

Carbon Budget Proposal Report 2024

Summary for All



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ISBN: 978-1-80009-230-3

How to cite:

Climate Change Advisory Council (2024), *Carbon Budget Proposal Report 2024: Summary for All*. <https://www.climatecouncil.ie/councilpublications/>

Carbon Budget Proposal 2024: Summary for All

Climate change is now contributing to increasing flooding, droughts and coastal damage, with significant and costly consequences for people, communities and nature across Ireland.

Ireland's urgent response to this global crisis will require the most significant change since the foundation of the State. As an absolute imperative, fossil fuels must be phased out as early as 2039 (i.e. in 15 years). To date, the country has not risen to this challenge and is set to miss the agreed carbon budgets out to 2030. We know that, if we do nothing, there will be profound costs to the Irish economy and to the people of Ireland.

The Council has considered the most recent scientific evidence and determined pathways consistent with the National Climate Objective as the basis for the proposed carbon budgets. There is no doubt that this transition will be highly disruptive and initially expensive and that the burden will not be shared equally. It will be necessary to manage this transition carefully and in an inclusive manner which ensures that potential impacts on people, communities and nature are properly addressed. However, it presents Ireland with an opportunity to achieve a more sustainable society and cleaner environment and to improve people's health and well-being. The transition also provides an opportunity to deliver energy independence and price stability, to maintain Ireland's competitive economy in a low-carbon world, and to build greater resilience to the impacts of climate change.

What the Council has proposed is feasible with today's technologies, but it represents a significant political and social challenge for the country. It will require difficult policy choices and substantial investment that will have a profound impact on the economy. It will also require strong political leadership to ensure that Ireland can collectively achieve a climate-neutral and biodiversity-rich society and that no one is left behind.

Carbon budgets set out a pathway for Ireland to achieve a climate-neutral and biodiversity-rich society before 2050, in which Ireland no longer contributes to the increase in global temperatures. This will involve changing how we heat our homes, how we move around, how we produce food and how we operate our businesses.

Figure 1 illustrates the Council's proposed carbon budgets for the periods 2031–2035 and 2036–2040 and also shows the agreed carbon budgets for the period up to 2030. The provisional Carbon Budget 3 (2031–2035) was a linear calculation to meet net zero in GWP_{100}^a by 2050. Updated analyses of mitigation options were used for the new proposal, in which the Council considered temperature neutrality pathways rather than constraining Ireland to meeting net zero emissions in GWP_{100}^a . This has resulted in a 9 Mt CO_2 eq increase in the Council's final proposal for Carbon Budget 3. An annual reduction of at least 6.3% on average year on year to 2040 is required to remain within the carbon budgets.

It is important to emphasise that the Council does not propose sectoral ceilings, as these are the responsibility of the Government. The allocation of sectoral ceilings will determine the challenges for each sector and the essential support that Government will have to provide. Furthermore, the carbon

^a Global warming potential 100 (GWP_{100}) describes how much impact the emission of a gas will have on atmospheric warming over 100 years compared with the emission of same amount of carbon dioxide. For example, the emission of 36 tonnes of methane is equivalent to the emission of about 1,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide, when the GWP_{100} of methane is 28.

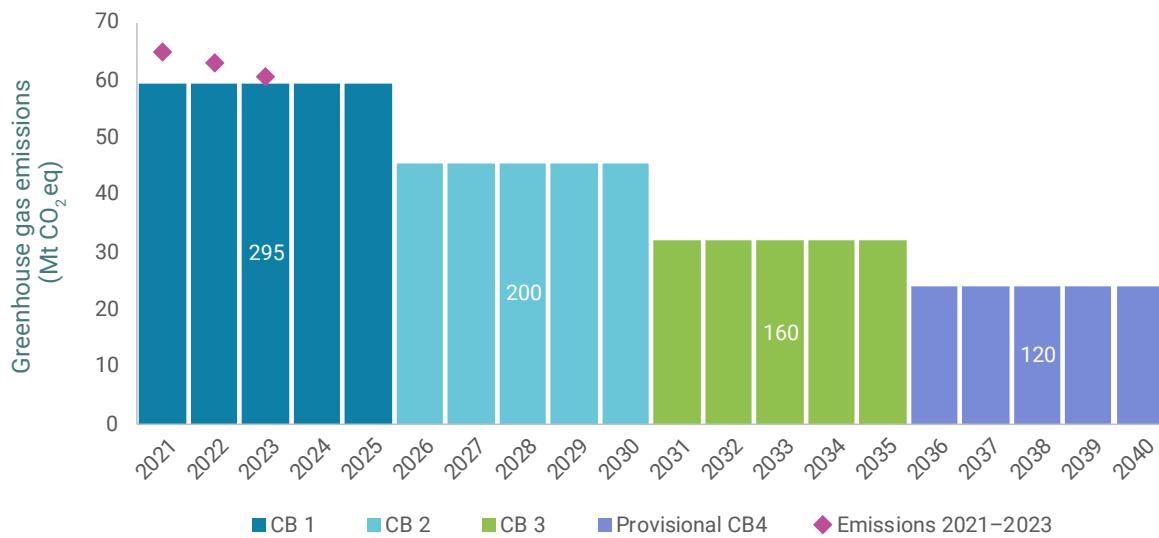


Figure 1: The Council’s proposal for Carbon Budget 3 (CB3: 2031–2035) of 160 Mt CO₂ eq and a provisional Carbon Budget 4 (CB4: 2036–2040) of 120 Mt CO₂ eq using GWP₁₀₀ in the context of approved Carbon Budget 1 (CB1: 2021–2025) and Carbon Budget 2 (CB2: 2026–2030)^a and the Environmental Protection Agency’s provisional estimates of total emissions in the years 2021–2023.^b

budgets shown in **Figure 1** do not take account of any exceedance in emissions that may occur between now and 2030. If emissions in a carbon budget period exceed the agreed carbon budget, then the exceedance must be deducted from the next carbon budget.

What action will be required from Government?

- ▶ Government must urgently commit to this process through making the necessary investment, taxation and policy decisions.
- ▶ Government must prioritise investment and resources now to save people and businesses money by phasing out fossil fuels to avoid future fines and compliance costs, maintain competitiveness in a low-carbon world and enhance resilience to climate change.
- ▶ Government must mobilise sufficient financial support to enable people, households, urban and rural communities, and impacted sectors to take action at the speed and scale required.
- ▶ Government needs to accelerate the implementation of the current strategies to upskill people and businesses for new technologies and practices, while reskilling those sectors impacted by the transition.
- ▶ Lead Government departments, State agencies, semi-state companies and local authorities must be aligned with the achievement of the National Climate Objective.

^b <https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/climate-change/air-emissions/irelands-provisional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-1990-2023.php>