposed Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation. The proposed regulation would codify the targets outlined in the EU Farm-to-Fork Strategy of a 50% reduction in chemical pesticides and 50% reduction in hazardous pesticides by 2030. The consultation submissions are currently being reviewed by DAFM. One stakeholder expressed concern over the risk of the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive being watered down due to poor cross-departmental management and a lack of clarity in management language. Furthermore, biodiversity officers in local authorities will have the opportunity to address this at the local level in their county Biodiversity Action Plans.

2l. "Continue to implement the third National Biodiversity Action Plan 2017-2021 and build on the commitments made at the first National Biodiversity Conference."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2021, the vast majority of the actions within the plan had remained unimplemented. While the tenure of this plan ended in 2021, most of the commitments in the third plan remained unfulfilled. These were expected to be rolled over into the fourth NBAP. The fourth NBAP was expected to be published in 2023 to incorporate the findings of the Citizens' Assembly. In addition, the National Biodiversity Forum [published a comprehensive review](#) of the third NBAP and provided a series of recommendations.

2023 Progress: The 4th NBAP remains in progress, following a public consultation period that closed in November 2022 and the publication of the Citizens' Assembly report in April 2023. The publication of the 4th NBAP is expected for September 2023. One stakeholder felt this is a prime example that *"biodiversity is a poor man's cousin to climate"* due to the lack of statutory policies in biodiversity management and the enormous delays that are occurring. The [Wildlife Amendments Bill](#) was passed by both Houses of the Oireachtas on 13 July 2023, providing legal standing for National Biodiversity Action Plans. One stakeholder shared that achieving legal footing before publishing the fourth NBAP would be substantial progress.

2m. "Support local nature groups and local authorities to work in partnership on local biodiversity projects."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2021, €1.35 million was [made available](#) for the National Biodiversity Local Authority Biodiversity Grant Scheme operated by NPWS. There was additional funding [announced for community peatlands projects](#) by Minister Malcolm Noonan, the first round of which would supply €160,000 across 16 projects. Several announcements were made in 2021 with this funding

being complimented by a 41% increase in funding for the Irish Environmental Network, indirectly supporting local groups to work on projects with local authorities. Speaking at the National Biodiversity Conference 2022, Minister Malcolm Noonan outlined a number of supports provided to local communities: €1.5 million was available in 2022 to local authorities under the Local Biodiversity Action Fund, combined with €600,000 to support the Biodiversity Officer Programme rollout. In partnership with the Community Foundation for Ireland, €500,000 over the following five years was committed to the Environment and Nature Fund.

2023 Progress: In 2023, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage [funded 188 projects](#) across the 31 local authorities through the Local Biodiversity Action Fund. Since its initial launch in 2018, approximately €6 million in funding has been dedicated to local biodiversity projects. Examples of [projects funded in 2023](#) include a Biodiversity Education Programme in Meath; Crayfish Awareness in Westmeath; and Biodiversity Training for Carlow County Council staff. An example of massive biodiversity restoration efforts taking place at the local level is the bird preservation efforts in [Harper's Island](#) in County Cork. [Clogheen Marsh](#) in County Clonakilty is another example of a partnership between the NPWS and a local nature group, the Clonakilty Biodiversity Group. This marsh is both an Special Area of Conservation and an Special Protected Area, and the local organisation secured NPWS funding to develop a nature reserve.

2n. "Continue to raise awareness of biodiversity through initiatives like the Annual Biodiversity Awards Scheme."

2021-2022 Progress: As of 2021, there was not a Government-backed awards scheme for Biodiversity. The exception to this was the [Together for Biodiversity Awards](#), as part of the 2019 National Biodiversity Conference. In 2022, public engagement in biodiversity policy making was sought out. The 2022 National Biodiversity Conference was part of the public consultation aimed at increasing the transparency and raising the profile of the upcoming 4th NBAP. [National Biodiversity Week 2022](#) was launched by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and consisted of over 100 events across the country. As per the Strategic Action Plan for the NPWS, a new head of communications was anticipated to be appointed in September 2022.

2023 Progress: There is not an Annual Biodiversity Awards Scheme. The [National Biodiversity Week](#) took place in May 2023 and included a contest for the Biodiversity Photographer of the Year with monetary prizes. In October 2022, the National Biodiversity Data Centre hosted a [Tidy Towns Pollinator Award](#) contest, with Cobh Tidy Towns, Co. Cork winning for their work in public engagement and pollinator surveys. One stakeholder conveyed interest in the expansion of public engagement and awareness campaigns on biodiversity through awards schemes such as these.

2o. "Build on the success of the UNESCO Dublin Bay Biosphere and achieve further UNESCO designations for Irish sites, including the Lough Allen region."

2021-2022 Progress: [According to reports in June 2021](#), five sites in Ireland were expected to apply for inclusion on the country's tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites: The Valentia transatlantic cable station in Co Kerry; the Burren in Co Clare; Glendalough monastic city in Co Wicklow; the passage tomb landscapes of Co Sligo; and the royal sites of ancient Ireland. In July 2022, a [new Tentative List](#) of potential World Heritage sites was published.

2023 Progress: In January 2023, the [Passage Tomb Landscape of County Sligo](#) and the [Transatlantic Cable Ensemble](#) were submitted to the Tentative List for UNESCO site certification. As of July 2023, [two sites](#) were inscribed under the World Heritage list. In July 2023, the Irish Times [reported on](#) the environmental concerns surrounding the preservation and management of the UNESCO Dublin Bay

Biosphere, which resulted in the Dublin Bay Biodiversity Conservation and Research Strategy (2022-2026). There has not been enormous progress, but one source stated that there are ideas being circulated.

2p. "Appoint Education Liaison Officers in each of our National Parks to work with schools across the country, to promote the importance of biodiversity and the natural world, and to involve pupils in the work that goes on in our National Parks."

2021-2022 Progress: In June 2021, Minister Malcolm Noonan stated that his Department was progressing matters regarding the number of education liaison officers. In May 2022, Minister Darragh O'Brien, [stated that](#) the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage was consulting with the Department of Education to deliver this.

2023 Progress: There is no indication that this commitment has been fulfilled but there has been some progress. The review of the National Parks and Wildlife Service included significant emphasis on education structures in the national parks. One source stated that a lot of work is taking place in Killarney National Park currently, to improve the quality of biodiversity and nature education in the park.

2q. "Legislate to designate our western lakes as salmonid lakes."

2021-2022 Progress: In July 2021, Minister Eamon Ryan stated that the proposed bye-law, intended to give effect to this commitment, was [in working draft form](#). The public consultation for the draft bye-law [closed for submissions](#) in August 2021.

2023 Progress: Since the consultation period closed for the draft by-law, there has been no [update](#) from the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications on this commitment.

3. Water and Marine

3.1. Drinking and Waste Water

3.1a. "We will develop a scheme between local authorities and Irish Water to provide drinking water fountains nationwide to reduce plastic bottle litter."

2021-2022 progress: In 2021, developments such as the [installation of five water fountains in Limerick city](#) had been made. In February 2022, Minister Darragh O'Brien stated a "[Drinking Water Expert Group](#)" had been convened. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage had made provisions in their budget.

2023 Progress: A [charge of €2,272 remains in place](#) for the installation of water fountains and acts as a barrier for local authorities. Nevertheless, one stakeholder organisation noted that fountain installations appear to be increasing. Media reports indicate that the [installation of water fountains in Laois](#) and [further pilot water stations](#) are planned. [Water refill stations](#) were installed in Crosserlough in Cavan and Lough Carra in Mayo.

3.1b. "We will continue to help fund upgrades to wells."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2021, the Government [continued to fund well upgrades](#) under the Housing (Private Water Supply Financial Assistance) Regulations 2020. In 2022, under the Rural Water Programme, [grants to upgrade, install and/or improve the water quality of private wells were available](#). Grants were also available for group water schemes from local authorities.

2023 Progress: Stakeholders acknowledged that there is still [a grant available](#) for wells but they are [subject to different conditions](#). While funding for upgrades to wells is evident, the stakeholder noted

that meetings are taking place within the rural water section to establish whether these grants need to be reviewed. It was mentioned that other reviews are being put in motion in the rural water section, but the review of grants for wells is “not on the priority list”.

3.1.1. Infrastructure and Capital Programme

3.1.1a. “Retain Irish Water in public ownership as a national, standalone, regulated utility.”

2021-2022 Progress: Irish water remained in public ownership.

2023 Progress: This commitment is complete as Irish water is a single public utility which came into [effect in January 2023](#) and has since been rebranded as [Uisce Eireann](#).

3.1.1b. “Ensure that Irish Water is sufficiently funded to make the necessary investment in drinking water and wastewater infrastructure.”

2021 - 2022 Progress: Irish Water [estimated that 2.2 million litres of water were saved each day](#) through find and fix alone. However, a report from the independent Water Advisory Board stated that progress on water supplies in need of fixing across the [country went backwards in the second quarter of 2021](#). In November 2021, the EPA released the [Urban Wastewater Treatment’ report](#) finding that urban waste discharge was the [main source of pollution in 208 water bodies](#) in Ireland, yet there was nothing in the ‘Draft River Basin Management Plan for Ireland’ to address this. There were no significant increases in wastewater treatment since the PfG.

2023 Progress: [The 2022 EPA Urban Wastewater report](#) called for more investment. [The National Development Plan 2021-2030](#) has committed to a 6bn investment into [Uisce Eireann](#). [Irish Water’s capital investment plan continues until 2024](#), and a feasibility study is being carried out to assess infrastructure issues within wastewater infrastructure. [Budget 2023](#) provided funding of more than 1.68 billion to support water services. [Multiple programmes](#) exist to improve wastewater infrastructure. One stakeholder confirmed that funding issues are regularly raised by Uisce Eireann. However, they were assured by the Department that the body is sufficiently funded. Conversely, another stakeholder group felt that this commitment is one of the more “significant pressures” and is not being met.

3.1.1c. “Mandate Irish Water to develop plans to ensure security of supply and sufficient capacity in drinking and wastewater networks to allow for balanced regional development.”

2021-2022 Progress: In 2022, progress made on this commitment as part the National Water Resource Plan was delivered as a [series of regional water resource plans](#) developed by Irish Water, the drafts of which were being reviewed by the regulator. However, this was planned prior to the publication of the PfG.

2023 Progress: [In late 2022, regional development plans were progressing](#). Stakeholders confirmed that four regional plans have been developed, with two being published, one being a finished consultation and one open for consultation. [These regional plans](#) were acknowledged as “very detailed plans” by one stakeholder.

3.1.1d. “The Government will fund Irish Water’s capital investment plan for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure on a multi-annual basis and deliver the €8.5 billion funding package committed to in Project Ireland 2040.”

2021-2022 Progress: In 2021, [the provision](#) to Irish Water was 1.3 billion. Under Budget 2022, [€1.459 billion was secured for domestic water services provision](#) by Irish Water.

2023 Progress: [As part of the 2023 budget, funding of more than €1.557 billion](#) is also included in relation to domestic water services provision by Irish Water. It is highlighted that this investment will bring improvements for water and wastewater. [The National Development Plan](#) pledges to deliver €6 billion in investment to Irish Water. [The €1.557 billion in 2023 for Uisce Eireann was recognised as a "record funding" amount.](#)

3.1.1e. "Support take-up of Irish Water's Small Towns and Villages Growth Programme 2020-2024, which will provide water and wastewater growth capacity in smaller settlements that would otherwise not be provided for in Irish Water's capital investment plan."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2021, Carrigallen wastewater treatment plant was [selected for upgrade](#) as part of the small towns and villages growth programme. €97.5 million was [allocated to Irish Water](#) for this programme. In September 2021, [21 additional projects](#) were selected to be upgraded under this programme.

2023 Progress: [The CRU has provided](#) nearly 100 million euro for the "small towns and villages programme 2020-2024". In addition to this, the [Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme 2022-2025](#) uses exchequer funding to improve water services in rural Ireland.

3.1.1f. "Ensure that the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund supports the development of such projects."

2021-2022 Progress: There were no major announcements detailing the use of this fund in relation to water infrastructure.

2023 Progress: The delivery of projects under this fund [was delayed](#) following the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2023, [30 projects are complete with 81 projects expected](#) to be completed by the end of this year.

3.1.1g. "Support continued investment in reducing leakage across the network."

2021-2022 Progress: See [Commitment 3.1.1b](#).

2023 Progress: A [national leakage reduction programme](#) is ongoing and this commitment [remains on track](#) to reach leakage reduction targets. [Media reports](#) from June 2023 highlighted County Donegal receiving benefits from the leakage reduction programme while also underlining continued investments of [250 million every year until 2030](#). Stakeholders confirmed leakage is reducing, and while progress was considered "slow", they felt "ambitious targets" were evident.

3.1.1h. "Fully consider the review from the Commission for Regulation of Utilities to Irish Water's proposed approach to the Water Supply Project for the Eastern and Midlands Region."

2021-2022 Progress: There was nothing in the public domain regarding this commitment.

2023 Progress: [The last updated review was carried out in 2018](#). Stakeholders were uncertain about the progress of the review.

3.1.1i. "We will continue to help fund upgrades to domestic wastewater treatment systems, including septic tanks."

AND 3.1.1j. "We will review and work to improve the inspection regime for the 500,000 domestic wastewater systems and incentivise upgrading works."

2021-2022 Progress: In July 2020, the EPA reported the grant scheme for septic tanks had [been expanded](#) to cover specific areas. Stakeholders expressed concern regarding the eligibility

requirements for septic tank upgrades as tanks located in areas of high pollution were not necessarily [eligible for an upgrade](#). Stakeholders also felt the inspection regime had never been adequate, stating the EPA reviews of the inspection plan were poor. While the [2022-2026 plan](#) aims to increase the number of inspections, SWAN Ireland's [review of this plan](#) stated that all dwellings where wastewater treatment is a detriment to water quality should be inspected.

2023 Progress: A stakeholder confirmed that while wastewater and septic tanks [are being funded with certain eligibility standards](#), the uptake of the grant is low and thus the grant scheme is being reviewed. NGO representatives felt the current [inspection plan](#) is not working successfully and highlighted that a lot of failures in relation to septic tanks are “not being addressed”. There was concern surrounding the worsening of the problem and insufficiency of the inspection regime. [Shortcomings in relation to inspections](#) were raised in 2022 and are expected to be completed in 2023.

3.1.1k. "As a very significant user of electricity, we will review the electricity requirements of water and wastewater treatment plants and carry out a series of pilot projects to incorporate onsite renewable energy generation."

2021-2022 Progress: No announcements were made on this commitment.

2023 Progress: [Renewable energy projects have been completed in relation to wastewater treatment plants](#). However, there have been no announcements of a review of the electricity requirements. An NGO representative mentioned there was a discussion of this but had no further information.

3.1.2. Safety and Standards

3.1.2a. "Ensure that Irish Water progresses works to reduce the number of schemes on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Remedial Action List."

2021-2022 Progress: As of July 2021, there were 53 public water supplies on the EPA's [Remedial Action List](#). EPA's quarterly [Public Water Supplies Remedial Action List](#) showed an increase of one supply from January 2020. As of January 2022, there were [52 water supplies](#) on this list.

2023 Progress: There has been an updated list of the [remedial action list](#) in 2023 with 58 water supplies on the list. An NGO representative felt this commitment has not improved since 2021.

3.1.2b. "Support Irish Water in its programme to remove lead pipes from the public supply."

2021-2022 Progress: A report by the Water Advisory Board [released in January](#) 2021 said it was “Concerned with the lack of progress by Irish Water during 2020 to replace lead connections, with little progress made”. The Water Advisory Board noted in [their Q1 2022 report](#) that Irish Water replaced 3,152 lead connections in Q4 2021, ahead of 2021 targets (1,500) replacements. There were no new regulations on this commitment. However, [“€68.5 million for legacy issues in relation to lead pipe remediation”](#) was secured under the National Development Plan.

2023 Progress: A stakeholder confirmed there is still a lead replacement scheme, including [the domestic lead remediation grant scheme](#) available for households in 2022. As of June 2023, a [grant for older homes](#) has been launched along with [an information campaign](#) to increase homeowner's awareness of this grant.

3.1.2c. "Ensure that the State complies with the EU Water Framework Directive"

2021-2022 Progress: The general scheme of the Water Environment (Abstractions) Bill reached the

pre-legislative scrutiny stage. However, advice from the office of parliamentary legal advisers to the Housing Committee concurred with the position of SWAN Ireland that the Heads of Bill were not in compliance with the WFD. [More than half of Ireland's "rivers, lakes and estuaries" failed to meet Water Framework Directive status](#). Total nitrogen and phosphorus loads from rivers to the marine environment increased [by "26% and 35% respectively since \[the\] 2012-2014"](#) reporting period. Referring to the question of whether all water bodies would be of good quality by 2027 (as stipulated by the Water Framework Directive), NGOs stated that there is ["no chance of that happening"](#). The EPA released a [Water Quality Indicators 2020 Report](#).

2023 Progress: January of 2023, [the European Commission referred Ireland to the EU Court of Justice](#) for its failure to correctly transpose the Water Framework Directive into law. NGO representatives felt the State is not willing to make the changes necessary to comply with the WFD and we are *"not anywhere near complying with the WFD"*. One stakeholder highlighted the significance of the [EPA indicators report](#) in showing the poor level of compliance with the WFD. While one stakeholder acknowledged the signing of the [Abstraction Act](#) into [legislation](#), they felt it neglected the requirements of the WFD and set the threshold too high. [Media reports](#) also highlight a lack of compliance with the WFD.

3.1.2d. "Expand programmes, including the Agriculture Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme (ASSAP), and work with farmers, industry, and advisory services, to protect and deliver improvements in water quality."

2021-2022 Progress: There was no published expansion of ASSAP. There were no published water quality data/empirical evidence to demonstrate this program is effective. An [independent review](#) stated that the design of ASSAP *"is a vital element for addressing the water quality challenges in Irish agriculture"*. However, this review recommended measures to strengthen ASSAP which were not implemented as of the 2022 assessment.

2023 Progress: In relation to the independent review, one of the [recommendations to expand and continue the programme](#) has been committed to and is being funded by the Government. However, an NGO representative highlighted that there was "no evidence that the programme has delivered any water quality results". Another stakeholder confirmed, "they are expanding it". However, they felt there needs to be more correlation between the advisors in ASSAP and catchment scientists to provide sufficient advice.

3.1.2e. "Launch a new revised and strengthened River Basin Management Plan in 2022, drawing on a collaborative approach between all stakeholders."

2021 - 2022 Progress: A [public consultation](#) was conducted in August 2020. The Draft River Basin Management Plan was published in September 2021. The plan was [criticized for a lack of ambition and for lacking a central body](#). Lack of policy cohesion between agriculture/forestry and water quality was described as a *"huge issue"* by NGO representatives. Despite the addition of some measures to address nitrate pollution, the plan was criticized for [failing to adequately address this problem](#). An NGO representative described the plan as *"marginally strengthened"*. However, it was difficult to assess the 'collaborative' aspect of this commitment as the finalized plan had not yet been published.

2023 Progress: A source stated this plan will be published "very soon" and will be stronger. Media

reports confirm that [departments are working on revised and "strengthened" river basin management plans](#). Stakeholders hoped the delayed plan was an indication of increased ambition. However, one NGO representative voiced concern over the content of the draft not being sufficient and that "collaboration between stakeholders" was not happening as promised.

3.1.2f. "Ensure that Irish Water develops Drinking Water Safety Plans to protect abstraction sources; and reduces public health risks, including Trihalomethane (THMs) exceedances in treatment plants."

2021 - 2022 Progress: The EPA's "[Drinking Water Quality in Public Supplies 2020](#)" report (2021) anticipated the transposition of the Drinking Water Directive (due to be transposed into Irish law in January 2023) to place this requirement on a statutory footing. However, there was an infringement case before the Court of Justice of the European Union due to 30 supply zones failing to meet safety standards for THMs. The European Commission [welcomed Ireland's progress in addressing THM levels](#). However, the Commission also stated that more than three years after the opening of the [infringement case](#), several water supply zones still did not comply with the requirements of the Drinking Water Directive. According to the EPA, there was [no water quality standard for microplastics](#) in the Drinking Water Regulations.

2023 Progress: [A new Drinking Water Directive](#) has been implemented. Within [the Directive](#), Member States are obliged to make drinking water safety plans. One stakeholder noted that Uisce Eireann is progressing with these. Stakeholders believed Irish Water were progressing well on this commitment but lacked evidence to say this with certainty.

3.1.2g. "Continue to support the Local Authority Waters Programme and expand the Community Water Development Fund."

2021 - 2022 Progress: The Local Authority Waters Programme launched its 2021 Community Water Development Fund in November 2020. The 2021 fund was [increased to €360,000](#) from 225,000 in 2020. In 2022, the budget for this fund was increased to €500,000. However, this scheme was described as completely oversubscribed by stakeholders, with funding remaining insufficient when measured against public interest. LAWPro was also described as understaffed. There were 13 Community Water Officers while [a SWAN assessment](#) found at least 46 are required.

2023 Progress: EUR [523,000](#) was allocated to the Community Water Development Fund in 2023. [The fund applications in 2023 were twice the grant aid available](#) and this appears to be constantly increasing. Stakeholders confirmed that financial resources are expected to increase along with the Community Water Development Fund and acknowledged good progress in relation to this commitment.

3.1.3. Group Water Schemes

3.1.3a. "We will support the National Federation of Group Water Schemes, to ensure that issues of quality and security of supply are addressed."

AND 3.1.3b "We will continue to invest in a multi-annual capital funding programme to improve the quality of drinking water in group water schemes, while protecting water quality."

2021 - 2022 Progress: In March 2021, [funding of €500,000 was announced](#) to implement targeted drinking water source protection actions in group water scheme catchments as part of the national federation of group water schemes source protection strategy. A review of the funding and support

provided to water schemes in rural communities was [underway](#) in 2022 but not yet acted upon.
2023 Progress: Stakeholders confirmed that support for the National Federation of Group Water Schemes is in place along with multi-annual capital funding for group water schemes [with more funding becoming available for 2023](#).

3.1.4. Conservation

3.1.4a. "Implement the recommendations of the Committee on Future Funding of Domestic Water Services in relation to excess use."

2021-2022 Progress: There was no evidence that this commitment had been implemented.

2023 Progress: A stakeholder confirmed that although recommendations have been made on water conservation, this commitment has not progressed.

3.1.4b. "Advocate at EU level for more water and energy-efficient white goods."

2021-2022 Progress: There was no information available on this commitment.

2023 Progress: A stakeholder confirmed that no progress has been seen at this level.

3.1.4c. "Conduct a feasibility study examining how further assistance can be given to low-income households for the installation of water efficient appliances."

2021-2022 Progress: No information about this commitment was publicly available.

2023 Progress: A stakeholder confirmed that nothing has been done in relation to this commitment.

3.1.4d. "We fully support the work of the Water Services Innovation Fund, which aims to investigate solutions to promoting greater efficiency in water usage."

2021-2022 Progress: According to the [Water Services Innovation Fund Annual Report 2020](#)

(November 2021), the CRU allowed Irish Water EUR 4 million under the Fund for the period 2020-2024.

2023 Progress: A stakeholder confirmed that this commitment has not progressed.

3.1.4e. "We will continue to work with An Fóram Uisce (the water forum) to review and develop water-quality strategies."

2021-2022 Progress: There was no publicly available evidence of An Fóram Uisce's input being integrated into policy.

2023 Progress: A stakeholder confirmed this commitment is now progressing and there is engagement regarding conservation. In relation to water quality, the River Basin Management Plan engagement was considered "extensive". Stakeholder input and engagement with the Government was considered positive.

3.1.4f. "We will commission a range of research projects to explore innovative ways of improving our water infrastructure and reducing consumption."

2021-2022 Progress: There were no announcements regarding this commitment.

2023 Progress: One stakeholder voiced concerns over the progress of this commitment. [In July 2022 there was a call for research on conservation by the water forum](#). Following this, [the water forum](#) submitted a policy position document on water conservation to the department focusing on why water conservation is necessary in Ireland.

3.2. Marine

3.2a. "Develop a new integrated marine sustainable development plan, as a successor to Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth, focusing on all aspects of the marine, with a greater focus on sustainability and stakeholder engagement and centrally coordinated by the Department of the Taoiseach, to be implemented over the life of the Government."

2021-2022 Progress: There was no obvious progress on this commitment.

2023 Progress: [Improvements can be seen in relation to fishing control laws](#). A stakeholder confirmed new fishery control regulations were on the way to being passed.

3.2b. "Ensure that inshore waters continue to be protected for smaller fishing vessels and recreational fishers and that pair trawling will be prohibited inside the six-mile limit."

2021-2022 Progress: The High Court ruled that the policy directive excluding large vessels from trawling in inshore waters within 6 miles of the coast was void/or of no legal effect. The substantive hearing by the Court of Appeal took [place in June 2021](#). Vessels resumed trawling in the waters inside six nautical miles and no progress was made with appeals as of the 2022 assessment. In May 2022, [Minister Charlie McConalogue](#) released a statement that he was awaiting the decision of the Court of Appeal to inform next steps. The resumption of trawling within the six-mile limit was highlighted by NGOs such as [Birdwatch Ireland](#) as a critical issue.

2023 Progress: [A Parliamentary Question](#) in 2023 in relation to pair trawling indicated there are legal proceedings still ongoing which prevent progress on this commitment. Trawling [still remains permitted](#) after the policy directive was reversed. However, there was a strong [appeal for action](#) in 2018-2019 with "900 submissions with people sufficiently engaged to appeal to the minister to do something". In March 2023 [two fishermen](#) won an appeal over a "trawling ban" where it is further indicated that the "Government Policy Directive" does not have legal effect. [The Irish Wildlife Trust](#) acknowledged the years of trying to protect inshore waters from trawling as "another failure".

3.2c. "Aggressively tackle the issue of waste, ghost nets and illegal dumping in the marine environment, through rigorous implementation of the Port Reception Facilities Directives and by requiring all Irish fishing trawlers to participate in the Clean Oceans Initiative, ensuring that plastic fished up at sea is brought ashore."

2021-2022 Progress: While [96% of Irish trawlers were signed up to the Clean Oceans Initiative](#), there was no clear evidence of participation in this scheme as a requirement. There was insufficient information available on the implementation of the Port Reception Facilities Directive. In June 2022, Minister McConalogue announced the '[Clean Oceans Initiative Fishing Gear Retirement Scheme](#)'. According to stakeholders, industry-led initiatives were also progressing, but it was unclear how these were monitored. There was no legislative action to address this commitment.

2023 Progress: [In February 2023 announcements were made](#) indicating the introduction of [a programme of measures](#) to tackle strain on Ireland's Marine environment and achieve Ireland's targets for a clean marine environment. One of the main measures [seen in the programme of measures](#) "PoMs", is the aim to reduce litter in the seas, through the implementation of the Single-Use Plastics Directive and Circular Economy Act. There has been further evidence of "PoMs" being implemented within [CAP23](#).

3.2d. "Work to develop the aquaculture sector in a sustainable way, including shellfish aquaculture, using native species, and implement the recommendations of the report of the Independent Aquaculture Licencing Review Group, to ensure that feed products for aquaculture are sourced and produced in the most sustainable manner possible."

2021-2022 Progress: Minister McConalogue [announced in July 2021](#) the award of EUR 1 million in grants to 13 aquaculture enterprises under European Maritime and Fisheries Fund Programme. In June 2022, the online Aquaculture Information Management System (AQUAMIS) [was launched](#) in line with the [Independent Aquaculture Licencing Review Group's recommendation](#). This has been described as Phase 1 of implementing the Review Group's recommendations. Phase 2 was planned to be delivered [over a 24-month period](#). According to AQUAMIS, there were [551 licensed aquaculture sites](#) for Pacific oysters. These are classified as invasive species and are becoming naturalized in Irish bays. [According to Irish ecologists](#), this has the potential to displace native species (including shore birds) and disrupt existing marine habitats.

2023 Progress: In December 2022, the EU Commission [adopted](#) the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund (EMFAF) Programme 2021-27 for Ireland, with a budget of €258 million, of which €134 million is from EU contribution and €116 million is from the Government of Ireland.

3.2e. "Progress a national policy on coastal erosion and flooding having regard to climate change."

2021-2022 Progress: The National Coastal Change Management Strategy Steering Group [met for the first time in September 2020](#). The group was intended to report to the Government within six months with initial findings but no findings were made public in 2021 and no progress was made on this commitment in 2022. In the CCAC's [2021 Annual Review](#), they noted the Government had committed to the development of a Coastal Change Strategy and established a cross-departmental working group on a whole of Government basis. However, the initial findings and recommendations of the group which were due in Spring 2021 were overdue as of the 2022 assessment.

2023 Progress: The National Coastal Change Management Strategy Steering Group has failed to supply their report. In a May 2023 debate, Minister of State Patrick O'Donovan [stated](#) that the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is currently assisting Local Authorities in coastal erosion management. Minister O'Donovan further states that the Office of Public Works has started a national assessment of coastal erosion through the Irish Coastal Protection Strategy Study (ICPSS).

3.2f. "We will task the Marine Institute with a collaborative EU-wide research initiative, aimed at investigating the climate-change mitigation potential of blue carbon and working towards a means of creating a validated inventory that will in the future assist the EU in meeting our climate-change objectives."

2021-2022 Progress: The Marine Institute [launched a funding call](#) for a programme of research in the area of Blue Carbon. The successful recipients of funding. 'BlueC' and 'Quest', were [announced in February 2022](#). These projects received 2.6 million in funding. However, it was unknown whether these projects will have a successful impact.

2023 Progress: In a June 2023 debate, there was [discussion of](#) the Marine Institute's 'Blue Carbon and Marine Carbon Sequestration in Irish Waters and Coastal Habitats' special report from 2021 and the projects Quest and Blue C, without providing updates on the outcomes of these projects. The

European Commission has proposed the establishment of a certification framework for carbon removals. It is unclear whether these projects have had a major impact.

3.2.1. Common Fisheries Policy

3.2.1a. “We are fully committed to the environmental objectives of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)”

2021-2022 Progress: In 2021, The [Irish Wildlife Trust](#) indicated: “the level of overfishing is getting worse and there is no indication that the Government is planning anything but business as usual.” NGO stakeholders felt Ireland had played a negative role at EU level, by advocating for sustainable fishing limits defined as overfishing and by taking insufficient action to ensure that the landing obligation was complied with. In February 2022, a CFP Review Group [was announced](#) following a call made by the High Court of Ireland for the Court of Justice of the European Union to decide whether EU ministers have illegally set unsustainable fishing limits, following a case taken by Friends of the Irish Environment. The CFP Review Group undertook a review of the CFP and its implementation in Ireland, but this was not published before the 2022 assessment.

2023 Progress: A stakeholder confirmed there was a [national review of the CFP](#) last year with many recommendations sent to the Minister in terms of what needs to be changed within the CFP from a national perspective. Issues around overfishing and insufficient compliance in relation to the objectives of the CFP [continue to be reported](#). [The Irish Wildlife Trust](#) says that rather than being pledged to the CFP environmental objectives the “Irish Government tried to defend overfishing in the high court”. One stakeholder shared that there has not been any progress on this commitment, as it remains in the courts.

3.2.1b. “Actively promote setting annual quotas, in line with Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) principles.”

2021-2022 Progress: In the opinion of an NGO representative, Ireland played a negative role at the EU level, contributing to the EUs failure to implement MSY principles by advocating for practices which result in overfishing. Ireland continued to press for total allowable catches to be above scientific advice, still setting catches in excess for many fisheries and species.

2023 Progress: In October 2022, Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine Charlie McConalogue [stated](#) that in 2022, 38 stocks were fished below the MSY, while, in 2013, only 20 were fished at that level. Minister McConalogue further stated that 15 stocks were overfished in 2022, as of October, which is reduced from previous years of 22. An NGO representative confirmed Ireland is advocating for quotas “outside scientific advice”. [The Marine Strategy Framework Directive](#) has implemented “12 new measures” and highlighted the review of the CFP which focused on an “ecosystem-based approach” while considering the maximum sustainable yield. However, concerns were voiced in relation to this commitment and a need for “work to be done”.

3.2.1c. “Promote the introduction of constructive technical measures that promote sustainability, decrease by-catch and protect fish stocks for the future.”

2021-2022 Progress: The Sea-Fisheries (Technical Measures) Regulations 2020 (S.I. No. 440/2020) was enacted in October 2020, giving full effect to the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/967. BIM [trialled technical measures](#) such as nets with altered mesh sizes for the purposes of

improving environmental and economic sustainability. BIM also published technical guidelines on reducing the number of unwanted catches. However, stakeholders indicated the extent to which uptake of these measures have been promoted remained questionable, and there appeared to be no legislative backing for the use of such measures.

2023 Progress: One NGO representative confirmed reports were carried out on technical measures in increasing sustainability, e.g. [the fisheries conservation report in June 2023](#)

3.2.1d. "Work to eliminate illegal fishing and promote a culture of compliance by all EU vessels in our 200-mile zone, in order to protect the fish stocks on which the Irish fishing industry depends."

2021-2022 Progress: Auditors found evidence of large-scale overfishing between 2012 and 2016, declaring Ireland's systems for controlling and sanctioning compliance with the rules as "unsatisfactory". As a result, Ireland will have [tens of thousands of fish deducted from its quotas](#) and could lose up to €40 million in EU funding. Land and sea inspections of fishing vessels also dropped by 30% in 2020, with a [drop of over 60% sea boardings](#) by the Naval Service due to Covid-19 redeployment. In 2021, the Naval Service undertook [269 boardings](#) relating to fisheries, resulting in nine detentions, compared to [309 boardings in 2020](#). Illegal discarding continued to be a significant issue in Irish waters. In November 2021, the European Commission [issued a formal notice](#) to Ireland requesting a response regarding how this issue will be tackled.

2023 Progress: An NGO representative confirmed this commitment as a "tick box" in terms of progress, but noted prosecutions taking place in terms of illegal fishing. For example, [fines being implemented for illegal fishing](#) in March 2023. In July 2022, [media reports](#) shared that more than 100 prosecutions were charged for illegal fishing.

3.2.1e. "Implement the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) capability review, with a view to enhancing governance issues, and consider any other measures that may be necessary."

2021-2022 Progress: According to [Minister's Questions in April 2021](#), an independent Advisory Board nominated by DAFM was put in place to assist the management of the SFPA in the implementation of the Report. According to a [Parliamentary Question](#) in June 2022, the "advisory board has no legal responsibility and is solely advisory in nature". The responsibility to implement the SFPA capability review was solely with the SFPA, according to the Minister's response. In December 2021, the SFPA published their [three year strategy](#).

2023 Progress: In November 2023 [The Sea Fisheries Regulator](#) published their 2021 report. Within this report, high expectations are indicated. It is mentioned that there is "significant ongoing progress" as part of their capability review. Following on from this [they have implemented a three-year strategy](#) from 2021-2023. [With the most recent report being published in Q1 of 2023. The Irish Wildlife Trust](#) said there was "greater assertiveness and capability" concerning the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA).

3.2.1f. "Implement a fair EU points system, in order to protect fish stocks and ensure the release of suspended EU funding."

2021-2022 Progress: In August 2020, [laws were introduced](#) providing the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority with powers to apply penalty points against licensed fishing vessels for serious

infringements of the European Common Fisheries Policy. The [Sea-Fisheries \(Miscellaneous Provisions\) Act 2022](#) amended the European Union (Common Fisheries Policy) (Point System) Regulations 2020.

2023 Progress: In January 2023 the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) announced a serious infringement concerning a sea fishing boat. Leading on from this, they are liable to penalty points. In Q1 2023, the SFPA published a report highlighting the implementation of “3 points” for an infringement.

3.2.2. Marine Protection Areas

3.2.2a. "We support the principles and ambition of the EU Biodiversity Strategy and will develop comprehensive legislation for the identification, designation, and management of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in Irish territorial waters."

AND 3.2.2b. "We will realise our outstanding target of 10% under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive as soon as is practical and aim for 30% of marine protected areas by 2030."

AND 3.2.2c. "This will be done on the basis of scientific expertise and in close consultation with all stakeholders, in particular the fishing industry, as well as environmental and community representatives. This consultation process will begin in the first 100 days of Government."

2021-2022 Progress: An expert report on MPAs (initiated under the last Government) was published in 2021. Multiple NGO representatives expressed the opinion that legislation will be necessary if there is any chance to meet the 30% by 2030 target, asserting that existing [MPAs remain mismanaged while the criteria for deciding where new MPAs should go has yet to be determined](#). According to Minister Noonan, the target of 30% will be included in this legislation. However, the quality of this legislation is unknown until the draft is published. Stakeholders felt Ireland was well behind on achieving the targets outlined in this commitment as only 2.1% of Ireland’s marine and coastal areas were designated as MPAs. The [review of the public consultation on the MPA Advisory Group report](#) was published in March 2022. The process showed an exceptionally long six-month public consultation on MPAs concluded at the end of July. It is unclear when the outcome of this consultation will be known. According to NGO representatives, there has been no official timeline given at any point in this process. One NGO representative raised concerns around the lack of funding allocated to progress research, consultation, designation and management.

2023 Progress: An NGO representative confirmed that MPA legislation is currently being drafted. However, they expressed concern over the MPA Bill due to the expectation for this to be introduced to the Oireachtas by July but now delayed until autumn. The representative felt there has been good progress, but it has “slowed recently”. A source confirmed the MPA legislation has been developed and they have increased [marine protected area coverage](#) to “8.3% and hope to be 10%” targets under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, further noting that they are “on track” for 30% MPAs by 2030. Another stakeholder expressed concern over the poor systems currently in place to establish MPAs, stating that the first step to the process should be establishing the areas, not the planning regime.

3.2.2d. "We will examine the establishment of an offshore maritime area as Ireland’s seventh national park."

2021-2022 Progress: No Progress was made on this commitment.

2023 Progress: A stakeholder confirmed that this commitment has not progressed.

3.2.3. Marine Planning and Development Management Bill

3.2.3a. "The Government will prioritise the passage of a balanced and Aarhus Convention compliant Marine and Planning and Development Management Bill through the Oireachtas." ... "Give cross government priority to the drafting of the Marine Planning and Development Bill, so that it is published as soon as possible and enacted within nine months."

2021-2022 Progress: The Marine Planning and Development Bill was replaced by the Maritime Area Planning Bill. This commitment is now the '[Marine Area Planning Act](#)' and was passed by the Oireachtas in December 2021. Several stakeholders expressed concern over the Act's compliance with the Aarhus Convention. Furthermore, the Act was criticised for not addressing interim protection of areas before designation. Other concerns within the legislation included the [impact of the planning process on biodiversity and the process of judicial review](#). According to an NGO representative, by failing to make provisions for marine protection, the current Maritime Area Planning Bill could be described as failing to meet the "balanced" criteria the Government committed to in the PfG.

2023 Progress: A stakeholder confirmed this commitment is now complete. The MAP Act and National Marine Planning Framework were agreed upon in 2021, and a review of the current planning framework is ongoing.

3.2.3b. "We will bring forward Ireland's first ever National Marine Planning Framework. This will introduce a planning system for the development of Ireland's maritime area in the same way that the National Planning Framework fulfils this function on land."

2021-2023 Progress: The [National Marine Planning Framework \(NMPF\)](#) was approved by the Dáil in May 2021. SWAN's report on the NMPF stated that it cannot be considered a spatial plan, which is required under the Directive, as it did not "[allocate where activities will take place at sea or set out regionally differentiated priorities for the use and protection of Ireland's marine space](#)". When the final plan was published, there were calls from NGOs, the fishing sector, and opposition parties to allow for more scrutiny of the plan. There was a very brief debate in the Dáil before the NMPF was passed. According to NGO representatives in 2021, the NMPF was not compliant with the EU's Maritime Spatial Planning Directive.

2023 Progress: A stakeholder confirmed this commitment is now complete. However, [Oireachtas testimony](#) by civil society organisations in February 2023 pointed out that Ireland is already approximately nine years late delivering on the obligation to provide for MPAs under the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive, and this delay further compromises Ireland's implementation of the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive, including Ireland's maritime spatial plan, the national marine planning framework, NMPF, and the certainty maritime developments and activities need to advance under the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021 and other legislation, knowing where they can and cannot hope to operate.

3.2.3c. "These two documents will form the basis for Project Ireland Marine 2040, our long-term overarching strategy to manage Ireland's seas for the benefit of all its people."

2021-2022 Progress: The two documents have been published. However, as highlighted in Section 3.2.3a and 3.2.3b, NGOs expressed numerous concerns over their quality.

2023 Progress: In July 2021, the [National Marine Planning Framework](#) was published, outlining the role of Project Ireland Marine 2040 in working with the Project Ireland Delivery Board. The Project

Marine's third newsletter was published in February 2023, outlining policy updates and areas of concern.

3.2.3d. "A marine planning oversight delivery board on the same model as the Project Ireland 2040 Delivery Board will be established to provide leadership and oversight to the implementation of these policies."

2021-2022 Progress: While there was a reference to this Delivery Board in the National Marine Planning Framework, there were no public reports of any appointments, meetings or actions taken by the board as of 2022. The Maritime Area Regulatory Authority was aimed to become [established and operational from next year](#). According to Minister of State Ossian Smyth, "The establishment of this authority is one of the highest priorities for the Government".

2023 Progress: Within [CAP23](#) there is a focus on marine planning and establishing Marine Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) to be functional in 2023. MARA will hold the role of delivering permits and implementation of actions within the marine space. MARA [will be established on the 17th of July 2023](#) and will be responsible for judging applications of "maritime area consents", permitting licences, and imposing regulations for developments and activities in "Ireland's maritime area".

4. Circular Economy & Waste

4a. "Publish and start implementing a new National Waste and Circular Economy Action Plan."

2021-2022 Progress: The [Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy](#) was published in September 2020. The Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy 2022 – 2023 'Living More, Using Less' was published in December 2021. The [Circular Economy and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2022](#) was signed into law in [July 2022](#) including the application of [mandatory incentivized pricing to all commercial waste customers](#). A working group was established with five seats in this group occupied by the NGO sector. According to one NGO representative, the retention of this advisory group should contribute to the proper implementation of the various regulations and legislation.

2023 Outcome: This commitment is complete as the Waste Action Plan is now published. NGO representatives felt the drafting of a [new national waste management plan](#) was very detailed but wanted more specificity on reuse and repair within the document.

4b. "Strengthen the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) model (for packaging), to ensure the coverage of the full net costs related to the separate collection and treatment of the end-of-life products."

2021-2022 Progress: The heads of regulation were completed in 2021. Additional enforcement provisions around EPR, including fixed payment notices, are being delivered through the Circular Economy and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2022. Work was underway to [amend packaging regulations](#) to ensure 'self-compliance' was removed as an option. Additional EPRs will arise from the Single Use Packaging Directive. According to [a Government announcement](#), by 31 December 2024, producers of balloons, wet wipes and fishing gear will also be subject to an EPR scheme.

2023 Progress: [Extended EPR](#) has been introduced in different areas and extended into other products such as [cigarette products](#) and [in relation to farm plastics](#). NGO representatives regarded this commitment as being on track and felt there was a noticeable shift toward compostable packaging.

4c. "Consider ways in which we can better inform consumers about the carbon footprint of products, including through labelling."

2021-2022 Progress: According to a source, DECC was working with the Department of Enterprise to develop Ireland's negotiating position on the European Commission's Sustainable Products Initiative. The two departments believed this is the most effective route to ensure customers are informed about the environmental impact of products. NGO representatives expressed concern over lack of progress in this area.

2023 Progress: A source noted that Ireland is better off waiting for the Sustainable Products Initiative [focused on labelling to avoid greenwashing](#) rather than progressing this commitment on its own. An NGO representative felt this commitment was moving slower than they would like.

4d. "Ensure that public procurement leads the transition to the Circular Economy through an evidence-based approach, such as relying on Environmental Product Declarations. We will mandate the inclusion of green criteria in all procurements using public funds, to be completed within 36 months."

2021-2022 Progress: The 'Green Tenders' document on Green Public Procurement was [being reviewed](#) in 2022 as part of the ["Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy 2022 - 2023"](#), DECC was working with the OGP and the EPA to update all procurement frameworks within the next three years. In addition, The EPA's 'Green Public Procurement - Guidance for the Public Sector' document was published in September 2021. The EPA's website contains an online training program for green procurement. The specified outputs include a 'Report on Green Public Procurement activity during 2020' ([published by the EPA in April](#)). The Circular Economy, Waste Management (Amendment) and Minerals Development (Amendment) Bill 2022 used the phrase "promote the use", which some stakeholders felt was too weak.

2023 Progress: In March 2023, the EPA released its [second report on Green Public Procurement](#), which found that only 10% of contracts included green criteria. A source acknowledged public procurement was a challenge but confirmed that revised green public procurement criteria will be published by the end of 2023. [CAP23](#) also considered measures and plans to implement green public procurement. [However, the EPA](#) highlighted the issue of a lack of inclusion of green public procurement. [The Public Sector Climate Action Mandate](#) was announced in 2023, with a focus on green public procurement.

4e. "Work with EU Member States to encourage the further reduction and prevention of plastic packaging."

2021-2022 Progress: Ireland was on track with the requirements of the SUP Directive. The Circular Economy Act put forward measures such as the 'latte levy' to help meet targets. In a [Seanad debate of the Circular Economy Bill](#) in June 2022, Deputy Ossian Smyth (Green Party) stated: "We are providing legislation that allows for any type of packaging - for food, drink or anything else - to have a levy on it only where there is a reusable alternative." In 2021, the Rethink Plastic Alliance and the Break Free From Plastic movement [released an assessment](#) of each EU Member States' transposition of the SUP Directive highlighting five new positive developments in Ireland.

2023 Progress: NGO representatives noted the "Latte Levy" as part of this commitment and acknowledged that, while progress has taken place internally, there has been no announcement made yet. Stakeholders would also like to see a focus on other single-use plastic items such as those

within the dining sector. [A media report in May 2023 confirmed](#) the phase-out of disposable cups, plates and utensils in the public sector. Plans have been brought to the cabinet in order to implement the [banning of these disposable items](#). These plans are published within the [New public sector mandate 2023](#) with the mandate setting out actions such as stopping the use of the previously mentioned disposable items.

4f. "Continue and expand the Clean Oceans Initiative to collect, reduce and reuse marine litter and clean up our marine environment."

2021-2022 Progress: Minister McConalogue [announced in June 2021](#) that over 600 tonnes of marine waste had been collected by Ireland's seafood sector since 2015 as a result of participation in the Clean Oceans Initiative. However, there was no evidence of any expansion of the scheme's scope in 2021. In June 2022, Minister Charlie McConalogue announced the ["Clean Oceans Initiative Fishing Gear Retirement Scheme"](#), aimed at collecting old and damaged fishing gear.

2023 Progress: [CAP23](#) introduces measures to improve engagement in the clean oceans initiative. Action MA/23/15 focuses on improving and increasing participation of the clean oceans initiative.

4g. "Examine changes to the tax system to encourage the efficient use of resources."

2021-2022 Progress: Economic instruments such as a levy on takeaway and zero VAT for the reselling of used items or for repair services were cited as further areas of development by one NGO representative. A 20c levy on disposable coffee cups was introduced under the Circular Economy Act (see [Commitment 4e](#)). The NGO 'VOICE' pushed for zero VAT on repair services but were unsuccessful. While this was [discussed by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action in October 2021](#), it was not taken up by DECC.

2023 Progress: An NGO representative highlighted the levy on takeaway cups and the importance of zero VAT in reselling reused items for repair services. However, it was noted that there had been a lack of movement on "reuse and repair". An NGO representative would further advocate for "0 VAT on reselling and repair of reuse items". It was noted that VAT on DRS has been removed and this was considered a positive change.

4h. "Create a Circular Economy Unit in Government, to ensure a whole-of-government approach to the circular economy."

2021-2022 Progress: A Circular Economy Unit was established in the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) with two circular economy divisions -Circular Economy Strategic Economy Division and the Circular Economy Materials Management division. According to a source, there was a larger focus on this commitment in 2022, with the aim of moving up the waste hierarchy beyond recycling and into reuse and reduction.

2023 Outcome: This commitment has been completed with the establishment of a whole-of-Government circular economy unit. NGO representatives felt it was "working quite well, encouraging a whole of Government approach" and were positive about this commitment.

4i. "Phase out the use of single-use plastics."

2021-2022 Progress: A latte levy was [expected to be in place as of 2022](#). However, Government focus moved towards single use disposable agents and prioritising the use of reusable products

([Commitment 4e](#)). VOICE was [looking for stronger provisions](#). The waste recovery levy was hoped to be introduced in 2022, with public consultation and impact analysis planned Q3/Q4, according to a source. [Despite support from the Joint Committee on Environment & Climate Action](#), no progress was made regarding the banning of certain single-use plastic items.

2023 Progress: [A latte cup levy is set to be introduced in 2023](#). [Further reports indicate the implementation of the levy in summer of 2023](#). Under the Single Use Plastics (SUP) EU Directive, the DEEC banned single use plastic items, like plastic cutlery, in 2021, while tobacco products containing plastic were [prohibited](#) in 2023. In June 2023, Minister Smyth introduced a public [consultation](#) for the management of disposable vapes. A source emphasised the progress being made in relation to this commitment. An NGO representative noted they are “still waiting” for the latte levy to be implemented. However, another source confirmed that the latte levy is just awaiting a launch date. Finally, an additional NGO representative confirmed that conversations over tethered lids (lids that remain attached to the bottle after opening) and packaging are occurring, but still struggle with slow progress.

4j. "Examine the potential of a municipal compost system for biodegradable packaging."

2021-2022 Progress: No Progress was made regarding this commitment.

2023 Progress: A source acknowledged delays with this commitment but highlighted the introduction of regulations in relation to brown bins for all domestic customers by the end of the year. NGO representatives pointed to the need for more education within this area and highlighted issues around access to individuals living in both rural and urban settings such as apartment blocks. [Waste legislation](#) is scheduled to come into effect in July. NGO representatives are happy to see this but feel there needs to be more emphasis on messaging and clarity around waste segregation.

4k. "Intend to introduce a deposit-and-return scheme for plastic bottles and aluminium cans, in line with the findings of the recently commissioned report."

2021-2022 Progress: A national deposit-and-return scheme for both PET bottles and cans underwent consultation and was [expected to be in place by the end of 2022](#) to achieve the 90% collection target. The Government aimed to have this scheme [operational by Q3 2022](#). This is not a pilot scheme and all vending machines are expected to be rolled out at the same time. VOICE Ireland [strongly criticised](#) the Department of Finance’s plan to introduce VAT on the DRS, stating that it “set a bad precedent” and “may defeat any new reuse system”.

2023 Progress: [The Deposit and Return Scheme \(DRS\)](#) has been launched and is scheduled to be fully rolled out by [February 2024](#). A source confirmed this commitment to be on track, emphasising that retailers have begun to invest in reverse vending machines. An NGO representative noted they were happy with the progress in relation to this commitment and with VAT not being included in the roll out of DRS.

5. Air Quality

5a. "We will publish the first ever clean air strategy."

2021-2022 Progress: Despite the completion of a consultation in 2017, the clean air strategy was not published in 2021 or 2022. In [May 2022](#), submissions for consultation on the strategy closed. Stakeholders expressed concerns that the strategy will be outdated by the time it is published.

2023 Progress: Following over 100 public consultation [submissions](#), [The Clean Air Strategy](#) was published in April 2023. Stakeholders welcomed the strategy and its ambition to meet World Health Organisation (WHO) Air Quality Guidelines by 2040, which are more stringent than the current [Clean Air for Europe \(CAFE\) Directive](#) limits. Air pollution is currently governed under the Air Pollution Act 1987, which was criticised by stakeholders for being outdated. The clean air strategy details plans to replace this with a new Clean Air Act.

5b. "Develop a regional approach to air quality and noise enforcement."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2020, The EPA [contracted CERC to undertake regional-to-local scale air quality modelling for Ireland](#) to generate air quality maps for the whole country. A regional approach to air quality [began with local authorities](#) in 2022. An EPA report was commissioned in November 2020 [to provide an emissions inventory for the five main cities \(Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford and Galway\)](#), creating a local approach to air quality monitoring. However, this report excluded small towns such as Ennis, Tralee and Enniscorthy, which are among [the most highly polluted areas in Ireland](#). In 2022, no results regarding the modelled air quality and resultant maps were publicly available. There was no clear progress on the development of a regional approach to noise enforcement from 2021-2022.

2023 Progress: There are [no dedicated resources](#) within regional lead authorities in relation to air quality enforcement. In 2023, DECC worked with the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) in developing the [business case for improved implementation of air quality legislation](#), which is expected to be approved this year. In 2023, local authorities received an additional [€500,000 in funding](#) to support enforcement campaigns. According to the Clean Air Strategy, the Clean Air Act will require local authorities to develop action plans in instances where there are exceedances of the air quality limits in their areas. Stakeholders expressed concerns regarding the lack of national coordination strategies available to local authorities in tackling air pollution and the disproportionate emphasis placed on large urban areas compared to highly polluted towns. [In September of 2022](#), Minister Eamon Ryan stated that DECC and the LGMA were working on a business case assessment to improve noise enforcement. Stakeholders were critical of the lack of progress surrounding noise enforcement.

5c. "Develop a multi-agency approach to clamping down on the sale of high-sulphur content fuel imported from the UK, with local authorities and the Revenue Commissioners involved"

2021-2022 Progress: In 2021, no announcements were made on the development of such a multi-agency approach. In [July 2022](#), the Solid Fuel Regulation was agreed upon, lowering the permitted sulphur content of these fuels from 2% to 1% by the 1st of September 2025.

2023 Progress: In 2023, there was no progress made on the development of such a multi-agency approach. According to the Clean Air Strategy, a National Air Quality Enforcement Steering Committee will be established in 2024 with membership from DECC, other Government Departments as well as law enforcement agencies, including An Garda Síochána.

5d. "Invest in our network of monitoring stations, to provide scientific evidence of air quality across different parts of the country, including real-time and localised air quality information."

2021-2022 Progress: In August 2021, Minister Eamon Ryan announced plans to expand the air quality monitoring network by 15 stations, increasing the total number of stations to 110 [during the period up to 2024](#). This project would be the highest level of monitoring per capita in Europe. Plans for this network were in place before the publication of the PfG. In 2022, there were [90 monitoring stations](#) which provided readily available data to the public.

2023 Progress: As of June 2023, there are [113 monitoring stations across Ireland](#). The expansion of monitoring stations is set to be completed in 2023, with [116 stations overall](#). Stakeholders were happy with the level of monitoring, however expressed concerns surrounding frequent breakdowns and maintenance of the stations. For example, [the Sligo station](#) has only conducted one reading in 2021 and remained offline since. Stakeholders emphasised that improved monitoring is required regarding ultrafine particles as well as in sensitive areas, such as schools and hospitals. Stakeholders also highlighted that current monitoring could be complemented by the widespread implementation of low-cost sensors, used as reference instruments rather than for compliance.

5e. "Extend the Smoky Coal ban to new towns and, over the term of Government, move towards a full nationwide ban."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2021, there was a public consultation on the development of new Solid Fuel Regulations and the Clean Air (Smoky Coal Ban) Bill 2021, which went before Seanad Éireann that year. In July 2022, the [Government agreed on new regulations of solid fuels](#), which focused on the large-scale, commercial sale of smoky fuels. These regulations were submitted to the European Commission under the Technical Standards Directive (2015/1535) notification procedure.

2023 Progress: Despite the passing of the Smoky Coal Ban in 2022, the illegal use of imported smoky coals from Northern Ireland remained an issue in 2023. The Solid Fuel Merchants Ireland (SFMI) claim that [€56 million worth of illegal coal](#) was brought into Ireland in 2022. Stakeholders commented that additional supports are needed for those switching from solid fuels to renewables, in order to ensure a just transition, and that improved public awareness campaigns and policing is required.

6. Transport

6a. "Use a range of policy approaches to incentivise use of electric vehicles (EVs) and encourage a shift away from petrol/diesel vehicles."

2021- 2022 Progress: In 2021, there was an increased focus on battery electric vehicles (BEVs). The grants for these EV's would remain at €5,000, whereas the purchase grants for Plug-In Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEV) decreased from €5,000 to €2,500. In 2022, the €5,000 purchase grant for BEVs was continued but the purchase grant for PHEVs was removed to encourage the uptake of BEVs. Incentives such as a €600 home charger grant, lower motor tax and reduced tolls were introduced to incentivise EV ownership.

2023 Progress: The number of new electric cars licensed for the first time in 2022 [increased by 81% compared with 2021](#). Approximately 22% of new private cars licensed in the first four months of 2023 were diesel compared to [17% which were electric](#). Zero Emissions Vehicles Ireland was established in July 2022 tasked with [supporting consumers, the public sector and businesses to](#)

[continue to make the switch to zero emission vehicles](#). They announced new initiatives and grants such as [purchase grants for private car owners and taxi drivers](#), [VRT relief](#), [reduced tolls](#), [home charger grants](#), [favourable motor and BIK tax rates](#), and [an extensive charging network](#). These measures have collectively contributed to an increased take up of EVs, with almost [88,000 registered](#) at the end of April 2023. From 1 January 2023, [EVs benefitted from a preferential rate of BIK, ranging from 9 – 22.5% depending on mileage](#). [Fossil-fuel vehicles were subjected to higher BIK rates, up to 37.5%](#). One stakeholder stated that they felt like the Government relies too heavily on EVs as the answer to transport emissions, when they come with so many issues of their own.

6b. "Legislate to ban the registration of new fossil-fuelled cars and light vehicles from 2030 onwards and phase out diesel and petrol cars from Irish cities from 2030."

2021-2022 progress: In 2022, it was noted that this commitment cannot be achieved unilaterally, so the EU has planned to legislate a ban on new fossil fuel car registration by 2035.

2023 Progress: In February 2023, [the European Parliament voted to approve a new law banning the sale of petrol and diesel cars from 2035](#). In March 2023, an exemption agreement between the EU and Germany was [announced](#), allowing "sales and registration of internal-combustion engine (ICE) models after the 2035 deadline — provided those vehicles operate only on carbon-neutral fuels, often generically referred to as 'e-fuels.'"

6c. "Review the current motor taxation regime to ensure that it adequately captures the harm caused by NOx (nitrogen oxide) and SOx (sulphur oxide) emissions. This will only apply to newly registered vehicles."

2021-2022 progress: In 2021, the surcharge bands on NOx were adjusted so higher NOx emitting vehicles pay more. No SOx surcharges were introduced as of 2022. No additional progress was made to disincentivise the purchase of high emission vehicles.

2023 Progress: In 2023, no additional progress has been made to disincentive the purchase of high emissions vehicles.

6d. "Publish an EV strategy to ensure that charging infrastructure stays ahead of demand and provide planning guidance to local authorities."

2021-2022 progress: In 2021, there was minor progress made by the Government with ESB ecars introducing a €20m programme to improve charging facilities across Ireland. In May 2022, there was a public consultation on the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy 2022-25, which focused on how Ireland can improve its charging infrastructure. In Budget 2022, 100 million was allocated to the implementation of the charging infrastructure outlined in the strategy.

2023 Outcome: In January 2023, Minister Eamon Ryan launched the [Electric Vehicles Charging Infrastructure Strategy 2022 – 2025](#). It will see €100 million spent on public charging infrastructure over the next three years to [deliver a national EV charging network](#) which aims to have a pool of high-powered chargers every 60 km on the motorway network as well as home/apartment charging, residential neighbourhood charging (including new mobility hubs), destination charging and en-route charging. Minister Ryan also announced the new [Shared Island Sports Club Scheme](#), which began its first practical roll-out on the 30th January. It is a €15 million scheme that will help sports clubs in local communities across the country to install electric vehicle charge points. Other destinations for these charge points include, retail centres and tourism spots.

6e. "Publish a public procurement framework for EVs. By at least 2025, we will only allow public sector bodies to purchase low or no-emissions cars and light goods vehicles."

2021-2022 progress and outcome: In August 2021, the revised Clean Vehicles Directive was transposed into Irish law ([S.I. 381 of 2021](#)). [Under these new rules](#), by 2025, 45% of buses and 10% of trucks procured by public bodies must be "clean" vehicles, with those targets rising to 15% and 65% respectively by 2030. For lighter duty vehicles (LDVs) the target is 38.5% by 2025. The public procurement framework for EVs was expected to be completed by the end of 2022 as stated in Climate Action Plan 2021.

2023 Progress: The [Public Sector Climate Action Mandate](#) states that public sector bodies will procure (purchase or lease) only zero-emission vehicles from the end of 2023, enabling Ireland to go beyond the requirements of the EU Directive. The [transport chapter of CAP23](#) recognises that, given the few zero-carbon alternatives now accessible to commercial operators, decarbonization of the haulage and heavy goods road freight sector poses a unique challenge. Manufacturers have indicated their commitment to [increasing the availability of e-trucks](#) to the market by mid-decade, with trucks such as Scania Battery Electric Truck, Volvo Electric Range Trucks & MAN eTruck now on the market.

6f. "Require that all new urban buses be electric hybrid or electric."

2021-2022 progress: In 2022, significant progress was made with the procurement process for 800 new electric buses agreed and the first 120 buses ordered in June 2022.

2023 Progress: Minister for Transport Eamon Ryan launched [Ireland's first all-electric bus service in Athlone](#) in January 2023. The project, a €10 million investment by the NTA, is the first to launch under the Government's Pathfinder Programme – a package of transport projects to be delivered by state agencies and local authorities around the country within the next three years. Prior to the commencement of the service, Bus Éireann drivers and mechanics have spent more than 500 hours partaking in a [comprehensive training programme](#), on the driving, maintenance and operation of the new buses which will deliver emission free public transport. However, [media reports](#) from July 2023 indicate that more than 80 electric buses will sit idle until the end of the year due to lack of charging infrastructure.

6g. "Legislate for e-scooters and e-bikes."

2021-2022 progress: The legislation of e-scooters and e-bikes under the [Road Traffic \(Amendment\) \(Personal Light Electric Vehicles\) Bill 2021](#) went before the Dáil in 2021. In 2022, it remained in the second stage of the Dáil and was expected to be signed into law in 2023.

2023 Progress: On 27 June 2023, the Minister for Transport welcomed the signing of the Road Traffic and Roads Act 2023 by President Michael D. Higgins. One of the most significant changes to the Act is the removal of legal restrictions for the use of e-scooters. The Act introduces a [new class of vehicle called Personal Powered Transporters \(PPTs\)](#), so regulations may now begin to classify e-scooters as PPTs. Until the regulations are in place, the use of e-scooters will remain illegal on public roads. Under EU legislation, technical e-scooter regulations must be notified to the European Commission for review, to ensure that they comply with Single Market rules before taking effect (this is known as the "TRIS" process). This procedure takes at least 12 weeks. When the TRIS procedure is completed successfully, the regulations can be implemented. This will most likely happen in Q4 2023. [The Act will also give e-bikes legal status.](#)

6h. "Publish and implement a 10-year strategy for the haulage sector focused on improving efficiencies, standards, and helping the sector move to a low-carbon future."

2021-2022 progress: [The ten-year Strategy for the Haulage Sector First Consultation Document](#) was published in April 2021 in addition to the Alternatively Fuelled Heavy Duty Vehicle Purchase Grant Scheme, which was [launched in March 2021](#). In 2022, the 10-year strategy was still being developed, but there was no public information on its progress. The Alternatively Fuelled Heavy Duty Vehicle Purchase Grant Scheme [re-opened for applications](#) in April 2022.

2023 Progress: In December 2022, Minister for Transport Eamon Ryan and Minister of State Hildegard Naughton published [Ireland's Road Haulage Strategy 2022-2031](#). The strategy is focused on [generating efficiencies, improving standards, securing jobs and helping the road freight sector move to a low-carbon future](#). The Strategy includes measures and supporting policies needed to deliver on these policies, with particular focus on decarbonisation. The Minister acknowledged that 99% of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) that are currently on Irish roads are diesel fuelled, and that the road-haulage sector is among one of the most emission intensive sectors.

6i. "Review and reduce speed limits, where appropriate, to address both road safety issues and carbon emissions, and ensure greater compliance."

2021-2022 progress: In 2021, Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) commissioned an analysis of the impact of changing and varying speed limits on greenhouse gas emissions and pollutants. These findings assisted in the development of the Climate Action Plan 2021. In March 2022, there was a review of speed limits with the joint Oireachtas Committee on Transport and Communications.

2023 Progress: The [Road Traffic and Roads Act 2023](#), introduced the use of variable speed limits on specific national roads in Ireland, specifically the M50. Variable speed limits are electronic speed limit signs that may be changed when required, depending on conditions and other safety concerns. The Act allows these variable speed limits to be enforced. A report on the reduction of speed limits is due to be published by summer 2023 recommending a reduction of the default 50 km/ph speed limit in urban areas to 30 km/ph speed limit. The [AA has shown support](#) for this reduction, encouraging people to slow down. However, they believe enforcement is required. In February 2023 the new Special Speed Limit Bye-Laws were approved and adopted. The [County Wicklow Road Traffic Special Speed Limit Bye-Laws of 2023](#) are due to come into effect on 1st June 2023, with the periodic limits due to come into effect 1st August 2023.

6j. "Run a pilot to examine the potential for ride-sharing apps to improve rural connectivity."

2021- 2022 progress: No progress was made on this commitment.

2023 Progress: No progress has been made on this commitment. A stakeholder indicated that legislation has stopped this. The [ride-sharing model used by Uber](#) and competitors such as Lyft would "not comply" with Irish legislation governing small public-service vehicles. Such legislation states that anyone carrying passengers for money must have a valid taxi licence.

6k. "Continue to support the greening of the taxi fleet and continue to provide financial assistance to taxi drivers switching to battery electric vehicles and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles."

2021-2022 progress: In February 2021, Minister Eamon Ryan announced the expansion of the Electric Scheme for Small Public Service Vehicles (SPSVs) such as taxis and hackneys. This increased grants for the purchasing of electric vehicles, with extra grants if the vehicle was wheelchair accessible or for scrapping an older, more polluting or high mileage vehicle. In 2022, the scheme was

still in place.

2023 Progress: The eSPSV Grant Scheme for taxis, hackneys and limousines has been renewed for 2023, providing SPSV owners with ongoing cost savings as they transition to electric vehicles. The grant offer period has been extended from three to nine months, allowing drivers more options for purchasing EVs. The eSPSV Grant Scheme has assisted nearly 1,400 SPSV drivers in obtaining electric vehicles since its inception in February 2018.

6l. "Support EU and international action to reduce aviation emissions, in line with the aims of the Paris Agreement and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change."

2021-2022 progress: There was no apparent progress on this commitment. However, in 2022, Ireland [endorsed the concept](#) of green aviation at COP26.

2023 Progress: [EU negotiators have agreed to decarbonise the aviation sector](#) through the stimulation of the region's green aviation fuel market. Before it can become legislation, the agreement, known as the ReFuelEU Aviation proposal, must be approved by individual EU Governments. The new regulations will require aviation fuel suppliers to supply a minimum share of sustainable aviation fuels (SAFs) to EU airports, beginning with 2% of total fuel supplied by 2025. This is expected to rise to 6% by the end of the decade, before reaching 70% by 2050. The measure will also require aircraft operators departing from EU airports to only use the necessary amount of fuel required for the flight, to avoid emissions related to "tankering", where operators carry excess fuel deliberately in order to avoid refuelling with SAF. In July 2023, the [National Hydrogen Strategy](#) was published, informing the country's national strategy when it comes to sustainable aviation fuel and decarbonising the aviation transport sector.

6.1. Cycling and Walking

6.1a. "Each local authority will be immediately mandated to carry out an assessment of their road network, to see where space can be reallocated for pedestrians and cyclists. This should be done immediately."

2021-2022 progress: In 2022, there was progress made at a national level and more road space was allocated to pedestrians and cyclists. In addition, [€289 million was allocated](#) for local authorities to develop more walking and cycling infrastructure.

2023 Progress: The [NTA allocated €290 million for Ireland's local authorities](#) to spend on walking and cycling infrastructure in 2023 to fund approximately 1,200 Active Travel projects, resulting in the development of almost 1,000 km of new and upgraded walking and cycling infrastructure across the country by 2025. Some of the major [projects receiving funding](#) include the Dodder Greenway, a new cycle and pedestrian bridge over the N40 in Cork, and the Waterford Greenway. In April 2023, Minister Ryan announced the roll out of the [Walking and Cycling Index 2023](#) (previously known as the Bike Life report). Approximately 1,100 persons will be surveyed in each of the Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway, and Waterford Metropolitan Areas. Following the survey, separate reports for each of the Metropolitan Areas will be created and published in early 2024.

6.1b. "The Government's commitment to cycling and pedestrian projects will be set at 20% of the 2020 capital budget (€360 million) per year for the lifetime of the Government."

2021-2022 progress: In 2021, there was a [€360 million investment in walking and cycling](#). This investment was maintained in 2022.

2023 Progress: This investment was maintained in 2023. However, in August 2022, it was reported

that [several Irish councils had underspent](#) their Government allocation in 2021. The councils were collectively allocated roughly €309m , but only €179m was spent, leaving 42% of the funding unused. One stakeholder was more concerned about the quality of projects rather than how much is being spent.

6.1c. "Deliver a five-year, multi-annual funding programme linked with a specific target of new separated cycling and walking infrastructure, which will be delivered or under construction by the end of 2024."

2021-2022 progress: There was no progress made as this commitment was not planned to be delivered until 2024.

2023 Progress: One stakeholder confirmed that NTA spent €310m on walking and cycling funding in 2022 but were unwilling to provide a breakdown of costs. There is no evidence of progress on this five-year multi-annual funding programme commitment.

6.1d. "Mandate that every local authority, with assistance from the National Transport Authority (NTA), adopts a high quality cycling policy, carries out an assessment of their roads network and develops cycle network plans, which will be implemented with the help of a suitably qualified Cycling Officer with clear powers and roles."

AND "Expand and enhance the expertise on active travel needed to dramatically improve infrastructure and participation both in the NTA and local authorities, including by establishing Regional Cycle Design Offices, co-located in the seven Regional Design Offices for roads, to support local authorities."

2021-2022 progress: In 2021, the Government announced funding for [248 new staff in local authorities](#) which would include an Active Travel Officer dedicated to behavioural change and promotional activity for each local authority. In 2022, progress was made on this commitment within some local authorities, though there was an imbalance of implementation across the country and limited publicly available information regarding the Regional Cycle Design Offices.

2023 Progress: In August 2022, there were [seven councils that were yet to fill 50% of the walking and cycling jobs](#) that have been funded by Government. [Active Travel teams are currently present in all 31 local authorities](#), with the number of specialised workers for Active Travel projects increasing from 57 in January 2021 to roughly 240 as of 31 March 2023.

6.1e. "Dramatically increase the number of children walking and cycling to primary and secondary school by mandating the Department of Transport to work with schools across Ireland, local authorities, the Green-Schools programme and local initiatives, including Cycle Bus and School Streets."

2021-2022 progress: The Safe Routes to School (SRTS) was announced in March 2021 and [170 schools were ultimately selected for the scheme](#). There was limited progress made since due to capacity issues. There is a goal to develop routes for [761 schools](#) over the coming years.

2023 Progress: The total number of schools currently in SRTS stands at 275. In December 2022, [Round 2 of the Safe Routes to School was launched](#). 108 schools were chosen to participate and receive support for walking and cycling infrastructure for primary and post-primary schools. As of 31 May 2023, SRTS projects at [22 schools have been completed](#) with all remaining schools at various stages of progress through the Programme. The [Central Statistics Office](#) 2022 census found "there were 88% more primary school children commuting by bicycle than in 2016, and the number of students aged 13 to 18 cycling to school was up 79%." However, the dominant form of transport for

school children remained the car with 55% of primary school and 42% of secondary school children being driven or driving to school.

6.1f. "Widen the eligibility of the Bike to Work scheme. We will provide an increased proportionate allowance for e-bikes and cargo bikes."

2021-2022 progress: In 2021, E-bikes were added to the Bike to Work scheme with a grant of €1,500 assisting with the purchase. The eligibility of regular bikes in the scheme was widened from bikes worth a maximum of €1,000 to bikes worth a maximum of €1,250. The eligibility of the scheme was not widened further in 2022.

2023 Progress: The eligibility was not widened further. However, cargo bikes were added to the Bike-to-Work Scheme with a [grant of €3,000](#).

6.1g. "Ramp up the Cycle Right programme to ensure that all children are offered cycling training in primary school."

2021-2022 progress: The Cycle Right Programme continued to exist but there was no evidence for the programme to be ramped up.

2023 Progress: The Cycle Right programme continues to grow with an expected participation of over 40,000 in 2023 compared to 30,000 participants last year. There was an increased number of DEIS schools offering the programme due to the additional funding they received from Dept. of Transport (extra €10 per pupil, €45 per pupil in total).

6.1h. "Conduct a review of road traffic policy and legislation to prioritise the safety of walking and cycling."

2021-2022 progress: [A ten year road safety strategy was launched in December 2021](#). This fifth National Road Safety Strategy (2021-2030) included ambitious targets and a large investment in road safety during the first phase action plan to 2024.

2023 Progress: There are multiple updates to the Road Traffic and Roads Act 2023 that will aid with the safety of walking and cycling. The main aspects being the introduction of variable speed limits and the faster roll-out of walking and cycling infrastructure. In October 2022, the [fines for dangerous behaviour while driving doubled](#) in the hope that it would decrease the number of road traffic accidents. In December 2022, the [development of a new generation polydrug testing device](#) was introduced. The RSA anticipates the launch of this enhanced drug testing capability will deliver positive change in 2023.

6.1i. "We will lead the development of an integrated national greenways strategy."

2021-2022 progress: €63.5m for Greenways was [confirmed by Minister Eamon Ryan in 2021 and Minister Hildegard Naughton in November 2020](#). In 2022, a diverse multi-stakeholder working group developed a [Code of Best Practice for National and Regional Greenways](#). However, no integrated national greenways strategy had been launched.

2023 Progress: A source confirmed there is no published integrated national Greenway strategy, but they are at a very advanced stage on the publication of a National Cycle Network Strategy. The [National Cycle Network](#) plan is due for publication in Q3 2023. The plan comprises a 3,500km network that will connect more than 200 villages, towns and cities. The network will include cycling links to transport hubs, education centres, employment centres, leisure and tourist destinations, and support "last mile" bicycle deliveries.

6.1j. "Work with local authorities and appropriate agencies to continue developing an integrated national network of greenways to be used by commuters, students, leisure cyclists and tourists."

2021-2022 progress: The network of greenways continued to expand in 2021. However, many of the routes were not directed into major towns. [Funding of around €60 million was allocated to 40 greenway projects in 2022 "in nearly every single county"](#).

2023 Progress: [€63 million is being invested in the Greenway network in 2023](#) through Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), which is an increase of over €40 million on 2019 funding levels. The number of Greenways in development in Ireland has increased from 13 in 2019, to over 70 projects currently under construction. A full list of 2023 allocation can be found [here](#). There will be a [longer wait for the first section of the South Kerry Greenway to be open](#), as the Supreme Court rejected two legal challenges against the use of CPOs for the route.

6.2. Transport Infrastructure

6.2a. "The Government is committed to a 2:1 ratio of expenditure between new public transport infrastructure and new roads over its lifetime. This ratio will be maintained in each Budget by the Government. In the event of an underspend on roads, this will not impact on public transport spending."

2021-2022 progress: In the 2020 Budget, [€3.5bn was allocated to the Department of Transport, 51% of which was allocated for "sustainable transport"](#). In 2022, the 10-year National Development Plan was allocated a budget of [€165bn with transport projects worth €35bn planned up to the end of the decade](#).

2023 Progress: Budget 2023 [maintained the €3.5bn investment](#) with the goal of more accessible and greener transport across the country. Minister Ryan has said that the Government is "too slow" shifting the capital spending on public transport, stating ["It's not good enough that we're still almost 1:1, because our system is so slow at delivering good public transport projects."](#) However, the Minister for Finance and the Minister of State for Road Transport both [emphasised the critical need for increased road maintenance investment](#) in light of the unacceptable state of some roads around the country.

6.2b. "We will develop and implement the existing strategies for our cities, such as the Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy, the Galway Transport Strategy, the draft Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy, as well as strategies being developed for Waterford and Limerick, and other projects progressing through planning. Specifically, the Government will prioritise plans for the delivery of Metrolink, Luas and other light rail expansion, DART expansion and interconnector and Bus Connects in Dublin, Cork, Galway, and Limerick."

2021-2022 progress: In November 2020, the NTA published an Issues Paper as an initial part of a statutory review of the Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy. Plans for a €2.6 billion extension of Dart services were published by the National Transport Authority in August 2020. In July 2020, the European Commission confirmed a grant award of €8.8 million for the design phase of the upgrade of the Kildare Line. This investment was secured under the EU's Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). The NTA prepared an updated [Draft Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area](#) based on the feedback and public consultation from 2021 and this strategy set out the framework for investment

in transport infrastructure and services over the next two decades to 2042. Work on BusConnects Dublin was being implemented, including the new Dublin Area Bus Service Network, and will continue into 2024.

2023 Progress: A [new Galway Transport Strategy](#) is due to be published by the end of 2023 and will include a feasibility study on a light rail system for the city. During 2022, work commenced on redesigning the bus network in Galway as part of the BusConnects Galway programme, with a public consultation on the draft new network which closed in early June. The Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy is in the [second round of public consultations for the €600m BusConnects Cork](#) programme. Progress in the Greater Dublin Area Transport Strategy include a Railway Order application which was submitted in March 2023 for [DART+ South West](#) while an application to An Bord Pleanála is due in Q3/Q4 2023 for [DART+ Coastal North](#). The Road Traffic and Roads Act 2023, enacted in June 2023, introduces essential [powers to the relevant authorities for the delivery of core bus corridors](#). Through this Act, the NTA will be given legislative authority to acquire land for mitigation reasons due to the impact of any public transit infrastructure to strengthen the NTA's ability to deliver this critical transport project.

6.2.2. Public Transport

6.2.2a. "Review fare structures to ensure that public transport is as accessible as possible, supports the delivery of services, and incentivises off-peak travel."

2021-2022 progress: In 2022, fares were re-structured by introducing a 20% reduction of public transport fees and 90 minute fare for LEAP.

2023 Outcome: On 27 April 2023, the [NTA published the National Fares Strategy for commuter and inter-urban journeys on Public Service Obligation \(PSO\)](#). Under this National Fare Strategy, the cost per kilometre travelled will be consistent across the country, which has not been the case in the past. The fare will be made up of an initial boarding fee and an incremental distance-based fare. It is anticipated that the [first phase of implementation](#) will happen in late 2023, following the NTAs Fare Determination. One stakeholder stated that they thought the review of the fare structures was good and that incremental reduction of fares is important.

6.2.2b. "Task the NTA to produce a park and ride implementation plan for each of the five cities to help reduce congestion and journey times. These will integrate car parking facilities with public transport and cycling networks and will include the provision of secure lockers for bicycles."

2021-2022 progress: The National Transport Authority established a 'Park and Ride Development Office' in 2021. [Phase 1 and 2 of the Five Cities Demand Management Study was published](#) in 2022.

2023 Progress: The Park and Ride Development Office [commenced the process of developing a park and ride strategy for Cork](#). It is anticipated that the strategy will be implemented in Q2 2023. In December 2022, the Waterford Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy was published and one of the challenges faced is the lack of [park and ride sites that align with public transport routes serving the city centre](#). [Wicklow train station park and ride received €40,000](#) from the Active Travel Investment Grants 2023 Allocations. It was the only Park and Ride to receive funding.

6.2.2c. "Develop and implement a Sustainable Rural Mobility Plan. This will introduce a public transport service standard under which all settlements over a certain size in terms of population, combined with employment or education places, will have a service connecting them to the national public transport system. Local Link will play a key role in this development. This service standard will be informed by the Connected Ireland research being carried out by the NTA."

2021-2022 progress: In April 2022, the Sustainable Rural Mobility Plan was launched as "Connecting Ireland" which included The Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan (CIRMP), which aimed to increase connectivity throughout rural Ireland between 2022 and 2025.

2023 Progress: [The NTA will continue to improve rural public transport services in 2023](#), with the planned implementation of 67 new and enhanced bus services, as well as the development of non-conventional measures such as Smart DRT (Demand Responsive Transport) and rural hackney pilot schemes. On 20 April 2023, the NTA [published the Connecting Ireland Phase 1 Review](#) which assesses the key achievements of bus services launched in 2022. The Plan is currently in Phase 2, with the overview of services in or proposed to go into operation in 2023 available [here](#).

6.2.2d. "We will review the operations and funding of Local Link within nine months."

2021-2022 progress: [In April 2022, Minister Ryan announced additional and enhanced local bus services to support Ukrainian refugees.](#)

2023 Progress: Funding for TFI Local Link has [increased from €12 million in 2016 to over €42 million in 2023](#). The additional funding has enabled the introduction of 100 new Rural Regular Service routes that operate at least 5 times per day over a 5-7 days per week schedule. They are specifically designed to ensure connectivity with other public transport systems as well as improved service connectivity between and within towns and villages. In 2022, passenger numbers rose to 2.8m following very low post covid numbers. [Weekly numbers peaked at 45,000 in November and December 2022.](#)

6.2.2e. "Establish a Working Group to utilise the modelling capacity of the NTA and commuter and travel data held by the CIE Group of Companies, the Central Statistics Office, NTA and other stakeholders to identify existing and potential demand for public transport and work to match demand with available services and new services, where appropriate."

2021-2022 progress: No progress was made on this commitment in 2021 and 2022.

2023 Progress: No progress was made on this commitment in 2023. A source has said this is due to the fact that a similar Working Group has already been created.

6.2.2f. "Ensure a national integrated public transport system with an integrated timetable, one tag on ticketing system and coordination between bus and rail timetables of all operators."

2021-2022 progress: The NTA continued to progress work on Next Generation Ticketing (NGT), which will implement an Account Based Ticketing (ABT) as the preferred option. However, there was no on-the-ground implementation in 2021. The TFI 90 minute fare was introduced in 2022.

2023 Progress: The Chief Executive of the NTA has said we are ["years away" from the introduction of contactless payments](#), which would see fares paid using credit or debit cards as well as phones. The NTA trialled the use of card payments on Local Link rural services only, as they have ["much more modern ticketing equipment which allows contactless payments to be made"](#), she said. The ticketing equipment on transport services in Dublin is said to be "too old" to allow trials of the

system to go ahead, let alone see its permanent implementation. The [NTA plan to award a contract for the NGT system by Q4 of 2023](#).

6.2.2g. "Establish a National Public Transport Forum involving all stakeholders and commence Section 17 of the Dublin Transport Authority Act to establish the Dublin Transport Advisory Council."

2021-2022 Progress: There was no progress made on this commitment in 2021. A "Sustainable Mobility Policy Framework" was published in April 2022, and progress was to be reviewed annually.

2023 Progress: There were no further announcements regarding the establishment of either the National Public Transport Forum or the Dublin Transport Advisory Council. According to a source, this commitment was included as an action (Action 71) in the [National Sustainable Mobility Policy \(SMP\)](#), which was published in April 2022. In April 2023, the Government established the [National Sustainable Mobility Forum](#) in County Westmeath, updating relevant stakeholders on implementation and development updates. Lastly, the adoption of a Dublin Transport Advisory Council is being considered, in order to achieve Action 74 of the SMP.

6.2.2h. "Accelerate sustainable transport plans for schools. We will complete the review of the School Transport Scheme to seek better outcomes and reduce car journeys. The School Transport Scheme should work in liaison with the Safe Routes to Schools Programme."

2021-2022 Progress: Minister Norma Foley [announced that the review of the School Transport Scheme had commenced](#) in February 2021. In June 2021, the steering group [presented Minister Norma Foley with an initial interim report on eligibility for the School Transport Scheme](#). It was Deputy Norma Foley's intention to advance the school transport system. The Department conducted an extensive stakeholder engagement process which commenced in January 2022.

2023 Progress: In [2022/2023 the school bus fares were free](#), which saw an increased number of applications and pupils being refused seats. In the school year 2023/2024, the fares are due to be reintroduced but capped at a lower amount. In March 2023, a partnership between the NTA and UCD [introduced 20 new "Bike Libraries" at primary schools across Dublin City](#).

6.2.3. Rail

6.2.3a. "In line with the commitment in the National Planning Framework to balanced regional development, prioritise rail projects in Cork, Galway, Limerick, and Waterford on existing and unused lines."

2021-2022 Progress: In June 2021, €184 million was allocated by the EU, as part of its NextGenerationEU recovery package for Europe, towards Cork commuter trains. There was no progress made on rail projects in other specified locations. In 2022, progress was made in Cork under the Cork Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy (CMATS) as well as new rail development in Limerick under the National Development Plan 2021-2030.

2023 Progress: On 25 July 2023, the Department of Transport (Ireland) and the Department of Infrastructure (Northern Ireland) [published](#) their joint draft report of the All-Island Strategic Rail Review, providing 30 recommendations for the implementation of a new rail system. The Review assesses the possible opportunity for [improved train services along the network's different existing or potential future lines](#). This includes the potential offered by disused and closed lines, such as the Western Rail Corridor.

6.2.3b. "Continue to fund safety works and capital improvements to the rail network, expand the Irish Rail fleet and progress the electrification of rail services to decrease journey times and emissions."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2021, Iarnród Éireann [announced a new National Train Control Centre](#) to integrate the signalling and communications control across the entire network. In 2022, 41 diesel carriages were ordered from the Hyundai factory in Korea and expected to enter service in 2023.

2023 Progress: In November 2022, The Minister for Transport obtained Cabinet approval for Iarnród Éireann (IÉ) to order [90 new battery-electric train carriages](#) from Alstom, for delivery to the Irish rail system in 2026. The train order will include 18 modern 5-carriage Battery-Electric Multiple Units (BEMUs) at a cost of approximately €179 million. The BEMUs can operate in electric-only mode or in battery-electric mode, increasing flexibility and capacity, while helping to replace and decarbonise existing diesel-fleet operations.

6.2.3c. "Commission an economic evaluation of higher-speed rail links between our main cities."

2021-2022 Progress: In October 2020, Minister Eamon Ryan and the Northern Ireland Minister for Infrastructure, Nichola Mallon, [announced that a feasibility study would be conducted](#) for high-speed rail. In November 2021, the Department of Transport [launched](#) the public consultation period for the All-Island strategic rail review, which closed in January 2022.

2023 Progress: In July 2023, the joint draft report of the All-Island Strategic Rail Review was [published](#) by the Department of Transport (Ireland) and the Department of Infrastructure (Northern Ireland), including the 30 recommendations for the implementation of a new rail network. Currently, Ireland has approximately [2,300 km](#) of public rail line and, if the recommendations in this new review are adopted, the rail network would increase to about 2,950 km. This draft review is undergoing Strategic Environmental Assessment, Appropriate Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, with submissions closing 29 September 2023. This review includes short term timelines for 2030, in addition to medium and long-term timelines for 2040 and 2050.

6.2.3d. "Consider the report on the future of the Western Rail Corridor and take appropriate action."

2021-2022 progress: No progress was made on this commitment in 2021. In 2022, Dr John Bradley's ["forensic dissection"](#) of EY's report argued that the Western Rail Corridor is financially viable in contrast to EY's projections.

2023 Progress: In May 2023, The Minister for Transport fell [under fire for failing to back the full reopening of the Sligo to Galway railway line](#). Opposing politicians say the line makes economic and social sense and must eventually be extended on to Sligo to ensure Sligo has connectivity to the rest of Connacht.

6.2.4. Buses

6.2.4a. "Protect and expand regional connectivity and connectivity between towns and villages in rural Ireland."

2021-2022 progress: In 2020, Bus Éireann announced [120 new jobs and an expansion of services](#) which included both new routes and enhanced frequency on existing routes. In 2022, 81 additional buses for regional connectivity were announced.

2023 Progress: The Department of Transport has announced [67 new bus routes](#) that are to be rolled out across the country this year, through the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan. Almost €4 million was invested in implementing Connecting Ireland bus services in 2022, but that [sum was doubled this year to €8.5 million](#) funded by the Department of Transport and NTA.

6.2.4b. "Give greater priority to bus services by expanding Quality Bus Corridors and consider the introduction of Bus Rapid Transit Services."

2021- 2022 progress: No announcements on the introduction of bus Rapid Transit Services or progress under the expansion of the Quality Bus Corridors were announced.

2023 Progress: A number of Quality Bus Corridors opened in 2023 including the [extension of the College Green bus corridor](#). The College Green Pathfinder Project will help alleviate public transport congestion in the city core, and prioritises public transport at all times. One stakeholder mentioned that they are a year and a half behind schedule and that many of the projects are stuck in the planning application phase.

7. Buildings

7a. "We will publish our National Retrofitting Plan as part of the National Economic Plan. It will set out our commitment to:"

2021-2023 Progress: The National Retrofitting Plan was completed as part of the [Climate Action Plan 2021](#), which was published in November 2021. This commitment was completed and assessed in 2022.

7b. "1. Developing a new area-based and one-stop-shop approach to retrofitting to upgrade at least 500,000 homes to a B2 energy rating by 2030."

2021-2022 Progress: The SEAI launched a "One Stop Shop Development Call" in 2020. The SEAI instituted the one stop shop service for the long term in Spring 2022, as part of the 'New Home Energy Upgrade Scheme'. [Nine service providers operated these one stop shops](#), with plans to add more providers. However, the uptake of retrofitting was slow and an area-based approach to retrofitting had not been rolled out.

2023 Progress: As of July 2023, the SEAI one stop shop service had reached [16 service providers](#) under the scheme. Despite the expanding capacity of the programme, stakeholders and [media reports](#) reflect that administrative and implementation delays are the primary barriers to the uptake to retrofitting. In October 2022, the Irish Examiner [reported](#) that the flagship National Home Energy Upgrade Scheme (NHEUS) saw low application numbers. According to a stakeholder, an area-based approach has yet to be rolled out. One stakeholder stated that it is unlikely that this commitment will be achieved by the end of the decade, as Ireland is currently not on track to complete these energy upgrades.

7c. "2. Grouping homes together to lower cost, starting in the Midlands area."

2021-2023 Progress: In September 2020, the Government approved the [allocation of €20 million](#) from the carbon tax to eight local authorities under the Midlands Retrofit Project. In 2022, the Midlands Retrofit Project was piloted. According to a source, the project did not prove to be as successful as originally thought and therefore there are no plans to replicate this elsewhere. This commitment was assessed in 2022 and is now deemed complete.

7d. "3. Leveraging smart finance (e.g. loan guarantee, European Investment Bank, Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland)."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2021, funding provided under the European Recovery and Resilience Facility was allocated to provide risk protection to banks and financial institutions that offer retrofitting

loans at low rates. The goal for this scheme was to allow banks and financial institutions offering loans with 3.5pc interest rates to homeowners seeking to make their houses more sustainable. In 2022, a call for bank involvement resulted in the EIB running through the strategic banking operation, aimed to be launched in November 2022. There were plans to [launch these loans in July 2022](#).

2023 Progress: In January 2023, it was [reported](#) that the low cost loan scheme that was expected for launch in 2022, was facing further months-long delays. In their [Strategic Action Plan 2022-2025](#), the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland stated they were working with DECC and the European Investment Bank to create a *residential retrofit loan guarantee scheme*. In a February 2023 debate response, Minister of Finance Michael McGrath shared that the SBCI had [lent approximately €3.4 billion](#) to more than 53,000 Small Medium Enterprises (SME), including in the Energy Efficiency Loan Scheme, by the end of December 2022. There has been an overall increase in low interest loans for retrofitting efforts. One stakeholder said that a loan interest loan for retrofits is expected to be released by the end of the year.

7e. "4. Developing easy pay-back mechanisms (i.e. through utility bills)." 2021-

2023 Progress: Pay-back mechanisms were available through loans in 2022.

7f. "Designate a National Retrofitting Delivery Body by the end of 2020."

2021-2023 Progress: SEAI was designated the National Retrofitting Delivery Body. This commitment was assessed in 2021 and is now deemed completed.

7g. "In addition to the current scheme, use resources from the National Recovery Fund to immediately finance local authority retrofit programmes and to offer grants to owners of private properties. This effort will initially be focused on the Midlands, where dependence on fossil fuel is greatest."

2021-2022 Progress: As part of the EU funding detailed in the [National Recovery and Resilience fund](#), €40 million was allocated towards "De-risking a Low Cost Residential Retrofit Loan Scheme", while €60 million was allocated towards a "Public Sector Retrofit Pathfinder Project and Public Sector Buildings' Energy Retrofit Programme". In 2022, grants to owners of private properties and local authorities were offered. A midlands-focused approach had not been adopted (Commitment 7c). The Community Energy Grant Scheme committed €43 million for public, commercial and community buildings, with €15 million of this scheme relating to home retrofits.

2023 Progress: The National Retrofit Plan was [published](#) in February 2022 and expanded the Local Authority Retrofit programme, with an estimated 36,500 local authority homes to be retrofitted by 2030. In February 2023, the Dublin City Council [announced](#) that 9,186 social houses were upgraded under the Energy Efficiency Retrofitting Programme. In June 2023, Minister Eamon Ryan shared that the DECC funded [€87 million](#) for energy upgrades of Local Authority homes in 2023. In April 2023, Minister Darragh O'Brien stated that, of the 500,000 home retrofit target by 2030, [36,500 homes](#) are expected to be owned by local authorities. The Irish Times [reported](#) that the low cost retrofitting scheme was facing further delays as of February 2023.

7h. "Commence pilot schemes in early 2021, to test key elements of the national plan, building on the work being started in the Midlands. Following evaluation of the pilots, we will roll out our National Retrofitting Scheme."

2021-2022 Progress: In September 2020, the Government approved the allocation of €20 million from carbon tax to eight local authorities under the [Midlands Retrofit Project](#). [The National Retrofitting Scheme](#) was launched in February 2022. The 10-year funding, registration, and one-stop shops were all underway, and home retrofitting was taking place.

2023 Progress: In April 2023, Minister Eamon Ryan [stated](#) that, between 2015 and March 2023, SEAI completed over 182,000 retrofit installations, with 24,400 of those achieving a Building Energy Rating (BER) of B2 or better. Current DECC targets are to complete 75,000 B2-equivalent home retrofits each year between 2026 and 2030, in order to reach the overall target of 500,000 by 2030. In October 2022, it was reported that, under the National Retrofitting Scheme, the capacity to retrofit 500,000 homes is "[falling short](#)."

7i. "Work with the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland to develop funding options to deliver retrofitting with suitable retail partners, such as An Post and the Credit Unions."

2021-2022 Progress: Whilst there was no obvious involvement from the SBCI, An Post and various Credit Unions entered the retrofit finance market, with the latter receiving €10 million in additional funding from the [SEAI](#). As of 2022, this commitment was in progress and the [SBCI Loan Guarantee scheme](#) was expected to be launched that year.

2023 Progress: In January 2023, the [SBCI Loan Guarantee Scheme](#) had yet to be launched, with an expected months-long delay. The SBCI and the Government continue to work with the EIB to organise the structure of the scheme.

7j. "Amend the Energy Efficiency Obligation Scheme to boost the supply of retrofits, by increasing the targets which obligated parties must deliver, including for domestic homes and those in energy poverty."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2021, a public consultation on the design of the new Energy Efficiency Obligation Scheme (EEOS) was launched. In 2022, the EEOS was underway, resulting in many of the one-stop-shops funded by investments from the energy suppliers as the obligated parties. Under the amended EEOS, "[15% of all EEOS savings... are to be delivered in the residential sector](#)".

2023 Progress: On 1st January 2023, the amended Energy Efficiency Obligation Scheme (EEOS) was relaunched, with the amendments designed in response to the EU Energy Efficiency Directive. The amended legislation includes [legal mandates for energy companies](#) to support consumer energy saving efforts, across the residential, commercial and public sectors. In a February 2023 debate response, Minister Eamon Ryan [stated](#) that the SEAI has been a primary contributor to the redesign and implementation of the amended scheme, and an online reporting system has been created. As the scheme is in its first year of relaunch, there is little information about the effectiveness of the programme. Following the commencement of the scheme, in March 2023, the Council of Ministers presidency and the European Parliament negotiators reached an agreement on the energy reduction targets that initially impacted this revision, with the provisional target being a [reduction at the EU level by 11.7% in 2030](#).

7k. "Take steps to increase the number of homes and businesses with Building Energy Ratings (BER) and Display Energy Certificates (DEC) and use this data to increase the number of home and business retrofits being carried out."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2020, 3,964 homes were retrofitted to a 'B2' equivalent BER or higher. In 2021, 15,457 homes were retrofitted under various schemes. As of April 2022, 5,056 homes had been retrofitted, on par with last year's numbers, [despite the launch of the National Retrofitting Scheme in early 2022](#). No 'deep retrofits' had been completed in 2022. Unlike DECs, the number of households obtaining BERs increased [8% since 2020](#).

2023 Progress: In May 2023, Minister of Environment, Climate and Communications Eamon Ryan [stated](#) that the number of homes upgraded to a B2 equivalent BER almost doubled in 2022, with 8,481 homes being upgraded. Overall, in 2022, [27,199 property upgrades](#) took place. Despite the gradual increase in home retrofit upgrades, the Government is a long way from their target of 500,000 homes reaching a B2 equivalent BER by 2030. In the SEAI Annual Report from 2022, it states that [50,000 applications](#) were processed, which shows a 140% increase. In a May 2023 update, the Warmer Homes Scheme revealed that delays were occurring during the covid pandemic for deep retrofits, with 7,000 homes on waitlist. In this scheme, the rate of implementation went from 400 homes a month in 2022, while the target from 2023 grew to 500-600 each month.

7l. "Develop standard designs available for all property types."

2021-2023 Progress: A Standard Recommendation for the design, installation, commissioning and maintenance of heat pump systems in dwellings (S.R. 50-4:2021) was submitted to public consultation for a two-month period in Q3/Q4 2020. It was reviewed and published in April 2021. Standard designs were completed and the Heat Pump document was published in 2022. This commitment was assessed in 2022 and is now deemed completed.

7m. "Strengthen the capacity of state agencies responsible for the delivery of the ambitious targets we are setting out."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2022, the capacity of state agencies was strengthened through a substantial increase in staffing and funding.

2023 Progress: In June 2023, Minister Eamon Ryan stated that the public service is in a dire need of an increase in approximately [20,000-30,000 jobs](#). Across numerous stakeholders, a common burden to efficient policy implementation was a severe lack of skilled and educated workers. Examples varied from skilled employees for retrofit upgrades to qualified biodiversity experts.

7n. "Commence a targeted programme to install heat pumps in homes that are already suitable for the technology, as part of our plan to install 600,000 heat pumps by 2030."

2021-2022 Progress: Budget 2021 allocated funding for a new marketing and information campaign, focused on promoting the uptake of heat pumps in properties deemed suitable for heat pump installation. A series of "[SEAI Heat Pump Webinar for Homeowners](#)" were held for people who request the information pack. According to an NGO representative, while individual actions such as those detailed above were welcome, the overall uptake of heat pump installation remained low. Construction delays due to covid restrictions contributed to this. In 2022, this commitment was not on track, despite the increased grant funding for the installation of heat pumps in homes.

2023 Progress: According to the [SEAI Retrofit Annual Report](#), the number of heat pump installations ultimately did not reach the targets of the 2022 SEAI Business Plan. There was still an increase in 15% from 2021, but the installation rates are nowhere near current targets. The National Residential

Retrofit Plan establishes a heat pump target of 400,000 installations by 2030, which is not in line with the current commitment. In March 2023, Minister Eamon Ryan stated that a Government package launched in February 2022 provided an increase in grant funding support from [€3,500 up to €6,500](#) for heat pump installations. Similar to the previous years, despite the increased funding, the installation rates remain below target. This may be due to low workforce capacity, high equipment costs, [supply chain issues](#), and overall high cost of living.

7o. "Publish a feasibility study on establishing a district heating authority and setting new targets for district heating as part of a new strategy. This will be in addition to developing a regulatory environment for district heating."

2021-2022 Progress: Two planned district heating pilot schemes in Dublin received approximately [€25 million in Government funding](#) through the Climate Action Fund in 2021. The feasibility study [was published](#) as part of the SEAI 'National Heat Study' in February 2022. A new [District Heating Steering Group](#) was working on policy, planning, funding, and standards. This group was expected to [deliver a report to Government](#) in Q4 2022.

2023 Progress: In November 2022, Minister Eamon Ryan [reported](#) that the District Heating Steering Group had met 10 times since its establishment. Similarly, the SEAI launched a programme of pilot feasibility surveys. In the November debate response, Minister Ryan shared that the Commission for Regulation of Utilities was appointed as the Regulator of District Heat Networks. In April 2023, the [Heat and Built Environment Delivery Taskforce Terms of Reference](#) was published, with the Steering Group acting as working group. In March 2023, the Steering Group shared in a [task force meeting](#) that the report had been finalised and was under review by the Minister, with plans for Government review in the following weeks. The SEAI [District Heating and Cooling Report](#) was published in February 2022. In April 2023, Tallaght [launched](#) the first "large-scale district heating network," managed by the South Dublin County Council and Codema.

7p. "Take actions to drive energy-efficiency upgrades in rented properties and commercial building stock, following a consultation process that has already been completed."

2021-2022 Progress: According to the [Irish Independent](#), under the Housing For All Plan, landlords needed to meet a minimum energy rating for their rental properties from 2025. The specific BER rating that needed to be met had yet to be determined. As of 2022, this consultation had yet to be published and there was no specific plan in place for retrofitting the private sector. Despite this, action had been taken to allow grants to be available to landlords, covering 30-50% of the cost of them and 80% of costs for shallow measures.

2023 Progress: In the Finance Act 2022, the Minister for Finance introduced a [tax credit for small-scale landlords](#) who implement retrofits while the tenant remains in the home. Expenses incurred through this must be between the period 1 January 2023 to 31 December 2025. In June 2023, Minister for Finance Donohoe explained that the [amount of deduction that can be claimed](#) is "the lesser of the qualifying expenditure incurred or €10,000," with a limit to a maximum of two rental properties. Under the [National Retrofit Plan](#), a minimum efficiency rating requirement for private rental properties from 2025 is targeted.

7q. "Publish a new Public Sector Decarbonisation Strategy for 2030. This will include the development of policies to ensure greater use of energy performance contracts within the public service."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2021, DECC developed a methodology for measuring, accounting, reporting and recording public GHG emission reductions and expected to submit this for Government approval in [Q2 2021](#). In 2022, the Public Sector Decarbonisation Strategy was awaiting a minister to be appointed as public sector owner.

2023 Progress: In May 2023, Minister Eamon Ryan and Minister of State, Ossian Smyth, received [Cabinet approval](#) for the [Public Sector Climate Action Mandate 2023](#). This mandate applies to all bodies outlined under the decarbonisation targets, except for Local Authorities, Commercial Semi-State Bodies and the School Sector. This mandate pushes for public bodies to take part in SEAI's Partnership Programme.

7r. "Ensure that development of sustainable communities is the core objective of the LDA, delivering sustainable, climate resilient, low-carbon housing."

2021-2022 Progress: The Land Development Agency Act was enacted in July 2021, primarily focused on city centre housing. According to a [representative of the LDA](#), "*(with) half a million homes projected to be built nationally by 2040, the LDA is working to support the delivery of climate resilient low carbon developments.*" Additionally, according to an NGO representative, the LDA was taking a holistic approach to sustainability and was applying for [Home Performance Index Certification](#) across all of their sites going forward.

2023 Progress: The LDA acknowledges sustainable community development as a primary focus for organisational impact. In a March 2023 article, the Irish Examiner published an op-ed [criticising](#) the Land Development Agency's performance, which was reported under their Report on Relevant Public Land. In this report, the LDA revealed that "67,000 houses maximum could possibly be built on public land," while less than 10,000 of these homes can be built within five years. This report specifically cites [sustainable development as a key factor](#) in current development projects, with an aim to grow sustainable communities. Numerous projects include development in sustainable development zones. In October 2022, the LDA introduced plans for a [Digital Hub Campus](#), in order to develop a sustainable and inclusive urban community.

8. Energy

8a. "We will implement a new National Energy Efficiency Action Plan to reduce energy use, including behavioural and awareness aspects of energy efficiency such as building and data management."

2021-2022 Progress: The National Energy Efficiency Action Plan was [replaced by the National Energy and Climate Plan](#). According to a source, the steps of the National Energy Efficiency Plan were integrated into CAP21.

2023 Progress: The National Energy Efficiency plan has been further implemented into the [Climate Action Plan 2023 \(CAP23\)](#). Energy efficiency is included in multiple sectors such as the public and industrial sectors. The climate action plan highlights the [National Energy Security Framework](#) in delivering change in relation to energy efficiency. There has been a focus on improvement from SEAI in relation to their [Pathfinder Programme](#). One stakeholder felt the discussion on energy efficiency is

prominent, but there has been a lack of focus on growing energy demands. However, within CAP23 measures are mentioned in relation to energy demand. Another focal point in progress can be seen from the [National Retrofit Plan](#) in relation to improving energy efficiency in housing. Further energy efficiency plans are included in the [resource efficiency action plan](#). Furthermore, energy efficiency plans are included in the Public [Sector Climate Action Mandate 2023](#). [Grants](#) have also been established to implement energy efficiency measures in businesses. One NGO representative praised the Government's commitment and investment in increasing energy efficiency. However, accessibility to some grants and schemes remains a concern.

8b. "We will take the necessary action to deliver at least 70% renewable electricity by 2030." 2021-

2022 Progress: In [2020](#), 42.1% of Ireland's electricity was from renewables. The renewed national development plan increased the commitment to renewable energy share to 80% by 2030. According to a stakeholder from the energy sector, EirGrid's [Shaping Our Electricity Future Strategy](#) was not capable of delivering an 80 per cent target without changes. In 2021, [EPA](#) reported, coal and oil use tripled in the energy sector while renewable energy fell 7% from 2020 levels.

2023 Progress: According to the [Energy in Ireland 2022 report](#), Ireland's renewable electricity share was 36.4% in 2021. Within [CAP23](#), actions are included in relation to renewable energy plans. A recent [EPA report](#) highlighted that Ireland could reach the 80% target of renewables with additional measures being implemented. One stakeholder highlighted that this target of 80% of renewables will become more difficult to achieve as electricity demand increases. Another stakeholder expressed concerns over the achievement of this commitment on time due to delays in planning. However, an NGO representative positively added that this commitment does remain a priority and complimented the Government in "not shying away from it". Publication of an update to the [Eir Grid Shaping Our Electricity Future](#) strategy is due in July 2023.

8c. "Hold the first Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) auction by the end of 2020, with auctions held each year thereafter, including the first RESS auction for offshore wind in 2021."

2021-2022 Progress: The first RESS auction was completed in 2020. However, 2021's onshore wind RESS auction was delayed and underwent public consultation in 2021. Two successful RESS auctions were held in 2022 in addition to several corporate power purchase agreements. These involve approximately 11 terawatt hours of renewable energy being generated between RESS one and RESS two. The commitment appeared to be on track.

2023 Progress: The [first off-shore wind auction](#) was announced recently with pricing set at [€86.05/MWh](#), one of the lowest prices paid by an offshore wind market worldwide. A source cited the target of developing 5GW of offshore wind by 2030 as progress in relation to this commitment since the first auction accounted for 3.1GW of this target with the rest being accounted for in late 2024. Another stakeholder highlighted progress in relation to another onshore wind auction taking place this summer. However, while there is progress being made on onshore wind, the large quantity of projects are expected to struggle to get through the planning system.

8d. "Produce a whole-of-government plan setting out how we will deliver at least 70% renewable electricity by 2030 and how we will develop the necessary skills base, supply chains, legislation, and infrastructure to enable it. This new plan will make recommendations for how the deployment of renewable electricity can be sped up, for example the provision and permissioning of grid connections."

2021-2022 Progress: No announcements were made regarding an overarching renewable electricity plan. The Climate Action Plan 2021 is considered the whole-of-Government plan to achieve this commitment.

2023 Progress: [CAP23](#) acts as a whole-of-Government plan for how to achieve 80% renewable electricity by 2030. Actions can be seen across different sectors of CAP23 to introduce measures to reach the 80% renewable target by 2030. Actions are evident surrounding research, the creation and enforcement of necessary task forces and structures to be created to support the delivery of renewables. There is a section within CAP23 focused entirely on renewable electricity with an increased aim to reach 80% renewables by 2030. Within this section, a focus on the acceleration of renewable energy creation takes a strong standpoint. It focuses on the acceleration of offshore and onshore renewables. There is implementation of specific targets in relation to these renewables. While also taking into account specific planning around grid connections.

8e. "Complete the Celtic Interconnector to connect Ireland's electricity grid to France."

2021-2022 Progress: A timeline on progress of the Celtic Interconnector can be found [here](#). This commitment is progressing as planned. [Planning permission](#) to complete the Celtic Interconnector was granted and will have contracts signed by the end of 2022.

2023 Progress: [The Celtic Inter-Connector](#) commitment is on track with construction beginning in Autumn 2023 and expected to be completed by 2026. Stakeholders were broadly positive.

8f. "Commence planning for future interconnection with our neighbours."

2021-2022 Progress: Greenlink reached financial close and went into construction phase, which was aimed to be completed by the end of 2023/2024. Preparatory on-shore construction work began on the GreenLink project, in both Wales and Ireland, and work began to examine what phase 3 offshore wind looks like. This was expected to include further interconnection. The North-South interconnector was [fully approved in Q4 2021, and Eirgrid is ready to begin construction](#).

2023 Progress: One stakeholder mentioned the private interconnector linking Ireland to Britain as a positive update, acknowledging that "next month we will see a lot more interconnection". This is known as the [Green Link](#) interconnection which remains on track.

8g. "Finalise and publish the Wind Energy Guidelines, having regard to the public consultation that has just taken place."

2021-2022 Progress: A new set of draft guidelines were to be signed off on by the previous Government. As of July 2022, no wind energy guidelines were published. However, according to a stakeholder from the energy sector, this was something the Government was actively working on.

2023 Progress: In [March 2023](#), the 2006 Wind Energy Guidelines still remained in place. A consultation was held in 2019 and the start of 2020 on draft wind energy guidelines. However, the

feedback from the consultation indicated that the guidelines for onshore wind energy were heading in the wrong direction. One stakeholder noted that a consultation of a new version of draft guidelines may be held this year 2023. Stakeholders have expressed concerns in relation to this commitment highlighting that its completion should have been “straight forward”. Another stakeholder underlined that there is an expectation that a set of on-shore guidelines will be published and finalised next year with a possible consultation of a new version of guidelines in 2023. However, this commitment has been viewed as a “frustrating delay”. In relation to off-shore guidelines, stakeholders confirmed that off-shore wind energy planning guidelines are progressing and should be out in draft form for a consultation in August/September 2023. A source mentioned producing a white paper planning consultation this summer 2023, but this is expected to be more of a “planning statement” than guidelines.

8h. "Develop a Solar Energy Strategy for rooftop and ground based photovoltaics, to ensure that a greater share of our electricity needs is met through solar power."

2021-2022 Progress: A source indicated this commitment was completed and was present in the 2021 Climate Action Plan. Microgeneration grants, microgeneration clean export premiums, and clean export guarantees with RESS will include small-scale generation, and launch consultations will be part of the solar strategy by Q3 2022. The Government may be awaiting EU legislation before an overarching Solar Energy Strategy is published.

2023 Progress: One stakeholder confirmed there is still no solar strategy but progress can be seen in through the [abolishment of VAT on solar panels on houses and public buildings](#). Positive progress was acknowledged by stakeholders regarding rooftop [solar and other](#) solar projects with an “enormous pipeline to come”. A source confirmed there has been significant progress in relation to solar, indicating Ireland has moved from 0% of its energy coming from solar in April to 6% in May. There has also been a rise in applications for solar panels in homes from “1300-1400 a month in 2021 to 2,500 in May and more in June” and [applications set to exceed predictions](#). [Support](#) is available for businesses in relation to taking up solar, for example, the broadening of solar panel grants. [There has been an focus on quickening the production of solar farms](#).

8i. "Continue Eirgrid's programme 'Delivering a Secure, Sustainable Electricity System' (DS3)."

2021-2022 Progress: The DS3 is continuing with additional batteries connected to the grid in 2022.

2023 Progress: [EirGrid](#) is continuing the DS3. A source confirmed the upcoming launch of “Shaping Our Electricity Future Version 1.1” which will support the development of the electricity grid. The progress in relation to this commitment was acknowledged by stakeholders as “pretty good” with extra projects also underway.

8j. "Ensure that the energy efficiency potential of smart metres starts to be deployed in 2021 and that all mechanical electricity metres are replaced by 2024."

2021-2022 Progress: Smart metres installation was on track with over 750,000 smart metres have been installed by mid-2022, and this figure was expected to rise to 1.1 million by the end of the year. The National Smart Metering Programme, overseen by the CRU, [will roll out and install 2.3 million metres by 2025](#).

2023 Progress: [CAP23](#) mentions the “National Smart Metering Programme”, which acknowledges

the replacement of more metres by the end of 2024. [Smart metres](#) have been installed. However, an issue remains around [access to data](#) and stakeholders expressed concern regarding the quality of information provided to the consumer, particularly the allowance of home devices to be connected.

8k. "Invest in research and development in 'green' hydrogen (generated using excess renewable energy) as a fuel for power generation, manufacturing, energy storage and transport."

2021-2022 Progress: The ['Consultation on developing a hydrogen strategy for Ireland](#) was opened in July 2022. The [Green Hydrogen Strategy Bill 2022](#), introduced in February 2022 was before the second stage of the Dáil during the second assessment. "This Bill entitled an Act to require the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications to draft and publish a hydrogen strategy within six months of the passing of this Act."

2023 Progress: [Ireland](#) has exponential potential in relation to green hydrogen. However, stakeholders felt there is a need for more policy support. Ireland is viewed as "behind the curve" in comparison to other EU members. However, a [review](#) of energy security supply presents an array of measures mentioning hydrogen. [A collaboration](#) in relation to green hydrogen between Ireland and Germany developing a green hydrogen strategy is beginning with the Minister having signed a "joint declaration of intent on cooperation in the field of green hydrogen". [A consultation](#) was held last year in relation to green hydrogen. [The green hydrogen strategy](#) is set to be published soon. The [National Hydrogen Strategy](#) was published on the 12th of July. The strategy focuses on decarbonisation and improving Ireland's energy supply security. However, it may take 1-2 years to deliver this strategy. There will be a focus on three areas "infrastructure, where it will come from, and how it will be handled".

8l. "Produce a longer-term plan setting out how, as a country, we will take advantage of the massive potential of offshore energy on the Atlantic Coast. This plan will set out how Ireland can become a major contributor to a pan-European renewable energy generation and transmission system, taking advantage of a potential of at least 30GW of offshore floating wind power in our deeper waters in the Atlantic."

2021-2022 Progress: In May 2021, DECC published a [framework](#) for Ireland's future offshore electricity transmission system. According to a source, most of the resources in offshore renewable energy (ORE) development were dedicated to achieving the 5GW target in CAP21. In December 2021, the Government published a [Policy Statement "on the facilitation of Offshore Renewable Energy by Commercial Ports in Ireland"](#). Additionally, ["A number of ports and private entities are already progressing plans"](#) to support offshore renewable energy. The SSE [stated in June 2022](#) that the 5GW of ORE generation by 2030 target should be increased to 7GW.

2023 Progress: Stakeholders expressed [concerns](#) in relation to delays around off-shore wind projects, particularly with respect to the length of time needed for projects to get through the planning system along with policy changes slowing down the process. A [consultation](#) was run in relation to offshore renewable energy development. It opened for consultation in February 2023 and closed for submissions in April 2023. Stakeholders felt the auction system currently in place is good but open for improvements.

8m. "Increase the target for the number of Sustainable Energy Communities."

2021-2022 Progress: The Government's [Interim Climate Actions progress report](#) (published May 2021), listed the 2030 target for Sustainable Energy Communities as 1,500. According to the SEAI, there are "[over 600](#)" sustainable energy communities in Ireland. [As of January 2022](#) the target still appeared to be 1,500.

2023 Progress: [CAP23](#) includes actions such as BE/23/8 encouraging community involvement and with the target remaining 1,500 in 2023. A source highlighted community projects currently under construction and a move from "auction to feed-in tariff type approach". The Government is supporting communities to [develop plans for local energy projects](#). [Climate action proposals](#) have been published in order to support sustainable energy communities These proposals highlighted the need for further resources for sustainable energy communities and the introduction of "new local energy action fund".

8n. "Prioritise the development of microgeneration, letting people sell excess power back to the grid by June 2021."

2021-2022 Progress: [A public consultation on a Micro-generation Support Scheme](#) was held in 2021. A microgeneration scheme is now in place under the Clean Export Guarantee Tariff for both domestic and non-domestic projects. The tariff amount is set by each provider at an expected "[fair market rate](#)". SEAI grants for new microgeneration projects (both domestic and non-domestic) and the CEP tariff will be gradually phased out from 2024 onwards, a move criticised by the Micro Renewable Energy Federation (See [Commitment 1.2e](#)).

2023 Progress: The [Micro-Generation Support Scheme](#) was published in 2022, which lays out a structure for [supporting micro-generation in Ireland](#). One stakeholder felt that "*micro-generation in terms of solar panels is a small success story and significant success story in making those connections among ordinary people*". A source confirmed that the microgeneration scheme is "absolutely flying" with individuals receiving payment for their electricity supply to the grid. The next phase of the scheme is expected to be published this summer.

8o. "Ensure that community energy can play a role in reaching at least 70% renewable electricity, including a community benefit fund and a community category within the auction."

2021-2022 Progress: The Government published a draft guidebook of Good Practice Principles. In December 2020, the SEAI and DECC [launched a €28 million](#) Community Energy Grant Scheme for community energy projects across Ireland. The enabling framework is up and running for the 2030 national target of 500MW. Seventeen projects were contracted through RESS. Guidance for community benefit funds for offshore projects was expected to go to consultation in 2022.

2023 Progress: [A community benefit fund](#) has been opened for the first phase of the celtic interconnector in June 2023 with [EirGrid](#) providing access to the funds. This fund has €960,000 available for eligible community members to apply for.

8p. "Support a new Green Flag programme for communities, building on the successful programme in schools."

2021-2022 Progress: No progress appears to have been made on this commitment.

2023 Progress: [Green Flag awards were held](#) in 2022. One stakeholder confirmed [this commitment is](#)

[referred to in An Taisce's Legacy4Life](#) Green Communities Project Proposal. This project is funded by DHLGH and DECC. Furthermore, this funding aids research on how to deliver this commitment. This support has been in place in 2022 and 2023. A report is to be sent to these departments at the end of 2023 to “consolidate the Green Communities Low Carbon Plan” permanently. In 2020, there was a focus on including green flags in communities. An Taisce “administered Foundation for Environmental Education Green Schools Green Flag Programme”. This commitment is also regarded as required “Task 3.3 Promotion of the Green Flag Award for Communities”. A CAP24 submission has been made in order to support the achievement of this commitment.

8q. "Conclude the review of the current planning exemptions relating to solar panels, to ensure that households, schools, and communities can be strong champions of climate action."

2021-2022 Progress: The planning requirement for school solar panels was recognised as an oversight by the previous Government, and rectifying action was pledged multiple times. As of June 2022, the Government reported [work was ongoing](#). However, stakeholders highlighted extreme delays as a particular failure. In responding to a Parliamentary Question in July 2022, [Minister Burke stated](#) that “the proposed exempted development regulations must be laid in draft form before the Houses of the Oireachtas and receive a positive resolution from both Houses before they can be made” and that this process was expected to be “completed in the coming months”.

2023 Progress: [In September 2022](#), it was announced that every school in Ireland would have access to free solar panels funded through the Climate Action Fund. One stakeholder commended the Government in removing obstacles in accessing solar panels. Changes to planning law are taking place to allow people to have more exemptions in putting solar on their rooftops. The [2023 budget](#) will enable 6KW output for photovoltaic panels in [schools](#).

8r. "Develop new stress tests for financial institutions to look at the impact of tangible risks of higher temperature scenarios and involvement with the fossil-fuel economy on their portfolios, as recommended by the Taskforce on Climate Financial Disclosures."

2021-2022 Progress: Financial Stress Tests were conducted by the European Central Bank and were the first to incorporate climate criteria. Relevant EU legislation was being drafted in this area and due to be published by mid-July 2022. Irish banks participating in this scheme included [Bank of Ireland and AIB](#).

2023 Progress: [A financial sector assessment program-technical note on stress testing](#) took place in Ireland. One stakeholder expressed concern in relation to this commitment due to the risk of “greenwashing” and felt there was a limited amount of evidence of this sector divesting fossil fuel assets. The [banking sector](#) will face climate obligations and [reporting](#) under EU directives such as [Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive](#). [An update](#) has been made to Ireland's finance strategy in 2023 with mention of risks involving climate change.

8s. "Develop a regulatory environment to support the development of district heating."

2021 - 2022 Progress: A public consultation on a [“Policy Framework for the Development of District Heating in Ireland”](#) was held between December 2019 and February 2020. A District Heating Steering Group was established, which will report annually to the Government regarding the development of district heating. In November 2020, DECC published ‘Geothermal Energy in Ireland - A Roadmap for a Policy and Regulatory Framework’, outlining how geothermal energy could be harnessed for district

heating projects. Climate Action Plan 2021 reaffirmed the Government's commitment to expanding district heating. District heating projects are currently underway in Tallaght and Dublin City.

2023 Progress: [A Heat and Built Environment taskforce](#) was established in 2023 to further progress of district heating. [CAP23](#) mentions plans to develop district heating. A [policy statement for geothermal energy](#) was published in 2023. One stakeholder acknowledged that the potential for district heating in Ireland is great yet remains a long way from following other countries. Policy options are expected to go to Government in July 2023 with guidance on how to achieve 2025 and 2030 district heating targets. [The Government has introduced a renewable heat obligation](#) to encourage renewable energy in the heat sector.

8t. "Develop efficiency standards for equipment and processes, particularly those set to grow rapidly, such as Data Centres."

2021-2022 Progress: Growth in data centres resulted in increased demands on electricity, which put pressure on the security of supply. Additionally, the drive for the development of more data centres was highlighted as "[one of the most glaring inconsistencies](#)" and a "[contradiction](#)" in Irish climate policy. In May 2022, EirGrid announced they had cancelled the development of 30 data centre projects. This followed a de facto moratorium on new data centre projects announced in November 2022 by the CRU. In line with the commitment in CAP21, [the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment](#) began engaging with stakeholders and a review of the data centre strategy was due to be completed Q2 2022.

2023 Progress: [Large data centre owners](#) must publish their energy usage under EU guidelines as of March 2023. A [moratorium](#) was put in place in Dublin on new data centres being connected to the grid. One stakeholder felt this ban was due to the inability of the grid to cope with new connections rather than climate concerns. Stakeholders felt that while data centres are "efficient" energy users, they remain huge consumers of energy by volume and expressed concerns over the pressure data centres are placing on the electricity grid. A source confirmed work is being done at an EU level to develop EU efficiency standards outlined in [the energy efficiency Directive](#). This has been adopted in Ireland yet still needs to be implemented. [A lack of plans](#) is limiting further expansion of data centres.

8u. "Develop expectations for 'Obligated Entities' to leverage carbon credits."

2021-2022 Progress: One of the listed topics for review was "[Who will be obligated to achieve energy savings under the scheme, and how they will be obligated](#)". The Energy Efficiency Obligation Scheme was finalised. Carbon farming will be included as a part of agriculture but this will not be completed until 2024.

2023 Progress: [In November 2022 the carbon farming proposal](#) was viewed as needing a lot more assessment and "disappointing" to the IFA. Following this, the implementation of carbon farming was expressed as being [undetermined and with significant challenges](#) remaining in place. [A report released in may 2023](#) noted carbon farming to be a soon-to-be "enterprise". [In May 2023, a debate](#) confirmed that carbon farming is being developed in Ireland with further mention of the need for a consultation on carbon farming initiative for farmers.

8v. "Develop a policy framework for low emission zones."

2021-2022 Progress: The interim policy is complete and low-emission zones will be incorporated into the Clean Air Strategy.

2023 Progress: [A new National Demand Strategy](#) is expected to be completed by the end of 2023 to deal with congestion issues. [The Clean Air Strategy](#) references the development of a National Demand Strategy which incorporates low-emission zones. Multiple stakeholders expressed concerns over this commitment feeling Government will to implement low emission zones was not apparent.

8w. "End the issue of new licences for the exploration and extraction of gas, on the same basis as the recent decision in relation to oil exploration and extraction."

2021-2022 Progress: The issuing of new licences for the exploration and extraction of oil and gas were formally banned by legislation amending the Petroleum and Other Minerals Development Act 1960. This legislation was included in the Climate Action and Low Carbon Amendment Act 2021. The Government introduced a ban on new oil and gas exploration licences (amending the 1960 Petroleum Act) in conjunction with the 2021 Climate (Amendment) Act.

2023 Outcome: This commitment has been completed with a [ban on new licences for exploration and extraction of gas](#) and oil. Stakeholders regarded completion of this commitment highly. However, there was concern that the ban focused on new licences and did not include existing licences though recent [reports](#) indicate existing licences for gas and oil exploration are being refused.

8x. "Ensure that Bord na Móna is required to take into account climate, biodiversity, and water objectives, as they deliver on their commercial mandate, through an amendment to the Turf Development Acts 1998."

2021-2022 Progress: There were no amendments to the Turf Development Act.

2023 Progress: The Turf Development Act has not been amended. However, a stakeholder commended the reduced bog cutting and ending of peat sales by Bord na Móna. One stakeholder felt Bord na Móna demonstrated an "extreme turn around for what was a fossil fuel company". [Media reports](#) confirmed the closure of the last remaining peat factory on 1st of June 2023.

8y. "We shall withdraw the Shannon LNG terminal from the EU Projects of Common Interest list in 2021."

2021-2022 Progress: Shannon LNG was not on the sixth PCI list, However, there remained a risk that Shannon LNG could retain certain benefits under EU law as a result of being on the previous list.

2023 Outcome: This commitment is complete and has been [removed from the PCI list](#). Multiple stakeholders were concerned about applications being reviewed for LNG terminals in other parts of the State.

8z. "We do not support the importation of fracked gas and shall develop a policy statement to establish that approach."

2021-2022 Progress: In May 2021, the Government published a [Policy Statement](#) on the Importation of Fracked Gas. The decision was expected in December 2022. The Government introduced a policy statement which brought a moratorium on the importation of fracked gas and LNG, pending an

ongoing energy security review. Despite this statement, Shannon LNG was still in a position to reapply.

2023 Outcome: Stakeholders acknowledged the completion of this commitment. However, concerns were expressed over the remaining possibility of an LNG facility and that LNG cannot fully be ruled out. An NGO representative noted the ban on LNG as a positive result for this commitment.

9. Agriculture and Forestry

9a. "Carry out a baseline biodiversity survey on every farm to inform future policy development."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2022, applications to participate in 'Farm Environmental Surveys' (FES) were [closed on 27th May](#), with the aim to "set a baseline biodiversity database for agricultural land". Given the early stages of the project, only 0.5% of farms had undergone inspections.

2023 Progress: In December 2021, Minister Charlie McConalogue and Minister Pippa Hackett introduced the pilot [Farm Environmental Study \(FES\)](#), with a €5 million budget to create a baseline database. Farm surveys expected to be carried out across approximately 6,500 farms. Surveys were expected to commence in Q2 of 2022, with results ready in Q4 of 2022. As of October 2022, the DAFM was working with the Agricultural Consultant's Association to generate the database. Minister Charlie McConalogue [reported](#) that the surveys are behind schedule and are likely to be carried out in the following survey year (Q4 2023). Results are expected by the end of 2023.

9b. "Publish a new National Pollinator plan and encourage public bodies to promote and protect biodiversity."

2021-2023 Progress: See [Commitment 2f](#).

9c. "Complete a national hedgerow survey."

2021-2022 Progress: There were no announcements made regarding this commitment.

2023 Progress: There was no national hedgerow survey completed or announced in 2023. In June 2023, Minister McConalogue [announced](#) a public review of the EIA (Agriculture) Regulations, which includes mandates on rural land boundary removals. At a local scale, Monaghan County completed [a hedgerow survey](#) in 2021 as part of the Monaghan Biodiversity and Heritage Strategic Plan. Similarly, in 2021, the draft new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) introduced an [Area Monitoring System \(AMS\)](#) that would allow for simpler review of land use changes, like unauthorised hedgerow removal. The transitional period of the policy is expected to finish in 2024.

9d. "Incentivise the rewetting of carbon-rich soils."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2021, contracts for peatland rewetting were [awarded and signed](#). A separate results-based initiative, FarmPeat, was officially launched by Minister Hackett in July 2021. In 2022, EU-funded and co-funded LIFE projects were progressing work on peatland rewetting. Several new NPWS projects were examining incentivisation of peatland rewetting through farming schemes and also incentivising Bord Na Móna through just transition funding to re-wet bogs. The focus of this commitment has mainly been on peatlands rather than non-peat carbon rich soils.

2023 Progress: Similar to previous years, efforts from Bord Na Móna and FarmPEAT continue to drive peatland restoration and rewetting efforts. [FarmPEAT](#) is a pilot, results-based programme, rewarding farmers for peatland management efforts. [Bord Na Móna](#) plans to rewet 80,000ha of drained peatlands. In May 2023, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar [expressed concern](#) over massive rewetting

efforts on farmlands, stating it was too excessive. According to one stakeholder, there is no coherent strategy on the undertaking of carbon soil rewetting. Another stakeholder said the commitment is controversial in the midst of a biodiversity crisis, with biodiversity management not happening at the rate it should.

9e. "Invest in research in the agri-food sector, prioritising investment in areas such as climate and the bioeconomy."

2021-2022 Progress: Budget 2021 [provided an extra €4m in funding to Teagasc](#), as well as an increased allocation of €3m for the DAFM's competitive research funding programmes. The 25% emissions reduction target for the agricultural sector was announced in July 2022, but it was unclear as to how this will impact future research in the agri-food sector.

2023 Progress: In March 2023, DAFM [announced](#) the biennial research funding application period, providing opportunity for research awards in the agri-food, forest and bioeconomy sectors. This research call provided an opportunity for €20 million in funding available. In June 2023, a €32 million investment into the agri-food sector was [announced](#) by Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment Simon Coveney and Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine Charlie McConalogue as part of the €100 million Capital Investment Scheme for the Processing and Marketing of Agriculture products. One stakeholder mentioned the funding for permanent positions in the Teagasc Climate Centre from the DAFM as an area of improvement.

9f. "We will implement the National Policy Statement on the Bioeconomy, providing the agri-food sector with new opportunities, using biological resources from the land and sea in a sustainable and circular manner."

2021-2022 Progress: The first meeting of the National Bioeconomy Forum [took place in July](#) 2021. In 2022, there was strong representation of stakeholder groups within the forum. The new forum had met but the National Policy Statement had not yet been implemented.

2023 Progress: In October 2022, the [Bioeconomy Ireland Week](#) took place and is expected to take place again in October 2023. Following the National Policy Statement on the Bioeconomy in 2018, the Government launched the [High-Level Bioeconomy Implementation Group](#), which consists of representation from DAFM and DECC. The group met fourteen times between 2018 and 2023. As a vital tool for the transition to a circular economy, bioeconomy policy development plays a major role in the [Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy 2022-2023](#). The Bioeconomy Action Plan Consultation period closed in January 2023 and is currently under review. In May 2023, the first report from the [Bioeconomy Stakeholder Forum](#) was published, while the Bioeconomy Implementation Group Second Progress Report was published in April 2023.

9g. "Explore and develop potential opportunities for farmers from anaerobic digestion."

2021-2022 Progress: [In July 2022, the Government announced](#) additional resources and commitments to scale up and speed up progress on anaerobic digestion, which had been agreed as part of the sectoral emissions ceilings negotiations. This included up to 5.7 TWh of biomethane as part of a new "Anaerobic Digestion for Nature" programme.

2023 Progress: In May 2023, the [Joint Oireachtas Committee](#) on Agriculture, Food and the Marine discussed the development of a working group between DAFM and DECC to establish a national biomethane strategy. This working group will "*define the strategic direction for the production and delivery of the 5.7 TWh of indigenously produced biomethane*". An expert in the agricultural policy sector raised the mixed reactions from stakeholders on the high target of 5.7

TWh of biomethane. The same stakeholder had not heard of the “Anaerobic Digestion for Nature” programme.

9h. "Develop climate action 'signpost farms' to provide on-farm experience of the benefits of farming sustainably."

2021-2022 Progress: Teagasc’s Signpost Programme was launched in May 2021, with 100 farms participating. In 2022, with only one year of data from the farms available, it was still uncertain how effective this work would be in reducing agricultural emissions.

2023 Progress: Teagasc’s Signpost Programme is expected to see an operational redesign and transformation in 2023, including a new [Sustainability Digital Platform](#) for Signpost Demonstration farmers to use the previous two years of data and analyse the progress of the programme. In June 2023, Teagasc announced the creation of a free [Signpost Advisory Programme](#), which will support the [advisory and training](#) of participating farmers.

9i. "Establish an 'Energy Efficient Farming' scheme, to include a farm efficiency rating, educational support and grant subsidies for onsite renewable energy options and the promotion of energy efficient technology for farm use."

2021-2022 Progress: No such scheme was announced in 2021 or 2022.

2023 Progress: In February 2023, the Targeted Agriculture Modernisation Schemes (TAMS 3) began accepting applications for new solar grants under the [Solar Capital Investment Scheme](#) to provide farmers funding to implement solar infrastructure on farms, across buildings and equipment.

According to a source, uptake and interest has remained high in these solar grant programmes for farmers. Furthermore, in 2023, the SEAI offered financial [vouchers](#) to farmers for free energy audits.

9j. "Expand programmes such as the Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme (ASSAP), working with farmers, industry, and advisory services to deliver real improvements in water quality."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2022, there were discussions about expanding programmes such as the ASSAP, but expansion was questionable due to uncertainty about effectiveness. See [Commitment 3.1.2d](#) & [Commitment 9.2.7k](#).

2023 Progress: In a February 2023 PQ response, Minister Charlie McConalogue discussed the [successful results](#) of ASSAP implementation and how it has resulted in significant funding for a Water European Innovation Partnership (EIP), reflecting that this partnership is expected to result in similar partnerships and programmes to ASSAP as proposals closed in January 2023.

9k. "Implement the climate adaptation plan for the agri-food and seafood sector and assist these sectors to adapt with the changed environment."

2021-2022 Progress: There was no information available regarding the extent to which the plan was implemented. There did not seem to be any major policies addressing climate adaptation publicised by the Government, with the National Adaptation Framework and all current Sectoral Adaptation plans carrying over from the previous Government.

2023 Progress: The [CCAC’s 2022 Annual Review](#) confirms that “despite some progress at sectoral and local level, adaptation is still not adequately considered or represented in a range of policies or initiatives”, noting “Limited progress” in the agriculture, forestry and seafood sector.

9l. "Review pesticide use across the agricultural sector, while acknowledging the comparatively low level of pesticide use in Ireland; and provide supports to farmers who are undertaking these practices to reduce their dependence on such chemicals."

2021-2022 Progress: During [Minister's Questions in May 2021](#), Minister McConalogue stated "a number of measures are in place to review pesticide use across the agriculture sector. These include collection and analysis of pesticides sales data on an annual basis, a rolling programme of pesticide usage surveys, covering all main crops, and calculation of Harmonised Risk Indicators for assessing trends in risk from pesticide use." In 2022, no obvious progress was available regarding how pesticide use was being re-examined.

2023 Progress: In June 2023, Minister Charlie McConalogue [shared](#) that DAFM is working with DECC, the EPA, and stakeholders to generate a plan for sustainable pesticide use, collection and disposal. One stakeholder said that there were no major updates in the field of pesticide use management.

9.1. Flagship Environmental Scheme

9.1a. "We will design a flagship environmental scheme under the new CAP that is user friendly for farmers, delivering broader environmental and biodiversity benefits and aligning financial support with climate, forestry, and land use objectives."

2021-2022 Progress: The [public consultation](#) on the proposed interventions outlined in Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan (CSP) 2023-2027 took place in 2021. The 1.5 billion euro "Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme" (ACRES) [was announced in June 2022](#) and had been "[cited by the Government as a new REPS](#)". The scheme was composed of a focused Co-operation Projects scheme targeted towards specific geographical areas, which garnered €700 million of funds and a general scheme open to all farmers. The ICSFA argued that this scheme brings less benefits for farmers "who want to go the extra mile" compared to the previous REPS.

2023 Progress: The Agri-Climate Rural Environment Scheme (ACRES) contracts started 1 January 2023 and all qualifying applicants are expected to be accepted in 2023. ACRES [Tranche 2](#) is expected to open Q4 of 2023. The [Basic Income Support for Sustainability](#) (BISS) programme closed May 2023. With ACRES not fully launched yet, uptake and impacts are unclear.

9.1b. "This will be complemented by an ambitious ECO-scheme under Pillar 1 of the CAP, rewarding farmers who deliver enhanced environmental performance." AND

9.1c. "We will pilot this agri-environment scheme during the CAP transition period, supported by additional exchequer funding. The scheme will seek to include farmers not currently in GLAS, who previously participated in AEOS, and those exiting GLAS. This pilot will inform the shape of the flagship agri-environment scheme for the next CAP."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2021, there was progress towards a new results-based programme for Irish farmers to replace the Green Low-carbon Agri-environment Scheme (GLAS), with the Results Based Environment Agri Pilot Programme (REAP). The scheme was oversubscribed, indicating farmers were keen to do their part. A separate results-based initiative, [FarmPeat](#), was launched for farmers with peat soils, with €1.2 million in funding provided. In 2022, the REAP scheme continued with [3,740 farmers participating as of July 2022](#).

2023 Progress: The [National Peatlands Strategy Mid-Term Review and Implementation Plan](#) timeline includes a target to develop an agri-environment framework with a Results Based Payment Scheme for improved blanket bog biodiversity. The framework was anticipated to be completed by Q4 of 2022. There have been few updates on this action and whether this was completed.

9.2. National agri-food policy

9.2a. "Publish a successor strategy to Foodwise 2025, within six months of government formation, providing an ambitious blueprint for the industry for the years ahead, adding value sustainably in the agri-food sector into the future, and supporting family farms and employment in rural Ireland." AND

9.2b. "Ensure that, in addition to growing international markets and value-added export as a key priority, a strategic focus of the Foodwise 2025 successor strategy will be on environmental protection, reversing biodiversity decline and developing additional market opportunities for primary producers, closer to home."

2021-2022 Progress: In August 2021, the Government approved [Food Vision 2030](#). The Environmental Pillar reluctantly withdrew from this committee, concluding the draft strategy was ["woefully inadequate to meet the social and environmental challenges we face"](#). An NGO representative stated that the Government has "absolutely, categorically failed" on this commitment, commenting that Food Vision 2030 is a document that engages in greenwashing to a large degree and the current Agri-Food Strategy perpetuates the agricultural model which is directly responsible for escalating nitrogen and phosphorus pollution and damaging the environment.

2023 Progress: Similar to previous years, one stakeholder stated that the food production and sustainability sector participate in severe greenwashing with efforts like Food Vision 2030. The first [annual report](#) for Food Vision 2030 was launched in May 2023 by Minister McConalogue.

9.2c. "Build upon schemes such as Areas of Natural Constraint, the Beef Data and Genomics Programme, Beef Environmental Efficiency Programme (Suckler), the Knowledge Transfer Scheme and the Sheep Welfare Scheme, in a way that enhances farm incomes, while contributing to climate change, biodiversity and animal welfare objectives, and recognising their significant contribution to net farm incomes."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2021, there were expansions in funding for a number of these schemes. Funding continued for these programmes into 2022. However, NGO representatives expressed concerns over their environmental impact, arguing these programmes may increase overall emissions.

2023 Progress: Funding continued for these programmes in 2023, in addition to new programmes being adopted. In May 2023, Minister McConalogue [announced](#) the launch of a new world-first genotyping programme for Irish cattle with a €23 million budget.

9.2d. "The Government will undertake a national land use review, including farmland, forests, and peatlands, so that optimal land use options inform all relevant government decisions. The review will balance environmental, social, and economic considerations and involve a process of evaluation of the ecological characteristics of the land."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2022, the National Land Use Review was in progress. Stakeholders expressed concerns that the review may have a narrow scope, focusing mainly on climate, but that it should also include a broader focus on biodiversity and water quality.

2023 Progress: In March 2023, the Government [published](#) Phase I of the National Land Use Review, which "gathered evidence about stakeholders; existing policy; and environmental, social and economic characteristics of land use to date." Results of this report reflect that 78% of Irish land is privately owned, 8% is publicly owned, and 14% is unable to be categorised. Similar to 2022, some stakeholders felt that biodiversity became a 'fringe' issue for the land use review. One stakeholder

stated that while the review is important, “it is just a land use report telling us where we are, rather than what we can do about it”.

9.2.1. Dairy

9.2.1a. "Invest strategically in the future development of the dairy sector, focusing on greater efficiency and sustainability."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2022, investments in the dairy sector occurred, but these investments were not delivering on environmental objectives.

2023 Progress: In April 2023, Minister Charlie McConalogue stated that investments in agricultural sustainability are ‘*larger than ever*,’ with funding continuing from TAMS II and additional investments. Minister McConalogue specified that the dairy sector received investments for solar implementation and the Low Emission Slurry Spreading programme. Under TAMS III, the [Dairy Equipment Scheme](#) allows farmers the opportunity for funding to improve farm equipment technology.

9.2.1b. "Encourage investment in renewable infrastructure on farms to reduce energy costs."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2022, some progress was made in the area of renewable infrastructure on farms, including a [Bill on microgeneration combined with rooftop solar](#) (announced June 2022).

2023 Progress: A source confirmed that significant progress has been made to achieve this commitment. The Targeted Agriculture Modernisation Schemes (TAMS) II is currently closed, with [TAMS III](#) application dates published. TAMS provides a 60% grant for the installation of solar infrastructure on farm buildings with a €90,000 investment ceiling through the [Solar Capital Investment Scheme](#). In February 2023, the applications officially opened. One stakeholder expressed concern that remote farmers will not be able to put energy back into the grid if the farm is too isolated. There is tax relief for renewable energy companies to buy solar farms, which was described as noncontroversial and in demand.

9.2.2. Tillage

9.2.2a. "Work to increase the adoption at farm level of Teagasc recommendations for climate-smart cultivation methods."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2021, the Signpost project did include the tillage sector among others. In 2022, this commitment was in progress through Teagasc’s Signpost project but remained in an infancy stage, with one year of data and limited research outcomes.

2023 Progress: In December 2022, the [Signpost project](#) published tillage soil test results, with ‘Soil Organic Carbon (SOC) and Tillage Soils’ being measured as a means to combat climate change. In June 2023, a €10m [Tillage Incentive Scheme 2023](#) opened for applications. Minister McConalogue stated that the scheme was successful with a [6% increase](#) in tillage area.

9.2.3. Horticulture

9.2.3a. "Review the supports available to the horticultural sector and encourage greater expansion and growth in this sector, supplying both the domestic and international market."

2021-2022 Progress: The Scheme of Investment Aid for the Development of the Commercial Horticulture Sector was [introduced in 2020](#) with applications for funding submitted in September 2020. The upper cumulative limit per applicant for investments under the scheme over the period 2020-2027 was [€5 million](#). In 2022, additional funding was made available for the horticulture

sector. There was no specific ring-fencing fund for more sustainable measures for alternatives, and the funding was provided solely to maintain the industry.

2023 Progress: Food Vision 2030 called for a horticulture strategy, which was published in May 2023 as the [National Strategy Horticulture 2023 to 2027](#). If all actions are completed, the horticulture sector is expected to grow 30% in farmgate value from “€529 million in 2022 to €688 million by the end of 2027.”

9.2.4. Organic Farming

9.2.4a. "We will set an ambitious new target for organic farming, to meet changing consumer trends in this area." AND

9.2.4b. "We will commit to aligning Ireland's organic land area with that of the current EU average over the lifetime of this Government."

2021-2022 Progress: Food Vision 2030 set a target of at least 7.5% of utilisable agricultural area to be farmed organically by 2030. The Organic Farming Scheme [re-opened for applications](#) in March-April 2021, with an additional budget of €4 million. As of 2022, this commitment was improving incrementally. A stakeholder highlighted Ireland was committed to aligning organic land area and increasing funding, but this was occurring at a low baseline, meaning the targets would not be achievable at the level of funding.

2023 Progress: In March 2023, Minister McConalogue stated that the Organic Farming Scheme has [grown massively](#) over the last two years. The December 2022 application period saw 3,423 eligible applications. As of March, there were 200,000 hectares under organic production, representing approximately 4% of the utilisable agricultural area. The CAP23 targets 10% of agricultural land to be managed organically by 2030. Minister McConalogue secured €256m for the organic sector in order to grow the OFS and additional programmes to support development. In February 2023, the Irish Farmers Journal [reported](#) that new entrants to the OFS will receive an average payment of €15,500. One stakeholder discussed concerns over administrative burdens and poor “face to face” engagement with farmers in the organics scheme.

9.2.5. Animal Welfare

9.2.5a. "Extend the badger vaccination programme nationwide and end badger culling as soon as possible, consistent with the best scientific and veterinary advice."

2021-2022 Progress: According to the Irish Wildlife Trust, badger vaccination was rolled out in 2021, albeit slowly. While the numbers of badgers being killed was coming down, it remained around 5,000 per annum. Stakeholders did not see any indication that pressure was coming from the Government to accelerate this to the point where [culling will end any time soon](#). As of July 2022, no announcements were made regarding this commitment.

2023 Progress: According to one stakeholder, this commitment is nowhere near being fulfilled. In a July 2023 article, the [Irish Wildlife Trust](#) discussed how there was an increase in culling numbers from 2020 to 2021 and called this a “serious fail (not only for badgers) on the Government's side.”

9.2.6 Young Farmers

9.2.6a. "Ensure an increased emphasis, through our agricultural colleges, on education in the areas of sustainability, agroecology, climate action and biodiversity, and the link to land use, soil health and agriculture."

2021-2022 Progress: No announcements were made regarding this commitment.

2023 Progress: According to a source, an additional 2,000 organic farmers joined the organic farming

industry this year through the Organic Farming Scheme, which requires farmers to partake in a 25 hour training course on organic practices. In February 2022, Minister Pippa Hackett launched the first Msc in Organic and Biological Agriculture with Waterford Institute of Technology. Several stakeholders commented that, despite not being aware of concrete examples, this did not mean progress is absent in this commitment.

9.2.7. Soil Health and Nutrient Management

9.2.7a. "Deliver an incremental and ambitious reduction in the use of inorganic nitrogen fertiliser through to 2030."

2021-2022 Progress: Food Vision 2030 restated this ambition, promising a drop in emissions associated with chemical fertiliser by more than 50% by 2030. The CSO [reports](#) that nitrogen fertiliser sales went down 18% in 2022.

2023 Progress: Nitrogen fertiliser sales declined [56%](#) between October 2022 and March 2023. It is unclear if this is due to Government intervention or increasing cost of nitrogen fertiliser due to global concerns over gas shortages. IFA Deputy President Brian Rushe attributed the decline to cost increases in [his testimony](#) to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine on Fertiliser in April 2023.

9.2.7b. "Publish a National Soils Strategy that will assess all appropriate soil health parameters and will inform future policies on good soil-management practices."

2021-2022 Progress: A new soil survey was launched in 2021. In 2022, there had been little focus on soil health in the National Soils Strategy, but the survey had ultimately been circulated and Minister Charlie McConalogue [launched a €10 million investment](#) for a soil sampling and analysis pilot programme.

2023 Progress: There is little evidence of further improvement in achieving this commitment. Land and soil surveys were included in EPA soil monitoring systems and the EU Common Agricultural Policy. The [EPA Research 2030](#) programme includes soil-related research.

9.2.7c. "Review the effects of the nitrates derogation on water quality, in conjunction with the EPA, which will inform future policy in this area."

2021-2022 Progress: Although this review was mentioned in Food Vision 2030, there was no evidence of the review having been commenced in 2021 or 2022. The Nitrates Action Plan was released and, according to a stakeholder, there was little noticeable change from the last plan, besides an increase in climate and water ambitions.

2023 Progress: In January 2023, the applications for the 2023 Nitrates Derogation programme opened. One stakeholder expressed concern about the poor impact this programme will have on water quality.

9.2.7d. "Work with nitrates derogation farmers to improve environmental outcomes on their farms, ensuring the sustainable use of the derogation, in line with our environmental objectives."

2021-2022 Progress: The [terms and conditions](#) of the Nitrates Derogation were updated for 2021. In 2022, no significant shift in environmental requirements occurred from the Nitrates Derogation.

2023 Progress: The [2023 Nitrates Derogation](#) opened applications in January 2023, which included the opportunity for dairy farmers to participate, as they previously could not. In March 2022, An Taisce [opposed](#) the Nitrates Action Programme (NAP) 2022 - 2025, stating that "*necessary safeguards for water quality are not in place.*"

9.2.7e. "Encourage farming practices, which preserve or enhance soil organic matter."

2021-2022 Progress: Various stakeholders commented that this commitment was fairly vague and there had been limited advice surrounding farming practices and soil health.

2023 Progress: Similar to previous years, this commitment was difficult to evaluate due to the ambiguity of the wording.

9.2.7f. "Introduce a national liming programme to improve nitrogen-use efficiency."

2021-2022 Progress: [As of August 2021](#), all nitrate derogation farmers had to adopt a farm scale liming programme based on a current Nutrient Management Plan and soil analysis results. Aside from the encouragement of farmers to adopt farm scale liming, there was limited progress.

2023 Process: In 2023, Minister Charlie McConalogue [launched](#) the National Liming Programme with a budget of €8 million (€16 per tonne). Applications for the programme [closed](#) in April 2023, with claims needing to be submitted by October 2023. According to an ENGO representative, the current status of liming policy is getting worse as the dairy herd increases. In May 2023, the Irish Examiner [reported](#) that the National Liming Programme was oversubscribed with 41,000 applications, which required DAFM to limit accepted applicants.

9.2.7g. "Encourage the use of protected nitrogen (urea) on grassland and greater take up of low emissions slurry spreading."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2022, increased use of protected urea and low emissions slurry spreading was mandatory for Nitrates Derogation farmers. In the new nitrates action programme, limits had been introduced for farmers over a certain intensity to use low emissions slurry spreading. Awareness raising efforts via Teagasc advisory services and the Signpost project was leading to increased uptake on use of these technologies.

2023 Progress: The [Low Emission Slurry Spreading Scheme](#) was launched in May 2023, providing the opportunity for farmers to purchase slurry-spreading equipment through LESS. This allows for reduction in soil nitrates. Similar to 2022, Teagasc continues to raise [awareness](#) on the use of protected nitrogen. In February 2023, Teagasc [stated](#) that protected urea increased by 59%, while ordinary use increased by 28%. Straight nitrogen reduced by 22%.

9.2.7h. "Improve nutrient management planning and investigate and support dry manure systems for housed livestock."

2021-2022 Progress: There were no indications that nutrient management planning was used.

2023 Progress: Since 2022, there has not been significant evidence of tangible improvement in nutrient management planning. In Joint Oireachtas debates from [2022](#) and [2023](#), nutrient management plans played a role in the nitrates derogation discussion, which is at the forefront of the EPA's policy focus.

9.2.7i. "Encourage better grassland management and support the use of clover and other mixed species in grass reseeding and the protection of older swards."

2021-2022 Progress: No obvious progress in 2021 beyond the launch of Teagasc's Signpost project. In 2022, more farmers were switching over to the use of clover and other mixed grass species.

2023 Progress: In a November 2022 Joint Oireachtas debate, Teagasc Director Frank O'Mara [stated](#) that Teagasc planned to complete the establishment of the National Agricultural Soil Carbon Observatory (NASCO) in 2023. Minister Charlie McConalogue originally [announced](#) the creation of NASCO in November 2020 with expectations of grassland data collection. Teagasc also hosts

applications for [Sustainable Grassland Farmer of the Year](#), with the application period being launched in June 2023. Lastly, the [Multi-Species Swards Measure](#) was launched in April 2023 by DAFM, providing opportunities for funding for seed purchase.

9.2.7j. "Invest in research and innovation in areas such as feed additives, protected nitrogen, and other climate-action areas of advancement."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2022, there was an endorsement for feed additives. Additionally, there was an uptake in the use of protected nitrogen, but no noticeable progress or outcomes from other climate action areas of advancement occurred.

2023 Progress: According to a source, DAFM has committed approximately €4 million in funding to research directed into 5 projects related to feed/slurry additives, including the [SmartSward](#) with focus on multi species swards; [MethAbate](#) project testing feed and slurry additives to reduce methane emissions; [SeaSolutions](#) programme and SeaFeed project to examine how seaweed bioactives can reduce enteric methane emissions and antimicrobial resistance; and the GRA Flagship on Feed Additives project. For protected nitrogen and urea research, DAFM has invested €1.8 million towards 3 projects. The DAFM 2021 Research Call resulted in 53% of the awards being awarded 15 projects on environment and climate-related research, approximately €15.8 million of the €29.6 million total.

9.2.7k. "Focus on improving knowledge transfer in the area of nutrient management and soil health."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2021, Teagasc advisory services worked with farmers to develop nutrient management plans for farms, completing almost 5,000 plans for farmers within Nitrates Derogations. A Nutrient Use Efficiency training course was developed for farmers with a focus on the efficient use of Nitrogen and Phosphorus in grassland systems. As of 2021, advisors had [trained approximately 2,500 farmers](#) by Zoom and training courses had plans to continue until the end of 2021. According to an NGO representative, [Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advisory Programme \(ASSAP\)](#) supported the farmers with nutrient and water quality management.

2023 Progress: Teagasc continues to host [knowledge transfer programmes](#), like Soil Fertility and Nutrient Management Planning and Biodiversity & Landscape sub-programmes. In May 2023, Teagasc and University College Dublin were accepting applications for the [Knowledge Transfer Masters Programme](#), focusing on agricultural advisory.

9.2.7l. "Publish a roadmap with specific targets and actions on each of these measures within the first 100 days of Government."

2021-2022 Progress: 'Ag Climatise', the National Climate and Air Roadmap for the Agriculture Sector, was [published in December 2020](#). The Environmental Pillar [warned that the roadmap](#) "perpetuates business-as-usual practices that will continue to wreak havoc on our environment and prevent us from meeting our climate targets."

2023 Progress: In September 2022, the Environmental Pillar and Stop Climate Chaos Coalition shared their [co-sponsored submission](#) to the Ag-Climatise draft from 2020. The submission provides suggestions for agricultural emissions ceilings. In December 2022, Teagasc shared plans to develop the [Teagasc Climate Action Strategy](#) - The Road Map for Agriculture.

9.3. Forestry

9.3a. "Publish a successor forestry programme to deliver an ambitious afforestation plan reviewing grant and premium rates across all categories in this area, with a particular focus on an increased farmer rate of support."

2021-2022 Progress: Minister Pippa Hackett established Project Woodland in 2021, bringing various parties together to work towards the fulfilment of this commitment. The outcome of Project Woodland was unclear and Ireland continued to [fall well short of afforestation targets](#). In 2022, licences were being processed slowly and Project Woodland achieved a number of outcomes. A new Forest Strategy was expected in Autumn 2022 and a new Forestry Programme early in 2023. In 2022, poor forestry licences were still being issued to plant trees on high nature value farmland and important sites for ground nesting birds. There were serious concerns that the significant pressure and threat that is afforestation in appropriate places was not being taken seriously by the Government.

2023 Progress: In November 2022, the new Forestry Programme was launched and has since been sent to the European Commission for State Aid review but DAFM has yet to receive this approval. Many stakeholders expressed concern over the delay that this approval process has already caused. In tandem, it has caused a delay in the new Forestry Strategy, which is expected to be published at the same time. In July 2023, the Irish Wildlife Trust (IWT) [expressed concern](#) over the new Forestry Programme not dedicating enough funding and resources to native woodland and continuous-cover forestry in the programme. [IWT](#) states that *"the failure to deliver more than slogans for forestry is a major disappointment and a black mark on this government's record to-date."* One stakeholder shared that it is a comprehensive response to the need to plant more trees in Ireland, while incentivising farmers to participate in the planting of native trees. Another stakeholder stated that this Government has failed to adequately deliver on its promises for forestry management, while directing funding to support the traditional monoculture model. Lastly, one stakeholder stated that the [Native Tree Scheme](#) in the programme would likely prove successful among farmers, but may face issues with inadequate rollout capacity of forestry companies.

9.3b. "Implement the MacKinnon Report and review the forestry appeals process, to ensure that it is aligned with other comparable appeals processes and that the licensing system is sufficiently resourced to clear the existing backlog, with the prompt issuing of licences in the future."

2021-2022 Program: According to [media reports from July 2021](#), 1,836 forestry licences had been issued since the start of the year, with 40% of the target of 4,500 forestry licences to be issued in 2021 reached by July. These licences covered 2,695ha of potential new forestry, an increase of 21% on the area licensed to the same date in 2020, and a 5% increase in the number of afforestation licences issued. According to an investigative journalist, parts of the Mackinnon report were being implemented. It was now harder for members of the public to take an appeal because of increased fees for gathering documentation and bringing your appeals.

2023 Progress: The Forestry Licensing Plan 2022 was launched in February 2022. In July 2023, the [Irish Farmers Journal](#) reported that the number of afforestation licences issued for tree planting was down over 93% in the first half of 2023, compared with the same period in 2022.. Afforestation licences accounting for approximately 130ha of land have been approved this year, while the first 6 months of 2022 saw over 2,000ha of licences approved. In February 2023, Minister McConalogue stated that in 2023 so far the DAFM issued [404 licences](#).

9.3c. "Support the development of on-farm forestry initiatives through the new CAP, aligning agri environment schemes with climate-change objectives and investing further in knowledge transfer." AND

9.3d. "Incorporate afforestation into the new CAP to provide incentives for farmers to plant woodland on their farms, acting as a carbon store, helping to promote wildlife corridors, and providing a future fuel source for the household." AND

9.3e. "Actively promote and support farm forestry/rewilding options that do not impact on agricultural production and support biodiversity and habitat creation. We will incentivise the option of small-scale (e.g. one hectare) forestry/rewilding."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2022, under the new CAP, there was mention of farmers planting their land for agri-environmental measures.

2023 Progress: The [Climate Action Plan 2023](#) includes actions to adopt the CAP Strategic Plan and agri-environmental measures. One target in CAP23 is to launch the Low Input Peat Grassland Measure under the Agri-Environment and Climate Measure.

9.3f. "Embark on an ambitious programme of afforestation on state-owned lands, building on the Coillte/Bord na Móna initiatives."

2021-2022 Progress: In August 2020, the creation of the Woodland Creation on Public Lands scheme was [announced](#). Funding was provided to public bodies for native woodland planting on a per hectare basis. In 2022, this commitment was not achieved as expected, as there was little to no uptake of the woodlands creation on public lands.

2023 Progress: There is no indication that the Woodland Creation on Public Lands is still being pursued. The Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss report acknowledged that [state-owned](#) woodlands should be managed by the Government long term.

9.3g. "Task Climate Action Regional Offices to work with public bodies to review land available for planting providing feedback on the potential in this area, by the end of 2020."

2021-2022 Progress: While there were [media reports in November 2020](#) detailing how Cork County Council's Climate Action Regional Offices were contacting all public sector landowners in the county to develop a database of areas suitable for planting native woodland trees, the Government did not publish a wider status update on this commitment in 2021. In May 2021, applications for 88ha of planting had been received under this scheme.

2023 Progress: There was no clear indication of announcements on this commitment. Each of the four CAROs ran until June 2023 and a new five year Service Level Agreement (SLA) was established in July 2023.

9.3h. "Institute a state-sponsored national Tree Planting Day and provide communities across the country with trees to plant on this day annually."

2021-2022 Progress: 1st October 2020 was the first National Tree Day. 1,500 native tree saplings were made available through the campaign website for primary schools to plant on their school grounds. In 2022, a public awareness campaign was undertaken and there is now an [annual National Tree Planting Week](#) in Ireland.

2023 Progress: National [Tree Week](#) took place between 19 March and 26 March 2023, with planting events taking place across the country. Fingal County Council distributed 16,000 trees to residents.

9.3i. "Engage with local authorities and local communities in a radical expansion of urban tree planting and neighbourhood and community forests."

2021-2022 Progress: There was no obvious "radical expansion" in this area in 2021 or 2022.

2023 Progress: There has not been an obvious expansion in this commitment. In May 2023, a Private Members Bill for urban tree protection was before the Dáil, the [Urban Tree Protection and Sites Locally Important for Ecology Bill 2023](#). Despite acknowledging the [public importance](#) of urban forests, there has not been major expansion.

9.3j. "Promote close to nature-continuous cover forestry systems to ultimately create permanent biodiverse forests containing trees of all ages." AND

9.3k. "Encourage the private sector to meet corporate social responsibility or sustainability objectives by investing in native woodlands, building on the Woodland Environmental Fund." AND

9.3l. "Promote planting of 'protection forests' along rivers and lakes to protect water quality and assist in managing flood risks."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2022, according to an NGO representative, continuous cover forestry was not being promoted. There was no noticeable progress with the Woodland Environmental Fund and little to no promotion of planting protection forests.

2023 Progress: As stated in Commitment 9.3a, the [Irish Wildlife Trust](#) reported concern over the lack of focus on nature-continuous cover forestry systems in the Forestry Programme 2023-2027. One stakeholder stated that the new Forestry Programme before the European Commission currently provides more support for continuous cover forestry.

9.3m. "Provide increased support for the development of agroforestry/silvopasture on Irish farmlands."

2021-2022 Progress: There was no major expansion of supports for agroforestry/silvopasture.

2023 Progress: The current [Forest Strategy 2023-2027](#) before the European Commission includes funding for agroforestry development with a grant of approximately €8,555. There was no mention of silvopasture development. One stakeholder stated that the new Forestry Programme before the European Commission currently provides more support for agroforestry and silvopasture.

9.3n. "Continue to uphold the objectives of the Forest Consent System, the Bird and Habitats Directive, the catchment management approach of the Water Framework Directive and the Forest Law and Enforcement Governance Trade regulation (FLEGT)."

2021-2022 Progress: As of 2022, there were significant problems with licensing systems and how environmental assessments were being carried out. There were issues with how the EIA process came out in the appeals system, with licences paused and sent back to the department for inaccurate completion.

2023 Progress: According to one stakeholder from an ENGO, improvements in catchment management are not happening.

9.3o. "Invest in schemes that promote recreational forestry and work with Coillte on projects such as Coillte Nature to provide the public with access to recreational forests across the country."

2021-2022 Progress: In 2021, recreational forestry applications could apply under a number of existing schemes and Coillte Nature continued its work in this area. In 2022, Coillte Nature's projects remained relatively small and few in number.

2023 Progress: Ireland's forest strategy was mentioned in a [January 2023 debate](#) with tree planting

for forest recreation being a small part of the conversation. In a July 2022 PQ, Minister Charlie McConalogue discussed the Coillte not-for-profit wing, [Coillte Nature](#), putting an emphasis on biodiversity and nature conservation efforts. Coillte Nature has completed a handful of restoration and biodiversity projects this year, like the [Sand Dune Restoration](#) in Co. Wexford. .

9.3p. "Expand the NeighbourWood Scheme, providing communities with amenity woodlands for local access, enjoyment and increasing tourism opportunities."

2021-2022 Progress: There was no major expansion of this scheme announced. Expansion would have to be within the new forestry and payments model, but little funding was going towards the NeighbourWood Scheme.

2023 Progress: There has not been significant expansion in this scheme aside from potential [additional funding](#) in the new Forestry Programme 2023-2027, which is before the European Commission currently.

9.3q. "Ensure that Coillte's remit supports the delivery of climate change commitments and the protection of biodiversity. We are fully committed to the retention of the commercial forests of Coillte in public ownership."

2021-2022 Progress: Coillte Nature expanded to include legacy plantations in the West of Ireland, but, [according to the Irish Wildlife Trust](#), if the potential scale of this is to be achieved, the Government needs to step in. As of 2022, there was no review of Coillte's remit. Coillte launched a public consultation on a new strategy in 2022.

2023 Progress: Minister Charlie McConalogue and Minister of State Pippa Hackett [met with Coillte](#) in January 2023 to discuss the forestry agency's vision and strategy. In January 2023, Coillte made it clear that "Of the State's overall national target of 450,000 hectares of new forests by 2050, the fund will plant less than 1% of that total." Despite committing to completing a review of Coillte, one stakeholder stated that the Government has yet to complete this review.

9.4. EU Common Agricultural Policy

9.4a. "Seek reforms to the CAP to reward farmers for sequestering carbon, restoring biodiversity, improving water and air quality, producing clean energy, and developing schemes that support results-based outcomes." AND

9.4b. "Continue to support farmers to embrace farming practices that are beneficial environmentally, that have a lower carbon footprint, and that better utilise and protect natural resources." AND

9.4c. "Advocate for a fair system of eligibility conditionality, under the reform of Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition rules, recognising that farmers should not be unfairly penalised for maintaining land that contributes to biodiversity principles."

2021-2022 Progress: The CAP negotiations concluded in June 2021. In 2022, according to an investigative journalist, Ireland managed to gain extensive flexibility in the percentage of farms that need to be left to nature conservation or contain biodiversity-related projects on its land. It was clear that Ireland wanted the lowest percentage allowed, which led to the European Commission scolding the inadequacy of Ireland's CAP plan.

2023 Progress: The new [Common Agricultural Policy](#) commenced on 1st January 2023. Ireland's [strategic plan](#) was approved by the Government in October 2022, with the Minister stating that "It will deliver some €9.8 billion to our farm families over the next five years to support them to continue

to produce world-class, safe and sustainable food as well as supporting them in their important work of meeting our climate ambitions.” In a July 2023 media report, the [Irish Wildlife Trust](#) acknowledged the vast funding that will benefit the farming sector, but expressed concern over the fact that only 15% of the funding will be used towards ‘results-based measures’.

10. Other Commitments

10.1 Public Procurement

10.1a. "Seek to minimise the environmental impact and optimise the community benefit of products and services procured." AND

10.1b. "Support innovation in supply markets to increase the availability and effectiveness of sustainable solutions." AND

10.1c. "Encourage suppliers to adopt practices that minimise their environmental impact and deliver community benefit." AND

10.1d. "We will task the Office of Government Procurement to update all procurement frameworks, in line with green procurement practice over the next three years."

2021-2022 progress: In 2021 and 2022, the EPA updated the guidance for public officials on GPP.

2023 Progress: Similar to previous years, the EPA published the [second report](#) on Green Public Procurement activity by Government Departments for the reference year 2021. The report shows that of the €528 million spent on contracts over €25,000, only 10% included green criteria.

10.2 National Development Plan

10.2a. "We will bring forward the planned review of the National Development Plan (NDP) from 2022. We will use the review to set out an updated NDP for the period to 2031." AND

10.2b. "The review of the NDP will be consistent with the ambition of the Programme for Government. The updated NDP will be aligned with the National Planning Framework (NPF)."

2021-2022 progress: The planned review of the National Development Plan was brought forward, with a [public consultation](#) taking place between 2020 and 2021. In October 2021 [The revised NDP 2021-2030](#) was published.

2023 Outcome: This commitment has been completed. Alongside the NDP review The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform published a [‘Climate & Environmental Assessment of NDP Review Spending Proposals’](#). However, stakeholders believe that this assessment was not transparent enough, as quantitative emissions were not provided. It also did not address major weaknesses in the agriculture and forestry policies that existed at that time.

10.3. Tourism

10.3a. "Develop a Sustainable Tourism Policy document, and in advance of this an Interim Action Plan."

2021-2022 progress: In April 2021, Minister Catherine Martin stated “the development of a new national tourism policy, with sustainability at its core, will commence later this year when the sector begins to recover from the COVID-19 crisis”. In 2022, [a working group was established](#) under the Tourism Action Plan 2019-2021 to review and propose a strategy for sustainable tourism.

2023 Progress: In March 2023, Minister Catherine Martin spoke about the [development of a new national tourism policy](#), building upon the work achieved by the Sustainable Tourism Working Group, who published a number of actions to promote sustainable tourism practices.

10.4 A Shared Island

10.4a. “Explore how bodies established under the Good Friday Agreement can ensure that there is a joined-up approach to environmental issues on an all-island basis and seek to develop an all-island strategy to tackle climate breakdown and the biodiversity crisis.”

2021-2022 progress: In 2021, these bodies met once but there were no significant outcomes. In April 2022, a [report by NESC](#) was published, highlighting the support for an all-island approach to economic, social, environmental, and well-being challenges facing the island of Ireland.

2023 Progress: In December 2022, the Taoiseach announced over [€50m in new funding for Shared Island programmes](#). €11m of this has been allocated for all-island biodiversity actions on peatlands restoration and biosecurity. The [Shared Island Civic Society Fund](#) is an initiative to promote practical North South cooperation and engagement across a range of sectors and themes, consistent with the objectives and commitments of the Good Friday Agreement.

10.4b. “Promote an all-island approach to land-use planning and river-basin management plans to stop cross-border pollution.”

2021-2022 progress: No progress was made on this commitment. However, in September 2021 [a 2022-2027 River Basin Management Plan](#) was published and was undergoing public consultation.

2023 Progress: An NGO report [Linking the Irish Environment](#) was published in June 2023 to investigate how to enable the environment sector across the island of Ireland. It was commissioned by Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL) and Irish Environment Network (IEN), as part of the first stage of developing a long-term programme for stronger north/south environmental NGO cooperation, and presents recommendations to help define the path forward.

10.5 Rural Development

10.5a. “Publish and implement a new Rural Policy to build on the progress of the Action Plan for Rural Development to promote rural recovery and development in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis.”

2021-2022 progress: In March 2021, [“Our Rural Future”](#), a new rural development policy was published. There was no further progress made in 2022.

2023 Progress: [Our Rural Future 2023 Work Programme](#) outlines the proposed actions being taken in 2023. There are 296 actions scheduled for completion, 17 of which will support implementation of 11 new policy initiatives, indicating the Government's intention for Our Rural Future to respond to evolving requirements through interactions with stakeholders. A number of actions carried over from 2022 have been allocated revised delivery timelines.

10.6 Local Government

10.6a. “Build the capacity of local authorities to lead locally and engage citizens on climate change and biodiversity.”

2021-2022 progress: In 2021, [27 of the 31 Development plans](#) were reviewed and adopted in the context of Local Authority Climate Action Plans. In 2022, [according to Councillor Nicholas Crossan](#), all local authorities co-signed the Climate Action Charter for Local Authorities.

2023 Progress: Local Authorities have a key role in the delivery of both climate mitigation and adaptation. This is reflected in the provisions of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021. [Phase 2: Development of LA CAP](#) was to be designed and delivered between March 2023 and February 2024.