

Minister Darragh O'Brien TD
Minister for Climate, Energy and the Environment
Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment
Tom Johnson House,
Haddington Road,
Dublin 4,
D04 K7X4
20 March 2026

RE: Proposal for a National Climate Dialogue

Dear Minister O'Brien,

I am writing further to the Just Transition Commission's recent advice regarding the next iteration of the National Dialogue on Climate Action (NDCA), and to reiterate the central importance of engagement and structured social dialogue in delivering a just transition to a climate-neutral Ireland.

As outlined in the Commission's Introductory Report (June 2025), a just transition is not only a moral imperative but a strategic one. It enables Ireland to design lasting, inclusive solutions that protect workers, support vulnerable groups, and build durable public support for climate action. The Just Transition Principles Framework places social dialogue as one of its core pillars, recognising that impacted citizens and communities must be empowered and central to the transition process. Without meaningful engagement, there is a real risk that climate action will deepen existing inequalities or erode trust in public institutions.

A key role of the Commission, as set out in our Terms of Reference, is:

"To provide strategic advice and engagement on just transition: the Commission will support the National Dialogue on Climate Action, as well as any dialogues on climate/just transition matters within individual sectors, in engagement on the implementation of climate programmes agreed by Government."

In line with this mandate, the Commission has established a dedicated subgroup to focus specifically on dialogue and engagement. This subgroup is tasked with supporting the strengthening of the NDCA, advising on structured dialogue processes, and ensuring that just transition principles are embedded meaningfully in climate engagement mechanisms.

In our advice to the Department on the NDCA, the Commission emphasised that engagement must be accessible, accountable, and designed to reach those most affected by climate change and climate policy. We highlighted the need for clearer purpose, stronger feedback loops, and more place-based dialogue, particularly with rural communities and other underrepresented groups. Engagement should not be consultative in name only, it should shape policy in a visible and transparent way.

It is in this context that the Commission very much welcomes the interest you expressed in holding a *National Climate Dialogue* when you met the Commission last year. The idea of a structured, high-level climate dialogue, similar in format to the National Economic Dialogue (NED), has received consistent support across the five pillars of social dialogue and was reflected in discussions during the last year's NED climate breakout session. We see your interest in this initiative as a positive and timely opportunity to build on that momentum.

The Commission views a National Climate Dialogue as one important contribution to Ireland's broader system of social dialogue on climate action. It would not replace existing structures but rather complement and strengthen them by providing a focused, high-level forum for structured engagement between Government, the social pillars, civil society, youth and expert bodies at a key moment in the climate governance cycle.

To support this initiative, the Commission has included within this correspondence an outline proposal for a National Climate Dialogue. This proposal sets out a potential structure and approach for consideration. It is intended as a constructive contribution to ongoing discussions and not as a prescriptive blueprint.

The Commission believes that a National Climate Dialogue could:

1. Strengthen democratic legitimacy by creating a structured forum for meaningful dialogue on climate policy trade-offs and opportunities;
2. Improve policy coherence and delivery by identifying practical barriers and shared solutions across sectors; and
3. Embed fairness at the heart of climate governance by ensuring equity, vulnerability and intergenerational justice are treated as core considerations rather than add-ons.

We wish to emphasise that the success of a National Climate Dialogue will depend on early and meaningful co-creation with stakeholders. Given our mandate to advise on dialogue, and the work now underway within the Commission's dialogue subgroup, we would welcome the opportunity to work closely with you and your officials in shaping this initiative.

Ireland stands at a pivotal moment. As Government prepares the next Climate Action Plan in line with the second Carbon Budget period, a well-designed and co-created National Climate Dialogue could provide an important space to build shared understanding, address areas of tension, and ensure that climate ambition and social fairness advance together.

The Commission remains committed to supporting you in embedding just transition principles into climate governance and looks forward to further engagement on this important initiative.

Yours sincerely,



Ali Sheridan
Chair
Just Transition Commission