

Community Climate Action Fund – Strand 1a - Key Considerations, Potential Projects, Non-Eligible Projects and Activities

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Context

The Programme for Government and the National Development Plan 2021-30 (NDP) set out the Government's objectives for strategic cooperation and investment for mutual benefit on the island of Ireland, including on climate action.

The Shared Island chapter of the NDP includes investment objectives on:

- Climate action funding to take up opportunities for effective cross-border climate action partnerships and interventions.
- Coordinated investment to conserve cross-border region peatlands to support biodiversity, provide valuable ecosystem services and act as carbon sinks.
- Supporting more all-island approaches to biodiversity protection, building on the success of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.
- Investing for more efficient operation of the circular economy on an all-island basis.

1. KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The project applied for must be in line with the aim/purpose of the funding and should seek to demonstrate the delivery of national climate action at local level by:

- Reducing or supporting the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
- Increasing the production, or use, of renewable energy
- Improving energy efficiency
- Increasing climate resilience (helping us to live alongside the impacts of climate change)
- Identifying nature-based projects that enhance biodiversity and seek to reduce, or increase the removal of, greenhouse gas emissions or support climate resilience
- assist regions within sectors of the economy impacted by the transition to a low carbon economy
- Involving potentially innovative solutions to address the above asks.
- Having the ability to be scaled up or replicated in other communities post funding.

In developing projects, LAs and communities should also consider how their projects contribute to progress in relation to relevant Sustainable Development Goals.

2. POTENTIAL PROJECTS

Projects will address the following five themes.

Projects must also be developed to take climate action across as many of the following five programme themes as possible.

Please note applicants are not limited to selecting these project types and are encouraged to explore innovative projects that meet the fund objectives.

- 1. Community Energy**
- 2. Travel**
- 3. Food & Waste**
- 4. Shopping & Recycling**
- 5. Local Climate & Environmental Action**

Community energy

Many buildings have very low energy ratings and high running costs, mainly due to heat loss. How we heat our buildings and the heat lost account for 10% of Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. How we build, heat and run our buildings can play a big part in reducing Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. We can make our buildings more energy efficient by retrofitting them (e.g., insulation), using low energy lights/appliances, and using smart controls.

We are interested in projects which reduce the climate impact of buildings in communities by using less energy, utilising renewable energy and avoiding heat loss. This can include, for example, small community renewable energy projects (solar, hydro, wind), retrofitting community buildings, LED community lighting, but you are not limited to choosing these.

Travel

How we travel is one of the main areas where behaviour change can have a rapid and real impact on achieving our climate goals. Transport accounts for approximately 20% of Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. We know that changing our means of travel is not simple, and often dictated by previous planning and housing choices which has led to a high car dependency.

We are interested in projects which contribute to emissions reductions related to travel. This can include, for example, improving access to cycle ways, cycle parking, safe or active travel routes to schools, but you are not limited to choosing these.

Food and waste

It takes a lot of resources to put food on our tables. Growing, processing and transporting food all use large amounts of energy and materials. It is estimated that 1/3 of the food we grow is wasted and food waste accounts for 10% of global emissions. The 2021 Climate Action Plan has set a goal for the agricultural sector to reduce their climate impact in producing food and there is a national commitment to reducing food waste by 50% by 2030. Some changes which people are already making to reduce their climate impact include reducing the amount of food they are wasting, as well as including more plant based and lower carbon proteins in their meals. While being mindful that different circumstances such as the culture, religion, health, abilities and tastes can affect the

decisions individual people can make; at a systems, community and lifestyle level there are opportunities to connect and engage people in action on food, waste and climate change.

We are interested in projects that reduce food waste. This can include, for example, developing community gardens to promote local food production, food markets, or community composting facilities, but you are not limited to choosing these.

Shopping and recycling

What we buy has a major contribution to emissions in terms of how they are made, transported, used, reused and recycled. Ireland is moving towards creating a circular economy, making products that last longer, can be repurposed, reused and eventually recycled more easily. One of our climate goals is to increase the amount of waste that is recycled and to make all packaging reusable or recyclable by 2030.

As shoppers we have the power to influence how our products are made, and to look for sustainable options. People are changing their shopping habits by buying products that last longer or repurposing clothing or furniture. People are also planning what they will do with things when they are finished using them, recycling as much as possible, actively segregating their waste for collection and using recycling centres and services near to them (see mywaste.ie).

For example, we are interested in projects that increase the variety and number of recycling facilities in the local community; initiatives aimed at reducing, reusing and recycling, community repair hubs, swap shops, water filling stations or single use plastics elimination, but you are not limited to choosing these.

Local climate and environmental action

The island has an abundance of natural resources, from our bogs and forests to our rivers and oceans. These natural resources need to be protected from climate change, and in return, they will help us by absorbing carbon, reducing the risk of flooding, increasing flowers and wildlife, and acting as places for us all to reconnect with nature. How local communities come together to take action is an important part of the Climate Action Plan, and some of the best ideas for environmental action begin in the heart of communities. Community action can take many forms from simple clean-ups to community energy schemes, to making plans to adapt to the changes already happening.

We are interested in projects that take a holistic approach to managing the local environment, including in relation to climate action. This can include for example, mini forests, forest schools, dispersed orchards, community gardens, roof gardens, pollinator projects or climate resilience projects.

Smaller Projects

This element encourages participation by communities wishing to start out on their low carbon transition. A specific application form will be completed where groups can select from a menu of options e.g. community composting, water refill stations, pollinator projects, small renewable energy projects, rewilding etc. for strand 1a. Under strand 1a communities will be able to secure funding to collaborate with another community partner based in Northern Ireland, enabling cross-border projects.

Projects eligible for funding specifically under Strand 1a

While projects seeking funding under strand 1a should generally address the five themes listed above, there are also specific areas that may be particularly suited to a Shared Island approach. In recognition of the integration of climate and biodiversity action policies, these could include:

- **Valuing Networks for Nature:** Communities working together in nature recovery networks or 'wildlife web' and developing corridors of natural vegetation between existing conservation areas.
- **Sustainable farming:** Programmes focusing on regenerative and nature-based farming on a cross-border and all-island basis could be developed and expanded.
- **Just Transition:** Recognising the importance of a just transition for farmers and encouraging different agricultural practices on a cross-border and all-island basis, including to improve and protect land and water quality.
- **Peatland restoration:** This has been identified as a key area of work, North and South, given the trans-boundary implications for carbon storage levels and inventory reporting, with potential for community and Local Authority cooperative interventions in border regions.
- **Renewable energy:** Encouraging groups to build cooperation and share information in the areas of solar, offshore wind, wave and tidal energy. Some Local Authorities have already engaged in these areas and cross-border partnerships offer additional potential to develop projects and seek solutions.
- **Flood forecasting:** Using the "bottom-up" approach adopted by the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, small scale collaborations on flood forecasting and warning services could be piloted in particular -border regions.
- **Coastal erosion:** Potential for significant cooperation in research, data-sharing and mitigation between communities and Local Authorities across the island.

3. NON-ELIGIBLE PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

Please note the below is not exhaustive. It is important to begin discussions with SDCC about the eligibility of your group and potential projects at an early stage. Please get in touch at climatechange@sdblincoco.ie.

- Projects that solely benefit an individual
- Teaching/staffing
- Travel and transport costs except in exceptional circumstances
- Equipment, unless directly associated with the project
- Income generating projects
- Overheads, ongoing running costs
- Insurance
- Accommodation and subsistence
- Redundancy costs
- Penalties/Interest/Bank Interest/Charges
- Loan repayments
- Retrospective costs i.e. expenditure which has taken place prior to approval date of the project

- Costs for which more appropriate funding opportunities already exist are ineligible, where it is clear that Community Climate Action Programme funding is a substitute for other public funding which is currently available
- Notional costs e.g., the room hire within the applicant's own premises
- Legal Fees
- Rent/location set up fees
- Applicant organisations nor their partners cannot include the cost of using their own equipment or premises i.e., items such as the use of a photocopier or use of their own rooms for meetings.

Considerations around Land and Leasing

Where a project will be delivered from a site/building/floor space that is not in the ownership of SDCC, it must be in the ownership of the organisation applying to the fund, or either party must have a minimum five year lease or agreement in place from date of project completion, making it available to the community.

Purchase or leasing of land cannot be the entirety of the proposed project; a minimum of a five year lease is required from completion of the project. The project would have to demonstrate how it meets the objective and criteria of the Community Climate Action Programme. Purchase or lease of land alone would not meet the programme objectives.