



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Public Sector Climate Action Strategy

2023 - 2025

Prepared by the Department of
the Environment, Climate and Communications
[gov.ie](https://www.gov.ie)

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Minister's Foreword

Climate breakdown is the most pressing long-term global challenge of our time.

We have set ourselves the ambition of halving Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions by the end of the decade, and of putting Ireland on course to becoming carbon neutral no later than 2050.

The Government is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the public sector by 51% by 2030 and a 50% improvement in energy efficiency by 2030. This Strategy, underpinned by the Climate Action Plan 2023, puts in place the foundation for the public sector to achieve this 2050 target.

The world's most progressive public services are all moving in this direction along with us. Ireland is a member of the US led Net Zero Government Initiative, which was launched at COP 27. Participating countries commit to achieve net-zero national government emissions by no later than 2050.

Achieving the priorities laid out in this Strategy will require a coordinated effort across all public sector bodies. The necessary step-change in our climate ambition will require the public sector to play a leadership role as a catalyst for far-reaching climate action across buildings, transport, waste, and energy. The public sector is best placed to lead Irish efforts to combat climate change and harness the opportunities and rewards that will come from moving swiftly and efficiently to a low-carbon society.

While the challenge is great, so too is the opportunity. The public sector has made transformative changes before, as exemplified by T.K. Whitaker's First Programme for Economic Expansion in the late 1950s. This time, however, we are creating a new programme for green economic expansion, beginning with the decarbonisation of our public service organisations. Together we can and will serve the best interests of Ireland and its people through responsible, transformative climate action. We know we must act, and by acting now we can help build towards a cleaner, greener society and economy for ourselves and future generations.

Eamon Ryan TD

Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications

Glossary of Acronyms

BER	Building Energy Rating
CADB	Climate Action Delivery Board
CAP	Climate Action Plan
CAU	Climate Action Unit
CSC	Climate and Sustainability Champion
DEC	Display Energy Certificate
DECC	Department of the Environment, Climate, and Communications
EED	European Energy Efficiency Directive
EMAS	European Eco-Management and Audit System
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EPBD	European Energy Performance of Buildings Directive
EV	Electric Vehicle
GHG	Greenhouse Gas Emissions
GPP	Green Public Procurement
HDV	Heavy Duty Vehicle
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LDV	Light Duty Vehicle
LTRS	Long-Term Renovation Strategy
MEPS	Minimum Energy Performance Standard
M&R	Monitoring and Reporting, SEAI's system to enable public bodies to report on their compliance with their climate goals
NDP	National Development Plan
NEEAP	National Energy Efficiency Action Plan
NZEB	Nearly Zero-Energy Building
OGP	Office of Government Procurement
RED	Renewable Energy Directive
SEAI	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland

1 Introduction

This overarching Public Sector Climate Action Strategy will provide consistency in climate action across the public service. This strategy runs to 2025, to align with the end of the first carbon budget period.

This strategy focuses on governance, which has been identified as a key pillar in supporting the leadership role that public sector decarbonisation must play in the broader nation-wide net-zero transition.

Statutory Context for Climate Action

There is a legal obligation on public bodies¹ to comply with Ireland's climate law. Section 15(1) of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 (the Act) provides that:

A relevant body shall, in so far as practicable, perform its functions in a manner consistent with—

- (a) the most recent approved climate action plan,
- (b) the most recent approved national long term climate action strategy,
- (c) the most recent approved national adaptation framework and approved sectoral adaptation plans,
- (d) the furtherance of the national climate objective, and
- (e) the objective of mitigating greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change in the State.

The Act further provides that a Minister give a direction to a relevant body requiring it to prepare a report specifying:

- (a) the measures that the relevant body has adopted for the purposes of compliance by that relevant body with subsection (1), and
- (b) the progress made by the relevant body in the performance of its functions in the manner referred to in that subsection.

A Minister may also give a direction to a relevant body requiring it to adopt certain measures for the purposes of ensuring compliance with the climate law.

¹ Prescribed and public bodies as defined in the Freedom of Information Act 2014.

Scope

Public sector bodies must achieve at least a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and a 50% improvement in energy efficiency by 2030. This strategy will support all public sector bodies in achieving this aim. In relation to the governance structures detailed below, the sections on reporting, roadmaps, Climate and Sustainability Champions, and Green Teams are intended to provide guidance in support of the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate. The mandate and this strategy do not apply to local authorities, commercial semi state bodies, or the school sector.

Local authorities, commercial semi state bodies, and the school sector have separate mandate and roadmap requirements. However, the structures, guidance and case studies included in this strategy can also provide useful guidance for these other categories of public sector bodies.

Box 1: Vision, mission, values for the Public Sector Climate Action Strategy

Vision, Mission, and Values	
Vision	A public sector that is leading by example on climate action, demonstrated by being on a clear pathway to achieving at least a 51% reduction in GHG emissions, and a 50% improvement in energy efficiency by 2030.
Mission	<p>The public sector will lead by example on climate action.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Here and now: the public sector will act, make progress, and build momentum to deliver our climate action vision. We will deliver transformative change with appropriate accountability frameworks, through our coordinated strategies, policies, mandates, and roadmaps.2. The bigger picture: the public sector will influence society, instil change, and support our people to promote climate action in their workplaces and communities. Public servants will be 'change agents' in their social networks.3. Looking to the future: the public sector will get ready and scale up activity to achieve increasingly ambitious targets.
Values	<p>The public sector will embody key values in its climate action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leadership• Collaboration• Innovation• Accountability

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability • Inclusivity • Evidence-Based
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Box 2: 2030 and 2050 targets for the Public Sector

EU and public sector targets – 2020/2050			
	2020	2030	2050
EU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • – 20% GHG emissions • + 20% renewable energy • + 20% energy efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • – 55% GHG emissions • + 32% renewable energy • + 32.5% energy efficiency 	Climate Neutral
National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • – 20% GHG emissions • + 20% renewable energy • + 20% energy efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 million tonnes to 30 million tonnes • Carbon budgets and sectoral emissions ceilings 	Net Zero Emissions

2 Leadership, Governance, and Accountability

Leadership, underpinned by strong governance at all levels, is essential for the achievement of our 2030 emissions reduction and energy efficiency targets. Given that the total emissions from the public sector make up a small percentage of national emissions, the role of public sector should be viewed in terms of being catalytic to the overall transition to a decarbonised society.

The public sector can shape national decarbonisation policies and targets. In addition to eliminating its own emissions, the public sector can make a much more significant impact by taking on this leadership role. Public sector leadership will involve transforming its own operations and supply chains by promoting new workforce behaviours as systemic changes across whole organisations, including green considerations in public-sector procurement decisions, and embedding climate considerations in the budgeting process. There is an

underlying “best practice” dimension to public sector leadership which can be leveraged across the whole of society.

Comprehensive legislative structures already exist to underpin climate governance at Ministerial and Departmental level in the form of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021. Ministerial responsibility for the Public Sector sectoral emissions ceiling rests with the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications, with the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform to take a joint coordinating role over various Departments. By building on this foundation, the public sector strategy outlines what a strong governance and delivery infrastructure needs to look like to ensure accountability for reaching targets while also increasing sustainability.

A clear accountability framework is essential, including defined roles and responsibilities, and transparency on decision making and the flow of information. Policies, processes, and key performance indicators (KPIs) will be critical for making information transparent and communicating expectations to the public sector workforce and to wider society.

It is important to report and recognise progress. Transparent, balanced reporting on the progress of decarbonisation and sustainability promotes accountability, encourages progress, and keeps stakeholders informed. This strategy provides an accountability framework to enable this.

Management Boards, and other governance structures that set the organisational policy, direction, risk appetite, and culture will be key to promoting public sector leadership. Awareness and prioritisation of climate considerations will provide the appropriate ‘tone at the top’ which is essential for embedding a culture of leading by example on climate action. The role of Climate and Sustainability Champion, at Management Board level, will be critical in this regard.

Box 3: Governance overview

Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is key to the climate action leadership role that the public sector must play• Will deliver the Strategy through every level of all public sector bodies• Will guarantee commitment, responsibility, and accountability• Is a fundamental success factor for the Strategy
Key Aspects	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Climate Action Mandate• Climate Action Roadmaps

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate and Sustainability Champions • Green Teams • Climate Action Unit Network • Reporting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CAP quarterly reports to the Oireachtas and the CADB ○ Public Sector Climate Action Mandate ○ Annual reports ○ SEAI's M&R system ○ Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies
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Box 4: Governance; key aspects

Climate Action Mandate <i>What public sector bodies must do</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support public sector bodies leading by example, a Climate Action Mandate applies to all bodies covered by public sector decarbonisation targets, except for local authorities, commercial semi-state bodies, and the school sector • The mandate must be implemented by those bodies to which it applies • The SEAI will support bodies in their implementation of the mandate • The mandate will be reviewed annually and published in each iteration of the Climate Action Plan • The Climate and Sustainability Champion ("the Champion") has responsibility for implementing and reporting on the public sector climate action mandate • The implementation of the mandate is supported through the body's Climate Action Roadmap • The mandate must be reported on through the M&R system using a 'comply and explain' approach • The Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies will be updated to reflect mandate reporting requirements. Parent Departments will be able to audit implementation of the Mandate through the existing arrangements for monitoring of compliance with Code of Practice requirements. This will provide an external, independent review which will enhance the credibility of reporting
Climate Action Roadmaps <i>The path by which public sector bodies</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of the Roadmaps is to encourage strategic vision, coordination, organisation, mobilisation, and planning by each organisation • Each body must have a climate action roadmap ("the Roadmap") setting out how it will deliver on its energy efficiency and GHG emissions reduction targets

<p><i>will implement the Mandate</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Roadmaps must be in line with the Climate Action Mandate. The Roadmap supports the implementation of the mandate, so must be updated to reflect any changes in the mandate • Guidance for preparing Roadmaps has been developed by the SEAI and the EPA and is available at this link: https://www.seai.ie/publications/Public_Sector_Bodies_Climate_Action_Roadmaps_Guidance.pdf. When the mandate is reviewed annually, the guidance will be updated as necessary and reissued • The Roadmap must be signed off by the most senior management level within the organisation (e.g., CEO and Board, Management Board and Sec Gen, etc.)
<p>Climate and Sustainability Champion</p> <p><i>Responsibility for implementing and reporting on the Mandate</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A member of the Management Board (or equivalent) must be appointed as the Climate and Sustainability Champion for each public sector body • The Climate and Sustainability Champion (“the Champion”) has responsibility for implementing and reporting on the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate • The Champion acts as the sponsor for the Green Team at Management Board level • The Champion must ensure commitment at leadership level to achieving the climate action targets for the organisation. Advanced support from the SEAI can be accessed in the form of public sector partnership. Public bodies are encouraged to join the partnership programme and avail of the supports • The Champion reports directly to the Secretary General (or equivalent) in relation to their role, responsibilities, and actions. This is to ensure appropriate planning, investment, and resource allocation
<p>Green Teams</p> <p><i>Integrated drivers of sustainability</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All public sector bodies must establish a Green Team that is properly resourced and that reports to senior management on a regular and defined basis • The Green Team must have a charter that defines their role and areas of focus • The Champion acts as the sponsor for the Green Team at Management Board level • Energy management must be a strong element of the Green Teams’ remit. A key to success will be all public bodies having an appropriate level of energy management. The SEAI have published a guide as to what is required of each public body
<p>Climate Action Unit Network</p> <p><i>Building capacity to</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Climate Action Unit (CAU) Network will complement existing climate action governance structures. This will help to ensure transparency and full visibility of climate action policy and initiatives relevant to all Government Departments

<i>deliver climate action</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As distinct from other governance groups, the Network will focus on building capacity amongst CAU colleagues, facilitating peer learning and exchange, and exploring organisational or operational issues facing Government Departments in the delivery of climate action
Reporting <i>Ensuring accountability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Climate and Sustainability Champion has responsibility for implementing and reporting on the public sector climate action mandate Annual reporting and progress to targets is tracked by the M&R system. Public bodies report annually on organisational data. From 2022 public bodies will be reporting 'building specific' data, and from 2023 data on compliance with the clean vehicle directive Relevant public sector bodies must report through the SEAI M&R system on compliance with the Mandate using a 'comply or explain approach' The new M&R system, currently under development by the SEAI, will have more reports and scorecards to track energy and GHG performance. Public bodies will be encouraged to use these Public bodies have an obligation to report and input their data. This data is fundamental to tracking performance, and ensuring we are working towards achieving our climate action vision. The public sector targets are challenging but necessary to lead the way in Ireland and internationally Public bodies will be assigned to sectoral groups. The progress indicator for the public sector to meet its target will be the sectoral groups. This is in recognition of the need to have flexibility to invest where there is best return on investment in terms of emissions reduction Each body's annual report must report on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GHG emissions Implementation of the Mandate Sustainability activities report Compliance with Circular 1/2020: Procedures for offsetting the emissions associated with official air travel

Box 5 . Timeline for Public Sector Bodies' Climate Action Roadmaps (2023 – 2025)

2023	
By end of quarter 1 2023	First iteration of Roadmap completed by public sector body
	To implement Mandate as included in Climate Action plan 2021
By end of quarter 2 2023	Second iteration of Guidance published by SEAI and EPA
	To implement Mandate as included in Climate Action Plan 2023
By end of quarter 3 2023	Second iteration of Roadmap completed by public sector body
	To implement Mandate as included in Climate Action Plan 2023
2024, and following years	
Within 2 months of publication of Climate Action Plan	Updated Guidance to be published by SEAI and EPA
Within 6 months of publication of Climate Action Plan	Updated Roadmap to be completed by public sector bodies.

2.1 Green Teams

Green teams are essential to reducing emissions from the public sector. They have two fundamental objectives which tie in with the public sector leading by example:

- i) to influence colleagues to commit to working and living sustainably;
- ii) to influence decision making in public sector bodies so that climate; and environmental criteria are to the fore.

2.1.1 Critical Success Factors

To ensure effectiveness and success within a public sector body, a Green Team should have the following:²

² MacNamee, B., "Green Teams—Success and Failure," Consulteco Ltd., 2015.

- Alignment of green team goals with corporate sustainability goals;
- Senior management support and commitment;
- Time and other resources as required;
- Recognition of green teams' activity, rewards for success of green teams, and image;
- Motivation;
- Monitoring and feedback of Green Team performance;
- Co-ordination and communication; and
- Accountability and responsibility.

2.1.2 Structure and Role

The Green Team will have an agreed charter which outlines the areas that the team will focus on and will inform the work programme of the team. Implementing the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate should be a priority for Green Teams.

The team should be properly structured and resourced with key roles appropriately staffed. This can be detailed in the charter. The team should include employees from across the functions of the organisation and from a wide range of grade levels. Relevant areas that should be represented on the team include building management, corporate services, human resources, learning and development, finance, and technical support.

The Green Team will work closely with the Climate and Sustainability Champion, who will function as its sponsor at Management Board level within the organisation. The sponsor will clear operational barriers for the team and ensure it is properly resourced. To enable the work of the Green Team, the Champion must be able to access relevant information and data on the activities of the body.

Each organisation will set its own benchmarks for its Green Team against which the team can measure its level of success. Green Teams may start with their organisation's energy use and then branch out to areas such as water, waste, or biodiversity, but each organisation will have its own priority areas. Having metrics in place for the team is essential for measuring its success. These metrics will differ across different organisations.

2.1.3 Green Team Charter Guidelines

A Green Team Charter will have the following elements:

- A mission statement, briefly stating the Green Team's aims;
- A section devoted to the Green Team's purpose;

- A section on structure and membership, emphasising that the Green Team's membership is drawn from all levels of the organisation;
- An indication of meeting frequency; and
- A section on the Green Team's report, e.g., to senior management team/management board level.

2.2 Climate and Sustainability Champion

The Climate and Sustainability Champion has a key leadership role at a senior level in the organisation. The two primary functions of the Climate and Sustainability Champion are:

- i) to implement and report on the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate; and
- ii) to function as a sponsor at management board level for the organisation's Green Team.

The Climate and Sustainability Champion should be a member of the organisation at Management Board level or equivalent, thus being able to influence “the tone at the top” of the organisation. This should be the most senior management team within the public sector body. As the actions in the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate are concerned in large part with facilities management, procurement, governance and reporting, the Champion should have decision making powers in these areas.

2.3 European Eco-Management and Audit System (EMAS)

The Public Sector Climate Action Mandate requires public sector bodies to prepare to achieve the European Eco-Management Audit System (EMAS). The management board of the organisation must appoint a management representative who is responsible for EMAS.

The EMAS User Guide suggests ways for employees to get involved, such as proposing environmental objectives or drawing up procedures. The User Guide,³ as well as the Sectoral Reference Documents,⁴ will also provide guidance for the activities of Green Teams and provide a structure for the Green Team to demonstrate commitment to the achievement of the EMAS standards.

2.4 Climate Action Units (CAU)

The enactment of the *Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021* has placed legally binding obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and meet climate targets across Government Departments. This includes from sectoral and national policy

³ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/emas_publications/guidance_en.htm

⁴ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/emas_publications/sectoral_reference_documents_en.htm

perspectives, as well as a need for the public sector to lead by example and reduce their own emissions.

Under the Interim Climate Actions 2021, all Government Departments were required to establish a Climate Action Unit (CAU) to provide dedicated focus and resources to the delivery of climate action. All Departments established CAUs by the end of Q4 2021, varying in size and structure according to individual needs and sectoral prominence.

In some Departments, CAUs hold a significant externally facing remit for the development of sectoral climate policies for direct emissions reduction (e.g., across transport, agriculture, electricity, and enterprise). Others provide essential supporting roles to the delivery of climate action including to ensure a Just Transition, progress societal engagement, develop skills and/or bolster climate literacy. Others still hold an internally facing remit to reduce Departmental emissions, including through the retrofit of diverse public buildings profiles for enhanced energy and resource efficiencies.

2.4.1 The CAU Network

To further build capacity and ensure that both the people and systems are configured to deliver on climate action, the Climate Action Plan 2021 committed to establish a CAU Network and work programme.

Following consultation with the CAU Network, two distinct areas of focus for the Network work programme emerged:

- ‘Externally-facing’ climate action – linked to Departments’ direct need to design actions, cross-divisional policies, work programmes and supporting measures relevant to carbon budgets, Sectoral Emissions Ceilings, adaptation, engagement, and iterative annual Climate Action Plans; and
- ‘Internally-facing’ climate action – linked to Departments’ need to lead by example and reduce their own emission profiles, including through the implementation of climate action mandates; operation of green teams and corporate service functions; buildings management; and the retrofit of public buildings for enhanced energy and resource efficiencies.

Terms of Reference

The CAU Network will:

- Function as a forum for peer learning and exchange on climate policy issues across participating Government Departments;

- Build capacity across Units to address all aspects of climate action delivery, including through a programme of training and learning and sharing of events;
- Allow newer Units to interact with more established Units, to exchange on best practice and innovative approaches to climate action;
- Clarify and support the role of CAUs for both internal and external climate action delivery, as relevant to diverse sectoral, supporting, and corporate service functions;
- Support Units in efforts to mainstream climate action in the development of sectoral policies, strategies, and performance frameworks; and
- Function as a primary circulation and contact list, for use by all Members, to engage bilaterally in the spirit of collaboration as well as distribute upcoming alerts and initiatives (e.g., Ministerial letters, Memoranda to Government, proposal papers, research reports, etc.) on a system-wide basis.

Structure

The CAU Network will complement existing climate action governance structures. This will help to ensure transparency and full visibility of climate action policy and initiatives relevant to all Departments.

As distinct from other governance groups however, the Network will focus on building capacity amongst CAU colleagues, facilitating peer learning and exchange, and exploring organisational or operational issues facing Departments in the delivery of climate action.

The work programme of the CAU Network will remain open and flexible to emergent needs, in keeping with a membership-driven approach and existing dynamic climate policy environment.

2.5 Reporting

Transparent, balanced reporting on the progress of decarbonisation and sustainability promotes accountability and good governance, and further ensures that the public sector can continue to lead on climate action. The key pillars of the reporting framework under this strategy are:

- a) The SEAI Monitoring and Report (M&R) system;
- b) The annual report of each public sector body;
- c) The Public Sector Climate Action Mandate; and
- d) The Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

The reporting requirements relating to the mandate will be reflected in the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. This will enable parent Departments to include climate considerations as part of the existing reporting structure for monitoring compliance statutory and governance requirements.

2.5.1 SEAI Monitoring and Reporting (M&R) System

Public sector bodies must report their climate action activities through the SEAI Monitoring and Reporting System (M&R). The M&R system will track energy efficiency and GHG targets.

To avoid duplication the M&R system will also be used to track and monitor implementation of the mandate. This will involve using a 'comply or explain' approach to reporting on implementation of the Climate Action Mandate. Parent Departments will monitor compliance. Each public body's return on the M&R system will be forwarded to its parent Department for compliance checking and verification.

The SEAI annual report will be updated to include energy-related carbon emissions.

2.5.2 Annual Reporting Requirements

Public sector bodies must publicly report on their climate action activities (including implementation of the Mandate) in their annual reports. This reporting should include a declaration as to their performance, achievements in the past year, and plans and project pipelines to 2030 and 2050.

Annual reports are publicly available and will allow public sector bodies to communicate to a wider range of stakeholders on their efforts and their impact on the environment and community going beyond the reach of their policies and strategies. This approach will also capture areas, such as sustainability initiatives, which are not currently captured in the M&R system.

Accountability and transparency are enhanced by introducing climate and sustainability reporting into the annual reports of public sector bodies. Over time, better reporting will increase the public sector's own ability to measure its climate and environmental impact. In this way the true impact of the public sector along the value chain can be revealed and this visibility can help decision makers prioritise decarbonisation opportunities into the future. This will also encourage the sharing of learning, best practice, and innovative approaches across the public sector.

2.6 SEAI's Public Sector Partnership Programme

The Public Sector Partnership Programme is the SEAI's most comprehensive support package for large organisations. It is offered in return for the organisation's commitment to energy management. The Partnership Programme helps public bodies to save money, improve the environment, and meet national obligations by making significant reductions in their energy usage.

This is a key support and provides regular assessment of critical success factors. The SEAI provides tailored advisory supports for each public body. They also provide support to develop 2030 and 2050 project pipelines. This includes gap to target and pathway analysis and brings to bear pathfinder support to mobilise, seed, and sustain project pipelines.

3 Green Public Procurement

Through green public procurement (GPP), the public sector incentivises green industries and supply chains across Ireland and further phases out fossil fuels and pollution through green market choices. The public sector will be an exemplar in the uptake of green procurement, and in so doing will generate a market for green goods and services.

The EPA "Implementing Green Public Procurement" training course is designed for those with responsibility within Government Departments for procurement activities. The course is designed to support the greening of public procurement from need identification, to greening specifications, developing selection and award criteria, through to verifying supplier claims and implementing effective contract management.

In 2023, DECC will review and update Green Tenders (Action Plan on Public Procurement), to provide an updated and fit for purpose strategy and action plan for greener public sector purchasing.

Public bodies leading by example shall specify low carbon construction methods and low carbon cement material as far as practicable for directly procured or supported construction projects from 2023.⁵

⁵ Public Sector Leading by Example, Climate Action Plan 2023, p. 104.



GPP Criteria Search

Circular 20/2019: *Promoting the use of Environmental and Social Considerations in Public Procurement* instructed Government Departments to consider using green criteria in their procurements, where 'clearly defined, quantifiable, verifiable and measurable criteria have been developed'. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published updated Green Public Procurement Guidance for the Public Sector in September 2021⁶. This broad guidance is accompanied by GPP criteria for ten sectors ('Irish GPP criteria'). These criteria are clearly defined, quantifiable, verifiable, and measurable. They are, therefore, appropriate for inclusion in procurement documents, such as a Request for Tender.

In 2022, the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) led development of GPP Criteria Search, an online search tool that allows the user to rapidly find, select, and download the Irish GPP criteria relevant to a specific procurement project.⁷ Available at [GPPCriteria.gov.ie](https://gppcriteria.gov.ie), this search tool is designed to facilitate use of green procurement. Its use will be promoted in the public sector by OGP, DECC, and the EPA in 2023.

3.1 Green Public Procurement of Buildings

Buildings are responsible for greenhouse gas emissions before, during and after their operational lifetime. The 2050 vision for a decarbonised building stock goes beyond the current focus on operational greenhouse gas emissions. The whole life-cycle emissions of buildings should therefore progressively be taken into account, starting with new buildings.

⁶ <https://www.epa.ie/publications/circular-economy/resources/green-public-procurement-guidance.php>

⁷ Developed in collaboration with the EPA and the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, with support from the Public Service Innovation Fund.

The EPBD [currently under revision]⁸ establishes a requirement on member states to ensure that the life-cycle Global Warming Potential (GWP) of buildings, including those procured by the Public Sector, is calculated in accordance with Annex III and disclosed through the energy performance certificate of the building:

- (a) as of 1 January 2027, for all new buildings with a useful floor area over 2,000 square meters; and
- (b) as of 1 January 2030, for all new buildings.

‘Life-cycle Global Warming Potential (GWP)’ means an indicator which quantifies the global warming potential contributions of a building along its full life-cycle. The global warming potential over the whole life-cycle indicates the building’s overall contribution to emissions that lead to climate change. It brings together greenhouse gas emissions embodied in construction products with direct and indirect emissions from the use stage [of the building].

The whole life-cycle performance of buildings should be taken into account not only in new construction, but also in renovations through the inclusion of policies for the reduction of whole life-cycle greenhouse gas emissions in Member States’ building renovation plans.

Minimizing the whole life-cycle greenhouse gas emissions of buildings requires resource efficiency and circularity. This can also be combined with turning parts of the building stock into a temporary carbon sink.

4 Creating More Sustainable Travel Policies and Fleets

The public sector has a significant role to play in influencing travel demand, particularly through the delivery of its services, and must lead by example in the provision of sustainable mobility facilities, for its staff as well as service users, and normalise the use of low- and zero-carbon transport options to reduce transport emissions from the public sector.

Recent analysis undertaken by the National Transport Authority (NTA) indicated that the removal of free workplace parking has the potential to be a key mechanism in how the transport sector can meet its 50% emissions abatement target by 2030. More sustainable commuting and business-related travel by public sector employees should be strongly

⁸ Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of The Council on the energy performance of buildings (recast) - General approach <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13280-2022-INIT/en/pdf>

encouraged (e.g., active travel, shared mobility options and public transport) in place of commuting by private car, and appropriate facilities should be put in place to support employees, as well as users of public services, to avail of these options.

To this end, public bodies should:

- Engage with the NTA's Smarter Travel Workplace Programme which encourages organisations to support behavioural change amongst their staff towards sustainable modes of travel;
- Seek to acquire the NTA's Smarter Travel Mark, which will be launched in Q2 2023. To obtain the Smarter Travel Mark, organisations will be required to demonstrate robust communications, policies, facilities, incentives and supports in favour of sustainable commuting and business travel;
- Critically review the current allocation of car parking spaces, for employees and service users, and repurpose space currently used for private cars in favour of storage for active and micro-modes (e.g., bikes, e-bikes, cargo-bikes);
- Develop plans to phase out the use of parking in public sector buildings with adequate public transport levels to demonstrate our leadership on decarbonisation and smarter travel;
- Where possible, provide infrastructure such as showers, drying rooms, changing rooms and lockers to facilitate staff travelling to and from work by sustainable modes;
- Encourage the use of sustainable transport modes for essential business-related trips, and provide staff with education, advice and supports to avail of sustainable options for such trips, for example through making Leap cards available for business travel or setting up a business account with a shared mobility provider;
- Encourage the use of car-pooling/lift-sharing among those employees who have no viable alternatives to travel than via car, e.g., using dedicated carpool parking spaces;
- Actively seek to enhance staff knowledge of the bike-to-work and TaxSaver commuter schemes, and encourage uptake of these schemes;
- Give the maximum possible priority to reduction in commuter or work-related travel. This could include a 'remote-first' approach to meeting arrangements wherever possible, unless the holding of a physical meeting is deemed essential;
- Foster a culture of equivalence between physical and digital attendance, ensuring staff who attend remotely do not suffer any resultant disadvantage;

- Consider communications and messaging through a sustainable transport lens, e.g., when producing or being involved in official communications which include a transport element, the featured modes should be sustainable wherever possible;
- Consider regular staff travel surveys and travel audits, to learn how staff are travelling, via what modes, and to what extent available facilities are being used or in need of improvement, e.g., bike parking and shelters, more EV bays, etc. This data should inform ongoing reporting within the public sector body as well as in annual reports; and
- Encourage pedestrian or active travel activities and uptake via other means such as HR wellbeing initiatives, social club initiatives, volunteering programmes, etc.

4.1 Clean Vehicles Directive

The European Communities (Clean and Energy-Efficient Road Transport Vehicles) (Amendment) Regulations (S.I. 381 of 2021) introduced new requirements which give effect to the EU's Clean Vehicle Directive. The primary aim of these Regulations is to promote the uptake of low- and zero-emission vehicles by setting binding minimum targets for the share of 'clean' (low- and zero-emission) vehicles in procurements undertaken by public sector bodies and consequently stimulating the alternatively fuelled vehicle market. It applies to public procurement, including purchase, lease, rent, hire-purchase contracts, and relevant services contracts. These targets are legally binding and will become more stringent from 2026.

As per the Climate Action Mandate 2023, public sector bodies to which the Mandate applies shall procure (purchase or lease) only zero-emission vehicles from the end of 2022, enabling Ireland to go beyond the requirements of the EU Directive, amending Directive 2009/33/EC on the promotion of clean and energy-efficient road transport vehicles (EU Directive 2019/1161, the Clean Vehicle Directive) and act as an international leader in this area. An exception applies where the vehicle is exempt under European Communities (Clean and Energy-Efficient Road Transport Vehicles) (Amendment) Regulations (S.I. 381 of 2021)²². Public sector procurement contracts for delivery and haulage should specify zero emissions vehicles where possible.⁹

⁹ Public Sector Climate Action Mandate, Climate Action Plan 2023, page 109.

Box 6: Minimum targets for the share of ‘clean’ vehicles in procurements undertaken by public sector bodies¹⁰

Light Duty Vehicles Targets to 2025	Light Duty Vehicles Targets 2026-30	Heavy Duty Vehicles Targets to 2025		Heavy Duty Vehicles Requirements 2026-30	
		Trucks	Buses	Trucks	Buses
		10%	45%	15%	65%

In Ireland, the following categories of vehicle are exempted from the Directive:

- Agricultural or forestry vehicles;
- Two- or three-wheel vehicles and quadricycles;
- Track-laying vehicles;
- Mobile machinery;
- Coaches;
- Special vehicles for use by armed services, civil protection, fire services and police forces;
- Special vehicles for use on construction sites, quarries, ports and airports; and
- Armoured vehicles, ambulances, hearses, wheelchair accessible cars and mobile cranes.

The OGP has drawn up fixed price procurement frameworks for the supply of long and medium range battery electric passenger cars and vans to public sector bodies. These frameworks will assist Government Departments and bodies to purchase electric cars and vans.

Centralised procurement solutions are being examined to support public sector organisations wishing to install EV charging infrastructure. Centralised procurement will ensure that the public network is rolled out according to a set of appropriate standards.

¹⁰ Note that the above targets are for the procurement of ‘clean’ vehicles; in the EU Clean Vehicles Directive, ‘clean’ and ‘zero emissions’ heavy-duty vehicles are defined separately, to account for the lack of zero-emissions HDVs currently on the market. These definitions can be found both in the EU Directive and in the implementing SI. EU Clean Vehicles Directive: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/1161/oj>. Implementing SI: <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2021/si/381/made/en/print>.

Box 7: Case Study

CASE STUDY

An Post's Sustainable Fleet



An Post's fleet has over 4,000 vehicles and is responsible for a significant amount of the organisation's carbon emissions. Therefore, its fleet is a major focus for reducing An Post's carbon emissions.

In 2018, An Post reviewed peer group European transitions of fleets to Zero Emissions vehicles. Following this review, An Post started the electrification of its light commercial fleet. To date, An Post has over 1,000 EVs, including Ireland's first 7.5 tonne electric trucks. An Post plan to continue electrification of the fleet which is in line with commitments to net zero by 2030 and reduction of emissions by 50% by 2025.

An Post has one of the largest electric fleets and the largest private charging network in Ireland, with c. 1,300 chargers.

An Post was the first postal service provider in the world to achieve zero carbon emission delivery status in a capital city and all the cities it services. An Post has emission-free deliveries in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford, Kilkenny, and Galway.

In 2021, An Post's Electric Vehicles travelled over six million kilometres, resulting in fewer CO₂ emissions, cleaner air, and less noise pollution in Irish cities and across the country.



In September 2021, An Post was the first company to roll out a trial of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil fuel (HVO), which is over 90% less CO₂ intensive than fossil diesel. An Post retrofitted an existing 45,000 litre tank and diesel pump, engaging with the Circular Economy by reusing an existing tank instead of buying new.

An Post is one of the first companies with a fleet of vehicles in Ireland to implement HVO as part of its fuelling options. Since September, its trucks have travelled over 120,000 km on HVO, averaging 25lts/100 km, on par with diesel efficiency. The use of HVO in the trial has resulted in a 92% reduction in carbon emissions in the fleet.

5 A Strategic Approach for Buildings

5.1 Long Term Strategic Planning and Delivery Capabilities

The sectoral emissions ceiling and the public sector GHG emissions reduction target both point to an imperative for public bodies to cut emissions from their portfolios of buildings by at least 45-51% by 2030. 2030 will be an important milestone on a longer-term pathway to fully decarbonising public buildings, the public sector, and the wider economy by 2050.

Buildings have long lifetimes. Therefore, it is important that decisions made by public bodies now consider the long-term of viability of building portfolios, and of specific buildings, in the context of progressively more restrictive carbon constraints in the 2030s and 2040s.

Otherwise, poor investment decisions made over the next few years could result in public bodies having to retire heating systems or exit buildings before the end of their operational lifespans.

Public bodies should critically review their building portfolios in the context of the targets and their long-term accommodation needs. This should inform a strategic approach to managing their portfolios over the next decade, and beyond. Public bodies should only retain buildings that can meet their accommodation needs in a carbon-constrained environment. Public bodies must adopt an energy service culture. Identifying what accommodation is required to provide the service will firstly require challenging the need for the service and whether a building is needed to provide it, and if required, what is the minimum energy needed to provide the service.

Public bodies must identify and plan clear pathways to achieving high-A building energy ratings (BERs) for all buildings that are earmarked for retention.

Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD)

The Energy Performance of Buildings Directive is under review and planned for adoption in mid-2023. The Draft EPBD promotes the improvement of the energy performance of buildings and the reduction of greenhouse gas emission from buildings within the European Union, with a view to achieving a zero-emission building stock by 2050. It proposes that new buildings occupied or owned by public authorities are zero-emission buildings as of 1 January 2028. It also proposes that minimum energy performance standards (MEPS) are established for all non-residential buildings as of 1 January 2030, and a minimum average energy performance for the whole of the residential building stock by 2033. Public sector bodies should prepare for this and take account of the Minimum Energy Performance standards when published. To facilitate this, and supported by SEAI, public bodies will prepare Building Stock Plans in 2023.

Public bodies will need to undertake BER ratings of all their buildings and ensure compliance to the MEPS, by 2027. While the actual BER target is unclear, what is clear is that public bodies need to plan to retrofit all their buildings to a high BER rating by 2050.

Ireland will need to carefully determine what constitutes NZEB under the new rescaling. NZEB is determined based on cost optimal analysis. This allows for economic considerations, while the CAP 51% target and the EED 3% renovation rate and 1.7% kWh target do not allow for economic or other factors.

Many public buildings are in historic or traditional buildings. When retrofitting these buildings public sector bodies should use them as exemplars for historic/traditional building retrofit where practical, publish case studies of the works when completed, and conduct post occupancy evaluation.

The Draft EPBD also proposes to introduce a requirement for the deployment of suitable solar energy installations on all new public and non-residential buildings with a useful floor area over 250m² by 31 December 2026, on all existing public and non-residential buildings undergoing a major or deep renovation with a useful floor area over 400m² by 31 December 2027, and on all new residential buildings by 31 December 2029.

Building Automation and Control Systems (BACS) for non-residential buildings was a requirement introduced in the EPBD Amending Directive 2018/844 and was implemented in Ireland under the European Union (Energy Performance of Buildings) Regulations 2021 (S.I. No. 393 of 2021). This Regulation requires that an existing non-residential building shall be equipped with a building automation and control system before 31 December 2025 where

the effective rated output for heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems is over a threshold of 290kW. The Draft EPBD proposes new requirements where the implementation date for non-residential buildings with an effective rated output for heating and ventilation systems over 290kW are introduced one year earlier by 31 December 2024. It also introduces requirements for new residential buildings and residential buildings undergoing major renovation to be equipped with the functionality of continuous electronic monitoring and control from 1 January 2025.

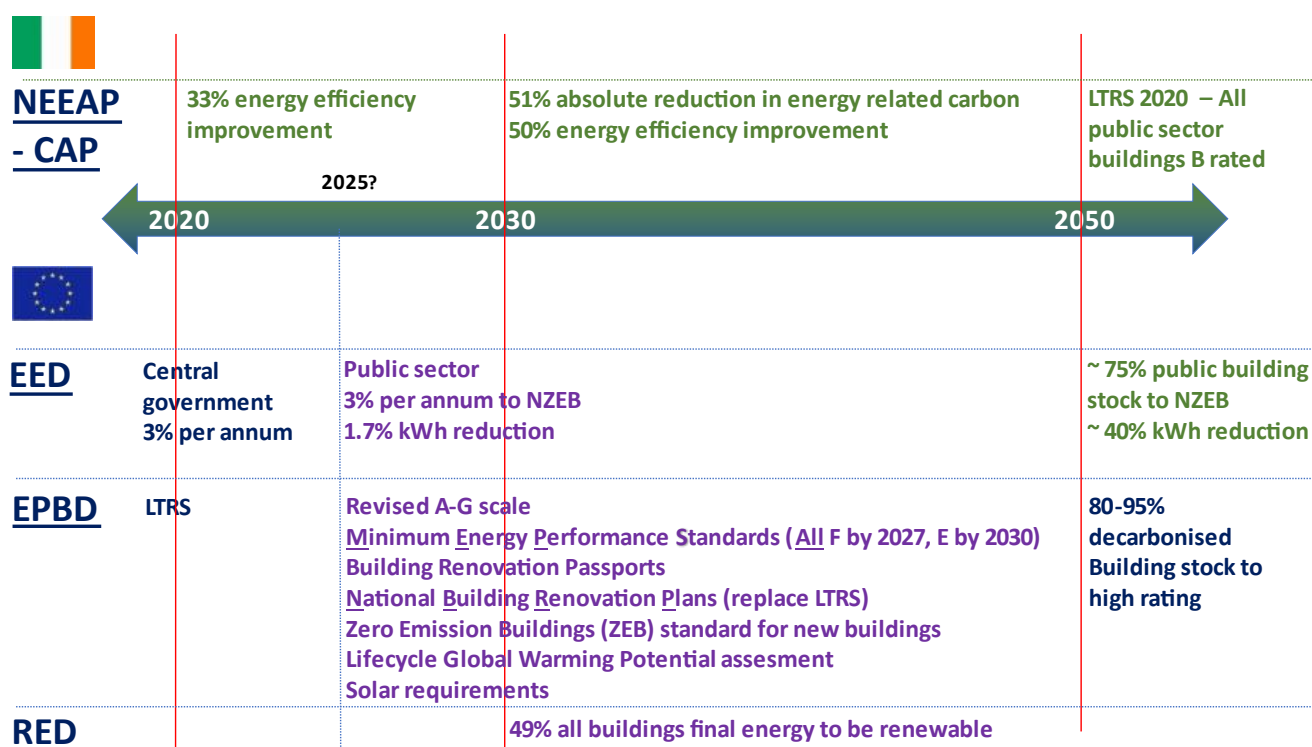
Public bodies should exit from (dispose of) buildings for which such pathways are deemed technically or economically unfeasible.

Ireland must develop a National Building Renovation Plan under the new EPBD (formally known as Long Term Renovation Strategy). Larger public sector organisations with greater than 50-100 buildings should be tasked with developing BRPs for their organisations.

As per the Climate Action Plan 2023, current and future action in the public sector leading by example will focus on retrofitting public sector buildings as a priority. By 2025, the public sector will achieve the buildings and retrofitting targets laid on in the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate and in Chapter 14: Built Environment of the Climate Action Plan 2023.

Box 8 sets out national and EU buildings related targets.

Box 8: National and EU buildings related targets



5.2 Asset Ratings vs Actual Performance

While having buildings that are labelled with [high-A] BER ratings is important, asset-based certification is only a means to an end. Public bodies must always remain focussed on achieving high levels of energy and emissions performance under real-world operating conditions in all their buildings. Achieving these outcomes will require significant absolute reductions in energy consumption, including the complete elimination of fossil fuel use, and the optimisation of local renewable energy supply. It is important that buildings are managed so that the asset rated energy performance achieved in the BER is realised in the actual energy performance of the building.

NZEB for non-residential buildings has been a requirement since 1 January 2019 with an earlier application date for public sector buildings. NZEB for non-residential buildings was introduced in 2017 and is implemented through Part L of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations under S.I. No. 538 of 2017.

Public bodies must report asset and performance data on their building portfolios to SEAI every year on a national Building Register (energy data only). This will enable Government to maintain and publish an inventory of public bodies' buildings, which will be used to track progress towards the building-related energy target and inform the development of policy supports.

The SEAI have plans to enhance the Building Register over time. This includes tracking both asset rating data (i.e., BER and related data) and actual usage data (DEC and other performance related schemes). Various public bodies and Departments are also developing their own registers and performance tracking systems for their own building stock. The SEAI Building Register will align with and compliment these databases.

As per the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate in Climate Action Plan 2023, the public sector will not install heating systems that use fossil fuels after 2023 in (1) new buildings, and (2) "major renovation" retrofit projects (as defined in the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD)) unless at least one of the following exceptions applies:

- The fossil-fuel use is only using electricity from the grid;
- There is no technically viable non-fossil alternative (generally only related to applications for a purpose other than space heating);

- The installation of a renewable space heating system would increase final CO₂ emissions;
- The fossil-fuel use is provided for backup, peaking, or operational purposes (and makes up less than 10% of annual heating energy); and
- Where the direct replacement of existing fossil fuel heating is required for an emergency maintenance purpose.¹¹

6 Financing and Funding

As leaders on climate action, public bodies will need to demonstrate strong ownership of agreed targets and the capacity to integrate climate action into the core policymaking, prioritisation, and budgetary processes of their organisations.

The National Development Plan sets out funding allocations over the period of 2021 to 2030 of €165 billion that will support climate action. This will bring public investment to over 5 per cent of GNI*, well above the EU average of 3 per cent of GDP.

It is up to the Departments in receipt of these funds to develop the policies and measures to maximise the impact of this planned investment, determining the appropriate balance and mix of expenditures in their sector. As noted in the NDP, it will be the effective implementation of these policies, which will need to blend regulation, behavioural change and taxation measures with direct Government investment that will lead to the achievement of Ireland's climate ambitions.

A key component of this is ensuring that Climate Action Roadmaps represent the best use of available resources and chart a financially sustainable path to improving energy efficiency and reducing emissions. Approval of these Roadmaps by senior management is designed to ensure appropriate planning, prioritisation, and governance of climate action expenditure within the agreed funding allocations and multiannual capital ceilings agreed under the National Development Plan.

Just as climate action needs to be considered an integral activity that permeates the work of public bodies rather than as a separate add-on, funding for climate action needs to be integrated into overall budgetary frameworks across public sector programmes. This will ensure that the ambitious goals that have been set are supported by robust, realistic, and

¹¹ Public Sector Climate Action Mandate, Climate Action Plan 2023, page 109

cost-effective resourcing plans that can accommodate the trade-offs and budgetary constraints that inevitably arise in the context of public service delivery.

Public sector bodies are also encouraged to look at all funding options to achieve climate action targets, including, where appropriate, Public Private Partnerships and/or Energy Performance Contracts, environmental philanthropy, or borrowing within approved limits. The Energy Efficiency Obligation Scheme (EEOS), which places a legal requirement on larger energy companies ('obligated parties') to assist energy users in saving energy also presents an opportunity for public sector bodies to leverage additional private support. Under the EEOS, public sector bodies can partner with obligated parties in the delivery of energy efficiency projects and obtain financial and/or practical assistance.