

- **Opening Statement**

Minister Ryan

Joint Committee on Environment and Climate Action

Climate Action Plan 2023

9.30am – Thursday, 16 February 2023

- I wish to begin by thanking the Chair and Members of the Committee for inviting me to speak with you today about Climate Action Plan 2023.

Overview

- Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP23), which was approved by Government in December 2022, provides an update on Ireland's climate action, as well as reporting on the progress made with regard to meeting our national emission targets of a 51% reduction in emissions by 2030, relative to 2018 levels, and achieving climate neutrality by no later than 2050.
- As the first statutory plan following the enactment of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, Climate Action Plan 2023 implements the legal requirement to incorporate the emission reduction pathways set by the Carbon Budgets and Sectoral Emissions Ceilings, with further work to be completed in relation to LULUCF emissions, and unallocated emissions savings in the second carbon budget period, ahead of Climate Action Plan 2024.

- For each sector that has an emissions ceiling, CAP23 includes a roadmap of actions to ensure compliance in the remainder of the first carbon budget period. CAP23 also includes potential actions and measures for the 2nd carbon budget period and an overview of potential policies for the 3rd period.

Annex of Actions

- CAP23 will be accompanied by an Annex of Actions which will provide additional detail for the actions identified in the Plan. This will include steps to support delivery, expected outputs, lead Departments, timelines for delivery and other stakeholders. This additional information supports the implementation and delivery of plans and policies to meet our climate goals, while also supporting the monitoring and reporting process that is essential to ensuring the successful delivery of our climate ambition. I expect the Annex of Actions to be published in the coming weeks.

Preparation of the Plan

- As part of the preparatory work for delivering CAP23 extensive consultation was carried out by my Department with stakeholders including all relevant Departments and Agencies. The principal means of engagement was through the establishment of ten Working Groups in September 2022. In addition to the Working Groups, there was significant bilateral engagement at both official and Ministerial level to discuss the challenges, opportunities and potential solutions to the issues this process raised.

Key Measures

- CAP23 includes actions that will transform and improve life in Ireland. These actions will support warmer and better built homes; more sustainable transport systems; increased levels of indigenous, renewable energy; more efficient and sustainable business practices; and new income streams for farmers.
- Key targets in the plan include:
 - enough renewable electricity to power every home and business in the country by 2030
 - 70% of people in rural Ireland to have buses that go three times a day to the nearest town
 - 500,000 homes retrofitted to BER B2 to make them warmer
 - 1 in 3 private cars on our roads to be electric by 2030
 - walking, cycling and public transport to account for 50% of all daily trips
 - tillage farming to cover up to 400,000 hectares by 2030
- The societal and economic changes required to meet these targets will require a collaborative effort by Government, businesses, academia, communities, and individuals to implement new and ambitious policies, technological innovations, systems and infrastructures.
- I have every faith that we together will reduce our overall economy-wide carbon emissions, year by year. This is not just the right thing to do for our environment and our planet; this is also the smart thing to do for our economy.

Conclusion

- I believe that 2023 will be a significant year for Ireland's transition towards net-zero. We have laid the foundations with the 2021 Climate Act and our 2022 Carbon Budgets and Sectoral Ceilings. Our latest Action Plan is ambitious, impactful but also, it is achievable.
- The transition to a carbon-neutral economy will provide huge opportunities to foster innovation, create new jobs and grow businesses in areas like offshore wind, cutting-edge sustainable agriculture, and low carbon construction.
- While we all must act together towards our climate objective, I realise that the costs of climate action will be felt more acutely by some than others. As a Government, we are committed to protecting those most vulnerable and to ensuring a just transition to a low-carbon economy.
- I would like to finish by thanking the Committee and acknowledging the integral role its Members will play in reviewing, and contributing to, the Government's progress towards reaching our climate ambitions.
- This oversight from this Committee is a key component of our enhanced climate governance structures and will improve the accountability of Ministers for delivery of climate action in their areas. I look forward to further engagement with the Committee as we work towards achieving a 51% reduction in our greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, and net-zero by no later than 2050.