

# **Preliminary findings of the Just Transition Commission to inform the development of a Just Transition Strategy**

Informal submission for consideration by  
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Climate, Energy and the Environment

## 1. Mandate and Context

The Just Transition Commission, in line with their Terms of Reference, have a mandate to evaluate, advise, and comment on policy planning, and the implementation and progress on the application of Ireland's Just Transition Principles<sup>1</sup> into national and sectoral climate policies, based on high-quality, evidence-based analysis.

In its first report, the Commission set out the clear finding that there is currently no strategic approach to the application of the Just Transition Principles across Government, nor sufficient evidence of their systematic integration into climate policy frameworks. While references to just transition appear across policy documents, there is limited coherence, coordination, or measurable implementation at a whole-of-government level. This absence of a structured and strategic approach risks weakening the effectiveness, transparency, and accountability of just transition delivery.

## 2. Purpose of this Submission

This document summarises early findings and recommendations of the Just Transition Commission to inform the future Just Transition Strategy based on work to date and a facilitated workshop that took place on 29 January 2026.

The Commission notes that, at the time of this informal submission and workshop discussion, it had not been provided with a draft Just Transition Strategy. The facilitated workshop held on 29

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<sup>1</sup> The framework consist of the following principles: 1. An integrated, structured, and evidence-based approach to identify and plan our response to just transition requirements; 2. People are equipped with the right skills to be able to participate in and benefit from the future net zero economy; 3. The costs are shared so that the impact is equitable and existing inequalities are not exacerbated; and 4. Social dialogue to ensure impacted citizens and communities are empowered and are core to the transition process.

January 2026 was therefore not a consultation on a draft text, but rather an opportunity to consider the foundational question of what role a Just Transition Strategy should play within Ireland's climate governance framework, and how it should function to ensure effective delivery.

### 3. Government Commitment and Strategic Opportunity

Le Chéile 28, the Statement of Strategy of the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (DCEE) committed to the development and implementation of a Just Transition Strategy as a key deliverable for the Department over the 2025-2028 period. This follows two commitments made in Climate Action Plan 2025 regarding the development of a just transition toolkit for policy professionals and the development of just transition indicators - tools to support mainstreaming. There is an expectation that the strategy will incorporate these two prior commitments.

The development of a dedicated Just Transition Strategy is therefore both timely and necessary. The Strategy process presents a critical opportunity to embed the Just Transition Principles within Ireland's climate policy framework. It must not operate in isolation, but instead serve as a core mechanism for integrating just transition into the design and delivery of climate action.

The need for a Just Transition Strategy is reinforced by the Commission's 2025 Introductory Report, which highlighted the importance of establishing a shared, long-term vision for just transition policy. Such a strategy is required to:

- Embed the Just Transition Principles as a consistent strategic lens across all climate action;
- Provide clarity of purpose, governance, and accountability mechanisms;
- Support policy coherence across sectors and departments;
- Enable meaningful stakeholder engagement and social dialogue; and
- Establish monitoring and evaluation structures to assess progress and outcomes.

Without a clear strategic framework, there is a risk that just transition remains aspirational rather than operational, and unevenly applied across policy domains.

These early findings are intended to inform the foundational design of the Just Transition Strategy. They will provide the basis for the Commission's later, more detailed submission as a key stakeholder in shaping a Strategy capable of embedding just transition as a core pillar of Ireland's climate policy and delivery framework.

### 4. Recommendations

#### **Establishing a Clear and Shared Vision**

1. The Strategy should set out a clear vision for a just transition. There are multiple definitions associated with a just transition, which will be important to consider as part of the Strategy when creating a shared understanding for mainstreamed integration and implementation

among stakeholders. The Just Transition Commission previously supported the Just Transition Taskforce definition<sup>2</sup>, and could use this in their submission, to propose as the vision for the Strategy.

### **Mainstreaming Just Transition Across Government**

2. Based on the Commission’s explorations of governance and sectoral integration of the policy to date, a consistent and recurring finding has been the lack of recognition of and familiarity with just transition as a horizontally applicable policy across Government Departments. One of the measures of success identified is that the Just Transition Principles would be fully considered, consulted on and integrated into each of the sectoral targets of the Climate Action Plan (CAP).

### **Integration with the Climate Action Plan Process**

3. In order to achieve this, the development of the Just Transition Strategy and the next CAP process should not be seen as separate processes. Fairness and just transition need to be effectively integrated into the next iteration of the CAP process, with the Strategy acting as a guide on how to achieve this integration. In preparing the Strategy, DCEE could examine why Just Transition Principles are not currently being applied across climate policy, with the Strategy outlining how this could be corrected.

### **Mandate and Structural Design of the Strategy**

4. This has implications for the structure of the Strategy. Rather than being a standalone Strategy it should focus on ensuring that there is a clear mandate to all Government Departments to apply Just Transition Principles. It should require all Government Departments to systematically apply Just Transition Principles in the design, implementation and review of climate-related policies.
5. Reporting and accountability for just transition should be integrated into the Climate Action Plan process, rather than as a separate Strategy process. Just transition outcomes with metrics should be introduced to the CAP process.

### **Reaffirmation and Strengthening of the Just Transition Principles**

6. The four Just Transition Principles should be reaffirmed in the Strategy, as the basis of the Climate Action Plan and the work of the Commission. However, there may need to be

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<sup>2</sup> “A Just Transition to a climate neutral Ireland will build a better future for all and ensure no-one is left behind. This will be achieved through social dialogue, promoting decent living standards, and proactive planning to anticipate change. It will support and develop sustainable and quality jobs and employment opportunities, reskilling and training. Through investment in services, infrastructure and social protection, people and communities that may be affected by this transition will be supported in a manner that is inclusive, equitable and fair.” [Just Transition Taskforce](#) (2024)

greater emphasis on impact on vulnerable groups, as the Principles currently refer only to not exacerbating inequality with regard to costs of climate action. The Commission's forthcoming work on vulnerabilities (commissioned research) will help to inform this.

To guide and support practical implementation, the Strategy might, for example, outline just transition questions to guide the development of climate policy; apply a just transition test to relevant policy; show worked examples of where the Principles have been mapped onto policies; suggest or mandate both pre-action and post-action impact assessments; and/or give guidelines for effective consultation and co-design of climate policies with affected groups.

### **Securing Whole-of-Government Buy-In**

7. There should be a strong focus on buy-in by all Government Departments to the Strategy. This will require extensive consultation and co-design over the next year as the Strategy is developed. This should be designed so that it happens in tandem with the development of the forthcoming Climate Action Plan, and not as a separate approach.

### **Proportionate and Meaningful Stakeholder Engagement**

8. In addition to the dialogue with Government Departments responsible for implementation of the policy, the five pillars of social dialogue should be considered too. However, if the Strategy is to be a high-level document which supports the work of the Climate Action Plan, many stakeholders will find it hard to engage in the absence of concrete actions and proposals.

A proportionate approach may therefore be appropriate, involving relatively light-touch social dialogue during the development of the Strategy, while ensuring that those who wish to contribute are provided with a genuine and meaningful opportunity to do so.

Consideration could also be given to aligning consultation on the Strategy with more detailed stakeholder engagement processes associated with the forthcoming Climate Action Plan.

The Commission can support this process by presenting relevant prior and forthcoming research, as well as insights from its engagement with social dialogue pillars and affected social groups, to inform the development of the Strategy.

9. Engagement and consultation with impacted and vulnerable cohorts is an important pillar of the Just Transition Principles. The Commission agreed that this should be accounted for in the Strategy and that Government Departments and other Government Bodies should be mandated in the Strategy to carry out meaningful and extensive consultation on their climate policies and actions with those most affected and provided with tools and guidelines to do so.

**Long-Term Strategic Horizon**

10. The Strategy should not be limited to a three-year lifespan, but a longer-term guide (7 to 10 years) to integrating just transition into climate policy. As stated above, however, this needs to be done in tandem with influencing the current Climate Action Plan development process.

**ENDS**

## Appendix – Terms of Reference of the Just Transition Commission

### 1. Establishment

- 1.1 The Just Transition Commission (Commission) is established on an administrative basis by Government Decision 30 April 2024.
- 1.2 The mission of the Just Transition Commission is to support the Government in its responsibility to provide that Ireland's transition to the National Climate Objective has regard to the requirement for a just transition to a climate neutral economy, which endeavours, in so far as practicable, to maximise employment opportunities, and to support people and communities that may be negatively affected by the transition. The Commission will be a public voice on planning for just transition, leading in developing a shared understanding, and identifying the challenges, solutions and opportunities for Ireland.

### 2. Functions of the Just Transition Commission

- 2.1 The functions of the Just Transition Commission are:
  - **To prepare and analyse strategic evidence-based research in relation to just transition:** to anticipate and inform long-term climate policy and investment planning, including focusing on the potential impacts, risks and opportunities arising from the climate transition for different sectors of both the economy and society, including the social, economic and employment impacts of this change and the policy responses required.
  - **To evaluate, advise, and comment on** policy planning and implementation and progress on the application of Ireland's just transition principles into national and sectoral climate policies, based on high-quality, evidence-based analysis.
  - **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.
  - **Sectoral or regional engagement and road-mapping:** the Commission may, on its own initiative, or at the request of the Government, undertake proactive engagement with particular communities, sectors or regions facing specific acute or long-term challenges arising from the transition, and advise Government on strategic co-ordination by the agencies of the State, on any interventions or targeted supports which may be helpful to address the challenges being faced by that community, sector or region.

### **3. Work Programme**

- 3.1 The work programme for the first term of the Commission shall include, but may not be limited to:
- An analysis of the potential impacts on Ireland's workforce, and policy implications, of achieving the statutory 2050 climate neutrality objective; including examining the potential overall employment implications, which sectors of the economy may be most adversely impacted, which sectors may be expected to see significant employment growth in the decades ahead; and an examination of the geographic distribution of these impacts.
  - An assessment of the degree to which climate action policies already reflect the principles of Ireland's Just Transition Framework, taking account of the policy framework and sectoral emissions ceilings set out in the Climate Action Plan, and advice on any opportunities for strengthening both the principles themselves and the application of the principles into sectoral policies.
  - Advice on the strengthening of the local and community dimensions of just transition and strengthening engagement with vulnerable cohorts into Ireland's climate engagement activities, in particular the National Dialogue on Climate Action, as well as sectoral dialogues.
  - Recommendations on a set of just transition indicators to support measurement of progress, over time, in achieving a just transition.

### **4. Membership and Chairperson**

- 4.1 The number of Members, appointed on a part time basis only, shall be comprised of not fewer than eight and not more than ten ordinary Members (excluding the Chair). Appointments to the Commission may be for a term of up to three years, renewable once.
- 4.2 The Minister who holds responsibility for climate policy shall make appointments to the Commission based on objective criteria, with due regard for the benefits of diversity, including on the basis of gender. The composition of the Commission should be balanced, so that the views of members represent a diverse group of stakeholders.
- 4.3 The Minister may appoint one member each from the five pillars of social dialogue, comprised of the Agriculture pillar, the Community and Voluntary pillar, the Employer pillar, the Environment pillar and the Trade Union pillar.

- 4.4 The remaining members shall be recruited through a competitive process to supplement delegated members and to represent a range of expertise and perspectives including human rights and equality, skills development, rural and community development, social inclusion, the green economic transition, and youth perspectives.
- 4.5 The Chair shall be appointed by the Minister either from amongst the appointed members or through a separate competitive recruitment process.
- 4.6 The Chair shall be independent of the Government and is responsible for determining the work programme of the Commission, in consultation with the Members, and for the discharge of this work programme, in conjunction with the secretariat.
- 4.7 The Minister may decide to appoint one or more deputy chairs from amongst the Members as required, subject to ultimate accountability remaining with the Chair.
- 4.8 Members and the Chair shall be suitably qualified persons, (for example, but not limited to individuals who have a direct experience of policy issues from a business or societal perspective or in academia).
- 4.9 All appointments to the Commission shall be approved by the Government.
- 4.10 Commission Members shall receive a fee and expenses.

## **5. Independence of Commission**

- 5.1 The Commission is an independent body and shall perform its duties in an objective, neutral and fully independent manner, free of any expressed ideology or political position.
- 5.2 The Commission shall have functional autonomy and shall be responsible for the management and direction of its own work programme, save where requested by Government to undertake proactive engagement with particular communities, sectors or regions facing specific acute or long-term challenges arising from the transition. The work programme will be shaped by the Chair, in consultation with Members and with the assistance of its Secretariat.
- 5.3 The Commission shall develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government, through the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, outlining the operational relationship between the Commission and the Government, including the provision of secretariat, financial and operational resources to the Commission.
- 5.4 The Commission shall produce independent high-quality, evidence-based analysis on just transition challenges and opportunities and shall report to the Government

through the Minister with responsibility for climate policy and make this analysis available to the public to inform policy development across government.

## **6. Advisory Representatives**

- 6.1 The following Departments may attend Commission meetings in an advisory capacity:
- Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine
  - Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications
  - Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
  - Department of Finance
  - Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
  - Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
  - Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform
  - Department of Rural and Community Development
  - Department of Social Protection
  - Department of Taoiseach
  - Department of Transport
- 6.2 The Commission may invite additional Government Departments and Agencies to attend Commission meetings in an advisory capacity where appropriate.
- 6.3 When necessary, alternates may attend on behalf of advisory representatives, with the prior agreement of the Chair.

## **7. Relationship with other bodies**

- 7.1 The relationship between the Commission and Climate Change Advisory Council will be subject to a Memorandum of Understanding between the two bodies.
- 7.2 The Commission may coordinate its work programme with other advisory bodies to ensure appropriate complementarity, taking account of the Commission's work programme set out in section 3.

## **8. Meetings and Procedure**

- 8.1 Subject to the requirements of this Section, the Commission shall regulate its own procedures.

- 8.2 The quorum for a meeting of the Commission shall be not less than six members at the meeting.
- 8.3 The Commission will seek to reach decisions by consensus. Where this is not possible, decisions shall be determined by a simple majority of votes of the members present and, if voting is equally divided, the Chairperson shall have a casting vote.
- 8.4 The Chairperson may at any time call a meeting of the Commission or shall call a meeting of the Commission at any time when requested to do so in writing by any five members of the Commission.
- 8.5 Views expressed by the Commission in publications or by any Member of the Commission speaking on its behalf, shall not be understood as representing the views of the Minister who holds responsibility for climate policy or any Member of the Government.
- 8.6 The disclosure of information, except in the exercise of their duties, obtained by any member of the Commission or any committee or consultative group appointed by it, shall be prohibited.
- 8.7 The Commission shall keep the Minister who holds responsibility for climate policy informed of its activities on a regular basis and the Chairperson shall be afforded the opportunity to present the key findings and recommendations of its work to the Minister, at minimum on an annual basis.

## **9. Secretariat**

- 9.1 The secretariat to the Commission shall be provided by the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications.
- 9.2 Communication between the Government, Ministers, Government officials and the Commission, save for when the Chair directly engages with such parties, shall be conducted through the Secretariat.

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