

Briefing your TD on the Climate Bill

Talking points for Tuesday 10th February 2015

The following talking points are some of the main concerns Stop Climate Chaos has about the Climate Bill. Feel free to use some or all of these in your discussions with TDs. You don't have to be an expert on the Bill – just raise the points you feel are comfortable with.

- **Why were the Oireachtas Environment Committee's recommendations not followed in the Government Bill?** The Environment Committee's report was agreed by consensus by TDs and Senators from all parties, so your colleagues (or you) supported it. And all the stakeholder groups welcomed it. Yet only 3 of the 10 recommendations from the Committee which required changes to the draft Bill have been acted on. You can [check if any of your TDs are members of the Environment Committee here](#) (in which case they should be willing to stand over their recommendations). Sending draft Bills to Oireachtas Committees for consideration was one of the Government's main political reforms. It makes it pretty pointless if their findings are ignored.
- The Bill doesn't set a simple emission reduction target for 2050, which would be the clearest driver of climate action over time. The UK Climate Change Act sets an 80% reduction target for 2050 as does the climate law in Finland, while France has set a 75% target. The European Council has stated that the EU will need to reduce its overall emissions by between 80 and 95% by 2050.
In Ireland all previous Bills (Government, all-party and opposition) have set a target for 2050. This Government has set its face against a target, partly on the advice of the Attorney General, but we don't know why. Ask your TD will the Government, at the very least, publish the Attorney General's advice.
- The Bill only says we will be a low carbon economy by 2050, but what does low carbon mean? **At the very least, the Government should include its own definition of low carbon in the Bill** (which has a definitions section), as recommended by the all-party Oireachtas Committee report. Will the TD put down an amendment to this effect? And ask their party or political grouping to support it?
- **Why isn't the Expert Advisory Council fully independent?** It should be modelled on the Fiscal Advisory Council, like the Oireachtas committee proposed. **Its independence should be explicitly stated in the Bill** and its members should be independent of State or stakeholder interests. Currently the Bill provides for a body where 4 members represent state bodies in an ex-officio capacity (EPA, SEAI, Teagasc and ESRI). The Bill does not specify that the Council will be independent in the exercise of its functions as is the case for the Fiscal Advisory Council. While the Bill provides for the Advisory Council to publish its reports, the time period is anything from 30-90 days after they give the report to the Minister, which is too long a delay for the purposes of informing public debate and ensuring transparency *before* the Government makes decisions.
- **Why is the principle of climate justice not included in the Bill?** The Oireachtas Committee recommended the legislation should incorporate the principle of climate justice. The Government has voiced support for the concept of climate justice at the UN and co-hosted a

conference on the issue with Mary Robinson as part of Ireland's EU presidency. There is no reason not to include it in the Bill. Section 4(7) of the Bill is a long list of matters the Government and Ministers must take into account, including economic opportunities, cost-effectiveness and "the need to promote sustainable development". The principle of climate justice should be included in this list.

- Finally, ask your TD to put down some amendments to the Bill to address your concerns. A list of amendments can be found on page 3. You may not need to discuss these in detail, as they relate to the above points, but it's a good idea to hand this list to the TD at the end of the meeting. That way they have something to refer to when the Bill is going through the Dail.

Top Tips for lobbying your TD

Be polite and friendly

Smile, shake hands and introduce yourself. Make eye contact during the meeting and listen as well as talk. Be calm but firm. Show your passion but don't get personal or aggressive. Being respectful makes it more likely for your message to get across.

Emphasis the local

If your children go to school together mention that, if your husband works with the TD's cousin, joke about how hard they work, little thing like this. If you voted for them, tell them that. If they feel like they are connected to you with local links they will feel even more accountable for their decisions. Even just telling them where you live will help them to place you.

Be concise

Put your message across as clearly as you can. Don't be afraid to make your main points a couple of times in different ways. If the TD wants to talk about something complicated that you don't understand, just go back to your main point. You don't have to be particularly knowledgeable, it is your right to tell a TD how you feel about climate change.

Don't let them waffle or side-track you.

Irish politicians love to divert the conversation away to an area that they are more comfortable talking about. Stick to your three main points and try to get them to as well. Politely bring the conversation back to the reason why you wanted to meet with them in the first place.

Be prepared

Do a little bit of reading up on the topics beforehand. You don't need to be an expert most TDs certainly aren't but it might be a good idea just to know what you are going to say. Have a think about things the TD might ask and what you would say in reply.

Pin them down

TDs often seem to be agreeing with what their constituents are saying. It is important to get a concrete commitment out of them for something that they will actually do. Ask them to support what you are saying by speaking on it in the Dail, and ask them to write to one of their colleagues in the cabinet to ask them to support it at cabinet level.