



Opening Statement

Regarding the

National Planning Framework

by Professor Edgar Morgenroth, Climate Change Advisory Council

to the

Joint Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage, 5th
November 2024

Opening Remarks

- 1) Thank you to the Joint Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage for the opportunity to attend today and speak on the National Planning Framework (NPF). The Climate Change Advisory Council is an independent advisory body tasked with assessing and advising on how Ireland can achieve the transition to a climate-resilient, biodiversity-rich, environmentally sustainable and climate-neutral economy. My name is Edgar Morgenroth, member of the Council and Professor of Economics in DCU Business School.
- 2) The Council was invited to a discussion with this Committee in September 2023 on the review of the National Planning Framework and the Secretariat to the Council has attended meetings of the Planning Advisory Forum throughout 2024. The Council published the final, eighth part of its Annual Review in October 2024, highlighting the urgency of concluding the National Planning Framework review this year and reiterates this message to the Committee today given the dependence of many sectors on planning policy to achieve decarbonisation and adaptation objectives. Planning is fundamental to the fulfilment of national climate goals and the Council considers the NPF, including regional targets for renewable electricity generation deployment, to be a pivotal policy document.
- 3) This is a critical policy area that the Council has consistently highlighted the importance of. In its 2023 Annual Review¹ the Council noted that planning reform will be required to remove barriers to policy implementation across a number of sectors with a need for the

¹ <https://www.climatecouncil.ie/councilpublications/annualreviewandreport/CCAC-AR-2023-postfinal.pdf>



new National Planning Framework in particular to better reflect our climate ambitions. The Council also wrote to Heads of Government in May 2023² in relation to a number of elements of the planning system focusing on deployment of renewable electricity, spatial development and resourcing.

4) Writing to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage in September,³ the Council expressed its views on the draft revision to the NPF, emphasising a number of areas where the plan could impact on achievement of Ireland's climate targets, which I will set out briefly;

- To ensure that Ireland reaches its full renewable energy potential, the Council stressed the importance of providing maximum clarity to local authorities on their contributions to national targets. It also urged the finalisation of the long overdue wind energy guidelines at the earliest opportunity.
- The Council urged a stronger focus on managing development to ensure genuine compact growth. This includes setting more ambitious targets, prioritising the use of brownfield and infill sites, urban regeneration and finalising the rural housing guidelines that align with overall targets.
- The letter highlighted the need to enable and support the roll-out of district heating in tandem with the roll-out of other low-carbon heat sources.
- An increased focus on Transport-oriented Development within the National Planning Framework is necessary to maximise the benefits of increased compact growth. The role of the National Transport Authority in planning for transport delivery should be enhanced across Ireland's cities.
- Highlighting the need for a renewed focus on climate resilience and biodiversity, the Council reiterated its call for a detailed coastal management plan to enable local authorities to begin planning for the impacts of sea level rise. In addition,

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<https://www.climatecouncil.ie/councilpublications/councilcorrespondenceandadvice/Letter%20to%20Government%20re%20Planning%20in%20Ireland%20.pdf>

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<https://www.climatecouncil.ie/councilpublications/councilcorrespondenceandadvice/NPF%20Review%20Consultation%20Input%20CCAC.pdf>



there needs to be a greater emphasis on nature-based solutions and increased awareness of the biodiversity impacts of development more generally.

- Finally, the Government must regularly measure and report on progress across these and other indicators. It is imperative that the new National Planning Framework is adopted before the dissolution of the Dáil.
- 5) As set out in our opening statement to this Committee in 2023, once the NPF review has concluded, a number of parties across the broader system will be critical to ensure implementation aligns with our climate goals. This will for example include the further development of Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies by the Regional Assemblies.
 - 6) The Office of the Planning Regulator will also play a critical role in assessment of local authority and regional assembly statutory plans to ensure alignment with the objectives of the revised NPF and to ensure that plans provide for planning and sustainable development.
 - 7) Strong political support at all levels will be required to ensure that there is strong oversight and implementation of the principles of the NPF. Community engagement will also be essential.

Closing Remarks

- 8) We are now in Year 4 of the first Carbon Budget and while recent reductions in emissions have brought Ireland closer to achieving its first carbon budget, the lack of significant progress makes it unlikely that Ireland will meet its second carbon budget in the period 2026 – 2030.
- 9) The NPF will have a critical role in enabling the transition and must be implemented swiftly. In so far as possible at this stage of finalisation, the Council recommends that the current draft should be further strengthened to support the expansion of wind and solar generation. As set out in the Council's 2024 Cross Sectoral Review, this should address key areas such as ensuring that Ireland's full renewables potential is achieved, managing development for genuine compact growth to help enable climate solutions such as district heating, active travel modes and public transport, and preparing for the impacts of climate change such as sea level rise while further developing the potential for the implementation of nature-based solutions.



10) The Council is happy to assist this Committee in supporting the achievement of Ireland's climate objectives and providing any further assistance or advice as required and I look forward to our discussions today.