



CLIMATE ACTION AND A JUST TRANSITION

**Our plan to cut emissions,
meet carbon targets and
restore nature.**

Labour 

CLIMATE ACTION AND A JUST TRANSITION

Our mission is to secure a just transition and meet our ambitious climate targets and carbon budgets using the power of the State to drive action on energy, retrofitting and the circular economy.

2024 will be the warmest year on record. The climate catastrophe is the greatest existential threat facing humanity. Climate breakdown is already impacting Ireland and climate models predict that things will continue to get worse as the Earth exceeds 1.5 degrees of warming. Storms, flooding, rainfall events and droughts are all becoming more frequent and severe. Sea level rise and tidal surges are eating away at our coastlines. As a small nation, we cannot solve this crisis on our own. Ireland can, however, take a leadership position in all international negotiations in solidarity with other small islands and developing countries to ensure that global climate action is aligned with science, and that it is fast and fair.

A NATIONAL MISSION

Acting on our climate pollution means phasing out fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas, and transforming our energy system so that it is using less energy overall, with most of our energy usage coming from renewable electricity instead. It also requires us to prepare for greater uncertainty and risk, whether from weather related extremes, or systemic risks from our exposure to catastrophic weather events elsewhere that, for example, lead to a surge in commodity prices or a drop in yields of essential foodstuffs.

Getting off fossil fuels will save everyone and the economy as a whole money in the long run. But to kickstart the energy revolution the state must lead in setting out a national energy transformation strategy that subsidises the upfront investment costs. The state must also shape energy markets to prioritise energy efficiency, fairness and social equality. Labour is committed to decarbonising every sector of the economy without relying on loopholes, greenwashing or offshoring, and the next government must address aviation emissions.

Under Labour, the Department of Climate Action and Environment will develop an updated and ambitious climate action strategy that is science-based, people-centred and that delivers emission reductions consistent with our legally binding carbon budgets. This will be a national mission.

Difficult decisions will need to be made, and Labour will not shy away from making those if necessary. We will bring annual emissions of greenhouse gases down by c.8% per annum during the lifetime of the next government to meet our binding national and EU 2030 targets and transform Ireland's energy system so that there are warm homes and affordable and reliable public transport for all. Our long-term goal is net zero by 2050 at the latest, but this may be brought forward if necessary to align with climate science.

EMISSION TARGETS

The Climate Change Advisory Council has warned that failure to meet our 2030 targets will result in fines of over €8 billion. Labour will meet our targets in a socially just way that shifts the policy burden off the backs of householders and ordinary workers onto polluters, particularly corporate entities, and high individual emitters. We will:

- » Create new, green jobs in the circular and sustainable energy economy.
- » Revitalise neglected industries, buildings, and trades to kickstart a people's energy transition movement.
- » Act to eliminate fuel, energy, and transport poverty, especially among low-income households, people with disabilities, students, and renters.
- » Work to create a just economy where people and nature thrive.
- » Reshape the Irish economic model so that it is energy efficient, respectful of planetary boundaries, and delivers wellbeing for all.
- » Ensure that all carbon tax revenues are fully ringfenced for climate action and related Just Transition measures.

THE END OF THE FOSSIL ENERGY ERA

Labour will ban the importation of fracked gas and will seek a clear commitment at the UN to end fossil fuel extraction and endorse the development of a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Labour will maintain the ban on offshore drilling or any further extraction of fossil fuels on Ireland's land or waters, with no renewal of existing licences when they expire. We will seek to end all further investment in fossil fuel infrastructure such as gas pipelines, gas (including liquified gas) storage infrastructure or fossil fuel power generation installations except for that which is required to balance the grid in the short term.

We will support research into, and deployment of, other carbon storage and utilisation technologies and renewable gas only where these result in verifiable absolute emission reductions consistent with the IPCC timeframes for net zero, and where they do not result in secondary environmental impacts.

A JUST AND TIMELY TRANSITION

Labour will draw up a plan to close all coal, peat and oil burning power stations in line with our national carbon budgets and renewable energy strategy, while using the existing subsidy to support affected workers and communities. We will provide a Decent Job Guarantee to any worker who loses their job due to Ireland's transition to a low carbon economy. This will mean re-employment in another state enterprise, with retraining and upskilling provided.



Labour will place the Just Transition Commission on a statutory footing and implement any recommendations for sector-specific decarbonisation plans. We are committed to using the social partnership model to ensure stakeholder participation in all aspects of the climate and energy transition.

Labour will expand the commercial semi-state sector involvement in renewable energy, energy management services and retrofitting, sustainable afforestation and forest management and bog restoration. We will give each a new mandate to align with achieving our climate, biodiversity, and nature restoration ambitions.

REPOWERING IRELAND

Labour will launch a new renewable energy strategy to ensure that at least 80% of Ireland's electricity needs are met by renewable energy sources by 2030 by designating renewable energy acceleration zones and by issuing mandatory targets to local authorities for renewable energy designations in county development plans. This will require an unprecedented scaling up of renewable energy projects and grid improvements nationwide.

Labour will ensure An Coimisiún Pleanála and local authorities are resourced and staffed with specialist planning and ecological expertise so that they can decide on strategically important sustainable infrastructure projects aligned with this goal within 18 weeks. We will also ensure MARA and the NPWS are adequately resourced. We will amend the planning and climate acts, if necessary, to ensure that the annual Climate Action Plan, the legally binding carbon emissions targets, and the obligation on public bodies to make their decisions in a manner consistent with climate action, are paramount in the decision-making process.

Labour will establish new grant schemes to support local energy transition and climate action plans. We will remove barriers to community energy schemes and promote small-scale renewable energy projects via Local Enterprise Offices and the SEAI. We will also provide a fund to support decarbonisation zones in each local authority.

Labour will draw up a national energy efficiency plan that delivers Ireland's targets under the Energy Efficiency Directive, by focusing on innovative solutions to energy, fuel and transport poverty as well as ensuring that public bodies are exemplars in energy conservation measures.

CLEAN, RENEWABLE ENERGY

Labour will accelerate the development of wind and solar power and deploy €1 billion of the Apple windfall as financing to take direct equity stakes in offshore wind projects. We will direct the new Strategic Investment and Development Bank to manage this and deploy further resources to ensure we deliver on Ireland's untapped renewable energy potential.

Within the first year of a new government, we will:

- » Outline a new framework to deliver critical enabling infrastructure such as grid, ports, and advanced energy parks.
- » Put in place an administrative one stop shop with a National Energy Coordinator to deliver the plan.
- » Ensure that by the end of 2025 we have accelerated and completed the zoning of our offshore development areas, designated Marine Protected Areas, and initiated a process to develop scalable floating demonstration projects.

Labour will create a new Strategic Ports Infrastructure Fund to support offshore construction. We will also ensure that EirGrid and ESB Networks rapidly scale up the resilience of our transmission network so that the grid becomes more robust. Funding for the EV charging network needs to increase by 50% over the next three years with a local authority programme to provide on-street e-charging facilities.

Labour will develop a national energy storage strategy with increased investment in battery and thermal storage options alongside projects like Silvermines Hydro. We will seek changes to EU rules to define pumped hydroelectricity plants as energy storage, and part of grid operations, rather than as power stations. This will allow EirGrid to invest in more of these facilities as a mechanism to manage variable electricity supply from wind. We will support and invest in all energy storage and interconnection infrastructure that is required to support the renewable electricity goal.

ALIGNING THE ENERGY SYSTEM WITH FAIRNESS AND EFFICIENCY

Labour will introduce a legal moratorium on new data centre developments until a robust legislative and regulatory framework is established that ensures they pose no threat to our binding limits on climate pollution or the security of our electricity supply. We will establish a transparent register of all data centres and large energy users to track their energy and water demand and require all existing data centres to develop decarbonisation plans within 12 months.

Labour will pass a Heat law to set out a regulatory framework for district heating schemes using waste heat from industry, incineration, and data centres. Resources from the Infrastructure, Nature and Climate Fund will be deployed to support the development of these new heating networks.

As surplus offshore wind power comes onto the grid, Labour will implement a renewable national hydrogen strategy to completely phase out fossil fuels and address strategic energy independence needs. We will also develop options for carbon capture and storage and explore the potential of tidal and geothermal power and other new technologies like sustainable aviation fuel.



Labour will extend the schools photovoltaic scheme to provide all schools and colleges with solar panels and seek to facilitate the donation of free excess solar generated electricity to local communities instead of spilling the excess to the grid. We will work to provide enhanced training, learning and engagement opportunities for local communities to participate in energy transition projects. We will invest in green skills, apprenticeships, and new training opportunities to staff the climate transition.

Labour will review the biomethane strategy to ensure that it achieves absolute greenhouse gas emissions reductions without resulting in additional land being converted to grass production. Biomethane plants should be integrated with local energy plans and incentivised to improve farm waste management and provide onsite renewable energy while also creating additional income streams for farmers.

WARMER HOMES FOR ALL

For too many people, upgrading their home is out of financial reach even with generous grants and the new low-cost loan product. Our priority is to first improve the energy efficiency of households with the lowest income, who are also most at risk of energy poverty. Labour will ensure we meet national targets of over 50,000 retrofits a year as part of our goal of delivering one million new and upgraded energy efficient homes over the next decade.

Social Housing

Labour will establish a multi-annual funding strategy for retrofitting and installing renewable heating systems and solar PV in all social housing by 2030. We will upgrade at least 5,000 social homes a year and ensure that funding for this programme allows the worst-performing buildings to be prioritised.

Local Community Energy Advisors

To encourage retrofitting in private and rented homes, Labour will appoint a network of Local Community Energy Advisors to provide face-to-face and tailored support with retrofit and heat pump grants, loans, and other incentives. The network will work with communities to boost uptake of existing programmes and build momentum for whole-area retrofitting.

Warmer Homes Scheme

The SEAI Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme provides free of charge energy efficiency upgrades to low incomes households. Demand for the scheme is high and there are long delays from application to completion. Labour will:

- » Increase funding for the Warmer Homes Scheme to address delays and improve access.
- » Include the automatic installation of renewable heating systems like heat pumps and solar panels.

- » Expand the scheme to include rental properties receiving the Housing Assistance Payment on the condition of a minimum five-year lease being offered to the tenant with clawback measures if the tenancy is terminated.

Labour will review all SEAI and HSE grants to ensure that the rationale for energy upgrades is linked to health outcomes. We will develop a targeted strategy to improve energy efficiency in mobile homes for Traveller communities, including a new trailer rental scheme with residential heating and insulation standards. We will also ensure housing adaptation grants are coordinated with SEAI upgrades.

Labour will pilot a dedicated retrofitting programme for rural households relying on solid fuel and oil heating systems based on CSO data and the social deprivation index.

Bridging the Affordability Gap

Cost remains a major barrier for many to retrofit their home. While SEAI programmes offer significant grants there is still a gap for too many households who cannot access private finance.

Labour will introduce a zero-interest loan product like models in France and the Netherlands, and a new Home Retrofit Tax incentive modelled on the Home Renovation Incentive, which will be available to households earning less than €100,000, and claimable on the first €10,000 of work. This would complement available grants and low interest loans and help bridge the affordability gap in a targeted way.

A Heat Pump Revolution

Replacing oil boilers and solid fuel heating systems will have a significant impact on reducing our emissions and improving air quality over time but Ireland is nowhere near reaching our heat pump installation targets.

Labour will work to lower costs and trial a new Heat Pump Scheme as part of our pilot rural household retrofitting programme that will fully fund the installation of up to 4,000 heat pumps a year for low- to middle-income households in rural and socially deprived areas. We will also develop a subsidised heat pump social tariff through an Energy Guarantee Scheme that would provide a cheaper rate of electricity for operating the system. The cost of other upgrades to bring the home to be heat pump ready would be met from existing SEAI schemes and the National Retrofitting Fund.

National Retrofitting Fund

Labour will create a new National Retrofitting Fund under the SEAI using €2.5 billion from the Apple tax windfall to be deployed over 5 years with additional allocations from the Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund.



We will use these dedicated resources to:

- » Rollout whole area retrofitting consisting of street by street, estate by estate or whole parish plans backed up by at least €1bn of funding, where the State will pick up the cost of energy efficiency upgrades, co-ordinated by local Community Energy Advisors. An offer will be made to cover all homes, with some level of clawback for higher incomes households and rental tenancies.
- » Develop a new dedicated scheme for apartment complexes, multi-unit developments and approved housing developments.
- » Provide a fund to support SMEs and the Community and Voluntary Sector carry out energy efficiency upgrades.
- » Ringfence at least €750 million for public sector pathfinder projects for upgrades of schools, Garda stations, hospitals, and other public buildings.

Labour will also seek to phase in minimum BER standards in the private rental sector and provide support from the National Retrofitting Fund for upgrades.

THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY, RECYCLING AND WASTE COLLECTION

Labour will prioritise the role of waste avoidance, re-use, and repair as a focus of national waste policy and seek to eliminate the use of single use plastics. We will penalise litter pollution and illegal dumping by increasing funding towards waste enforcement and rolling out a nationwide segregation education campaign to improve the quality and quantity of recyclable material collected from businesses and households. We want to see a greater focus on mandatory targets instead of voluntary agreements and promotional campaigns. The Circular Economy Act 2022 should be implemented straight away. We will also strengthen the right to repair.

Labour will revise the EPA and Waste Management Acts to give the agency greater powers to tackle environmental crimes with a focus on pollution prevention and the avoidance of environmental damage.

Labour will seek to develop a National Repair and Recycling Company to coordinate the recovery of specific waste streams such as textiles, plastics, and rare earth metals. We will increase the waste recovery levy to support this work and provide new grants for repair cafés. We will begin the remunicipalisation of waste collection by first changing the law to allow local authorities carry out a single tender for waste collection in designated areas and seek to introduce a waste waiver scheme to support low-income households.

BIODIVERSITY AND NATURE RESTORATION

Our Mission is to reverse biodiversity loss and restore nature to create a sustainable and resilient natural environment so that species and habitats can thrive with clean waterways, rich forestry, and healthy land.

Our biodiversity is in a critical state with 85% of habitats in an unfavourable condition and 15% of protected species in decline. The State must take a leading role in restoring and enhancing Ireland's biodiversity to protect the future of our island and planet. Labour is committed to acting.

The Citizens' Assembly on Biodiversity Loss and the Children and Young People's Assembly on Biodiversity Loss made more than 200 recommendations to halt ecological destruction and restore our natural environment. Labour will put these calls into action and work closely with all stakeholders, including farmers and fishers, environmental groups, and semi-state bodies, to achieve those recommendations.

THE ROLE OF SEMI-STATE BODIES AND AGENCIES

Semi-State bodies like Coillte and Bord na Móna control significant tracts of land in Ireland. However, their mandates are defined largely in commercial terms. These organisations have a key role in achieving our nature and climate commitments.

Labour will reform the legal mandates, governance, and operations of Coillte and Bord na Móna by amending the Forestry Act 1988 and the Turf Development Act 1946 to ensure that they align with our climate, biodiversity, and nature restoration ambitions.

Similar changes will be made to state agencies like the OPW, Bord Bia and Teagasc as well as Gas Networks Ireland and the ESB. We will:

- » Reconstitute Teagasc as a food security and sustainability agency tasked with working with stakeholders to improve our food security and growing more of what we eat.
- » Make the Department of the Environment responsible for all nature conservation functions, including Coillte and Bord na Móna.
- » Strengthen the EPA and ensure it is adequately resourced to carry out its mandate.
- » Reform the OPW and give it a stronger role in climate mitigation and flood prevention work, including protection works, and upstream land management in catchment areas.

As increasing numbers of households and businesses are denied flood insurance even when the OPW has installed defences, Labour will introduce a FloodRe scheme, like the model in the UK, to close the flood protection gap.



BIODIVERSITY AND NATURE RESTORATION

Labour will take the necessary steps to enhance our biodiversity and restore nature to good health. We will design and implement an ambitious Nature Restoration Plan in consultation with key stakeholders including environmental organisations, farmers and public bodies which will set nature on the path to recovery and ensure it is properly funded. We will also:

- » Invest in the National Parks and Wildlife Services to support commitments under the National Biodiversity Action Plan and the restoration of land and waterways and increase staffing to ensure that it can meet current obligations and those arising out of the Nature Restoration Law.
- » Ringfence funding in the Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund, and allocate a portion of future windfall tax gains for biodiversity and nature restoration.
- » Invest in nature by funding ecological expertise in all public bodies, local authorities, and planning agencies, and introduce an annual reporting framework on Ireland's biodiversity and the status of habitats and species.
- » Implement the recommendations of the ongoing land-use review as regards rewetting of cutaway bogs, the restoration of degraded peatlands and the rewetting of organic agricultural soils, particularly in upland areas.
- » Outlaw the use of chemicals that impact on pollinators.
- » Seek to bring more land into public ownership for designation as national parks and require and fund comprehensive management plans for all national parks, SACs, SPAs and MPAs.
- » Develop proposals for the introduction of the concept of Biodiversity Net Gain as a planning decision tool.
- » Advance the inclusion of a Right to a Clean Environment in our constitution.

FARMING AND FOOD SECURITY

Farmers are the stewards of our land and provide us with world-renowned quality food, but they need support to help us reach our nature restoration commitments. We will ensure farmers are engaged with and supported to help us prevent biodiversity loss, ensure food security, and implement more sustainable farming practices. Our policies on agriculture and food security are outlined separately, but on biodiversity and nature restoration, we will:

- » Expand the Farm Plan Scheme and review the ACRES programme to ensure farmers are supported with agri-environmental schemes that are long-term, adequately funded, locally led and results based.

- » Reform food policy and remove barriers for local food producers by ensuring institutional recognition and financial, structural, and strategic support, including a local food policy framework.
- » Strengthen the position of farmers in the food supply chain, protect producers against below-cost selling and competition from free trade agreements, and support the EU Just Transition fund for farmers.

CLEAN AIR

Labour will introduce a new Clean Air Act, implement a nationwide clean air strategy and increase the number of air quality monitoring stations in all urban areas, particularly near schools and heavily trafficked residential areas. We will phase out fossil fuel vehicles, introduce low or zero emission zones where required in polluted urban areas, and fast-track the reallocation of road space to zero emission public transport and active travel infrastructure. Engine idling will be prohibited near schools and childcare facilities.

Labour will ensure that public health services are fully engaged and cooperating with air, water, and sustainable diet strategies.

CLEAN WATER

Labour will work to reverse the decline in Ireland's rivers, lakes and coastal waters through enhanced inspections, investment, and enforcement, and achieving the objective of good water quality in all catchments by 2030. We will review Inland Fisheries Ireland and ensure rigorous investigation and prosecution of fish kills and environmental pollution in our rivers and lakes. We will establish a Boyne Valley Task Force as a pilot body for protecting the environment and habitats of river catchments. We will reverse the decline in water quality due to excessive nutrients and ensure that Teagasc advice on stocking rates is consistent with catchment-based water quality improvements. Labour will support the retention of the Nitrates Derogation only if it is supported by EPA water quality data showing measurable improvements in water quality status. We will mandate the EPA to work with Irish Water to prevent pollution from water treatment plants and increase the capital funding available for water treatment and inspections of septic tanks.

THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

Labour will ensure the protection of our marine habitats while supporting our struggling inshore fishing fleet. We will enact long-overdue legislation to designate 30% of our coastal waters as Marine Protected Areas with a plan to reach 50% over time. At least 10% will be strictly protected to safeguard and ensure the long-term health of our marine habitats. We will work closely with fisheries and environmental organisations to achieve this alongside the rollout of offshore wind energy infrastructure.



Labour will establish a Dublin Bay Authority as a model for protecting our coastal environment and public amenities. We will also:

- » Engage with coastal communities and stakeholders to identify, manage, and monitor the marine environment.
- » Produce an action plan for a Just Transition for low impact fisheries, prioritising small-scale coastal fisheries and considering diversification of activities and income models.
- » Ban trawlers of 18 metres or longer from fishing within 6 nautical miles of Ireland's coast and bottom trawling in MPAs, as well as phasing out all destructive fishing practices from our waters.
- » Review aquaculture policy and licensing to ensure they align with climate, water, and biodiversity policy.

FORESTRY

Ireland has the lowest forest coverage in the EU. Despite the forestry plan being in place for over a year, targets are nowhere near being met. This leaves Ireland with a large shortfall to meet on top of future targets.

Labour will review the Forestry programme to ensure a more active role for the State in the development and restoration of Irish forests with increased planting of native trees. We will increase planting grants and premia to renew our efforts to meet targets and promote cooperation between Coillte and farmers to plant on their land to encourage the most sustainable and biodiverse forestry and provide farmers with a new source of income. We will ensure that state-owned woodlands are recognised and managed as strategic long-term national assets for the benefit of the common good. We will also:

- » Put in place an achievable plan to reach afforestation targets.
- » Protect public ownership of our forests and seek changes to EU State Aid rules to ensure Coillte can invest in new planting of native species.
- » Promote agroforestry practices and develop land-use planning strategies to optimise the utilisation of available land while preserving biodiversity and natural habitats.
- » Introduce a scheme to grow and promote the Irish tree fruit sector and protect heritage breeds adapted to our natural environment as only 5% of our eating apples are home grown.
- » Increase urban tree planting, and pocket forests.
- » Address Ash Dieback concerns by reviewing the action plan with proper compensation for clearance and restoration along with the protection of the 15% of trees that have developed natural resistance to aid repopulation.

Labour will instruct the Department, along with Coillte and COFORD to develop and implement an ambitious national strategy for forestry and the “bio-economy” of new products made from wood pulp with an aim of further increasing the amount of land under forest cover, and striking the right balance between continuous cover, native species and commercial Sitka Spruce growing with the aim of maximising carbon capture, biodiversity and sustainable jobs.

WEATHER PREPAREDNESS

Labour will overhaul Emergency Preparedness resources to build resilience to systematic and climate hazards. We will implement a national flood warning system, replace the outdated “Winter Ready” site with one that has best practice resources in emergency preparedness, and actively review and implement lessons learned from other countries.

Additional Labour Party proposals on Climate Action are outlined elsewhere in our manifesto under Transport, Agriculture and Foreign Affairs.

