Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Consultation on Carbon Budgets

December 2021

Prepared by the Department of
the Environment, Climate & Communications
gov.ie/decc

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1 Background

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 (the "Act") was signed into law in July of this year and commits Ireland to reach a legally-binding target of a climate neutral economy no later than 2050 (the "National Climate Objective"), and a reduction in emissions of 51% by 2030 compared to 2018 levels.

The Act identifies the specific mechanisms, plans and strategies that will be used by Government to achieve the National Climate Objective. These are:

- a series of carbon budgets;
- sectoral emission ceilings;
- annual updates to the Climate Action Plan;
- a National Long Term Climate Action Strategy; and
- a National Adaptation Framework.

The Act also provides for a set of principles which the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications (the Minister) and Government will take into account when preparing, approving or adopting the statutory plans, strategies, carbon budgets and sectoral emission ceilings referred to. This will ensure the transformation to decarbonise our economy is a fair and just transition leaving no one behind.

1.1 What is a carbon budget?

Under the system of carbon budgeting established by the Act, a carbon budget represents the total amount of greenhouse gases that may be emitted in the State during a 5-year period, measured in tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. A carbon budget must be prepared for three sequential budget periods so that, at any one time, there is a series of three carbon budgets – referred to in the Act as a "carbon budget programme". The carbon budgets will be consistent with furthering the achievement of the national climate objective and include all greenhouse gases. The first carbon budget programme will comprise carbon budgets for the following periods: 2021-2025; 2026-2030 and 2031-2035. The first two carbon budgets in the programme provide for a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from the State by 2030, relative to 2018, as set out in the Act. The third carbon budget is provisional and consistent with establishing a pathway to the 2050 national climate objective.

2 Process

Under the Act, the Climate Change Advisory Council (CCAC) is tasked with preparing proposed carbon budgets based on the most up to date scientific evidence and analysis, and then presenting its proposal to the Minister. Within four months from receipt of the CCAC's proposed budget(s) the Minister shall:

- cause a copy of the carbon budget to be presented to both Houses of the Oireachtas;
- consider the carbon budget, consult with other relevant Ministers and with the public;
- amend the carbon budget, if appropriate, and present the recommended carbon budget to government for approval, which may approve as submitted or subject to modifications;
- cause a copy of the carbon budgets to be laid before both houses of the Oireachtas.

The Oireachtas shall then consider the carbon budgets, which will have effect from the date on which a motion approving the budgets has been passed by the second of the Houses.

CCAC Submission to Minister

On 25 October 2021, the CCAC submitted to the Minister, and published, the first proposed carbon budget programme (three successive 5-year carbon budgets). Minister Ryan publicly welcomed the proposed carbon budget programme as a "significant milestone in our efforts to tackle climate change". On 6 December 2021, the proposed carbon budgets were laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas. On 7 December, Dáil Éireann agreed to refer the proposed carbon budgets to the Joint Committee on Environment and Climate Action. The Committee will consider the carbon budget and provide a report in writing containing its recommendations to both Houses of the Oireachtas by 5 February 2022.

The Minister is now seeking input from the public on the proposed carbon budget programme to inform the Minister's recommendation on carbon budgets for government approval. Once approved by government, the Minister will propose a motion in both Houses of the Oireachtas for approval of the carbon budgets. The carbon budgets shall have effect on and from the date on which a motion approving the carbon budget has been passed by both Houses.

Once this process has been completed, the first economy-wide carbon budget programme will have been placed on a statutory footing. Following completion of this process, the Minister and Government will prepare and approve sectoral emissions ceiling in accordance with the Act.

3 Scope

This consultation relates to the economy-wide carbon budgets, proposed by the CCAC. The purpose of the consultation is to gather views from the public and interested parties on the economy-wide carbon budgets proposed by the CCAC, to inform the Minister's recommendation to government on final carbon budgets.

It is important to note that the carbon budgets must be consistent with the legally binding abatement targets established under the Act. The first two carbon budgets, proposed by the CCAC, bringing us up to 2030, must account for a 51% reduction in emissions relative to 2018 levels, while the provisional third budget, bringing us up to 2035, must be consistent with establishing a credible pathway to net-zero emissions by 2050. Any feedback submitted under this consultation should be consistent with these legally binding requirements.

4 Responding to this Consultation

Before making a recommendation to government, the Minister is now consulting on the CCAC proposal for three economy-wide carbon budgets for the period 2021-2035. You can contribute to this consultation by providing observations and comments on the CCAC's carbon budget letter to Minister Ryan and / or the associated CCAC Carbon Budget Technical Report published on 25 October 2021, both of which can be found at www.climatecouncil.ie/carbonbudgets. Please supplement your response with any relevant supporting information, evidence and/or analysis.

The Minister would welcome responses on:

- How effort is shared to meet the 51% emissions reduction by 2030 across the first two carbon budgets, 2021-2025 & 2026-2030.
- The third carbon budget for 2031-2035 being consistent with the national objective for a climate neutral economy by no later than 2050.
- The CCAC Technical report accompanying the proposed carbon budget programme.
- Any other observations you wish to make

4.1 Submitting your response

Responses to this consultation must be received in full by the Department no later than **5.30pm on 08 February 2022**. Where possible, responses should be returned electronically via email. Responses will also be accepted in hard copy format.

All responses should be clearly marked: “Consultation on Carbon Budgets” and sent to:

carbonbudgetconsultation@decc.gov.ie

Or posted to:

Climate Division – Carbon Budgets
Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications,
29-31 Adelaide Road,
Dublin,
D02 X28

4.2 Data Protection

We are committed to engaging with stakeholders in a clear, open and transparent manner. Any person or organisation can make a submission in relation to this consultation. All submissions and feedback will be considered before the final version of the carbon budgets is published.

Please note that responses to this consultation are subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2014 (FOI), Access to Information on the Environment Regulations 2007-2018 (AIE) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Please also note that we may publish the contents of all submissions received to our consultations on our website. We will redact personal data prior to publication. In responding to this consultation, parties should clearly indicate where their responses contain personal information, commercially sensitive information or confidential information which they would not wish to be released under FOI, AIE or otherwise published.

We would like to draw your attention to our Data Privacy Notice which explains how and when we collect personal data, why we do so and how we treat this information. It also explains your rights in relation to the collection of personal information and how you can exercise those rights.