



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications

Section 25A RSES Monitoring Report: Southern Regional Assembly

February 2024

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Introduction

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The Department of the Environment, Climate and Communication's (The Department) vision of a climate neutral, sustainable, and digitally connected Ireland will be achieved by collaboratively delivering policies and programmes to empower people, communities, and businesses to continue the transition to a better quality of life for current and future generations. The work of the Department impacts the daily lives of every citizen in Ireland and has major environment, societal and economic benefits.

The Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications has responsibility for policy and programmes across a number of areas of national strategic importance, encompassing telecommunications; postal; energy; climate action; waste management, resource efficiency and the circular economy; environmental policy and air quality, and natural resources. It is supported in its mandate by 14 State bodies, comprising a number of leading commercial, non-commercial and regulatory bodies.

Our Statement of Strategy for the period 2021-2023, [Le Chéile 23](#), sets out our five strategic goals:

1. Be a recognised leader in climate action.
2. Transform our energy system for a net zero emissions future.
3. Transition to a circular economy – protecting and restoring our environment through sustainable resource use.
4. Deliver world class connectivity and communications.
5. Ensure best in class governance and regulation.

Section 25A RSES Monitoring Report

As required under Section 25A (1) of the Planning and Development Act (as amended), the Department of the Environment Climate and Communication is required to submit a report to the Regional Assembly every two years setting out progress made in supporting regional objectives of the strategy, relevant to the Department. The report below sets out the Department's response and it is framed with reference to the following points as set out in the letter dated 21st December 2023:

1. Progress made by the Department on implementation of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 and the Climate Action Plans including decarbonising our energy system, buildings and transport system.

2. Progress in accelerating transition to a low carbon and circular economy and society, for more sustainable management of natural resources, and realising blue growth and bioeconomy opportunities.
3. Progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with agreed national sectoral plans and 2030 targets, and support for undertaking emissions monitoring at a regional and local authority level.
4. Progress in protecting biodiversity and natural heritage and achieving improved conservation status of protected species and habitats in the Region.
5. Progress in achieving good air quality for all urban and rural areas in the Region and incorporating the objectives of the EU Environmental Noise Directive.
6. The role of digitalisation in enhancing urban and rural regeneration, supporting development of a network of co-working/remote working hubs and smart cities, towns and villages in the Region, including delivery of the national broadband plan and future communications networks.
7. Progress made by agencies that operate under the aegis of the Department, in supporting the objectives of the RSES which are relevant to that agency.
8. Details of policy initiatives/developments that have been finalised or are in preparatory stages that support the objectives of the RSES.
9. A summary of the funding programmes administered by the Department (or agency under the aegis of the Department), over the last two years, which have been awarded within the Southern Region with the following details requested:
 - Funding Programme
 - County Project Name and Description
 - Amount Awarded (€)
 - Stage of Project

In addition to the sections above, there is an annex setting out the response from the SEAI, EirGrid and Geological Survey Ireland.

A response is not provided by the Department on the progress on implementation of the Water Framework Directive in achieving and maintaining at least 'good water status' for all water bodies in the Region and for mitigation of threats to 'At Risk' waterbodies, including delivery of wastewater facilities in the Region and guidance for achieving appropriate riparian setbacks from water bodies, as this falls within the remit of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH). IFI has provided input in section 7.4.5.

The responses provided by the Department show progress in the implementation of policies and actions to progress the Regional Strategy outcomes of the RSES under the pillars of a Green Region, a Liveable Region and Innovation and Creative Region, especially in support of:

- Low Carbon, Climate Resilient and Sustainable Society
- Enhanced Regional Accessibility and High- Quality International Connectivity (digital communications and international energy grid interconnections)
- Sustainable, Planned and Infrastructure Led Development.
- A Strong Economy

Department officials can make themselves available for a discussion on any of the matters raised in this submission or any other matters within the remit of the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications relevant to the preparation of the monitoring report. Please direct any requests for further consultation to PlanningNotifications@decc.gov.ie.

1. Progress made by the Department on implementation of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 and the Climate Action Plans including decarbonising our energy system, buildings and transport system

1.1 Climate Action Plan 2024

The latest update to the Climate Action Plan; 'Climate Action Plan 2024', was published in December and builds upon the previous Plan, updating and refining actions and measures, as well as reflecting the latest emissions reports and projections from the EPA. This Plan is subject to public consultation and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA), which will take place in early 2024.

1.2 Carbon Budgets/Sectoral Emissions Ceilings

The Department of Environment, Climate and Communications has prepared and introduced a number of key climate governance items associated with the 2021 Climate Act in the period 2022-2024.

In 2022, the Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications, supported by his Department, prepared for government approval Ireland's first ever carbon budget programme and sectoral emission ceilings.

A carbon budget represents the total amount of emissions, measured in tonnes of CO₂ equivalent, that may be emitted by a country or a region during a specific time period. Following recommendations prepared by the Climate Change Advisory Council and a comprehensive review and consultation period, a carbon budget programme, comprising three 5-year budgets (2021-2025; 2026-2030; and 2031-2035), came into effect on 6 April 2022 following adoption in both houses of the Oireachtas. These carbon budgets set the pathway for Ireland to meet its legally binding emission reduction targets for 2030 (51% reduction compared to 2018 levels) and 2050 (achieving net-zero).

Following the adoption of the Carbon Budgets, sector-specific emission ceilings that operate within the parameters of the Carbon Budgets ('Sectoral Emission Ceilings') were prepared through multi-stakeholder engagement with various Government Departments and Agencies. These Ceilings were approved by Government and came into effect in July 2022.

The following annual update to the national Climate Action Plan; 'Climate Action Plan 2023', was published in December 2022, and comprised actions, measures and policies that supported the achievement of the emission reduction pathways set out by the Carbon Budgets and Sectoral Emission Ceilings

1.3 Progress made by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications on decarbonising public buildings

The Department will relocate in Q1 of 2024 to our new headquarters building at Beggars Bush, Dublin. This OPW flagship project will deliver a publicly owned, Nearly Zero Energy Building (NZE) building with a BER rating of A2 which will significantly assist the Department to achieve the 2030 Green House Gas (GHG) and Energy Efficiency (EE) targets. It is estimated that this move will reduce our carbon emissions by 196.1 tCO₂. The project includes transitioning away from fossil fuels to use of heat pump technology and solar panels as well as LED lighting throughout the building.

In line with the Climate Action Public Sector Mandate 2023, Public Bodies are required to produce a Building Stock Plan of all the buildings they occupy, outlining strategies for retrofitting their building stock to meet CAP targets. In Q1 of 2024 the Department has completed the first stage of this process by completing a Pilot Building Register.

1.4 Progress made by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications on decarbonising the transport sector

The Department has enhanced its provision of EV charging stations at its new Headquarters with 8 EV charging stations provided. The Department also has EV charging facilities available at our current Headquarters at Adelaide Road as well as at our Wexford, City West and Booterstown Hall sites.

The Public Sector Climate Action Mandate 2022 derived from the Climate Action Plan 2021 (CAP21) and the Climate Action Mandate 2023 from (CAP23) requires that a Climate Action Roadmap is prepared to prepare a plan of actions and report on our progress towards achieving the GHG emission reduction and energy efficiency target's by 2030. In this regard the Department completed its first Climate Action Roadmap in June 2023 and a revision of this Roadmap was completed in December 2023. As part of this process Geological Survey Ireland (GSI) is undertaking a review of its use of fossil fuels in its transport operations including to identify a strategy to transition to the use of EV vehicles and examine the potential to use biofuels in their boats. GSI has recently disposed of 6 diesel vehicles and purchased two new EV vans for their fleet. This work is continuing in 2024 and progress will be reported in our 2024 Climate Action Roadmap.

1.5 Heat

The Climate Action Plan 2023 contains a range of actions, which build on the previous CAP, including delivery of up to 2.7TWh of district heating by 2030, delivery of up to 5.7TWh of indigenously produced biomethane by 2030 and the introduction of an obligation in the heat sector by 2024.

The District Heating Steering Group was established further to Action 187 of the 2021 Climate Action Plan. The District Heating Steering Group Report was approved by Government and published in July 2023. The recommendations from the report set the future policy direction for district heating.

A key recommendation of the District Heating Steering Group report is a centralised approach to delivery to ensure a balanced and timely expansion of district heating networks in Ireland. In order to implement this recommendation, the Department is working on establishing a District Heating Centre of Excellence which will be led by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland,

The report calls for legislation to support the development and expansion of district heating networks and to attract investment. In that regard, the Department is drafting the General Scheme of a proposed Heat Bill.

The Department, in conjunction with the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU), is in the process of developing a regulatory framework for district heating to ensure clarity in relation to the rights and obligations of consumers and suppliers of district heating. The CRU as Regulator for district heating networks will be responsible for the development of appropriate regulation of the sector going forward.

As part of the agreement on the Sectoral Emission Ceilings, Government agreed to an ambitious target to scale up indigenously produced biomethane to 5.7TWh per annum by 2030, with an interim target of 1TWh by 2025. The Climate Action Plan 2023 committed to the development of a National Biomethane Strategy as the first key step.

The National Biomethane Strategy will support delivery of the Government's commitment to achieve the production of 5.7TWh of indigenously produced Biomethane by 2030. The Strategy is being co-developed by Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) and the Department under the auspices of the Heat and Built Environment Taskforce.

Government has agreed to the introduction of an obligation on the heat sector to include renewable sources of heat by 2024. The obligation will incentivise suppliers of fossil fuels used for heat to ensure a proportion of the energy they supply is renewable. A public consultation seeking stakeholder feedback on proposed features of the RHO was launched on the 15 August 2023. The consultation was open until the 6 October 2023 and received 51 submissions for a wide range of interest groups. Responses have now been analysed alongside findings from an initial scoping exercise results are informing the next stage of Scheme design.

The Climate Action Plan 2023 includes a range of measures to address the use of fossil fuel in heating systems in buildings and the National Heat Study contains the detailed analysis that is informing the development of options, policies and measures to decarbonise the heating and cooling sectors to 2050. The Study considered a number of potential decarbonisation options for a wide range of dwelling and business types. This included the use of liquid biofuels such as HVO, solid biomass, biogases and other technologies such as heat pumps and district heating networks.

The recommendation of the Heat Study is that heat pumps are the optimal decarbonisation path for domestic heating systems, with district heating also being a competitive option that can be widely deployed.

The Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (2010/31/EU) (EPBD) is the European Union's main legislative instrument aiming to promote the improvement of the energy performance of buildings within the European Union. On the 7th of December 2023, The Council and the Parliament reached provisional political agreement on a proposal to revise the directive with final agreement expected soon. The new measures aim to increase the rate of renovation, particularly for the worst-performing buildings in each Member State.

Roadmaps for the long-term decarbonisation of the commercial sector and the public sector are being developed by working groups under the Heat and Built Environment Taskforce. These will consider the policies and supports required, the technologies involved and the capacity across the system to deliver on targets.

There are a wide range of supports for business funded by the Department of Environment and administered by the SEAI. The supports are intended to enable all businesses to improve their energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions, reduce energy consumption and costs and, in the process, enable them to become more competitive.

The Support Scheme for Renewable Heat (SSRH) is a government funded initiative designed to increase the energy generated from renewable sources in the heat sector whilst also reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The scheme is open to commercial, industrial, agricultural, district heating, public sector and other non-domestic heat users and is administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI).

1.6 Offshore

1.6.1 Plan-led system

Ireland has moved to a plan-led system for offshore renewable energy (ORE) development to ensure that future developments in Ireland's maritime area take place in a sustainable and strategic way, with consideration for environmental protection and extensive stakeholder and public input and engagement. Government is committed to the use of sub-national forward spatial planning through the establishment of Designated Maritime Area Plans (DMAPs) for different maritime activities including ORE.

The South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan (DMAP) Proposal, published in July 2023, puts forward an initial 'proposed' geographical area within which future offshore renewable energy development may take place. This proposal was the subject of a public information period in 2023 and will undergo statutory public consultation in 2024. Following this statutory consultation period, the DMAP area will be refined before the Draft South Coast DMAP is presented to the Minister for Housing and both houses of the Oireachtas for approval. The Draft South Coast DMAP will become Ireland's first ORE DMAP with further DMAPs to be established subsequently. Further information is available on [gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) - [South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan \(DMAP\) Proposal \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)

1.6.2 Interconnection

The National Policy Statement on Electricity Interconnection (published July 2023) has been updated in line with the Climate Action Plan. The new policy statement has set a target of completing one further interconnector project to Great Britain by 2030 beyond the completion of the Greenlink Interconnector which is expected to be completed in 2024. The policy statement also aims for further connection to mainland Europe following on from a successful Celtic 1 project linking Ireland to France, due in 2027.

This plan-led interconnection approach is necessary to match our renewable energy ambitions by focusing State and commercial efforts towards the same goal.

It is intended to have the Offshore Transmission Strategy with the ORE Future Framework and the National Industrial Strategy for Offshore Wind aligned as common package and will send a strong signal of intent to industry and international partners. It is intended to establish a greater presence in a number of European capitals to facilitate deeper energy cooperation and export potential through electricity interconnection.

Progress has also been made by our Department's involvement in Sub Group 1 of the North Seas Energy Cooperation (NSEC) by engaging with Member States (MS) to strengthen the supports and facilities for development of offshore grid and the large renewable energy potential in the region (in particular Hybrid projects). NSEC SG1 has also given the opportunity to discuss and further plan with our MS colleagues potential ways of supporting hybrid projects in the future.

1.6.3 Taskforce

The Offshore Wind Delivery Taskforce was established in 2022 to drive delivery and capture the wider and longer-term economic and business opportunities associated with the development of offshore renewables in Ireland. Its membership includes the State organisations with key actions to deliver to enable the offshore wind industry in Ireland. The Taskforce has developed the Offshore Wind Energy Programme to coordinate activities ongoing across Government in relation to offshore wind and has established a Programme Management Office to drive its implementation. Further information on the Taskforce is available on [gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) - [Offshore Wind Delivery Taskforce \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)

1.7 Just Transition

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amended) Act 2021 provides that as Ireland's transition towards its National Climate Objective, Ministers and the Government as a whole, in preparing both the Long-Term Climate Action Strategy and the annual Climate Action Plan, must have regard to the requirement for a just transition to a climate neutral economy, which endeavours, in so far as practicable to maximise employment opportunities and support people and communities that may be negatively affected by transitions.

1. Building on the provision of the 2021 Act, the Government, through the annual Climate Action Plan, has adopted an overarching framework for policy development, which takes a principles-based approach to support a just transition in Ireland. Climate Action Plan 2021 articulated this framework to guide the Government's approach to implementing climate action policies:
2. An integrated, structured, and evidence-based approach to identify and plan our response to just transition requirements
3. People are equipped with the right skills to be able to participate in and benefit from the future net zero economy
4. The costs are shared so that the impact is equitable and existing inequalities are not exacerbated
5. Social dialogue to ensure impacted citizens and communities are empowered and are core to the transition process

All relevant Ministers are expected to formulate and implement their climate action policies through the lens of this framework, so that policies are informed by the need to ensure a just transition. Annual Climate Action Plans provide details of just transition actions across Government.

The Government has also committed to establishing a Just Transition Commission. In September 2023, a Just Transition Taskforce comprised of representatives of the key social dialogue pillars (employers, trades unions, farming groups, social NGOs, and environmental NGOs), as well as the National Economic and Social Council and relevant Government Departments was established by Minister Ryan. This Taskforce is in the process of preparing a report and recommendations on the establishment of an enduring Just Transition Commission by early 2024.

1.8 Renewable Energy

The development of renewable energy is central to achieving our climate ambitions and the overall energy policy in Ireland. Renewable energy reduces dependence on fossil fuels, improves security of supply, and reduces greenhouse gas emissions creating environmental benefits while delivering green jobs to the economy, thus contributing to our national competitiveness. Climate change, energy security and competitiveness are inter-related challenges that will be addressed through the transforming of Ireland's economy from one based on fossil fuel dependence to a low carbon economy based around energy efficiency, renewable energy, and smart networks.

Proper planning and sustainable development on a national, regional, and county and city level will be critical to achieving our renewable energy and climate goals and to provide the framework in which investment in renewable energy can take place. The Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies prepared by the Regional Assemblies play an important role in mediating between the National Planning Framework prepared by Government and the Development Plans published by the Local Authorities.

The Department strongly supports the Southern Region's objective set out in its RSES to 'accelerate the transition towards low carbon economy' and 'to support the integration of indigenous renewable energy production and grid injection'. The Department also welcomes the participation of the Southern Regional Assembly in the suite of actions set out in the Climate Action Plan to ensure a supportive spatial planning framework for onshore renewable electricity generation development including participation in a Steering Group to oversee the implementation of this framework and deliver a Roadmap for the development of Regional Renewable Electricity Strategies.

1.8.1 Progress Made

Sectoral Developments

The recently published Climate Action Plan (CAP 24) provides a detailed plan for taking decisive action to achieve a 51% reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, setting us on a path to reach net-zero emissions by no later than 2050. We have set ambitious goals across the electricity generation sector to target that 80% of our electricity will come from renewable sources by 2030. To achieve this, Ireland aims to have 9 GW of onshore wind, 8 GW of solar by 2030 and support at least 500 MW of local community-based renewable energy projects and increased levels of new micro-generation and small-scale generation.

CAP 24 includes a suite of actions to realise the full potential of Ireland's onshore and offshore renewable energy resources and seeks to transform Ireland into an international leader in the development and generation of high-quality renewable energy and aims to set a course for Ireland to achieve a low-carbon, climate resilient future, through sustainable social and economic development. CAP 24 recognises the need for transformational policies, measures, and actions required to meet the electricity sector's carbon budget programme and sectoral emissions ceilings. This includes facilitating the large-scale deployment of renewables, that will be critical to decarbonising the power sector, as well as enabling the electrification of other technologies, through a number of schemes.

Accelerating Renewable Electricity Taskforce

The Accelerating Renewable Electricity Taskforce was established to support the delivery of the onshore renewable electricity targets, in particular the 80% of electricity demand from renewable generation by 2030. The Taskforce brings together stakeholders from across Government and State Bodies to identify, coordinate, and prioritise the required policies needed to achieve those targets and ensure that barriers to the implementation of such policies are removed or minimised to the greatest extent possible.

Support Schemes (RESS & SRESS)

One of the major Government policies to help deliver on Ireland's ambitious climate and energy targets is the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) - an auction-based support scheme which invites grid-scale renewable electricity generation projects to compete to receive a guaranteed price for the electricity they generate.

The first two RESS auctions, RESS 1 and RESS 2, secured over 1 GW and 1.8 GW of new wind and solar generation respectively. The RESS 3 which took place in 2023 secured a smaller volume of contracts for renewables, just over 0.6GW. While the auction resulted in lower volumes than in previous auctions, RESS 3 targeted mature projects that all have planning permission and grid connection offers, and are expected to deliver rapidly.

The RESS 3 auction volumes underpin the need for a much stronger pipeline of onshore wind and solar projects coming through the grid connection and permitting processes. It also highlights the urgent and critical need for greater alignment between local plans and renewable energy targets to support investment in, and delivery of, renewable energy projects.

The design of RESS 4, which is expected to be significantly larger than RESS 3, is well underway with the auction expected to proceed this year. The ability of projects to compete and deliver under the RESS is key to increasing the volume of renewables connecting to the Irish electricity grid as early as possible, and is critical to maximising Ireland's overall levels of renewable generation by 2030.

The Southern Region area encompasses a significant volume of Ireland's existing onshore wind capacity. A strong future pipeline of onshore wind and solar projects from the Southern region is critical to participate in the future programme of RESS auctions over the coming years in order for Ireland to meet its 80% renewable electricity target.

Community and Small-Scale Generation

Community renewable energy projects will play an important role in our transition to an electricity grid that is up to 80% powered by renewables by 2030.

The RESS supports communities in a variety of ways including through a mandatory community benefit fund for every project supported in the scheme.

Through the Department's continued engagement with Renewable Energy Communities (RECs), there is evidence of significant challenges REC projects may face with the competitive, auction-based nature of RESS. Therefore, from 2024, support for communities for the development of renewable projects will transition to the Small-Scale Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (SRESS). The scheme will support renewable electricity generators above 50kW and up to 6MW.

The SRESS will differ from RESS in that there will not be a competitive auction for export focussed participants to take part in. Instead, it is anticipated that a feed in tariff will be provided. This export tariff phase of SRESS, to support small scale and community renewable projects, is due to be launched later this year. This is expected to offer a simpler route to market for community projects and boost community participation in the Government's renewable energy ambition. The scheme will align more closely to the capacity of the community energy sector, thus ensuring a more sustainable delivery of the renewable energy community target of 500MW by 2030. SRESS grants are already available for renewable self-consumers above 50kW and up to 1MW through the Non-Domestic Microgen Scheme and the Business Grants and Supports Scheme ('Solar for Business').

A set of technical and financial supports for community projects are currently available to communities in a Community Enabling Framework under RESS. Similar supports will be available to community projects under the SRESS.

In 2023, SEAI also undertook five grid studies on a county basis to support communities in identifying sites within their locality that are most likely to have an economically viable grid connection. The initial focus of these grid studies has been on the counties that are most likely to have available grid capacity for smaller generation projects. Five have been completed so far for Kildare, Kerry and Galway, Limerick, East Cork and community information events highlighting the results were held. There are five further grid studies planned for 2024 which will include Laois, Cavan, Roscommon, Meath and Sligo.

Community energy projects and the community benefit fund will play a major role in the Southern region as the benefits of renewable energy projects to local communities and economies materialise. The region is home to Ireland's first community owned wind farm, the Templeberry Wind Farm in Co. Tipperary and it is expected that further community energy projects will be developed across the region.

Spatial Planning

In order to realise the full potential of Ireland's renewable energy resources and support accelerated renewable energy development, CAP 24 has committed to aligning the relevant constituent elements of the planning and permitting system, supported by national policy and associated methodologies to inform regional and local planning policies. A supportive policy framework for renewable electricity generation development at national, regional, and local level is critical to ensuring the successful delivery of the renewable electricity targets under the Climate Action Plan.

The Department has commenced work on a Renewable Electricity Spatial Policy Framework White Paper (RESPF) with a view to ensuring a more facilitative and supportive spatial planning framework for the delivery of increased onshore renewable electricity generation. The RESPF will set out a framework within which all stakeholders should operate in order to achieve the delivery of Ireland’s national onshore renewable electricity targets.

With the development of Regional Renewable Electricity Strategies (RRES), each regional assembly will consider how their regional renewable electricity generation targets, to be established in the forthcoming revision to the National Planning Framework, will be achieved within their region in an equitable and strategic manner. The regional assemblies hold a vital role in improving the coherence between national, regional, and local climate action policy.

A Roadmap is currently being developed in collaboration between the Department, The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the SEAI and the three regional assemblies to assist with and guide the development of the RRES. This will streamline the drafting of these strategies whilst enabling an efficient and consistent approach.

Work is also underway on a revised and updated methodology for the development of Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategies (LARES). Due for publication in Q3 2024, this up-to-date tool will support Local Authorities with energy planning, enabling them to examine potential renewable energy resources within a local authority area and maximise their contribution towards the national renewable energy targets.

The timely delivery of these policy measures will provide a critical structure through which Ireland can harness the market opportunities presented by its onshore renewable energy resources and supply sustainable development of carbon free onshore renewable electricity.

Table on Projects which have received Letters of Offer for RESS Auctions

Area	Total Projects	Solar Projects	Wind Projects	Amount in MW
Carlow	2	1	1	9.80
Clare	4	1	3	86.00
Cork	32	29	3	471.44
Kerry	4	3	1	89.20
Kilkenny	10	9	1	151.18
Limerick	3	3	-	58.95
Tipperary	11	10	1	295.39
Waterford	9	8	1	165.79
Wexford	15	15	-	281.66
Total	90	79	11	1609.41

1.9 Residential Energy Efficiency 2023 Achievements

Below is a summary of the achievements with regard to residential energy efficiency for the period of 2023:

- Capital expenditure Spend € 319,643,131;
- 67,411 applications processed;
- 47,952 home energy upgrades against a target of just over 37,000;
- Of these, 17,599 B2s completed (surpassing the 13,846 end of year target);
- Of the overall home completions, 5,897 homes were upgraded under SEAI fully funded energy poverty schemes (very close to the 6,000 end of year target);
- 22,214 domestic Solar PV installations (surpassing the year-end target of 12,500);
- 3,769 Heat Pumps Installed;
- Five additional One-Stop-Shops registered by SEAI bringing the total to 17; and
- Low-interest home energy upgrade loans, Ministerial approval between the Department and EIF approved on 27 November, loans expected in the market in Q1 2024.

2. Progress in accelerating transition to a low carbon and circular economy and society, for more sustainable management of natural resources, and realising blue growth and bioeconomy opportunities

2.1 Local Authority Climate Action Plans

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 set out that each local authority is required to prepare a local authority climate action plan for its respective administrative area. The plans will be consistent with the most recent approved climate action plan and national adaptation framework and are being developed over the next 12 months. Once adopted, each plan will be valid for five years.

Local authorities are key drivers in advancing climate policy at the local level. The local authority climate action will help local authorities to address, in an integrated way, the mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions and climate change adaptation and strengthen the alignment between national climate policy and the delivery of effective local climate action.

The local authority plans are designed to lead to a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in each local authority area. The five guiding principles for the local action plans are - ambitious, action-focused, evidence-based, participative and transparent.

Each authority in its local climate action plan will:

- Assess current emissions levels from local authority sources and more widely within the county/city through a Baseline Emissions Inventory
- Carry out a Climate Change Risk Assessment to identify climate hazards and assess vulnerability to these hazards
- Identify and plan a "decarbonising zone" (DZ). The DZ will be a specific part of the county/city which will act as a 'test bed' of what is possible for accelerating low carbon actions

Under the provisions of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Amendment Act 2021, statutory guidelines were developed in collaboration between the local government sector, technical agencies (such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Met Éireann), and government departments.

Developing the local climate plans will require more of the local authorities. In recognition of this, the Department is providing funds for specific roles to form part of and strengthen climate action teams - a Climate Action Coordinator and a Climate Action Officer. A dedicated Community Climate Action Officer is also funded through the Climate Action Fund (CAF) Community Climate Action Programme – Strand 1. These supports will ensure that each local authority has a specialised team in place to coordinate the development of the plan and responsible for supporting its implementation and tracking this.

The Department notes all local authorities in the Southern Regional Assembly have published a draft Local Authority Climate Action Plan, which are due to be adopted in Q1 2024.¹

¹ 10 draft Local Authority Climate Action Plans

2.2 Climate Action Regional Offices

In January 2018, the government established four Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) in recognition of the need to build capacity within the local government sector to respond and adapt to climate change. The CAROs play an important role in ensuring that cross-sectoral climate issues are identified and addressed. The CAROs provide a shared service function within the local government sector, with input from the County and City Management Association (CCMA).

The need for regional climate offices was reflected in both the National Adaptation Framework and the National Mitigation Plan and a commitment was made to provide €10 million in funding over a 5-year period. The CAROs play a central role in supporting and coordinating climate actions undertaken by local authorities, the measurement and recording of key performance indicators and supporting the advancement of behavioural change initiatives. The CAROs are supporting the local authorities to develop and coordinate their local climate plans across regions and nationally and assist with sharing knowledge and best practice.

Each office is operated by a lead local authority. One CARO operates in the Southern Region :

- Atlantic Seaboard South – Cork County Council

A new SLA was signed between the Department and the relevant lead local authorities to ensure the continuation of CARO services from 2023 – 2029, with an annual total allocation of €2m.

2.3 Local Authority Climate Action Training Programme

The Department supports upskilling and capacity building in the local government sector by funding the Local Authority Climate Action Training Programme, with a commitment of €1.575m over 2021 - 2023. This programme is designed to increase understanding of climate change and the need for action among all local authority staff and elected members. Building climate action capacity in the local authorities is essential to support the leadership role in the fight against climate change and in building resilience to its negative effects.

The Department has a Service Level Agreement with Kildare County Council, as the lead authority for the Eastern and Midlands CARO, to deliver the training programme. Kildare County Council works in collaboration with Tipperary County Council which is the lead authority for the Local Authority Services National Training Group.

The current Local Authority Climate Action Training Programme SLA expired in 2023 and a new SLA is currently being developed between the Department and Kildare County Council. This will be based on a new training programme being developed and agreed by the Climate Action Training Steering Group.

2.4 EU Cities Mission-Cork City

In April 2022 Cork City Council, alongside Dublin City Council, was selected from over 300 applicants to be part of the EU Cities Mission. The Department is supporting the two cities in achieving the target of being net zero cities by 2030 and will work alongside relevant departments and agencies.

The European Commission set up the EU Cities Mission in 2021. Its aim is to support 100 cities in the EU to become climate neutral by 2030 and to pave the way for all cities in Europe to be climate neutral by 2050. European cities can substantially contribute to the EU Green Deal target of reducing emissions by 55% by 2030.

The Cities Mission forms part of Horizon Europe which is the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation. There are five "missions" which are each designed to address pressing global issues that require cross-domain cooperation at both EU and national level.

Large urban areas have been selected for specific focus and help because urban areas across Europe account for 75% of its population. The cities mission will help cities to become places which provide citizens with a good quality of life through cleaner air, safer transport and less congestion and noise.

Cork City is poised to act as an experimentation and innovation hub, implementing cutting-edge and creative solutions across areas such as energy, transport, waste, infrastructure and buildings to reduce their environmental footprints. The Department is establishing a National Mirror Group to oversee and guide the Mission in Ireland and is aiming to provide technical supports to the cities to assist them in developing their roadmaps to climate neutrality by 2030.

2.5 Geoscience

2.5.1 Policy on Petroleum Exploration and Production

A Policy Statement on Petroleum Exploration and Production in Ireland was published in August 2022, replacing the 2019 "Policy Statement - Petroleum Exploration and Production Activities as part of Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Economy", in order to reflect the current policy and legislative position of the Government on Petroleum Exploration and Production, and to provide clarity to stakeholders in relation to future authorisations which may be granted under legislation.

This Policy Statement outlines the commitment contained in the Programme for Government – Our Shared Future to end the issuing of new licences for the exploration and extraction of gas on the same basis as the decision taken in 2019 by the previous Government in relation to oil exploration and extraction.

This means that whilst no new authorisations for new exploration will be granted, existing authorisations will not be affected by this change. Holders of existing authorisations can continue to apply to progress through the standard licensing lifecycle stages towards a natural conclusion, which may include expiry, relinquishment, or production.

Any applications for follow-on authorisations or applications to undertake offshore activities under an authorisation are subject to Ministerial consent and must continue to meet environmental, technical, and financial criteria as appropriate.

2.5.2 Irish Offshore Strategic Environmental Assessment (IOSEA6)

The Department has carried out the sixth Irish Offshore Strategic Environmental Assessment (IOSEA6), which involved a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) of the Plan for issue of Petroleum Exploration and Production Authorisations in Irish Offshore Waters for the period to 2030.

The Plan set out the proposed approach to the issuing of petroleum authorisations, and the consideration of the possible offshore exploration activities that could take place under such authorisations, following the decision to end the issuing of licences for new exploration and extraction, and the subsequent placing of this commitment on a statutory footing on commencement of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 on 7 September 2021, and the publication of the Department's Policy Statement on Petroleum Exploration and Production in Ireland.

The Plan provides an operational baseline which can be supplied to exploration companies who hold existing authorisations and are working offshore, against which they can conduct their work and ensure the protection of the marine environment. This will include descriptions of the types of offshore activity that may take place over the duration of the Plan, such as 2D seismic acquisition, 3D seismic acquisition, and drilling of wells.

This is the sixth iteration of the Irish Offshore Strategic Environmental Assessments (IOSEA), which was carried out to assess potential impacts associated with activities conducted under petroleum authorisations within Irish offshore waters and included public consultation with submissions and observations received considered as part of its preparation.

2.5.3 Policy Statement on Geothermal Energy

The Government's Policy Statement on Geothermal Energy for a Circular Economy was published July 2023.

The Policy Statement, which will be effective for five years (from 2023 – 2028), sets out:

- The approach to regulating shallow and deep geothermal systems, including licencing the exploration for and the utilisation of deep sources of geothermal energy, and confirms the importance of ensuring environmental protection by integrating with existing environmental, health and safety and planning regulatory frameworks.
- The scope of a strategy to promote the sustainable development of Ireland's geothermal resources to decarbonise the heating and cooling of buildings and for industrial uses and power generation.

An Advisory Group on Geothermal Energy has been established, which the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications will consult on the implementation of the Policy Statement.

2.5.4 Policy Statement on Mineral Exploration and Mining

A Policy Statement on Mineral Exploration and Mining– Critical Raw Materials for the Circular Economy Transition was published in December 2022. The policy for mineral exploration and mining underpinning the Policy Statement is to ensure a stable, robust, and transparent regulatory framework that supports environmentally sustainable mineral exploration and mining; and to maximise the contribution that sustainable exploration and mining can make to our society, economic development and the transition to a circular economy and net-zero greenhouse gas emissions through the supply of the raw materials necessary for our sustainable development.

The Statement sets out principles, grouped under five themes of Robust and Stable Regulation; Increasing Awareness and Participation; Sustainable Development; Building Capacity and Access to Knowledge; and International Co-operation and some specific actions have been identified to implement the policy. An Advisory Group on Minerals Exploration and Mining has been established which the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications will consult on the implementation of the Policy Statement, which includes a review of the regulatory processes and measures to support public awareness and participation. Implementation of the Policy Statement will also take into account the outcome of the EU Critical Raw Materials Act which is currently under negotiation at European level.

2.6 Circular Economy

Significant pro-circular policy and legislation has been introduced in Ireland in recent years including the Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy 2020-2025; the Circular Economy and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2022; and the Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy 2022-2023. Building on this progress, in 2023 Government adopted a suite of strategic measures to provide a pathway for reduced resource consumption, waste prevention, and increased levels of re-use and recycling.

In May 2023, the second Circular Economy Innovation Grant Scheme awarded a total of €640,000 to 13 projects across Ireland. This scheme directly supports the growth of the circular economy in Ireland and aims to support innovation and demonstration circular economy projects by small to medium enterprises and social enterprises.

Incentivised pricing for commercial waste was introduced in July 2023 to support increased segregation. This was followed in December 2023 by new regulations making the provision of an organic waste bin to all households a mandatory obligation. July 2023 also saw the establishment of the Circular Economy Fund which provides ring fenced funding for environmental and circular economy projects.

In September 2023, levies to drive waste prevention, reuse and recycling were expanded to include a new charge on waste recovered at landfills, used for energy generation, or exported, with monies raised being ringfenced for environmental projects in the Circular Economy Fund.

Over the course of 2023, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) advanced to publication end-of-waste and by-product national decisions for specific construction and demolition waste streams.

The Department is in the process of preparing a new Green Public Procurement Strategy and Action Plan, which it intends to submit for Government approval in 2024. The new Green Public Procurement Strategy and Action Plan will look to significantly increase Green Public Procurement Implementation across the public sector. A draft Green Public Procurement Strategy and Action Plan was published for public consultation in September 2023.

2.7 Bioeconomy

The Bioeconomy Action Plan 2023 – 2025, developed in partnership between the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, was published in October 2023 and supports the sustainable development of Ireland’s bioeconomy.

Following the publication of the National Policy Statement on the Bioeconomy in 2018, the High-Level Bioeconomy Implementation Group (BIG) has reported to Government twice (2019, 2023) on the progress achieved in implementing the policy statement and in supporting the delivery of the bioeconomy policy statement vision, guiding principles and its strategic objectives. In the Climate Action Plan 2021, the Department, DAFM and the BIG committed to developing this detailed and tailored three-year Bioeconomy Action Plan with the aim being to further progress the Irish bioeconomy.

The Bioeconomy Action Plan aims to progress the Irish bioeconomy following the guiding principles of sustainability, cascading use of resources, the precautionary principle, a “food first” approach, and supporting area-based local and regional development. The 33 actions set out in the Plan are divided in to seven pillars:

- Governance and Awareness
- Research, Development and Innovation
- Nature, Climate, Energy and Circular Economy
- Agriculture, Food, Forestry and the Marine
- Communities, Regions and Cities
- Industry and Enterprise
- Knowledge and Skills

Reflecting the cross-sectoral nature of the bioeconomy, the responsibility for the implementation of the Plan sits with a number of parent departments, such as the Department, DAFM, and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage; supported by agencies and stakeholders such as the Local Government Management Agency, the Environmental Protection Agency, and Teagasc.

3. Progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with agreed national sectoral plans and 2030 targets, and support for undertaking emissions monitoring at a regional and local authority level

3.1 Latest Projections for Irelands GHG Emissions in the period of 2022-20240 'With Existing Measures'

The Environmental Protection Agency's latest projections for Ireland's GHG emissions in the period 2022-2040 (published June 2023) indicate that under a 'With Existing Measures' (WEM) scenario (i.e., only accounting for the impact of implemented and existing policies) Ireland's total emissions are expected to decrease by 11% in 2030, compared to 2018 levels. The legally binding commitment is 51% by 2030, compared to 2018 levels.

Under the EPA's 'With Additional Measures' (WAM) scenario (i.e. factoring in additional measures from CAP21 and CAP23 and thus assuming significant reductions in key sectors such as power generation, residential buildings, transport, commercial and public services, and agriculture) results in a projected decrease in GHGs of 29% relative to 2018 levels.

It should be noted that even under the WAM scenario the EPA excludes several Climate Action Plan 2023 (CAP23) policies and measures as the Agency could not identify a clear and feasible implementation pathway and therefore account for their potential impact at this point in time.

The EPA does acknowledge that if all of the unmodelled policies and measures in CAP23 and the, as yet unallocated emissions savings for the second carbon budget period (2026-2030) are included, Ireland could reduce its emissions by 42% by 2030, a figure significantly closer to the overarching target of 51%. However, this residual 9% is still a significant gap that must be addressed if Ireland is to reach its legally binding emissions targets.

Climate Action Plan 2024 provides corrective actions and further detail on emissions reduction measures, which can support the EPA in modelling measures that are currently excluded from their pathways.

The Department is also working with the EPA to refine its processes for developing and refining actions and measures to make them more applicable to the EPA's modelling and analysis framework.

3.2 This Department's Emissions Targets

The Department has a presence in the Southern Region in its Wexford offices. The total GHG emissions that cannot be exceeded by the Department (in all locations) to meet the 2030 GHG target is 543.3 tCO₂. At the end of 2022 our total emissions were 728.7 tCO₂. The Department is using the SEAI Gap to Target tool to track our progress towards 2030 and have put in place a Climate Action Roadmap to identify actions required to reach the target.

In respect of our 2030 Energy Efficiency Target (EE) at the end of 2022 the Department had achieved savings of 50.9% towards the 2030 Energy Efficiency target of a 50% improvement.

The Department participates in the OPW 's Optimising Power at Work campaign which monitors energy use in our current head office at Adelaide Road which will continue when we move to our new HQ in Q1 of 2024.

In 2023 the Department established a new Green Team to drive efficiencies throughout the organisation and to implement practices to help reduce the organisation's environmental footprint and to promote 'green' and wellbeing practices among employees. In its Green Team Activity Report for 2023 it highlighted completion of staff training, raising staff awareness through promotion of the Reduce Your Use campaign in our weekly newsletter to staff as well as the development of staff communications on tips and tricks to stay warm and well this winter, while supporting a reduction in our energy consumption.

The Green Team also engaged with the Corporate Services Unit to undertake energy saving measures across our buildings. In 2024 the Green Team will implement a wider range of activities which will be reported on in the 2024 Climate Action Roadmap.

4. Progress in protecting biodiversity and natural heritage and achieving improved conservation status of protected species and habitats in the Region

4.1 Enhanced Decommissioning Rehabilitation and Restoration Scheme (EDRRS)

The rehabilitation of peatlands is currently being undertaken by Bord na Móna through the Enhanced Decommissioning Rehabilitation and Restoration Scheme (EDRRS) and is receiving funding from the National Recovery and Resilience Plan via the Climate Action Fund. This project relates to the enhanced rehabilitation of approximately 33,000 hectares of Bord na Móna peatlands across 82 bogs including a limited number in the Southern Region, previously used for energy production over a number of decades. They are some of the more degraded peatlands in the State.

Degraded peatlands are a source of carbon emissions rather than a sink as they would be in their natural state. The primary aim of the Peatlands Climate Action Scheme is to optimise climate action benefits of rewetting the former industrial peat production areas by creating soggy peatland conditions that will allow compatible peatland habitats to redevelop.

The total area planned for rehabilitation is 32,779 hectares rehabilitated for the entire EDRRS by its extended end date of August 2026. The total area rehabilitated to the end of December 2023 is 16,090 hectares, with an estimated 31 million tonnes of carbon stored in these hectares. The scheme includes for an on-going scientific monitoring and verification programme measuring carbon, hydrology, ecology and water quality. Carbon monitoring includes the establishment of two Eddy covariance towers and a chamber measurement program designed to estimate CO₂ and CH₄ emission factors for 22 different vegetation communities.

Following the completion of the majority of the Year 1 rehabilitation, it has become more evident that while the bogs do appear to have re-wetted, the scientific evidence for this will take some time. As further data becomes available it will be possible to carry out enhanced analysis of the wider environmental variables and identify whether there are trends associated with parameters including peat thickness, substrate type and rehabilitation measure type.

Some of the rehabilitation measures include a provision for Sphagnum inoculation and fertiliser spreading and due to their seasonal nature, it may not be possible to carry out these measures within the Bord na Móna financial year when the rehabilitation is being carried out. It has now been determined that the Sphagnum inoculation costs will be carried out under a separate project, the Peatlands and People LIFE project.

The rehabilitation has contributed to biodiversity restoration with the return/growth of certain wildlife species, including breeding waders, gulls and wildfowl, Eurasian Cranes and Whooper Swans. There has also been a return/growth of plant species like Common Bog Cotton, which is now thriving across locations like Oughter bog, for example.

5. Progress in achieving good air quality for all urban and rural areas in the Region and incorporating the objectives of the EU Environmental Noise Directive

5.1 Clean Air Strategy

The Clean Air Strategy was published in April 2023. It outlines how we will enhance and protect the quality of the air that we breathe and realise the full environmental and health benefits of cleaner air.

The CAS provides the high-level strategic policy framework necessary to identify and promote the integrated measures across government policy that are required to reduce air pollution and promote cleaner ambient air, while delivering on wider national objectives. It outlines how we will enhance and protect the quality of the air that we breathe and realise the full environmental and health benefits of cleaner air.

More details about the Clean Air Strategy can be found at gov.ie - Clean Air Strategy (www.gov.ie).

5.2 Introduction of new solid fuel regulations for Ireland

In order to achieve our commitment to continued improvements in our air quality and bringing associated health benefits to our population, new Solid Fuel Regulations were introduced in October 2022 and apply across the entire state.

They include more stringent technical standards for all solid fuels and allows regulation of the most polluting fuels to be prioritised. The regulations also include a revised registration, certification, and labelling requirement to ensure that approved products are of the highest quality, and to provide reassurance to consumers regarding the standard of the product they are purchasing.

The measures taken in the new solid fuel regulations will serve to protect human health and the environment and are consistent with our climate commitment of phasing out the most polluting fuels. They will also assist in our transition from an over-reliance on coal products towards less polluting alternatives and ultimately a transition to low carbon, low air pollutant fuels.

We are currently working with the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) to establish an enhanced enforcement support structure for local authorities. This structure will support the provision of improved co-ordination, expertise and advice to support consistent implementation of solid fuel regulation and all air quality legislation across the country.

5.3 Urban Transport-Related Air Pollution (UTRAP)

The UTRAP working group was jointly convened by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications and the Department of Transport (DoT) in autumn 2019.

The primary aim of the group was to examine transport-related air pollution and to develop an evidence-based national policy framework within which local authorities could reduce traffic related air pollution to reduce the potential for exceedances of EU limits.

The final report along with Synthesis report can be accessed at gov.ie - Urban Transport-Related Air Pollution (UTRAP) Working Group (www.gov.ie)

The UTRAP Group is continuing as a forum for ongoing engagement between the key transport stakeholders and as a sub-group of the Strategic Implementation Group. This alignment with the CAS will allow the UTRAP Group to contribute to the overall national air quality management structures including the provision of annual updates.

5.4 Strategic Noise Maps

The Environmental Noise Directive (END) and the European Communities (Environmental Noise) Regulations 2018 to 2021 (The Regulations) requires Strategic Noise Maps to be prepared for all major roads, railways, airports and agglomerations.

The purpose of the Strategic Noise Maps are to;

- Provide relevant data to the European Commission in accordance with the requirements of the Environmental Noise Directive,
- Provide a source of information for the general public on environmental noise and its effects,
- Provide the basis for developing Noise Action Plans to identify noise priority areas and quiet areas and propose relevant mitigation measures to help mitigate the harmful effects of these noise sources.

The Round 4 Strategic Noise Maps are available on www.epa.ie at EPA Maps under 'Environment and Wellbeing' and 'Noise' and draft noise action plans are due to be published for consultation in early 2024. Data from the mapping is reported to the European Environment Agency (EEA) with information available at [Noise \(europa.eu\)](http://Noise.europa.eu).

6. The role of digitalisation in enhancing urban and rural regeneration, supporting development of a network of co-working/remote working hubs and smart cities, towns and villages in the Region, including delivery of the national broadband plan and future communications networks

6.1 Digital Connectivity Office (DCO)

6.1.1 National Broadband Plan (NBP)

In December 2022, the Irish government approved a Digital Connectivity Strategy, aiming to enhance Ireland's digital infrastructure. The strategy includes ambitious targets such as achieving Gigabit network coverage for all Irish households and businesses by 2028, comprehensive 5G coverage by 2030, and digital connectivity for all schools and Broadband Connection Points (BCPs) by 2023.

The National Broadband Plan (NBP) is a critical part of achieving these targets, focusing on high-speed, reliable digital connectivity.

The National Broadband Plan (NBP) is the initiative to rollout high-speed broadband to the 1.1 million people living and working in almost 560,000 premises, including almost 100,000 businesses and farms, along with 672 schools, where commercial operators will not commit to deliver the service. It is expected that, eventually, over 600,000 premises will be served by the NBP, including new builds.

As of 12 January 2024, over 446,800 premises have had detailed designs completed, and over 217,100 premises were available for order/pre-order. In addition, over 205,600 premises were passed and able to avail of a high-speed broadband connection, with over 66,500 premises already connected.

6.1.2 Strategic Connection Points (SCPs)

Strategic Connection Points (SCPs) are a key element of the NBP, providing high speed broadband in every county in advance of the rollout of the fibre to the premises network. Included in this are school SCPs and Broadband Connection Points (BCPs). School SCPs provide Wi-Fi exclusively for students and teachers, while Broadband Connection Points (BCPs) are public locations which were selected to receive high speed connectivity as part of the NBP in areas with poor broadband coverage, including many of Ireland's offshore islands. The public BCP locations include a range of community facilities such as community centres, local sports facilities, and tourism and library hubs, etc.

The installation of SCPs and the delivery of public BCPs throughout the country has been completed and schools across the State now have access to high-speed broadband.

In the Southern region, 103 BCPs were in place by the end of November 2023, all of which were open for business and providing high speed broadband services to communities. There were also 265 school Strategic Connection Points (school SCPs) in the Southern region installed by the end of November 2023, and 210 of these schools are utilising the newly provided service with high-speed connectivity. The remaining 55 schools, which have slower connectivity, are in the process of being connected to the new high speed connection. This amounts to a total of 368 SCPs installed in the Southern region by 30 November 2023. The breakdown by county for the BCPs installed in the Southern region is as follows:

SCPs Installed By County – Southern Region			
County	School SCPs	Public BCPs	Total SCPs
Carlow	9	7	16
Clare	29	7	36
Cork	91	24	115
Kerry	24	10	34
Kilkenny	21	7	28
Limerick	21	15	36
Tipperary	37	20	57
Waterford	16	4	20
Wexford	17	9	26
Totals	265	103	368

6.1.3 Islands

Connecting the islands around Ireland is also an important aspect of the NBP, ensuring that those living on off-shore islands have the same access to high speed broadband as those living on the mainland. There are 27 islands in scope for specific deployment, separate from the mainland deployment areas, which will also receive fibre to the home connections and have access to the same speeds as premises on the mainland.

As of 12 January 2024, National Broadband Ireland (NBI) has completed fibre deployment activities on 10 islands around the country. Premises on these islands, which include two islands off Cork, can now order high speed broadband. These islands within the Southern region are set out in the table below:

Islands Ready for Order – Southern Region		
Island	County	Status
Hare Island	Cork	Ready for Order
Long Island	Cork	Ready for Order

The remaining 17 islands have been prioritised in line with public policy and will be delivered by Q4 of 2026. This includes six islands within the Southern region as set out in the table below.

An example of the impact that this prioritisation will have for those living on Ireland’s off-shore islands is Valentia Island in Kerry. The delivery date for Valentia was moved from Q1 2027 to Q4 2025.

Islands To Be Delivered By Q4 2026 – Southern Region		
Island	County	Ready for Service (RFS) Date
Sherkin Island	Cork	Q1 2025
Cape Clear	Cork	Q1 2025
Bere Island	Cork	Q4 2025
Dursey Island	Cork	Q3 2025
Horse Island	Cork	Q3 2026
Valentia Island*	Kerry	Q4 2025

*This will be delivered the same way as a mainland deployment area, using fibre cable across the bridge.

7. Please outline any progress made by agencies that operate under the aegis of your Department, in supporting the objectives of the RSES which are relevant to that agency

The following section provides the responses from Bord na Mona, Commission for Communications Regulations, Inland Fisheries Ireland, National Oil Reserve Agency and the Environmental Protection Agency.

7.1 Bord na Mona

7.1.1 Progress made on implementation of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 and the Climate Action Plans including decarbonising our energy system, buildings and transport system

Bord na Móna has developed and currently operates the 42MW windfarm at Bruckana (Tipperary/Kilkenny border). In 2022, Bord na Móna indicated that it was “*continue to examine potential sites for renewable energy projects across the country and within the Southern Region*”. This investigation phase has yielded potential renewable energy projects that are under consideration in the Southern Region, including Littleton Wind Farm which is currently in the pre-planning process, and which will be located on Littleton and Lanepark bogs.

7.1.2 Progress in accelerating transition to a low carbon and circular economy and society, for more sustainable management of natural resources, and realising blue growth and bioeconomy opportunities

Bord na Móna Recycling was the first waste collection company outside the major urban areas to develop segregated collections for household and commercial waste. Bord na Móna continues to provide segregated collections (for onward recycling/recovery) of organic, dry recyclables, glass, construction & demolition waste, and residuals in specific areas within the Southern Region.

In relation to ‘*sustainable management of natural resources*’, and following Bord na Móna cessation of peat harvesting, the company has developed a ‘win-win-win’ strategy for its primary natural resource, namely its landholding. Bord na Móna is seeking to develop renewable and low carbon energy projects (where such infrastructure is appropriate), in conjunction with peatlands remediation which will then create the conditions necessary for positive biodiversity gain; a win-win-win, as per objectives detailed in of the Climate Action Plan.

7.1.3 Progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with agreed national sectoral plans and 2030 targets, and support for undertaking emissions monitoring at a regional and local authority level

Bord na Móna is operating existing and developing new low carbon and renewable energy projects in the region, aligned with contributing to the 2030 targets for the 'Electricity Sector'.

Bord na Móna has, following funding for the Peatlands Climate Action Scheme (PCAS) which delivers the Enhanced Decommissioning Rehabilitation and Restoration Scheme (EDRRS), developed an intensive peatlands re-wetting programme, which compliments the company's Renewable energy ambition when viewed against the objectives in the Climate Action Plan. These peatland rehabilitation initiatives lock in carbon and have the ability, under certain conditions, to develop into carbon sinks, positively contributing to emissions associated with the 'Land Use' Sector.

The peatlands rehabilitation scheme that Bord na Móna is progressing also encompasses a comprehensive scientific monitoring programme designed to understand and quantify carbon fluxes on peatlands where rehabilitation and restoration initiatives have been deployed.

7.1.4 Progress in protecting biodiversity and natural heritage and achieving improved conservation status of protected species and habitats in the Region

On specific peatlands within the Southern Region where Bord na Móna has commenced peatlands rehabilitation, there is evidence of "pioneering habitats" recolonising these areas. In particular, re-wetting and remediation initiatives carried out across the Littleton Bog group (Tipperary) - which included intensive raised bog restoration at Knockahaw and Ballysorrel Bogs has resulted in positive biodiversity outcomes being recorded

7.2 Commission for Communications Regulations (ComReg)

7.2.1 ComReg and Climate Action

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 calls on relevant public bodies to perform their functions in a manner consistent with the Irish Government's climate policies, in so far as practicable. As a 'relevant body', ComReg seeks to be an organisation that values environmental sustainability. Environmental sustainability in this context is concerned with mitigation (i.e., reducing/minimizing the negative environmental impact caused by human activity) and adaptation (i.e., measures taken in the face of adverse weather conditions caused by climate change).

ComReg coordinates with the Department on the Government's annual Climate Action Plans under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021. ComReg has had a number of actions in recent Climate Action Plans (CAPs).

In CAP 23, ComReg had three specific actions:

- Action AD/23/12: Where appropriate, implement the findings and key takeaways from the report on ComReg’s network resilience project: ‘Climate Change and its Effect on Network Resilience in Ireland’.
- Action AD/23/13: Collate and review the various methodologies available to calculate the environmental impact of ECN and promote the harmonisation of such measurement indicators across the EU.
- Action CE/23/9: ComReg will begin work on considering consumer information actions to inform consumer choice aimed at driving improvements to the environmental sustainability of the electronic communications sector.

All three of these actions are now complete. The ‘Climate Change and its Effect on Network Resilience’ report has been published on the ComReg website (document 22/100a).

ComReg has one specific action in the most recent Climate Action Plan, CAP24:

- BEREC project on empowering end users with information on environmental impact of ECS/N products and services, improving the environmental transparency of the sector.

ComReg is actively contributing to the work of the Sustainability Working Group at BEREC (Body of European Regulators for Electronic Communications), composed of experts from Electronic Communications National Regulatory Authorities (NRAs) across Europe. There is currently a report on empowering end users through environmental transparency on digital products out for public consultation ([Public consultation on the draft BEREC Report on empowering end-users through environmental transparency on digital products | BEREC \(europa.eu\)](#)).

Alongside this action, under the National Adaptation Framework (which was updated in 2023) the Communications Sectoral Adaptation Plan (SAP) must be updated by 2025. The Department is the government department responsible for updating the Communications SAP, and ComReg will liaise and assist with this process.

7.2.2 The role of digitalisation in enhancing urban and rural regeneration, supporting development of a network of co-working/remote working hubs and smart cities, towns and villages in the Region, including delivery of the national broadband plan and future communications networks

ComReg understands the importance of digitalisation in enhancing rural and urban regeneration. Ireland's modern digitally connected society and economy is highly dependent on reliable and secure ECN and ECS. They form the backbone of much of Ireland's critical national infrastructure providing connectivity to the essential services upon which citizens rely, such as healthcare providers, energy providers, financial institutions, emergency services and public administration. ComReg is aware that consumer experience is not uniform and that there is a risk of citizens being left behind ("digital divide"). Those living in rural areas are at risk of missing out on the benefits of digitalisation due to the low incentives for commercial rollout in these areas.

Therefore, ComReg aims to create an environment that supports efficient investment and innovation in both fixed and mobile communications markets to support the roll-out of Very High-Capacity Networks (VHCN) to all areas.

On the fixed communications side, ComReg is currently conducting market reviews of various wholesale markets, including the Physical Infrastructure Access market, the Wholesale Local Access (WLA) and Wholesale Central Access (WCA) markets to ensure that there is effective and sustainable competition as far as possible in wholesale markets so that incentive to invest are not dampened.

While ComReg is not responsible for the NBP, as the sector specific NRA, ComReg makes itself available to assist policymakers to design state interventions that complement the market and regulation. ComReg will also continue to consider NBI's impact when carrying out its market analyses. In addition, ComReg also continues to provide technical advice to the Department if required in matters relating to NBI's role and State Aid generally where ComReg has relevant expertise.

On the mobile market side, in the Multi-Band spectrum award (MBSA2) 2022, coverage obligations were included that ensure licence winners must provide:

- 3 Mbit/s to 99% of the population within 3 years and 92% of the geographic area of Ireland within 7 years;
- 30 Mbit/s to 95% of the population, 90% of motorways, and 80% of primary roads within 7 years; and
- 30 Mbit/s service to 345 specific locations within 7 years, consisting of 40 business and technology parks (including "strategic sites"), 65 hospitals, 24 higher education campuses, 14 air and seaports, 160 train and bus stations, and 42 top visitor attraction information points.

These obligations will help to ensure that future communication networks will be provided across Ireland.

7.4 Inland Fisheries Ireland

7.4.1 Progress made on implementation of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 and the Climate Action Plans including decarbonising our energy system, buildings and transport system

Inland Fisheries Ireland has published its Climate Action Roadmap (2023) as required by Government. This document outlines how IFI aims to meet the requirements of the Public Sector Climate Action Mandate and reach its 2030 carbon and energy efficiency targets. In this roadmap, IFI has focused primarily on plans for reducing total energy related emissions and fossil fuel related emissions from relevant operations in line with the targets in the Climate Action Plan 2021-2023 but has also included IFI's unique contribution to water, the environment, biodiversity and climate research and action. IFI's latest Climate Action Plan can be downloaded [here](#).

7.4.2 Progress in accelerating transition to a low carbon and circular economy and society, for more sustainable management of natural resources, and realising blue growth and bioeconomy opportunities

As one of Ireland's core environmental agencies, IFI is committed to leading by example in climate action and sustainability. IFI has the necessary ambition and capacity to deliver and excel on all relevant national obligations under the Climate Action Plan 2023 and associated sustainability-focused initiatives. IFI's progress to date (HERE) highlights the commitment of IFI staff and management to reducing organisational impact on the environment and to maximising sustainability both within and beyond IFI.

The IFI Green Team Network is a critical supporting element in IFI's transition to a low carbon, circular organisation. The network was formed in 2019 to collectively and collaboratively develop ideas and initiatives aimed at addressing the climate and biodiversity emergency and at enhancing sustainability across and beyond the organisation through local actions. IFI Green Teams operate on a local and national level and are critical elements in IFI's journey towards a more sustainable future for all. The IFI Green teams network comprises a total of 49 members. IFI's Green Team members innovate, collaborate, partner and cooperate at a local and national level with a focus on sustainability at all times (natural resource management, decarbonisation and circular economy projects, sustainability campaigns etc.).

Inland Fisheries Ireland is committed to the compliant procurement of goods and services and works in line with best sustainable public procurement practices to maximise carbon reduction and circularity. This is strategically aligned with IFI's Climate Action Roadmap. IFI are working with the OGP to deliver green frameworks as they arise for renewal, and IFI has joined in partnership with BIM Bord Iascaigh Mhara on a project that will see IFI's obsolete (often confiscated as a component of illegal activity) fishing nets collected and recycled. IFI uses the OGP online search tool, which allows users to find, select, and download Green Public Procurement (GPP) criteria relevant to a specific procurement project. In-house sustainable procurement projects include the procurement of over 600 reusable coffee cups, water bottles, anti-microplastics wash bags for IFI workwear and green recycled diaries. IFI has introduced a scoring mechanism when analysing tender submissions based on the green element of their business and product offerings.

Inland Fisheries Ireland operates a fleet of over 200 vehicles. Approximately 70% of IFI's carbon emissions come from fleet. The process of swapping out ICE's (internal combustion-engine vehicles) with electric vehicles is well underway in IFI. In 2022, cumulative saving of 36,860 litres of fuel (when compared with 2021) were achieved in IFI. This saving equated to a 10% reduction in fossil fuel use in 2022 below 2021 levels. Importantly, fuel consumption dropped below 2021 levels from March onwards in 2022 – resulting from IFI 'Ecodriving' campaign and initiatives and the positive impact of additional EVs in IFI's fleet. IFI's EV fleet travelled a total of 336,872km in 2022. IFI added 26 EV charging points to the organisation's EV charging network in 2022. IFI increased EV kilometers driven by IFI staff in the course of their duties by 184% in 2022 (an increase of 126,197 km). IFI completed 9 energy focused projects in 2022. Seven projects were PV installs (bringing the total number of solar PV installations in IFI to 13) and 2 were building retrofits.

In 2023, cumulative saving of 39,947 litres of fuel (when compared with 2022) were achieved in IFI. This saving equated to a 12% reduction in fossil fuel use in 2023 below 2022 levels. 29 Energy focused projects were completed in 2023. 7 of these projects were PV system installations. IFI's EV charging network increase to 36 locations (50 sockets) in 2023. By December 31st, 2023, approximately 448,112.50 kWh had been generated by IFI's Solar PV network nationally. This figure equates to approximately 132,148 KgCO₂e (kg Carbon Dioxide Equivalent) removed from the atmosphere by IFI renewables.

IFI is committed to constant innovation and has designed and developed an innovative national energy monitoring system that allows real-time tracking of carbon emissions throughout IFI's property portfolio. This system enables impactful decision-making and informed management of energy at all IFI properties. This system has also supported targeted energy auditing of high-energy usage locations, and subsequent associated deep and shallow property retrofits.

7.4.3 Progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with agreed national sectoral plans and 2030 targets, and support for undertaking emissions monitoring at a regional and local authority level

Properties

Large and small-scale property retrofits have been completed by IFI. These have included the installation of LED sensor lighting, pumping cavity walls, 50mm insulation slabs for internal wall insulation, open-cell spray foam for attic space insulation, replacement of outdated, inefficient heating systems, and replacement of outdated windows and doors. Work is ongoing in this area with further retrofit works planned for 2024.

Renewables

Inland Fisheries Ireland has delivered a solar PV (photovoltaic) network consisting of 20 systems nationally. The PV systems range in size from 6 kWp up to 50 kWp. IFI has signed up with ESB Networks and Energia as microgeneration partners through the NC7 application process for two of our 50 kWp systems. IFI has also signed up for the green energy export grant scheme for our smaller systems through the NC6 process. The solar systems combined have generated 448,112.50 kWh and avoided 131,745.08 kg of CO₂ going into the atmosphere.

Fleet

The last 3 years saw IFI add 53 electric vehicles to its fleet. IFI is now delivering a decarbonised service with 25% of its fleet. IFI personnel have travelled 1,539,167.69 km in EVs since they first came on fleet in March 2019. IFI has started trialing electric boat engines and has rolled out over 30 electric bicycles to field staff. These e-bikes are used to carry out river, estuary, lake, and coastal patrols. Results - Our most recent figures show that we have seen a 44.5% improvement in energy efficiency from our 2009 baseline; our electricity usage has decreased by 5.7% in comparison to 2021; thermal energy has decreased by 2.8% in comparison to 2021; and transport has decreased by 7.9% in comparison to 2021.

7.4.4 Progress in protecting biodiversity and natural heritage and achieving improved conservation status of protected species and habitats in the Region

Inland Fisheries Ireland's protection and conservation roles relate to all aspects of the aquatic environment and all factors that influence the biotic communities within waters, which in any way relate to the propagation of fish populations. Ireland has more than 70,000 km of rivers and streams and 144,000 ha of lakes, all of which fall under IFI's fisheries management jurisdiction. IFI delivers an environmental remit (water quality, physical habitat) including the areas of biological diversity, sustainability, and heritage. Risk-based coordinated and nationally consistent environmental services maximise IFI's contribution to the sector. Coordinated and nationally consistent risk-based environmental services protect biodiversity and natural heritage and assist in achieving improved conservation status of protected species and habitats in the region in line with the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. IFI Operations and Research Divisions support the development of ecological networks and connectivity between protected sites. Environmental research, investigation, and assessment with associated communication of scientific and evidence-based reporting of outcomes to all is a critical element of IFI's proactive environmental function. IFI have fostered close working relationships with expert peers in sister agencies such as the EPA, the Local Authorities, NPWS, OPW and Waterways Ireland among others. This facilitates significant collaboration with a strategic focus on delivery of IFI's goals and legislative responsibilities. This collaboration also facilitates national delivery (where remit of public authorities overlap and resources allow) of broader environmental goals associated with implementation of the Habitats Directive, the Water Framework Directive, the protection of conservation species and the management of alien species (and other National and European legislative provisions).

Healthy freshwater ecosystems are essential for people and nature. Fish populations are a key component of these ecosystems and a primary barometer of environmental health. Fish populations are critical to the many different types of these ecosystems in Ireland, including rivers, lakes, canals, and other wetlands (e.g., marshes and peatlands). Although freshwaters cover a fraction of Ireland's landmass, they support rich biodiversity and provide ecosystem services to people, such as clean water, amenity value and flood protection, that are disproportionate to their size. They are also important for maintaining a stable climate (riparian zones and wetlands act as a national carbon pool). Biodiversity underpins EU and global food security. Biodiversity loss risks puts our food systems and nutrition at risk. Biodiversity loss is intrinsically linked to and exacerbates climate change (EU, 2020). Inland Fisheries Ireland delivers a public service that aligns with national biodiversity protection priorities encompassing the 'mainstreaming' biodiversity into decision making across all sectors (IFI's formal planning and advocacy role); strengthening the knowledge base for environmental conservation (IFI's research division); increasing awareness and appreciation of biodiversity and ecosystem services (IFI's education and outreach); conserving and restoring biodiversity and ecosystem services in the wider countryside (IFI's operations, research and habitat restoration programmes); the marine environment (IFI's protection and research role at sea); expanding and improving management of protected areas and species (IFI's role in integrated catchment management).

7.4.5 Progress on implementation of the Water Framework Directive in achieving and maintaining at least 'good water status' for all water bodies in the Region and for mitigation of threats to 'At Risk' waterbodies, including delivery of wastewater facilities in the Region and guidance for achieving appropriate riparian setbacks from water bodies

Inland Fisheries Ireland has been assigned the responsibility by the EPA of delivering the fish monitoring requirements of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) in Ireland. IFI is a fisheries-focused environmental agency, the principal functions of which are enshrined in Section 7 of the Inland Fisheries Act, 2010 (to promote, support, facilitate and advise the Minister on the protection, conservation, management, marketing, development, and improvement of inland fisheries, including sea angling). IFI is represented at Tiers 1, 2 and 3 within the WFD governance framework. IFI welcomes collaboration with all others in this field - positive and proactive engagement with other sectors, organisations and stakeholders that interact with the water environment is critical in order to deliver improved outcomes with regard to WFD policy, decision making and implementation at a national, regional and local level.

By way of background, the EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) requires all Member States to protect and improve water quality in all waters so that we achieve good ecological status by 2015 or, at the latest, by 2027. Ecological status is based on the composition and abundance of biological quality elements including fish and is applied to rivers, lakes, groundwater, and transitional coastal waters. IFI were assigned the responsibility of undertaking the fish monitoring programme for the WFD by the EPA in 2006 and since then have been carrying out the national fish surveillance monitoring programme in rivers, lakes and transitional waters. In 2020, IFI entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) designed to support the fish monitoring requirements of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and associated activities; this MOU is supported by funding from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Department.

A key step in the WFD process is for EU Member States to assess the health of their surface waters through national monitoring programmes. Classification tools are the main instruments used to classify the status (High, Good, Moderate, Poor, or Bad) of each water body (section of a river or other surface water). Once each country has determined the current status of their water bodies, ongoing monitoring helps to track the effectiveness of measures needed to clean up water bodies and achieve good status. IFI staff provide advice and data in various forms to the DHLGH, the Department, state agencies, stakeholders, and colleagues in support of riverine restoration.

The recent (2020) River Restoration Works - Science based Guidance centred on Hydromorphological Principles in an Era of Climate Change, an IFI publication (IFISH), outlined a phased approach to planning and design of river restoration works. Its principles provide an assurance that projects are sustainable, resilient and include climate proofing protocols, and achieve restoration objectives without causing detrimental ecological impacts. This range of research programmes provide the evidence base to support the rationale for riverine restoration and are used to monitor achievement of restoration goals.

As part of Ireland's Water Framework Directive (WFD) deliverables Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) has been tasked by DHLGH with delivering on a suite of tasks, focused on riverine connectivity, in the context of the Water Framework Directive. The DHLGH invited IFI to undertake a series of investigations concerning barriers issues and to develop plans and protocols in preparation for WFD third cycle implementation. The funding support received has enabled IFI to undertake a 4-year National Barriers Programme (NBP) programme (2018 – 2021). IFI's NBP created has succeeded in the development of an IFI Barrier Assessment and Screening Tool (I-BAST), which will now be used on an all-island basis. The I_BAST associated geodatabase consists of 73,055 structures of which 21,376 have been assessed by the end of 2020 and 5,482 are classified as a barrier to fish migration. This dataset will facilitate the prioritisation of barrier removal and mitigation decisions to maximise restoration gains.

The Environmental Riverine Enhancement Programme (EREP) is a collaborative research programme funded by the Office of Public Works (OPW) and managed by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI). The EREP evolved from previous joint research efforts between the two state agencies to understand the impacts of arterial drainage maintenance on the river corridor, its habitat and biota including fish. Initial research was undertaken in the 1990s as part of the Environmental Drainage Maintenance (EDM) studies. This work formed the basis for the current OPW guidance and training on environmentally friendly maintenance measures and river enhancement. Since 2008, the EREP has been developing knowledge and datasets for channelised river catchments, with baseline monitoring at a catchment-wide scale and specific scientific studies conducted at a reach-scale. Underpinning all EREP activities is the Water Framework Directive (WFD) with the requirement to improve the ecological quality of watercourses and achieve "good status". Particular emphasis has been placed on hydromorphology as a relevant element of the EREP, focussing on lateral and longitudinal connectivity, as well as the morphological conditions of the instream and riparian zones. River restoration is not just about restoring "hydromorphology" it is also concerned with restoring water quality - IFI's WFD and other programmes provide advice and data to support a range of initiatives directed at improving water quality. The Catchment Care (2018 to 2022) is an EU Interreg funded project set up is to establish cross-border river restoration projects which will contribute to achieving good water quality status through the implementation of catchment restoration actions, capacity building in conjunction with local communities and the provision of a platform for cross-border knowledge exchange between community, regional and national stakeholders.

IFI's guideline document 'Planning for Watercourses in the Urban Environment' outlines an integrated watercourse protection strategy, developed by us in consultation with a wide range of experts in the area. The strategy adopts a simple four-step approach to watercourse protection planning. Implementation of this strategy should not only protect watercourses and their associated riparian zones in urban areas, but also provide other benefits important for the well-being of people living nearby. This guidance document aims to support planning processes which address predicted Climate Change impacts associated with water (Climate Change Adaptation) and encourages greater CO2 sequestration along watercourses (Climate Change Mitigation).

7.4.6 Please provide a summary of the funding programmes administered by your Department (or agency under the aegis of your Department), over the last two years, which have been awarded within the Southern Region with the following details requested

The Salmon and Sea Trout Rehabilitation, Conservation and Protection Fund (SSTRCPF) is generated from the sale of salmon and sea trout angling and commercial fishing licences, which represents a major contribution by licence holders to the rehabilitation, conservation and protection of these fish species. The SSTRCPF is administered by Inland Fisheries Ireland. In the past 2 years approximately €2 million of funding has been awarded to projects around the country. The funding awarded in the SRA area in 2022 and 2023 is listed below:

Programme	County	Project Ref	Project Name	Description	Amount Awarded/€	Stage
SSTRCPF	Limerick	SCF-22-0141	Riddlestown Stream Rehabilitation	River habitat restoration project	16,590	Decommitted
SSTRCPF	Limerick	SCF-22-0142	Annacotty weir fish passage improvement works-Planning	Design and planning stage for fish passage mitigation at Annacotty Weir	99,481	Delivery
SSTRCPF	Cork	SCF-22-0147	Bandon River at Desert Bridge, Murragh, Co. Cork feasibility study	Feasibility study for habitat improvement on the Bandon River at Desert Bridge, Murragh, Co. Cork	3,272	Complete
SSTRCPF	Cork	SCF-22-0148	Kilcoleman Fishery Habitat Enhancement Project on Bandon River	Fishery habitat enhancement project on Bandon River	9,225	Complete
SSTRCPF	Wexford	SCF-22-0152	Solosboro Fishing Club-Habitat Improvement Works/Bank	Habitat improvement works/bank protection	70,000	Design

			Protection using soft engineering methods	using soft engineering methods		
SSTRCPF	Wexford	SCF-22-0153	Pallas Weir-Rock Ramp Fish Pass	Design and planning stage for fish passage mitigation at Pallas Weir	30,000	Delivery
SSTRCPF	Clare	SCF-23-0184	Doonbeg Riparian Planting	Tree planting in the riparian zone along the Doonbeg river	16,688	Design
SSTRCPF	Cork	SCF-23-0185	Bantry Bay Sea Trout Study	Baseline survey to catalogue the status of salmonids in the rivers that drain into Bantry Bay	140,000	Delivery
SSTRCPF	Clare	SCF-23-0187	Riparian Restoration-Inchiquin to Corofin	Creation of riparian buffer zones to keep livestock and pollutants out of the river Fergus and its tributaries.	26,036	Design
SSTRCPF	Kerry	SCF-23-0199	Tyshe River Fishery Habitat Improvements.	River habitat restoration project.	18,000	Design

7.5 National Oil Reserve Agency (NORA)

NORA continues to pursue its energy saving targets through participation in SEAI's system for Energy Monitoring and Reporting. In 2022 NORA has met its Public Body Energy Management obligations set out in S.I. No. 426/2014. In December 2019 NORA moved its head office to an LEED accredited designed building with a BER rating of B1.

NORA is responsible for the administration of Ireland's Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (RTFO) Scheme (formerly known as the Biofuels Obligation Scheme) and for the assessment of compliance of obligated parties with the provisions of Article 7(a) of the Fuel Quality Directive (FQD) as set out in S.I. 160 (2017).

The Agency works closely on an ongoing basis with all key stakeholders, in particular,

- The Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications.
- The Department of Transport.
- The downstream Oil and Biofuels industries.
- All parties obligated under legislation associated with the BOS, the EU Renewable Energy Directive (RED) and the Fuel Quality Directive (FQD)

In the development and implementation of key policies promoting the use and further development of renewable fuels in transport, the reduction of carbon emissions and promoting high levels of compliance with prevailing legislation.

As part of NORA's remit as set out under National Oil Reserves Agency (Amendment) and Provision of Central Treasury Services Act 2020, NORA makes a significant financial contribution to the Climate Action Fund (CAF) on an ongoing and annual basis. In 2023, NORA contributed €80 million to the Climate Action Fund. For the period 2021 – 2025, NORA expects to contribute a total of c. €470 million to the Climate Action Fund.

7.6 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

7.6.1 Progress made on implementation of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 and the Climate Action Plans including decarbonising our energy system, buildings and transport system

The EPA's Strategic Plan 2022-2026 recognises the need to lead by example to reduce our energy usage and carbon emissions with a commitment to reduce our carbon emissions by 30% by 2026. Significant effort and capital investment have been made in recent years to reduce energy consumption and to use renewable energy sources where possible.

Key achievements in the past year include:

- Carbon reporting supported by improved data processes
- 3-year rolling energy plan established for reducing energy
- LED lighting projects complete in HQ (39tn CO2e predicted savings)
- LED lighting project advanced in McCumiskey House (9tn CO2e predicted savings)
- Solar PV upgrade commenced for all EPA locations, including Cork (105tn CO2e overall predicted savings)

We continue to maintain an Environmental Management System certified to ISO 14001:2015 Standard which allows us to identify and mitigate any impacts on the environment as a result of our activities.

7.6.2 Progress in accelerating transition to a low carbon and circular economy and society, for more sustainable management of natural resources, and realising blue growth and bioeconomy opportunities

The EPA's environmental management programme encompasses the circular economy in areas such as Green Public Procurement and reuse and recycling of furniture in all capital and refurbishment projects. While our impact on blue growth is limited based on our activities, we have ongoing actions to conserve water and have a number of ongoing projects such as reductions in sample sizes for analysis (reducing plastic), waterless urinals and rainwater harvesting. Water usage is monitored by monthly meter readings.

7.6.3 Progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with agreed national sectoral plans and 2030 targets, and support for undertaking emissions monitoring at a regional and local authority level

As mentioned in point 1, our recent Strategic Plan recognises the need to lead by example to reduce our energy usage and carbon emissions with a commitment to reduce our carbon emissions by 30 per cent by 2026.

Significant effort and capital investment have been made over the years to reduce carbon and energy consumption and to use renewable energy sources where possible, underpinned by regular monitoring and reporting. Between 2010 and 2023, we continued to further reduce our energy consumption through a range of methods including, improving our overall energy management practices, the energy performance of lighting systems (switch to LED lighting), Solar PV panel design (planned for installation in 2024) and the performance of our vehicle fleet by incorporating plugin hybrid and fully electric vehicles.

Total carbon emissions arising from the EPA's activities in 2022 were 1,142.89 tonnes of CO2 equivalent, which is 37% lower than the chosen base period of 2016-2018 (1,826.84 tCO2e) and 20% higher than 2021 (962.92 tCO2e). The largest carbon emissions were generated from Scope 3 activities accounting for 34% of total carbon emissions with Scope 1 accounting for a 23% or slightly less than a quarter of our emissions. The increase in 2022 is more reflective of post pandemic levels, but is still a significant decrease from the baseline level.

7.6.4 Progress in protecting biodiversity and natural heritage and achieving improved conservation status of protected species and habitats in the Region

There are recognised synergies between protecting biodiversity and actions to prevent and adapt to climate change. We are committed to enhancing biodiversity at our offices with the aim of ensuring that our footprint on biodiversity is not negative and ideally presents a net gain. The high-level plan is to ensure that we manage 50% of our available green spaces for biodiversity, which is applicable across all EPA locations.

The role of biodiversity in staff well-being initiatives is also being enhanced through the plan. This includes the establishment of outdoor meeting areas for staff, woodland walk areas, biodiversity walks and talks. Butterfly, bird and bee monitoring, installation of swift boxes, wildlife planting and increased native planting have also been carried out at EPA locations to enhance, preserve, and protect biodiversity at the EPA. Our local Green Teams are leading the implementation of the biodiversity activities.

8. Please provide details of any policy initiatives/developments that have been finalised or are in preparatory stages that support the objectives of the RSES

8.1 National Broadband Plan

The Local Authority Funding Scheme (LAFS) was established by the Digital Connectivity Office (DCO) of the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications in 2022.

The purpose of the scheme is to ensure that local authorities (LAs) process licence applications for the deployment of fibre in a timely manner, which is vital to boosting the overall timeframe of the rollout of the National Broadband Plan.

The total funding for this scheme is €6 million over three years, for distribution among the 31 LAs and the Road Management Office (RMO). Details of the breakdown of funding was provided to all LAs and the RMO. The amount of funding for each LA is comprised of a base rate of €30,000 per annum combined with a ratio amount based on the number of premises within the LA area that form part of the NBP Intervention Area. The scheme runs from September to August for each of the three years. Funding for years 1 (2022-2023) and 2 (2023-2024) has been drawn down by all 31 local authorities and the Road Management Office.

As part of the funding scheme, the DCO established regional local authority engagement fora, which involves regional meetings with all LAs from each of the three regions. By the end of 2023, three sets of regional meetings took place in the Southern, North Western, and Eastern and Midlands regions, with high levels of engagement from all stakeholders. Further meetings are due to take place across all regions throughout 2024, with the fourth regional meeting for the Southern region scheduled for Friday, 26 April in Cork.

These meetings serve as an open forum, with all stakeholders provided an opportunity to raise points for discussion.

There have been some positive outcomes as a result of the issues raised at these meetings, including securing collective agreement with a range of stakeholders and subsequently arranging for the issuing of formal, written clarifications to all local authorities regarding timelines for processing section 254 licence applications and related payment arrangements, in order to assist with ensuring a clear, harmonised and consistent approach.

8.2 National Dialogue on Climate Action

The National Dialogue on Climate Action (NDCA) promotes and supports widespread public and stakeholder engagement on climate action, with the goal of empowering everyone in society to actively participate in the climate transition.

The Climate Conversations 2023 ran for eight weeks from June-September. More than 4,000 people took part in the online survey. We also held 12 workshops with groups who are vulnerable to the transition to carbon neutrality, or who are not yet taking part in the climate debate. We did 18 in-depth interviews with people across society who have taken on new and effective climate action projects.

On 26 October 2023, the National Dialogue on Climate Action (NDCA) team held a webinar where the initial results of this year's Climate Conversations (CC23) were presented by Ipsos. The findings suggest that:

- Awareness of climate change is high, most participants view it as important and are worried about it, but also feel that it is happening somewhere else, to someone else, and lies in the future
- Many feel that taking individual climate action is for people with money living in urban centres
- The language used in discussions on climate is too complex and needs to be made clearer
- People need help in making specific plans to take climate action and these plans are different for different sectors and different populations
- Engaging communities and networks is the most effective way to support people more broadly in taking climate action

The Department hosted the second National Youth Assembly on Climate with DCEDIY in March 2023. 50 youth delegates from across Ireland took part and gave recommendations on what they would like to see implemented as Government policy. The recommendations focused on three key areas, sustainable transport, the circular economy and communication, engagement, and climate literacy. The summary report from the day is available to view on [Gov.ie](https://gov.ie).

Two National Climate Stakeholder Forums were held in 2023 with over 300 attendees across the Forums. A wide range of stakeholders from policy makers, interest groups, agencies, local authorities, the eNGO sector, community and voluntary groups, and academics participated in each Forum with the second of the two focusing on how engagement with people across the country can be enhanced to support taking climate action.

In 2024 the National Dialogue on Climate Action will deliver an enhanced programme focused on:

- Increasing awareness of climate change based on evidence through a whole of Government communications programme
- Delivering an inclusive programme of engagement at the national, regional, and community level to empower people to take climate action
- Coordinating whole of Government governance structures to support the effective delivery of the climate communications and engagement programme
- Delivering robust systems to measure climate action at all levels

8.3 Development of a new National Adaptation Framework

The current National Adaptation Framework (NAF) was published in 2018. A primary objective of the NAF is to bring a clear and strong focus to both the challenges and the opportunities of transitioning to a climate resilient future, and the importance of a positively focussed and cost-effective national transition agenda. The NAF sets out Ireland's strategy for the application of adaptation measures across Government sectors and the local authority sector to reduce the vulnerability of the State to the negative effects of climate change and also to avail of any positive effects that may occur.

Action 455 of CAP 2021 and the provisions of the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act (the Climate Act) required that a review of the NAF be undertaken in 2022. The review of the NAF examined key developments at national, EU and international level that have arisen since the original NAF was published and recommended the development of a new NAF.

Following on from the Review, CAP23 included Action AD/23/2 which required a draft NAF to be developed in 2023 to integrate policy changes that had taken place at national, EU and International level as well as recommendations of the Climate Change Advisory Council (CCAC). This draft will be subject to public consultation in early 2024. A revised draft NAF reflecting submissions received as part of the consultation will then be submitted to Government for approval. Following approval by the Government, the new NAF and any requirements set out in it will replace the existing 2018 NAF.

The new NAF will take account of adaptation developments at International and EU level along with adaptation progress and legislative changes in Ireland since 2018 including relevant changes affecting the local authority sector. Following approval of the NAF relevant Government Departments will begin work on a series of new sectoral adaptation plans which will be due for completion in 2025.

8.4 EU Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change

The EU Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change focuses on supporting EU regions, cities and local authorities in their efforts to build resilience against the impacts of climate change. The Mission's objective is to accompany by 2030 at least 150 European regions and communities towards climate resilience.

The Mission contributes to delivery of the EU Adaptation Strategy by helping the regions and local authorities to:

- Better understand the climate risks that they are and will be confronted with in the future
- Develop their pathways to be better prepared and cope with the changing climate
- Test and deploy on the ground innovative solutions needed to build resilience to climate change.

To date 308 regions and local authorities across Europa have signed up to the Mission Charter under the EU Mission for Adaptation to Climate Change. This includes 7 local authorities in Ireland. Louth, Mayo, Offaly and Sligo County Councils, as well as Cork, Dublin and Galway City Councils, have signed the mission charter and pledged to develop adaptation and mitigation strategies. This entitles them to expert advice and guidance through the Mission Implementation Platform and to access funding for innovation activities and pilot projects. Enterprise Ireland is the National Contact Point for the adaptation mission in Ireland.

8.5 Offshore

The work by the Department on ORE supports progression of the following Regional Policy Objectives (RPOs) from the RSES:

- RPO 76 Marine Economy
- RPO 77 Maritime Spatial planning – consistency and alignment
- RPO 78 First Mover under the NMPF
- RPO 80 Marine Resource and Blue Economy
- RPO 85 Renewable Offshore Energy
- RPO 87 Low Carbon Energy Future
- RPO 90 Regional Decarbonisation
- RPOs 95-100 for Renewable Energy Generation, Offshore Wind Energy and Grid Connectivity
- RPOs 219-224 for Renewable Energy Infrastructure and Transmission Networks.

8.5.1 Draft South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan (DMAP)

The draft DMAP for the South Coast is in preparation and will undergo public consultation in 2024. Once finalised, this will be Ireland's first DMAP and will support the plan-led development of offshore renewable energy in line with the National Marine Planning Framework and RPO 77 (Maritime Spatial planning - Consistency and Alignment) and RPO 78 (First Mover under the National Marine Planning Framework) within the RSES.

8.5.2 Interconnection

One of the key aspects of Ireland's new policy on electricity interconnection is the development of the Offshore Transmission Strategy. It is planned for a state directed approach with an Offshore Transmission Strategy (OTS) to set out Ireland's emergent interconnector cable needs.

To deliver the optimal amount of interconnection, in the right places at the right times, moving to an enhanced integrated forward planning approach is necessary and this is why the OTS will align with further forward planning such as the Future Framework for Offshore Wind and the National Industrial Strategy on Offshore Wind (NISOW), also with terrestrial and international grid planning.

It is intended to draw together the strategic forward planning strands into an Offshore Transmission Strategy to be coherent and coordinated with the Future Framework and NISOW. The Strategy will evolve in a 5-year cycle (with a 20-year horizon) to manage contingent and emergent nature of process. It will convert the policy requirements into specific goals. Ireland's Offshore Transmission Strategy is currently being developed with a draft copy to be ready for March 2024. This work will support RPOs 95-100 for Renewable Energy Generation, Offshore Wind Energy and Grid Connectivity as well as RPO 219-224 for Renewable Energy Infrastructure and Transmission Networks within the RSES.

8.6 Bioeconomy

The Bioeconomy Action Plan 2023 – 2025, developed in partnership between the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, was published in October 2023. This Plan supports a number of objectives of the RSES, specifically:

- RPO57: National Policy Statement on Bioeconomy
- RPO58: Bioeconomy and Rural Areas
- RPO59: National Bioeconomy Hub in Lisheen.

The Action Plan is set out in to 33 actions, with multiple steps to achieve these, in support of growing Ireland's bioeconomy. Many of the actions and steps are relevant to the Region, with several coalescing beneath one of the seven main pillars – Pillar 5: Communities, Regions and Cities. Under this pillar, the Plan recognizes that the development of bioeconomy policy has progressed at a central and regional level. It aims to build on this development, for example under Actions 5.1 and 5.2:

- Action 5.1: Advance bioeconomy governance in cities, regional assemblies, Local Authorities
- Action 5.2: Co-create needs driven regional and local bioeconomy development linked to regional enterprise and regional skills

Reflecting the cross-sectoral nature of the bioeconomy, the responsibility for the implementation of these actions sits with a number of parent departments, such as the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; supported by agencies and stakeholders such as the Local Government Management Agency, and the Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs).

8.7 SEAI Support Schemes-Energy Efficiency and Reducing Carbon Emissions

Through the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications funds several support schemes and support initiatives for the public and commercial sectors, which can assist these sectors in increasing their energy efficiency and lowering their carbon emissions.

A summary of the existing support schemes is set out below:

- Support Scheme for Energy Audits (SSEA) - Supports SMEs (€2,000 voucher) to carry out professional energy audits and thus encourages implementation of energy saving measures identified.
- Large Industry Energy Network (LIEN) - SEAI assists the companies on energy improvements. Best practice guidance is shared among LIEN members on how to manage energy performance.
- Excellence in Energy Efficiency Design (EXEED) - A certified program for a systematic energy efficient approach to design, construction, and commissioning new investments and upgrades at the earliest stages of the business lifecycle. It is open to both business and public sector.
- Support Scheme for Renewable Heat (SSRH) - A grant (of up to 30%) to support investment in renewable heating systems using heat pumps. An operational support tariff over 15 years for new installations or installations that currently use a fossil fuel heating system and convert to using biomass or anaerobic digestion heating systems.
- Non-Domestic Microgen Scheme - Provides financial assistance to help businesses and other sectors to install solar PV panels to generate electricity on site. Grants are available for systems up to a maximum of €2,400 for installations of up to 6kWp.
- Energy Academy – This online resource which provides access to high quality energy training.
- The Public Sector Energy Efficiency Programme is an energy management and advisory programme which supports public bodies in achieving its energy targets. These targets are currently being reviewed by the Public Sector Working Group under the Heat and Built Environment Taskforce. Two EU Directives, the Energy Efficiency Directive (entered into effect in October 2023) and the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (estimated to come into effect in Q1 2024), will be the main drivers of Ireland’s targets out to 2030 and beyond.

The programme offers comprehensive support and engagement to guide public bodies in reaching their targets focussing on capacity building and energy management principles, which are low cost means of delivering energy efficiency improvements.

- The Public Sector Pathfinder Retrofit programme is a capital support programme co-funded by the Department and administered by the SEAI. The Programme is aimed at testing retrofit approaches, building capacity, and developing a scalable model that can be replicated across the wider public sector including schools. The participating partners are - the Department of Education, Higher Education Authority, Further Education and Training, Office of Public Works, the HSE, and the Local Authority sector.
- Energy Contracting Support Scheme - Energy Contracting Support Scheme provides supports and expertise across the business and public sectors to deliver energy efficiency through Energy Performance Contracts (EPCs), Local Energy Supply Contracts (LESCs) and Energy Performance Guarantees (EPGs).

SEAI provide information and advisory services to businesses and public sector bodies including briefings, workshops, workplace resources, access to energy auditing services and case studies of best practice.

8.8 Sustainable Development Goals

Ireland's Second Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) National Implementation Plan (NIP) was published in October 2022. The SDG NIP sets out the overarching national governance, coordination and monitoring framework for the SDGs and highlights the importance of the RSES which reflect Ireland's commitment to Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. As the regional tier of the national planning process, the RSES ensures coordination between the City and County Development Plans (CCDP) and the Local Economic and Community Plans (LECP). Strategic Objective 1 and 2 of the NIP aim to embed and integrate the SDGs into work across all levels of Government, better support the localisation of the SDGs and to achieve greater Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development.

9. Please provide a summary of the funding programmes administered by your Department (or agency under the aegis of your Department), over the last two years, which have been awarded within the Southern Region with the following details requested

9.1 National Broadband Plan Local Authority Funding Scheme

National Broadband Local Authority Funding Scheme (LAFS) – Southern Region						
Funding Programme	County / Local Authority	Project Name and Description	Amount Awarded (€) 2022	Amount Awarded (€) 2023	Amount Awarded to Date	Stage of Project
NBP Local Authority Funding Scheme	Carlow	Please see response to Question 9 above.	45,200	45,200	90,400	Funding Year 2
	Clare		72,000	72,000	144,000	
	Cork - City		30,500	30,500	61,000	
	Cork - County		176,700	176,700	353,400	
	Kerry		79,900	79,900	159,800	
	Kilkenny		64,100	64,100	128,200	
	Limerick		69,400	69,400	138,800	
	Tipperary		85,300	85,300	170,600	
	Waterford		58,100	58,100	116,200	
	Wexford		72,000	72,000	144,000	
	Totals		€753,200	€753,200	€1,506,400	

9.2 Climate Action Modelling Group

There is a 5-year contract agreement in place with University College Cork to provide the Department with research and modelling in areas relating to energy demand, consumption and supply, as part of the wider Climate Action Modelling Group which comprises a number of contracts with external research and modelling organisations.

The amount awarded is €4,014,763 (ex. VAT).

We are currently entering the second year of a five-year contract arrangement.

9.3 The Support Scheme for Renewable Heat

The SSRH (shortly explained under Question 1) managed by the SEAI supports businesses to decarbonize by providing investment aid or operational support. The funding to these projects is available nationwide. Details of the individual projects are not available to shared.

9.4 EU Just Transition Fund

The EU Just Transition Fund was launched in April 2023. This Fund represents a culmination of efforts at European, national, regional, and local level to support those impacted by Ireland's transition towards a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy.

It aims to support the economic transition of the designated Territory in the Midlands, which includes the municipal districts of Carrick on Suir and Thurles in County Tipperary. Up to €169 million is committed to the Territory until 2027.

The programme, which is being managed by the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly, is being delivered in cooperation with a number of different Departments and Agencies, focused on three priorities:

1. Generating employment for former peat communities by investing in the diversification of the local economy by supporting productive investments in enterprise, SMEs and community actions, focusing on sectors and activities which can address the economic challenge of the transition.
2. The restoration and rehabilitation of degraded peatlands and the regeneration and repurposing of industrial heritage assets to enable the transition towards climate-neutrality.
3. Providing former peat communities with smart and sustainable mobility options to enable them to benefit directly from the green transition.

Currently under this Fund, up to €71 million is available in open funding calls.

9.5 National Recovery and Resilience Fund, via the Climate Action Fund

The National Recovery and Resilience Fund amounts to €108 million, with counties including Kilkenny and Tipperary. The project is currently in year 3, with further details on progress included in section 4.1.

9.6 Circular Economy

Funding Programme	County Project name & Description	Amount Awarded	Stage of project
Elimination of Single Use Plastics at events	Limerick – <i>Guide for Plastic Free Events</i> This Guide, was developed through a collaborative project between the Southern Waste Management Planning Office (Limerick) and Native Events, to provide a comprehensive resource tailored for the event and festival industry in Ireland.	35,639.25	Due for completion Q1 2024
Elimination of Single Use Plastics (SUP) at events	Limerick – <i>Pilot SUP-free events x 4</i> This project, used to inform the development of the guide above, had the dual purpose of providing practical experience in implementing reuse systems and feedback from event organisers, bar operators and the general public to inform future work in this area. The project included one pilot event in Waterford – use of re-usable items at the Waterford Food Festival ‘Park after Dark’	32,001.53	Complete
Circular Economy Innovation Grant Scheme (CEIGS)	Cork - <i>Cork Urban Soil Project.</i> The Cork Urban Soil Project is a model of a circular food system Organic waste from local food businesses is composted to then grow plants which support urban growing initiatives.	48,630.00	Complete
CEIGS	Waterford - <i>GIY Wasted</i> A scalable, national, data-driven food waste education programme for chefs and food service teams (based on the EPA’s food recovery hierarchy with a closed loop approach).	50,000.00	Complete
CEIGS	Cork - <i>Verifact -</i> Verifact proposed to provide ICT services to the net purchasing and manufacturing supply chain giving full traceability of the product from manufacturer through to users to become raw material for fashion items. Verifact provided the verification to consumers through smart labelling on the	50,000.00	Complete

	items to confirm the origin and history of the raw material.		
CEIGS	Clare - CLDC - Repurposing windfarm blades to create walking trail infrastructure and outdoor furniture	49,692.00	Ongoing
CEIGS	Wexford - Saltrock Dairy An expansion plan to develop facilities to supply local foodservice and retail shops with a refillable system which will eliminate plastic and tetrapak waste from milk supply to these businesses and in doing so to develop a business model that can be replicated across the country by micro dairies in localised areas.	42,455.00	Ongoing

9.7 Research Projects Awards to organisations in the Southern Region

Please refer to Appendix 1 for funding awarded to research projects in the Southern Region.

9.8 Climate Action Fund (CAF)

The Climate Action Fund (CAF) was established on a statutory basis, with effect from 1 August 2020, on the commencement of the National Oil Reserves Agency (Amendment) and Provision of Treasury Services Act, 2020. A key objective of the Fund is to provide support for projects, initiatives and research that contribute to the achievement of Ireland’s climate and energy targets, that increase climate resilience and GHG removals in the State and for projects and initiatives in regions of the State, and within sectors of the economy, impacted by the transition to a low carbon economy. Support may also be provided for certain nature-based projects that enhance biodiversity and which also contribute to climate action.

As set out in the NDP 1, at least €500 million is expected to accrue to fund over the period to 2027 ensuring that substantial funding will be available to fund a series of projects, initiatives, and research.

To date, funding from the Climate Action Fund has been committed as follows:

9.8.1 Climate Action Fund First Call

In 2018, approval in principle issued for 7 projects valued at almost €77 million. Five of these projects are in delivery with the remaining two continuing to progress through the project validation stage. Of these seven, the projects relevant in whole, or in part, to the Southern Assembly Region are set out in the Table below.

9.8.2 Climate Action Fund Second Funding Round

Budget 2023 included the announcement of several project to be funded by the Climate Action Fund, two of which include funding that has been awarded within the Southern Region. Respectively, these projects seek to increase the use of renewable energy in the school sector and further improve access and decarbonisation of the public transport system.

9.8.3 Creative Climate Action

Creative Ireland, in collaboration with the Department, are now delivering the second phase of Creative Climate Action, Creative Climate Action Fund II – Agents for Change, a competitive fund of circa €5 million supported by the Climate Action Fund and the Creative Ireland Programme. Creative Climate Action will fund projects that can meaningfully connect people with the profound changes that are happening in our environment, society and economy arising from climate change, and can transform that connection into behaviour change or climate action. The contribution from the Climate Action Fund for this phase is approx. €2.5 million. The approved projects address a range of climate matters including sustainable farming, energy efficiency, GHG reduction and sustainable consumption. There is a mix of local authority-led projects and projects led by community groups, collectives and other organisations. A list of successful projects relevant, in whole or in part, to the Southern Assembly region is included in the Table below.

9.8.4 Community Climate Action Programme

The Climate Action Fund Community Climate Action Programme is a national programme that was launched by the Department on 10 November 2021. Under this programme €61.5 million from the Climate Action Fund will be invested in community climate action projects and initiatives, as well as capacity building, over the next three years. The overall aim of this Programme is to support and empower communities to shape and build low carbon, sustainable communities in a coherent way to contribute to national climate and energy targets.

Phase 1 involves the allocation of an initial €30 million for two strands of the Programme. Under Strand 1 €24 million is being provided to all local authorities to support communities, large and small, rural and urban, to build low carbon communities in a considered and structured way. Each local authority has received an allocation under this programme, including an equal portion of 12% of the overall programme funding for administrative purposes, which can be used towards the cost of a dedicated resource for the programme who is referred to as the Community Climate Action Officer (CCAO). This programme opened in December 2023 for applications from community groups. As the projects have not yet been selected this funding has not yet been received by the Local Authorities. However CCAOs are now in place across the country and may be contacted for further information about the programme.

A further €3 million is being provided from the Shared Island Fund to support cross-border² and all-island³ community climate action initiatives as an integrated part of strand 1 of the Community Climate Action Programme – referred to as strand 1a. This competitive fund will be available to support projects proposed by any of the 31 Local Authorities in Ireland.

Under Strand 2 of the Community Climate Action Programme a total of €6 million will be provided from the Climate Action Fund to build community capacity in relation to climate action. €1 million of this has already been allocated to the Creative Climate Action Fund, and the remaining €5 million has been allocated for an open call for projects and initiatives that facilitate community climate action through education, capacity building and learning by doing, which is being run by Pobal on behalf of the Department. Successful projects under Pobal were announced on 26th of October 2022. A list of successful projects relevant, in whole or in part, to the Southern Assembly region is included in the Table below.

Under Strand 2 of the CCAP a further additional €1.5 million was committed from the CAF for the second phase of the Creative Climate Action programme, with projects approved for funding in July 2023. A list of successful projects relevant, in whole or in part, to the Southern Assembly region is included in the Table below.

9.8.5 EU LIFE Programme 2021 Co-financing Grant Scheme

The Climate Action Fund LIFE Programme 2021 Co-financing Grant Scheme was launched in October 2021 to provide support, by way of co-financing from the Climate Action Fund, for LIFE Standard Action Projects, which are successful in securing funding under the EU LIFE Programme 2021 and which, in addition, met the criteria for funding from the Climate Action Fund. Approval-in-principle, valued at just under €4 million in total, issued in November 2021, to seven successful applicants. However, only one applicant was successful in securing funding under the EU Life Programme 2021. This project is valued at over €1 million.

9.8.6 Climate Action Fund Projects

Please refer to Appendix 2 for funding awarded to projects in the Southern Region.

² Cross-border projects involve projects that are both north and south of the border.

³ All-island projects are broader than cross-border projects and could involve multiple projects across Ireland.

10. Conclusion

We trust that the Southern Regional Assembly will find this information useful during the preparation of the Monitoring Report. Department officials can make themselves available for a discussion on any matters raised in this report or any other matters within the remit of the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications relevant to the preparation of this Monitoring Report.

Please direct any requests for further consultation to PlanningNotifications@decc.gov.ie

Yours sincerely,

Planning Advisory Division

Department of Environment, Climate and Communications

Encl.

1. Appendix 1 Research Projects Awards to organisations in the Southern Region
2. Appendix 2 Climate Action Fund Projects
3. EirGrid Response
4. Geological Survey Ireland (GSI) Response
5. Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) Response

Appendix 1 Research Projects Awards to organisations in the Southern Region

Call Year Awarded	Funding Programme	County	Lead Organisation	Project Name and Description	Amount Awarded (€)	Stage of Project
2022	SEAI National Energy Research Development and Demonstration (RD&D) Funding Programme	Cork	Munster Technological University (MTU)	<p>Investigation of PV Energy Optimisation for self-consumption (InVEST).</p> <p>The InVEST project will put the building occupier to the forefront of the research to understand their electricity use pattern, how they can maximise solar PV electricity use.</p>	€643,994.00	Active
2022	SEAI National Energy Research Development and Demonstration (RD&D) Funding Programme	Cork	University College Cork (UCC)	<p>IDEA-IRL (Integrated Design of floating wind Arrays Ireland).</p> <p>The objective of the IDEA-IRL project is to accelerate the sustainable development of Floating Offshore Wind Arrays (FOWA) both domestically and internationally. This will be achieved by building upon key background knowledge and by coordinating and leveraging of the</p>	€646,936.00	Active

				international FOWA research effort under the framework of the supported IEA Task 49.		
2022	SEAI National Energy Research Development and Demonstration (RD&D) Funding Programme	Cork	University College Cork (UCC)	CABBBIE - Developing Cascading Biomethane Biochemicals and Biofertiliser Systems for a Circular Bioeconomy in Ireland Identifying sustainable pathways for co-producing biomethane with biofertiliser in a circular bioeconomy system	€610,219.00	Active
2022	SEAI National Energy Research Development and Demonstration (RD&D) Funding Programme	Cork	Tyndall National Institute	FET-EV: 3C-SiC FET Revolution For Highly Efficient and Extreme Fast EV Charging Solutions. Developing technical advances that enable quicker, more efficient and more effective methods of charging Evs	€617,815.00	Active
2022	SEAI National Energy Research	Cork	University College Cork (UCC)	EuroFIT model - European Future	€282,155.00	Active

	Development and Demonstration (RD&D) Funding Programme			Interconnected Transmission model Evaluating the benefits of a more deeply connected continental scale electric grid system for the future		
2022	SEAI National Energy Research Development and Demonstration (RD&D) Funding Programme	Cork	Munster Technological University (MTU)	AgReGen Optimal pathways for the proliferation of renewable microgeneration in the Irish Agri-sector: On-farm renewable microgeneration, energy storage and demand response technologies	€400,035.00	Active
2022	SEAI National Energy Research Development and Demonstration (RD&D) Funding Programme	Cork	International Energy Research Centre	EnerFlex - Concurrent Energy and Flexibility Trading in Grid-aware Local Energy Community Accelerating the implementation of clean energy technologies to decarbonise the electricity distribution network	€398,398.00	Active

2022	SEAI National Energy Research Development and Demonstration (RD&D) Funding Programme	Cork	University College Cork (UCC)	Developing pathways for a sustainable shipping and maritime fuel value chain in Ireland (ShipFuel-IE)	€634,720.00	Active
2022	SEAI National Energy Research Development and Demonstration (RD&D) Funding Programme	Cork	University College Cork (UCC)	Battery Energy Storage materials and interfaces rapid analysis test kit development.	€295,964.00	Active
2022	Irish Research Council Government of Ireland Post Graduate Scholarship	Cork	University College Cork (UCC)	Opportunities and barriers for citizen participation in the energy transition: Onshore wind-energy policy in Ireland. The adoption of climate-friendly technologies is inextricably linked to social acceptance of the infrastructure. Therefore, citizen participation in the energy transition is	€55,626.00	Terminated

				indispensable. This project considers the case of wind energy, which is increasingly important to the EU's commitment to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050.		
2022	EPA Research Programme	Cork	University College Cork (UCC)	<p>SELFS - Sustainable integrated pathways for carbon-negative energy, land and food systems.</p> <p>SELFS will build a next-generation integrated assessment model for Ireland, mapping integrated pathways for rapidly and deeply decarbonising the energy, land and food systems to 2100 under varying levels of carbon drawdown, and identifying the complementarities and trade-offs in mitigation efforts in different sectors and systems. The project will quantify the potential level of sequestered carbon required of Ireland</p>	€383,222.21	Active

				under different global scenarios and approaches to equity, and explore the impact of alternative technological and demand mitigation levers on achieving carbon drawdown.		
2022	EPA Research Programme	Limerick	University of Limerick (UL)	<p>FISE4i - F gas Use, Scale and Environment: An Improved Indicative Inventory for Ireland.</p> <p>This research sets out to ascertain the impact of the refinement on Ireland's F gas inventory. Based at the University of Limerick, the professional, academic, and discipline-based knowledge of the research team will advance the F gas inventory for Ireland. This research will support the EPA Emissions Statistics Team to collate relevant data and insight, add supplementary data, and enable the emissions</p>	€99,615.07	Active

				inventory to attain the highest sensitivity possible.		
2022	EPA Research Programme	Cork	University College Cork (UCC)	<p>FLARES-PPLUS - Fire, Land and Atmospheric Remote Sensing of EmissionS-Projections, Policy and Land use and cover Synthesis.</p> <p>FLARES-PPLUS builds on the work of the EPA funded FLARES project which developed a methodology for deriving burned areas and estimating emissions from wildfires that occurred in Ireland over the period 2015-2021. This methodology, applied to Landsat-8 and Sentinel-2 satellite imagery will be extended to derive annual wildfire burned area maps and total affected areas from medium resolution satellite imagery</p>	€171,778.31	Active

				(Landsats 4-9, Sentinel-2, RapidEye and SPOT as required) for the Republic of Ireland from 1990-2024 inclusive.		
2022	Irish Research Council Government of Ireland Post Graduate Scholarship	Cork	University College Cork (UCC)	<p>Investigating the nature of the value-action gap among "conscious" consumers in environmental food behaviours.</p> <p>The present study aims to investigate the nature of the "value-action gap" among "conscious" consumers in the context of environmental food behaviours through adopting a cognitive dissonance lens. It will implement a qualitative methodological</p>	€27,833.28	Active

				approach and occur in two phases.		
2022	EPA Research Programme	Cork	University College Cork (UCC)	<p>The Role of Irish Small Medium-Sized Enterprises in the Transition to a More Circular Economy.</p> <p>The project will provide a review of Irish Small to Medium-Sized Enterprises' (SMEs) engagement in Circular Economy (CE) practices on a sector-by-sector basis. It will also assess the barriers and opportunities for</p>	€199,971.30	Active

				increased SME engagement in CE practices across SME sectors. Targeted behavioural/policy interventions for enhancing the uptake of CE practices on a sector-by-sector basis will be recommended.		
2022	EPA Research Programme	Limerick	University of Limerick (UL)	<p>Remanufacturing for Ireland.</p> <p>The RemanIre project will provide a roadmap to support Ireland's development as a global centre of excellence for remanufacturing. The project concept is inspired by the triple helix model of innovation which refers to a set of interactions between government, industry and academia to foster economic and social development. We will develop and implement a method of exploring remanufacturing from the perspective of each of these sectors where</p>	€224,739.80	Active

				they will reflect on their own role in advancing this agenda and identifying what they would expect from the other sectors to accelerate the growth of the overall activity of remanufacturing.		
2022	EPA Research Programme	Cork	University College Cork (UCC)	<p>eWHALE - Combining environmentalDNA sampling, whale watching & citizen science for stakeholder-driven marine biodiversity protection: NE Atlantic & Mediterranean.</p> <p>The eWHALE project will unite researchers, industry partners and the public across Europe, and implement stakeholder-driven marine biodiversity protection by combining environmental DNA (eDNA) sampling with whale watching. As such, this project will provide a much-needed proof of concept for ocean-wide</p>	€55,492.00	Active

				participatory biomonitoring.		
2023	SEAI National Energy Research Development and Demonstration (RD&D) Funding Programme	Limerick	University of Limerick (UL)	HyFloatComp - Novel design and manufacturing strategies for innovative offshore composite hydrogen tanks	€550,805.00	Recently awarded
2023	SEAI National Energy Research Development and Demonstration (RD&D) Funding Programme	Cork	University College Cork (UCC)	JUSTIFIED-Grids - Just and Socially responsible Transitions and Interactions for the Future of Irish Electricity Distribution Grids	€178,011.00	Recently awarded
2023	SEAI National Energy Research	Cork	University College Cork (UCC)	AtlanticFloat - Floating Offshore Wind	€648,224.00	Recently awarded

	Development and Demonstration (RD&D) Funding Programme			Technologies for the Atlantic Frontier		
2023	SEAI National Energy Research Development and Demonstration (RD&D) Funding Programme	Carlow	South East Technological University (SETU)	SOLOBLADE - Sol-gel materials for fouling prevention on Wind Turbine Blades	€234,674.00	Recently awarded
2023	SEAI National Energy Research Development and Demonstration (RD&D) Funding Programme	Limerick	University of Limerick (UL)	Inclusive Sustainable Cycling 2: Widening Equity in Ebike Use (ISCycle2)	€979,189.00	Recently awarded
2023	SEAI National Energy Research Development and Demonstration (RD&D)	Limerick	University of Limerick (UL)	MXEnergy - MXene-Based High Energy Density Batteries: Accelerating the Transition to a Sustainable Electric Vehicle Fleet	€672,249.00	Recently awarded

	Funding Programme					
2023	SEAI National Energy Research Development and Demonstration (RD&D) Funding Programme	Cork	Munster Technological University (MTU)	REDUCE - Reducing the performance gap in Irish asset rating systems	€722,803.00	Recently awarded
2023	SEAI National Energy Research Development and Demonstration (RD&D) Funding Programme	Cork	Tyndall National Institute	SuHSI - Super Home Smart Inverter for Irish Electricity Network	€390,770.00	Recently awarded
2023	EPA Research Programme	Cork	University College Cork (UCC)	DSIS - Deep Societal Innovation for Sustainability and Human Flourishing. This project seeks to develop and consolidate a transdisciplinary model for understanding deep societal transformation, and to use that knowledge to	€593,519.30	Recently awarded

				inform future oriented policy making for national and global societal challenges, including Horizon Europe Missions, and in pursuit of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).		
2023	EPA Research Programme	Cork	University College Cork (UCC)	JustCities Hub. JustCities Hub encapsulates a combined concern for embracing the challenges of climate action and promoting stable, just, and healthy urban environments. It adopts a nested research design with emphasis on the connection between scientific knowledge and practice. On the one hand it seeks to capture and explore timely knowledge on enabling climate justice change in the city and on the other it seeks to engage in problem-solving and evaluating solutions for climate change from a	€593,579.27	Recently awarded

				transdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder perspective.		
2023	EPA Research Programme	Cork	University College Cork (UCC)	<p>DETECT - Digital Environmental Technology for Enhanced Coastal Zone Management.</p> <p>Ireland's extensive coastline, spreading across 7000 km, holds significant social-environmental value. With 40% of the population residing within 5 km of the coast, equivalent to 1.9 million people, the vulnerability of these coastal areas to climate-related impacts is of great concern. Therefore, mapping techniques to promote effective coastal zone</p>	€555,187.30	Recently awarded

				management (CZM) become crucial in mitigating climate and human impacts in vulnerable areas.		
2023	EPA Research Programme	Cork	University College Cork (UCC)	<p>TALX2 - Place-Based Climate Action Partnerships.</p> <p>By adopting a place-based and multi-stakeholder-led partnership approach, TALX2 will foster stronger communication and collaboration between stakeholders across the island of Ireland, utilising and exchanging innovative data and knowledge on climate action, empowering local actors and enhancing the ability of communities to plan for an uncertain future, and realise opportunities for sustainable development.</p>	€298,251.69	Recently awarded

2023	Irish Research Council Government of Ireland Post Graduate Scholarship	Cork	University College Cork (UCC)	<p>Mapping the Legal Influences of and Implications for International Law of the 2030 Sustainable-Development-Goals.</p> <p>This project investigates the legal nature and impacts of the novel normative framework established by the SDGs. The SDGs will be critically analysed in conventional and customary international law to establish how the Goals have been shaped by, and will in turn shape, the international legal landscape.</p>	€84,000.00	Recently awarded
2023	Fulbright Fellowship Programme	Cork	University College Cork (UCC)	<p>Large Eddy Simulation of Offshore Floating Wind Farm Wake Aerodynamics and Optimisation.</p> <p>There is an increasing need to further exploit superior offshore wind resources, which is pushing multi-megawatt wind turbines into deep waters. To study wind farm aerodynamics</p>	€20,634.00	Recently awarded

				(WFA), the wind industry at present relies on simplistic engineering models, which only simulate basic physics. The advances in computer technology have promoted the application of Large Eddy Simulation (LES). Using high performance computing facilities will allow a detailed insight into WFA, which in succession will help the wind industry improve engineering models.		
2023	EPA Research Programme	Cork	University College Cork (UCC)	<p>ENTYRE - Mapping the Role of End-of-Life Tyres for a Sustainable Circular Economy in Ireland.</p> <p>In the European Union (EU), over 300 million units of tyres are sold annually. Currently, recycling and/or repurposing of waste tyres (68%) is the most common method of EOL treatment of waste tyres in Ireland, followed by</p>	€143,070.80	Recently awarded

				energy recovery such as fuel in cement kiln (27%) and further re-use (3%). ENTYRE is aimed at performing a deep review of existing practices and literature regarding utilisation pathways of waste EOL tyres in terms of their techno-economic and environmental impacts as well as from the light of current and upcoming local (Irish) and international (EU) policies.		
2023	EPA Research Programme	Limerick	University of Limerick (UL)	<p>A Data Driven Circular Economy National Platform.</p> <p>A vast range of data is collected and curated on every aspect of the economy, society and environment by a host of different government agencies and private organisations. The underlying concept of this project is to employ machine learning to develop algorithms to understand the</p>	€596,276.23	Recently awarded

				relationships between these datasets, and ultimately predict material flows and outcomes.		
2023	EPA Research Programme	Cork	Munster Technological University (MTU)	<p>Enable-BIO - The Roadmap towards enabling regulatory environment for agri-food waste streams In Innovative bio-based value chains.</p> <p>The Irish Government's vision for the bioeconomy stretches beyond policy compliance on meeting climate change targets and becoming a global leader in the bioeconomy to help support a modern sustainable society. The Enable-BIO project would provide a roadmap towards the creation of an enabling environment for innovations in the agri-</p>	€299,952.70	Recently awarded

				food waste biobased value chains.		
2023	EPA Research Programme	Limerick	Central Solutions Ltd	<p>Enhancing the Circular Economy for Tourism.</p> <p>The overarching aim of this research is to investigate how the circular economy approach can be applied to the tourism sector in Ireland to make it more environmentally sustainable and develop a roadmap to facilitate mainstreaming of circular economy business models and best practice in the tourism sector.</p>	€377,766.78	Recently awarded

2023	SFI-IRC Pathway Programme	Cork	University College Cork (UCC)	<p>Azbio - sustainable valorisation of agri-food wastewaters.</p> <p>The Azbio (Azolla-Bioreactor) project will optimise remediation of high-nutrient wastewaters derived from the agri-food sector through secure multitiered indoor cultivation of Azolla using infrastructure already in place at UCC, while developing new multi-species bioreactors for greater system efficacy based on naturally occurring ecological-interactions.</p>	€272,078.50	Recently awarded
2023	Irish Research Council Government of Ireland Post Graduate Scholarship	Cork	University College Cork (UCC)	<p>Sustainable chemical upcycling of waste polyolefins by rational design of heterogeneous catalysts.</p> <p>Almost 60% of all plastic production is polyolefins. The stability of these plastics, which make them so useful to our everyday lives, also means that they cannot</p>	€112,000.00	Recently awarded

				<p>be easily broken down by chemical or enzymatic methods. Polyolefin plastic mostly ends up in landfills or are incinerated to produce copious amounts of greenhouse emissions. This project will use theoretical modelling as a powerful predictive design tool, coupled with experimental chemistry to develop technologies for the sustainable conversion of polyolefin waste into high value commodity chemicals.</p>		
2023	MSCA DOROTHY Co-fund	Cork	University College Cork (UCC)	<p>INSIDE-AIR - Innovative Solutions for Indoor Air Exposure: Agile, Lean, and Resilient.</p> <p>Nowadays, pharmaceuticals such as marbofloxacin, irbesartan, phenytoin, ciprofloxacin, sulfamethoxazole, acetaminophen, carbamazepine, triclosan, atrazine,</p>	€155,475.00	Recently awarded

				<p>sulfamethoxazole and industrial waste chemicals of toxic heavy metals and organic compounds are discharged to the environment continuously globally. The waste effluents of these chemicals must be treated before discharged to the ecosystem. This proposed research project will therefore focus on the synthesis of emerging nanomaterials for degradation of chemical pollutants into non-toxic forms.</p>		
2023	MSCA DOROTHY Co-fund	Limerick	University of Limerick (UL)	<p>Design and Synthesis of M(O,S)y-Heterostructures and Nanocomposites for Photocatalytic-Degradation of Contaminants of Emerging-Concern and Industrial-Waste-Chemicals.</p> <p>Ideally, a building indoor-air management system would be flexible</p>	€155,475.00	Recently awarded

				<p>enough to deal with the extended demands during threats to occupant health, like a pandemic or nearby wildfire, and provide healthy indoor air during everyday operation. It should be able to achieve this without consuming unduly large amounts of energy. To achieve this goal, we need to create a matrix of engineering solutions for the optimum design and operation of indoor air management systems.</p>		
2023	EPA Research Programme	Waterford	South East Technological University (SETU)	<p>GRaDE - Gamma Radiation Dose Evaluation.</p> <p>The GRaDE project aims to develop a better understanding of the geographical distribution of natural and artificial gamma-emitting radionuclide concentrations in the Irish terrestrial environment with a view to providing a</p>	€575,128.00	Recently awarded

				more accurate, up to date estimate of the average annual effective dose that a member of the Irish public receives as a result of exposure from terrestrial gamma radiation.		
2023	EPA Research Programme	Cork	University College Cork (UCC)	<p>The Development of Land Use Indicators for the Protection of Our Natural Environment.</p> <p>Based on the recommendations of the Land Use Review, this project will review existing international datasets and models that are used to assess the impact of land use. From this we will develop additional indicators and an integrated model for the assessment of the impact of land use on a range of factors.</p>	€104,052.90	Recently awarded

2023	EPA Research Programme	Cork	University College Cork (UCC)	<p>C-UISCE - Carbon and catchments: Understanding the Impacts and Sources of Carbon Export from land to water.</p> <p>C-UISCE is a collaborative, multidisciplinary project aiming to quantify the magnitude of carbon loss from land to water and the potential impacts of dissolved organic carbon (DOC) export on water quality and aquatic ecology.</p>	€599,997.02	Recently awarded
2023	EPA Research Programme	Waterford	South East Technological University (SETU)	<p>Cúpla-Trá - Combining digital twin technology with landscape biography for environmental analysis of a coastal region.</p> <p>The project will combine the technology of the digital twin platform with a landscape biography methodological framework to enable an assessment of the natural environment of</p>	€590,558.00	Recently awarded

				the Back Strand in Tramore, to establish, better understand and communicate the competing influences and priorities for the region.		
2023	EPA Research Programme	Cork	University College Cork (UCC)	<p>DStream - Dairy Sustainability Through Regenerative Experimentation and Mindsets.</p> <p>The overall objective of DStream is to investigate the role of practices in enabling the emergence of pro-environmental and experimental mindsets amongst Irish dairy farmers. Moreover, DStream aims to assess the potential for creating momentum for self-sustaining pro-environmental behaviour at both an on-farm and landscape level.</p>	€521,290.38	Recently awarded

Appendix 2 Climate Action Fund Projects

Funding Programme	County	Project Name and Description	Amount Awarded (€)	Stage of Project
Climate Action Fund First Call	3CEA is a non-profit, independent energy agency working primarily in Carlow, Kilkenny and Wexford	Driving HGV efficiency into Brexit Supporting the transport sector in reducing reduce fuel consumption and emissions from vehicles. Over a two-year period, telematics equipment will be installed in over 1,000 heavy goods vehicles and appropriate training for the drivers will be provided. Through continuous monitoring and positive reinforcement of driving behaviour performance, at least a 10% fuel efficiency is expected to accrue. Depending on project results, it may be scaled further by private industry.	Up to €1.37 million	In Delivery
Climate Action Fund First Call	(Nationwide including the Southern region)	ESB – ecars This project moved to delivery stage was ESB e-cars in September 2019, with the CAF committing up to €10 million, leveraging a further €10 million from ESB. This project will install new modern electric vehicle chargers across the country as well as upgrade the existing charging network.	up to €10 million	In Delivery

Climate Action Fund First Call	(Nationwide including the Southern region- pilot phase included the retrofit and trial of a new transmission in operation between Limerick and Limerick Junction)	Irish Rail – Hybrid Railcars In May 2020, Irish Rail received approval to proceed with a project testing hybrid drive technology on intercity railcars, with support from the Climate Action Fund. When at full scale, this project will support the transition of Irish Rail’s intercity fleet to hybrid drive technology. Trains will switch to electric only mode in major urban centres, with the electricity generated during regenerative braking and periods of diesel operation in the open countryside.	Up to €15 million including a pilot phase valued at €1.12m.	The pilot phase of this project is in delivery
Climate Action Fund First Call	Cork	Zero Emissions Gas (GRAZE Gas) The GRAZE Gas project aims to support the installation of the first transmission connected Central Grid Injection (CGI) facility for renewable gas and a grant scheme to support circa 74 compressed natural gas vehicles. The GRAZE Gas project will be located in Munster with the CGI facility being installed in Mitchelstown.	Up to €8.47 million	Final Approval Pending
Climate Action	(Nationwide including the Southern region)	Local Authority Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Project	Up to €17.5 million	Final Approval Pending

Fund First Call		Retrofitting 197,907 non-LED Local Authority public lights to high efficiency LED Lanterns. The project will run in 3 distinct phases, coinciding with three regions – Southwest led by Cork County Council, East led by Kilkenny County Council and Northwest led by Mayo County Council.		
Climate Action Fund Second Funding Round	11 Counties including Kerry, Limerick, Clare, Waterford, Kilkenny	Schools Photovoltaic Programme (SPP) The SPP is detailed in the published Climate Action Plan 2023. The programme will provide 6kW roof-mounted photovoltaic (PV) panels funded by the CAF to all eligible schools in the country.	Up to €23.5m, up to €9.35m for schools in SR counties	Pilot Phase of SPP launched (covering schools in SR counties Kerry, Limerick, Clare, Waterford, Kilkenny).
Climate Action Fund Second Funding Round	May apply to Limerick and Kerry	Smart Demand Responsive Transport Pilot Project (SDRTPP) SDRT is the use of technology to provide demand responsive services and entails piloting a hybrid of a regular public transport service and an individualised taxi service, without fixed routes and schedules. This project will implement SDRT in three separate market models: Urban, Urban town and Rural. The choice of Limerick City and Killarney,	€6.825m	Pre-launch, launch anticipated February 2024.

		Co. Kerry is budget and context dependent and can only be finally determined once procurement has begun.		
Strand 2 of the CCAP – Education, Capacity Building and Learning by Doing	A number of Counties including Limerick	Retrofit Ready Project aims to bridge the knowledge gap at community level by establishing a Community Retrofit service which combines Knowledge Transfer (IT Sligo) and Technical Support (PlanEnergy) with dedicated Retrofit Champion resources working with community structures such as Sustainable Energy Communities (SECs).	€499,646	This project is in delivery
Strand 2 of the CCAP – Education, Capacity Building and Learning by Doing	Cork	Circular approaches to community level food and waste management Project aims to develop and pilot a toolkit for community level organisations to engage with food waste from farm to fork through consultative and action-based approaches.	€212,750	This project is in delivery
Strand 2 of the CCAP – Education, Capacity Building	Tipperary	Climate Coaches for a Just Transition and Resilient Communities To co-develop a Good Practice Guide and Toolkit and train a diverse	€99,602	This project is in delivery

and Learning by Doing		cohort of community climate coaches to encourage and mentor communities to take meaningful action on climate through local development		
Strand 2 of the CCAP – Education, Capacity Building and Learning by Doing	Tipperary	Creating Centres of Excellence for Community Climate Action This project will seek to develop and support Sustainable Education and Demonstration Centres as focal points for community climate action and sustainability - to create Centres of Excellence for Community Climate Action	€99,835	This project is in delivery
Strand 2 of the CCAP – Education, Capacity Building and Learning by Doing	Tipperary	Energy Saving Champions A project based on behaviour change that will encourage greater energy savings and energy efficiency among families, households and communities.	€63,318	This project is in delivery
Strand 2 of the CCAP – Education, Capacity Building and Learning by Doing	Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford, Wexford	Community Energy Hubs To deliver online and in library ‘Community Energy Hubs’ which will support community groups and individuals to turn their energy efficiency project ideas into reality.	€74,085	This project is in delivery

Strand 2 of the CCAP – Education, Capacity Building and Learning by Doing	Clare, National	Homeworks: Bringing Climate Action Home The goal of HOMEWORKS is to build the capacity and confidence of communities to take practical, climate-oriented action in their own homes and community facilities through a focus on skills related to home, energy, food and waste.	€99,293	This project is in delivery
Strand 2 of the CCAP – Education, Capacity Building and Learning by Doing	Waterford	LEAF (Literacy & Environmental Action of Food) @ the Library Aims to engage communities across Ireland to deliver climate change from the ground up. It will train librarians and equip libraries so that they will be a source for people to access the tools, supports & knowledge on how to start growing or join a growing initiative in the community e.g. growing guides, calendars & seed libraries.	€200,000	This project is in delivery
Creative Climate Action Phase 1	Kilkenny	The Callan Energy Store An alternative, non-commercial premises for the exchange of big ideas. Asylum Productions and Loosysmokes aerial circus company, in partnership with the Callan Community Energy Company, will	€ 46,700	Complete

		<p>open a pop-up Energy Store in the heart of Callan, Kilkenny for the month of May 2022. Using their 'on street shop front' model of community engagement, this space will be the focal point for free community workshops, events and activities, bringing expert technologists in the fields of wind, solar and hydro-electric energy, together with radical thinkers & doers, inventors and makers in the field of theatre and street arts.</p>		
<p>Creative Climate Action Phase 1</p>	<p>Tipperary</p>	<p>Field Exchange A project which centres on the idea of agri-culture – linking art, food and agriculture and bringing artists, farmers, scientists, experts and the public together in Brookfield Farm, Tipperary. The aim is to integrate regenerative agriculture, creativity and gathering to combat climate change, linking production, consumption and individual farmers' actions. Field Exchange will present two significant art works addressing climate change which will bring art out of the gallery, into rural Ireland, linking artistic response to climate change with practical mitigation</p>	<p>€ 199,491</p>	<p>Complete</p>

		ideas. The project includes 12 knowledge sharing events over 12 weeks on regenerative agriculture topics.		
Creative Climate Action Phase 1	Waterford	<p>ACT Waterford - Activating Communities to target Climate Change</p> <p>Five different communities in Waterford City and County will be engaged with themes of climate change: transport, domestic energy, green spaces and consumption, aligning with WCCC's aim to make the city a decarbonised zone. Facilitators will work with these communities to try to understand where they are on climate change action. The community will consider the particular barriers to action and work with creatives / designers to explore solutions. A variety of design and artistic media will be used, and the creative output will be shared with the community through public exhibition and performance working with various existing cultural events.</p>	€ 155,000	Complete
Creative Climate Action Phase 1	Kerry and Clare	<p>Stories of Change</p> <p>is an intergenerational, creative vehicle that poses daunting questions on climate change but</p>	€ 99,167	Complete

		<p>more importantly, answers them by showcasing local solutions to the climate crisis through the visual medium of photos, the art of storytelling, and the gift of food. A team of environmental educators, sustainable chefs and professional photographers will tour four Irish counties with five identified partners. Their mission is to bring the community together to showcase and celebrate people leading locally such as local food growers, energy projects etc. through the medium of photo exhibitions, communal feasts and environmental workshops created by the locals for locals. Donegal, Kerry, Clare and Galway</p>		
<p>Creative Climate Action Phase 1</p>	<p>Limerick</p>	<p>Discovering Decarbonisation, Decarbonising Together A collaboration between communities in Limerick and the arts, culture and creative sectors, conceived as a framework to enable community-led innovation in Limerick's decarbonisation mission. Five community groups, identified through an expression of interest shared via the Limerick PPN network, will be invited to first</p>	<p>€118,889.50</p>	<p>Complete</p>

		<p>examine decarbonisation and Limerick's Decarbonisation Plan, identify an aspect of decarbonisation that matters to them and then work with a creative partner, through a range of creative outputs, to explore and enable behaviour change towards decarbonisation in their day to day lives and activities.</p>		
<p>Creative Climate Action Phase 1</p>	<p>Kerry</p>	<p>Corca Dhuibhne Inbhuanaithe 2030 - A Creative Imagining Under the auspices of Corca Dhuibhne/ Dingle Peninsula 2030, the partners will creatively address solutions to support the transition to environmentally and economically sustainable farming on the Dingle Peninsula and beyond. A creative practitioner will imagine a low carbon farming future for the peninsula, supporting the sector on its transition journey to a new paradigm. Barriers inhibiting farmers from becoming more sustainable will be addressed through the medium of a creative lens facilitated by an Embedded Artist working specifically with farmers in the local area.</p>	<p>€ 180,660</p>	<p>Complete</p>

Creative Climate Action Phase 1	Cork	The KinShip Project Will use artistic and cultural methods to engage the public on climate action through a programme sited at Tramore Valley Park, a 170-acre park developed on a reclaimed landfill site in Cork City. Over a 17-month programme of artist residencies and creative learning activities centred on citizen agency and an architecturally designed, sustainable 'eco-lab' structure, the project will nurture and develop a kin-like sense of connection, modelling 'care' as a civic responsibility to the future of urban land use.	€ 110,790	Complete
Creative Climate Action Fund II – Agents for Change	Waterford	Act II Waterford ACT II Waterford will continue the work of ACT 1 Waterford which worked with 5 communities on initiatives that promoted a better understanding of climate change and enabled the people of Waterford to make sustainable changes to their lifestyles.	€250,000	This project is in delivery
Creative Climate Action Fund II –	Kerry	Brilliant Ballybunion will engage the local community to creatively explore the future for Ballybunion in terms of protecting biodiversity, ensuring food security,	€250,000	This project is in delivery

Agents for Change		addressing climate and long term sustainability.		
Creative Climate Action Fund II – Agents for Change	Kerry	Creative Coastal Resilience This project seeks to embed creativity via an artist in residence into the work of the Maharees Conservation Committee to ensure the region is well-adapted in the face to the challenges created by climate change.	€248,660	This project is in delivery
Creative Climate Action Fund II – Agents for Change	A number of Counties including Clare, Cork, Kerry, Limerick, and Waterford	Dinnseanchas - Envisioning the Uplands This will be the cultural element of Hometree’s ‘Wild Atlantic Rainforest Project’ and will bring artists to the uplands to facilitate community engagement.	€249,125	This project is in delivery
Creative Climate Action Fund II – Agents for Change	Nationwide	Immersion: Experience Climate Action This initiative brings together immersive story tellers from across the island to explore ways of engaging with the public on climate action. By collaborating with climate experts and community action groups, the participants will gain a deep understanding of how climate action is perceived by the public and devise new ways to capture the collective imagination..	€250,000	This project is in delivery

Creative Climate Action Fund II - Agents for Change	Tipperary	Field Exchange 2024- 2025 Building on the success of previous Exchanges amongst farmers, artists, scientists, and the public, this iteration will see a series of creative farming interventions developed with the Irish Agroforestry Forum Ireland, Dry Stone Wall Association of Ireland and selected Creative Farm Ambassadors.	€250,000	This project is in delivery
Creative Climate Action Fund II - Agents for Change	Limerick	Síolta Glas Will bring together community groups to Limerick's Citizen Innovation Lab to build capacity around decarbonisation in their localities.	€249,935.75	This project is in delivery
Creative Climate Action Fund II - Agents for Change	A number of Counties including Cork	GoodLife Ireland 2030 Will include a series of public and industry workshops to harness the unique skills of the advertising industry in creating alternative visions of the future.	€249,570	This project is in delivery
Creative Climate Action Fund II - Agents for Change	Clare	Turas - Journeys in Stewardship A year long series of events, led by Burrenbeo Trust, to engage farmers and rural communities in a journey towards better environmental stewardship in response to the growing climate and biodiversity crises.	€50,000	This project is in delivery

Creative Climate Action Fund II – Agents for Change	Limerick	Creating a climate for change in Limerick Dance Limerick intend to break down academic work on climate change into new formats of hearing, seeing & moving. Creative teams will co-create with three partner organisations in the Limerick region to share positive stories of climate action in accessible formats.	€50,000	This project is in delivery
Creative Climate Action Fund II – Agents for Change	Waterford	The Greenhouse at Theatre Royal is a site-responsive, interactive theatre event which promenades through the Theatre Royal building and explores ways to reduce the theatre's carbon footprint.	€34,221	This project is in delivery
Creative Climate Action Fund II – Agents for Change	Nationwide	Design Declares – Ireland Following a UK model that targeted the design community through signing a declaration and supporting design practitioners in reducing emissions through provision of toolkits and showing how design agencies can be a positive influence with their clients		This project is in delivery
Creative Climate Action Fund II –	Clare and Limerick	Renew Bunratty As a series of place making projects, Renew Bunratty will develop a sustainable approach to tourism and local development through	€50,000	This project is in delivery

Agents for Change		community-led, hands-on collaboration between creatives and public		
Creative Climate Action Fund II – Agents for Change	Kilkenny	Till Now A set of co-design workshops with local residents and community events that will produce proposals for the use of outdoor public space in Callan town.	€50,000	This project is in delivery
Creative Climate Action Fund II – Agents for Change	Cork	Pathways to Building Community Resilience to Climate Change Will enable community engagement, creativity and connections to the biodiversity crisis, coastal erosion and rising sea levels through on-site workshops, textile art and bronze casting, audio & visual recordings.	€48,559	This project is in delivery
Creative Climate Action Fund II – Agents for Change	Cork	Gleann na Phúca, A Glen River Creative Climate Action Project Celebrates the Glen river as it runs its course across the Northside of Cork City with a series of creative engagements that aims to inspire positive action for stewardship of the river.	€40,958	This project is in delivery
Creative Climate Action Fund II –	Clare	Room With A View Will transform a disused rural town property in Co. Clare into an interactive portal to witness two critical points from the late 20th	€50,000	This project is in delivery

Agents for Change		century to the late 21st century. Through the front window subtle changes will emerge that will offer hopeful and inciting ideas about the world beyond the window.		
Creative Climate Action Fund II – Agents for Change	Cork	Cycle to the Sea Is a collaborative art project that will map out cycle routes from the village of Cloyne to the sea with sculptural artworks installed as distance markers along the way.	€40,000	This project is in delivery
Creative Climate Action Fund II – Agents for Change	Kerry	The Eco-Makers Is part of Kerry’s eco-visual arts programme. Through innovative and creative workshops, people with intellectual disabilities will be empowered to bring recycled-art and sustainability together and make sustainable alternative products can reduce energy use, and demand on finite resources.	€40,000	This project is in delivery
Creative Climate Action Fund II – Agents for Change	Nationwide including Kilkenny	Puffin Rock Habitat This touring exhibition is based on the much loved Puffin Rock TV series and is aimed at families with young children (4-8) and the wider community. It focuses on habitat and biodiversity awareness and protection.	€49,500	This project is in delivery

<p>CAF - EU LIFE Programme 2021</p>	<p>Tipperary</p>	<p>PLASTIC2WAXLIFE The project will demonstrate and scale up a new process for the conversion of waste plastics into renewable wax. This technology relies on a high performance, proprietary, chemical recycling process characterised by the absence of catalyst, representing a greener, safer, and more convenient alternative to other technologies.</p>	<p>30% of eligible expenditure or up to €1.5M</p>	<p>This project is in delivery</p>
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