



ÚDARÁS UCHTÁLA na hÉIREANN  
THE ADOPTION AUTHORITY of IRELAND

**ADOPTION AUTHORITY OF IRELAND**

**Climate Action Roadmap**

**2023**

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## Version

Version #	Reviewer/Approver	Date
Version 1	Board of the Authority and CEO	18/04/2023
Version 2	Board of the Authority and CEO	07/11/2023

## Foreword

### Message from the Chief Executive Officer - Colm O'Leary

Climate change is one of the most pressing global public policy challenges of our time, and climate solutions need to be placed at the centre of both social and economic development. There are challenges in changing systems, practices and behaviours, however, the reality is that Ireland must meet legal obligations to reduce our emissions by 51% by 2030 and reach net zero by no later than 2050 with every sector, every community and every person having a role to play.

Achieving the objectives, set out in the guidance documentation and supporting publications, requires a positive and sustained engagement from all agencies and organisations across the Public Sector. The Adoption Authority of Ireland is dedicated to playing its part, and is proactively working towards both our 2030 and 2050 obligations in an inclusive and collaborative manner.

I am delighted to share this plan with you, outlining the steps the Authority will undertake over the coming year to bring us closer to these ambitious targets. These steps will involve us building climate mitigation and adaptation into policies, ways of working and corporate planning to develop low carbon pathways. The plan will be reviewed and monitored regularly, and improved and strengthened as required. As we move forward it is imperative that we integrate climate mitigation and adaption into our ways of working and corporate planning.



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**Date:** 18 April 2023

## **Overview of the Adoption Authority of Ireland**

The Adoption Authority of Ireland, established on the 1st November 2010 under the Adoption Act 2010, is an independent quasi-judicial body under the aegis of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY).

Our main operating units are:

- Board of the Adoption Authority;
- Chief Executive Officer;
- Director of Operations/Board Secretary;
  - Domestic Adoption Unit;
  - Intercountry Adoption Unit;
- Head of Compliance;
  - Corporate Services & Accreditation Unit;
- Director of Information and Records;
  - Records Unit
  - Solutions Unit
  - Archives Unit
  - Data Protection Unit
- Head of HR and Staff Development;
- Social Work Team;
- Research Unit.

The Authority has more than doubled in size within the past year, and currently comprises a staff of approximately 60. The offices are located in Shelbourne House, Ballsbridge and occupy both the third and fourth floors with a net floor area of approximately 900 sqm per floor. The accommodation comprises of both open plan and cellular accommodation.

## **Introduction and purpose of the Climate Action Roadmap**

Climate change is one of the most pressing global public policy challenges of today. Its impacts are having far reaching economic, environmental and social consequences. The Irish Government has published the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015, the National Mitigation Plan, the National Adaptation Framework, Project Ireland 2040 (the National Planning Framework, and the National Development Plan), setting out how Ireland will achieve its International and European commitments and transition Ireland to a low-carbon society.

The Climate Action Roadmap is a document to be produced by public sector bodies annually which communicates how each public body aims to meet the requirements of the Climate Action Mandate 2022 (the Mandate) and reach its 2030 carbon and energy efficiency targets. This requirement applies to all public bodies, other than Local Authorities, commercial semi-state bodies and schools, all of whom have their own requirements. To support the development of Climate Action Roadmaps across the sector the SEAI and the EPA have produced guidance materials.

The updated Climate Action & Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, establishes the legislative basis for climate action and the 2050 target. The goals for public sector decarbonisation include 51% emissions reduction and 50% improvement in energy efficiency by 2030. It also includes a roadmap to carbon neutrality by 2050. As a public body, the Adoption Authority is required to deliver against these targets.

In this, the Authority's initial Climate Action Roadmap, the focus is on the Authority's plans for reducing total energy related emissions and fossil fuel related emissions from our operations in line with the targets in the Climate Action Plan 2021 (CAP21). The Authority sets out the measures being taken to meet requirements of the Mandate and reach 2030 carbon and energy efficiency targets.

The Climate Action Mandate sets emission reduction and energy efficiency targets for public bodies, specifically: -

- Reduction in GHG emissions by 51% in 2030.
- Reporting under the SEAI Monitoring and Reporting system.
- Increase the improvement in energy efficiency in the public sector from the 33% target in 2020 to 50% by 2030

- Produce a Climate Action Roadmap by the end of Q1 2023

The Authority is committed to meeting the requirements of the Climate Action Mandate 2022 and in particular is working to utilise supports available to ensure: -

- Perform all functions in a manner consistent with Ireland's climate ambition
- Demonstrate exemplary energy management and undertake energy audits every four years
- Review legal requirements and guidance annually, and amend approach as appropriate

The Annual Report 2021 on Public Sector Energy Efficiency Performance prepared by the SEAI for the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications recorded a 2020 energy consumption of 0.2 GWh for the Authority and a 40% energy saving since the baseline. The energy efficiency improvement achieved exceeded both the baseline and the 2020 target. The Annual Report 2022 sustained the energy consumption of 0.2 GWh for the 2021 reporting period with a 47% energy saving since the baseline.

Similarly, with regard to GHG emissions the 2021 tCO<sub>2</sub> of 31.5 is an 15% reduction from the baseline with the Authority on track to reaching the 2023 target of 8.5.

The Authority monitors and maintains a log on official air travel, calculating liability based on relevant rates. On 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2023 the Authority paid €44.94 into the Climate Action Fund in respect to offsetting emissions relating to official air travel in 2022.

The Adoption Authority of Ireland's Climate Action Roadmap 2023 sets out how the Authority will improve energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in its building and operations. This will be achieved through a range of ongoing and planned actions across four key pillars;

- Our People
- Our Targets
- Our Way of Working
- Our Building and Vehicles

In order to support ongoing efficiency improvements, the Authority has identified ***Education and Awareness*** as the core theme for this first iteration of our Climate Action Roadmap, and

is committed to strengthening engagement with and understanding of climate action and energy management throughout the organisation.

Delivery of actions across the pillars is subdivided into target areas within each of the four pillars. Our People focuses on two key areas Leadership and Governance for Climate Action and Engaging our People. Actions under this pillar seek to embed consideration for climate action into the mind set of staff at all levels across the organisation. Our Targets seeks to identify actions to support delivery across both Achieving our Carbon Targets and Achieving our Energy Efficiency Target. Our Way of Working examines current work practices across Energy and Environmental Management Systems, Green Procurement and Resource Usage in an effort to identify new ways of working to improve our energy usage and gain efficiency. Our Buildings and Vehicles acknowledges that the Authority is responsible for the energy use and emissions for its building, facilities and equipment, and needs to work with partners to identify and address gaps.

Our first objective is to ensure that this plan is delivered through the empowerment of Adoption Authority staff and proactive engagement with our stakeholders.

The actions in this roadmap have been identified to support the organisation close the gap between the current baselines and the stated targets, and will be reviewed and updated regularly.

**The 2023 Climate Action Roadmap was approved by the Board of the Adoption Authority on 18<sup>th</sup> April and signed by the Chief Executive Officer. It will be reviewed quarterly, by the Head of Compliance and reported to the CEO and Senior Management Team.**

**The 2023 Climate Action Roadmap was reviewed and revised in September 2023 in line with the Public Sector Bodies Climate Action Roadmaps Guidance prepared by SEAI and EPA. The guidance document supports public sector bodies update their roadmaps taking into consideration the updated public sector climate action mandate, as outlined in the Climate Action Plan 2023, approved by the Government in May 2023.**

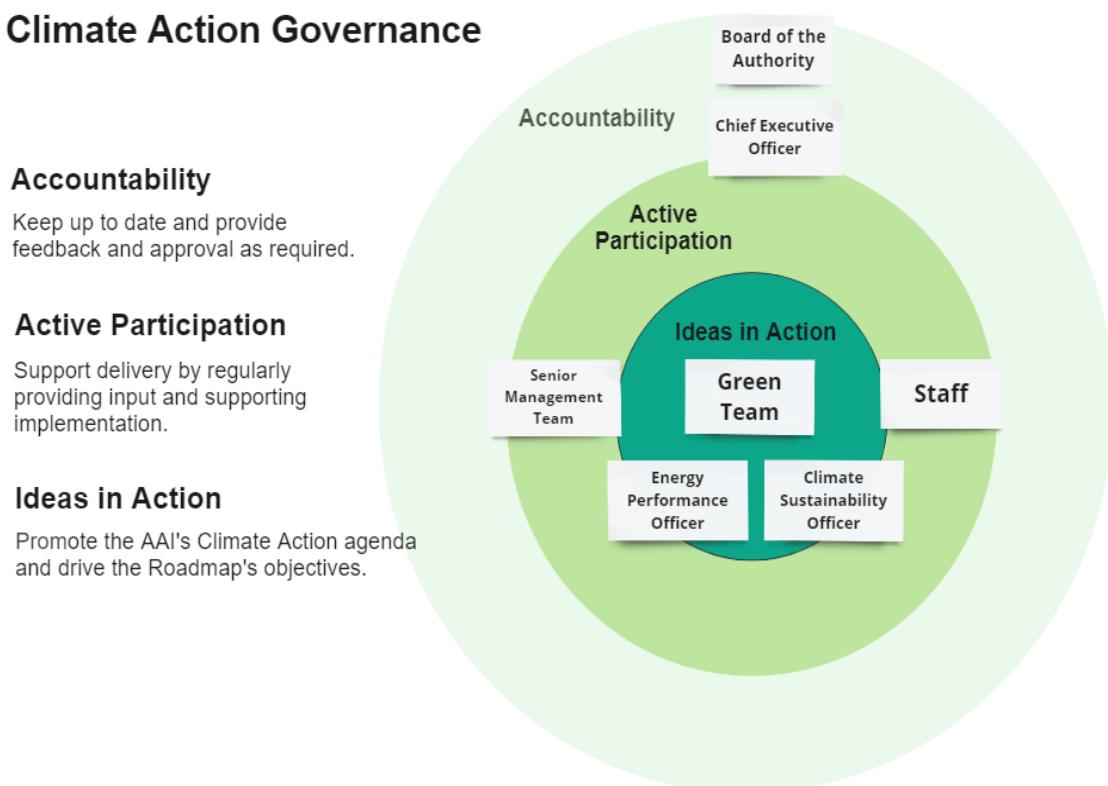
## The Adoption Authority's Climate Action Roadmap

### 1. Leadership and governance for climate action

The responsibility for driving the climate action agenda sits within the remit of the Corporate Services and Accreditation Unit. The roles of Climate and Sustainability Champion and Energy Performance Officer are carried out by the Head of Compliance, Kate O'Hara.

The development and promotion of the Sustainability and Energy Efficient Strategy is included in the actions of the Strategic Plan 2022-2024 under Priority 4; Empower our people and deliver effective operations. The commitment to deliver the Climate Action Roadmap 2023 is reinforced in the Business Plan 2023. The Authority's commitment to support climate action will be expanded and developed further in the Strategic Plan 2025-2027 to ensure we meet our 2030 targets.

### Climate Action Governance



The priority action is the establishment of the Green Team with appropriate resources and support to drive sustainability and integrate climate action into how we work.

## ***2. Engaging and training our people***

The Authority is sourcing suitable educational resources with the guidance of SEAI to raise staff awareness on energy related emissions, and over time wider climate issues to support a reduction in the organisational carbon footprint.

During 2023, the Authority will organise a staff engagement workshop, focussed on energy related emissions in an effort to decrease the organisation's carbon footprint in a collaborative way. This workshop will inform the preparation of the 2024 Climate Action Roadmap.

The Authority will also identify appropriate climate action training for staff that will be incorporated into ongoing staff learning and development. Climate Action is a shared ambition and responsibility for the organisation, and we will work to build the capacity of our staff to respond to the challenge.

In preparation for the implementation of recommendations from the planned energy audit, the Finance Officer has completed the SEAI PS Training Course in Internal Audit.

## ***3. Achieving our carbon target***

Greenhouse gas emissions are energy-related carbon dioxide equivalent emissions. The baseline is the average of 2016-2018 emissions. The target contains two parts: -

- Emissions associated with thermal energy for heating and transport
- Overall energy related emissions including electricity

Both targets must be reduced by 51%.

In 2023, the Authority will utilise the SEAI Gap to Target tool to support the identification of priority projects for coming years, maximising the impact for lowering emissions and driving our climate ambitions.

## ***4. Achieving our energy efficiency target***

The Authority will review current and anticipated work practices to identify significant energy users and address gaps in meeting target. The Gap to Target tool will support the Authority to implement mitigation measures and energy efficiency initiatives, and secure ongoing progress to target.

The SEAI Gap to Target tool will also confirm priority of projects to support the Authority improve energy efficiency.

### ***5. Energy and environmental management systems***

The Authority will engage with the SEAI partnership programme to embed an appropriate level of energy management into the organisation.

The Authority does not qualify for grant funding under the SEAI support scheme for energy audits. Budget has been allocated, subject to approval, to complete an energy audit and support the organisation identify priority actions.

### ***6. Greening our procurement***

The Authority will work to optimise opportunities to introduce green criteria into procurement projects, supporting climate action ambitions, such as improved energy efficiency. We will seek to source goods and services with a reduced environmental impact by utilising the EPA guidance on GPP (across the ten accompanying criteria) to work towards implementing sustainable and green practices into our procurement procedures.

The priority under this area for 2023 is to review and update our procurement policy and procedures to ensure green criteria receives due consideration as part of the procurement process.

### ***7. Baselinining and reducing our resource use***

The Climate Action Mandate requires public bodies to review paper-based processes and evaluate the possibilities for digitisation. The preference is for digitisation to become the default approach. Since 2019, the Authority has engaged in a large scale project aimed at ensuring that all adoption records are digitally accessible. While the Authority has made tremendous progress in moving towards digital processes, there is continued scope for improvement.

The priority action for 2023 is a review of organisational workflow processes to identify paper heavy areas with scope to benefit from further digitisation.

The payment process has been identified as a paper heavy process, and is currently under review to introduce digital approval and mitigate the need to print for ink approval.

### ***8. Improving our buildings and vehicles***

The Authority occupies a rented property with dated facility systems. We are not responsible for a fleet, and do not own and operate our own vehicles. Therefore, the focus under *Our Buildings and Vehicles* pillar is engagement with partners and agents to identify opportunities for improvements and further efficiencies. This is particularly relevant for 2023 when the Authority will engage with the OPW about future organisational requirements in advance of our current lease expiring in 2027.

An energy usage audit will provide the Authority with the opportunity to review the energy efficiency of its lighting, heating and computing facilities and take appropriate steps.

Although the Authority does not own a fleet, many staff opt to drive to work. There are 15 bicycle stands available at Shelbourne House. The Authority will encourage staff to avail of the Cycle to Work Scheme, and explore alternative transportation methods to personal car travel.

The Authority has been working with Building Management to identify a suitable, safe and secure location for bike parking to encourage cycling to work over driving.

Taking cognisance of the dated facilities in place. The Authority has budgeted €15,000 for climate initiatives in 2024, subject to budget approval.

**Roadmap 2023****Action Area 1; Our People**

Action	Description	Target	Update	Status
<b>Formation of Green Team</b>	Identify staff to participate in driving the climate action objectives	End of Q3	Green Team formed.	On track
<b>Training and Awareness</b>	Engage with SEAI to identify suitable resources to raise awareness and understanding within the organisation	End of Q2	SEAI PS Training Course – completed by Finance Officer. Green Team Training identified for December 2023.	On track
<b>Annual Engagement Workshop</b>	Host a participatory workshop in Q3 to inform the 2024 Climate Action Roadmap	End of Q3	Planned for February 2024 – following Energy Audit.	On track

**Action Area 2; Our Targets**

Action	Description	Target	Update	Status
<b>Use supports available to identify priorities</b>	Utilise the Gap to Target tool to identify projects that will maximise energy efficiency.	End of Q3	Energy Audit Report will inform this objective.	Delayed to Q1 2024
<b>Access SEAI grant funding for Energy Audit</b>	Utilise supports available to carry out a review of our energy use	End of Q2	Energy Audit Report will inform this objective.	Delayed to Q1 2024

**Action Area 3; Our Way of Working**

Action	Description	Target	Update	Status
<b>Embed Green Public Procurement principles into our procurement process</b>	Review and update our procurement policy and procedures to ensure green criteria receives due consideration as part of the procurement process.	End of Q3	The Authority has started to consider Green Procurement as an award criterion in procurement competitions. Further training required to ensure this criterion is integrated fully into the process.	On track
<b>Review of paper based workflow</b>	Review organisational workflows to identify paper heavy areas with the scope to benefit from further digitisation.	End of Q3	Payment Process identified as initial initiative with project commenced to digitise process.	On track

**Action Area 4; Our Buildings and Vehicles**

Action	Description	Target	Update	Status
<b>Promotion of Green Transport</b>	Encourage staff to participate in cycle to work scheme, and consider alternatives to personal car	End of Q2	Cycle to Work has been promoted in both Q2 and Q3. Corporate Services are working with Building Management to identify safe and secure bike parking.	On track
<b>Engagement with Agencies and Partners</b>	Meet with service providers to discuss the Authority's obligations and highlight the requirement to improve energy efficiency	End of Q3	The Authority has commenced a review of services provided in an effort to map energy use and identify opportunities for improvements.	On track