Just Transition
Commission of Ireland
Coimisiún na hÉireann
um Aistriú Cóir

Towards a Just Transition in the Built Environment

How can Ireland transition its built environment in a way that is fair, reduces emissions and delivers warmer, healthier and more secure homes and communities?



Get in touch!

The Commission is keen to hear from people, communities, organisations and wider societal actors working towards a just transition. We are eager to hear about both the challenges being faced and positive examples of how social and climate goals can be integrated to support action, inclusion, justice and equality. To share your insights or stories, please email us at:

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Key Reflections

The Commission believes that the climate transition in Ireland's built environment presents a significant opportunity. Done well, it can deliver warmer, healthier and more resilient homes and buildings, lower energy costs, good-quality employment and stronger communities, while reducing emissions and Ireland's reliance on fossil fuels. This transition must now accelerate, rapidly improving existing buildings, reducing energy demand and moving away from fossil-fuel heating.

The Commission cautions, however, that these outcomes are not automatic. A transition that reduces emissions without addressing existing inequalities risks leaving some people and communities behind. Equally, a transition that does not deliver lasting reductions in energy demand and fossil-fuel use will not deliver the structural change required. A Just Transition is not an argument for slower climate action, it is about ensuring that faster action delivers fairer outcomes. Climate and social outcomes must be achieved together.

Through its engagements, the Commission heard that people do not have equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from the transition. Income, housing tenure, location and personal circumstances affect the choices available to people. Those experiencing energy poverty and living in poorly performing homes can face some of the greatest barriers to improving them, while renters and social housing tenants may have limited control over decisions about their homes. The existence of supports is therefore not, on its own, a measure of a Just Transition. People need fair and realistic pathways to participate, including appropriate financial support, trusted advice and practical assistance. Public investment should prioritise those with the greatest need and ensure that households facing the greatest barriers are proactively supported.

The Commission also heard that where people live matters. Access to skills, services, infrastructure, funding and community capacity differs across Ireland. Public investment should recognise these differences. Place-based and community approaches can respond to local needs and enable people to play a greater role in shaping the transition.

The transition can also create good-quality employment and strengthen Ireland's skills base. Green jobs should also be good jobs. Long-term public investment should support decent work, training and apprenticeships, provide greater certainty for workers and businesses, and widen access to employment opportunities.

Better evidence will be essential to understanding whether the transition is just. Success should not be measured only through buildings upgraded or energy performance and emissions reductions, but through outcomes for people, workers and communities. These outcomes should include reducing energy poverty, improving housing quality and resilience, creating good jobs, widening access to public investment and enabling meaningful participation.

Ultimately, the Commission believes that a Just Transition in the built environment should improve people's everyday lives. Achieving this will require Ireland to move at pace, while ensuring that the people and places with the greatest need are at the forefront of the transition.

Assessing Built Environment Through a Just Transition Lens: The Commission's Approach

As part of its review of the built environment in the context of the climate transition, the Just Transition Commission sought to understand both how the transition is being developed in policy and how it is being experienced in practice.

The Commission engaged with policymakers, researchers, local authorities, stakeholder and community organisations, and people with direct experience of home retrofit and regeneration. It also undertook a site visit to Cork City, including visits to social housing undergoing energy-efficiency retrofit, a wider neighbourhood regeneration programme and local community initiatives. The Commission met residents living in retrofitted and newly built homes, people awaiting new or upgraded housing, homeowners, retrofit providers, community organisations and others involved in delivering the transition locally.

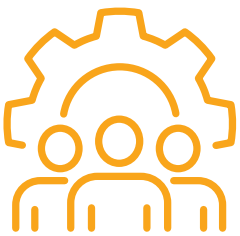
These engagements provided valuable insight into the opportunities the transition can create, as well as the practical barriers that affect whether people and communities can participate in and benefit from it. **The Commission would like to thank all those who met with us, hosted visits and shared their time, experience and expertise.**

The Just Transition Principles Framework provided the lens for the Commission's assessment across four key areas: **strategic direction and evidence base; skills for a Just Transition; shared costs and equity; and social dialogue and participation.**

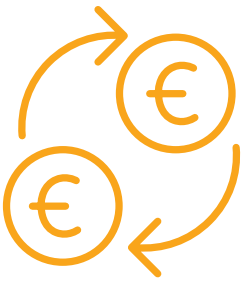
The Just Transition Principles Framework



Strategic Direction and Evidence Base



Skills for a Just Transition



Shared Costs and Equity



Social Dialogue and Participation

Key Recommendations

1. Accelerate retrofit and target greater support at those who cannot afford to participate.

Government should accelerate the improvement of Ireland's existing buildings and the move away from fossil fuel heating. The Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment should expand access to fully funded retrofit, introduce higher levels of support based on ability to pay and examine deferred payment options for households that cannot meet upfront costs or take on additional debt. This should address the gap faced by low and middle income households who do not qualify for fully funded retrofit but cannot afford to participate under existing support levels.

2. Reform how Ireland identifies and responds to energy poverty and protect consumers as the energy system changes.

The Department of Social Protection should review the definition, indicators and monitoring of energy poverty so that welfare and retrofit supports can be better targeted. The National Energy Affordability Taskforce should establish a structured role for people with direct experience of energy poverty and organisations working directly with affected households, including the Energy Poverty Network.

Government should also assess the distributional impacts of changes such as time-of-use tariffs and demand flexibility, alongside the risks of self-disconnection associated with prepayment meters. This should inform stronger consumer protections and measures to ensure that households experiencing energy poverty can benefit from the changing energy system, including initiatives such as Energy Cloud.

3. Put a Just Transition at the heart of the National Building Renovation Plan and measure public investment against clear just transition indicators.

The Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment should urgently progress the National Building Renovation Plan and include measurable Just Transition outcomes alongside climate and energy targets. Government should systematically apply the Just Transition Principles across built environment policy and investment and develop indicators to measure and report on Just Transition outcomes and who benefits from public investment, including reductions in energy poverty, improvements in housing quality, access to investment by vulnerable households and the creation of good-quality jobs, training and apprenticeship opportunities. Ireland's Social Climate Plan and use of the Social Climate Fund should be aligned with this approach.

4. Introduce minimum energy standards for rental homes while protecting tenants.

Government should introduce a laddered approach towards minimum energy performance standards in the private rental sector, beginning with the least energy-efficient homes.

Any new requirements and any public support for landlords should be accompanied by protections against increased rents, eviction and displacement, and should deliver clear benefits for tenants without compromising supply within the market.

5. Use public investment to improve the homes, communities and places where need is greatest.

Government should prioritise households experiencing energy poverty and those living in the poorest-performing homes and provide sustained multiannual funding for local authority and Approved Housing Bodies (AHB) retrofit as well as a targeted national approach to Traveller accommodation.

Area-based retrofit programmes should look beyond individual homes to improve neighbourhoods and create warmer, healthier and more attractive places to live. This should include opportunities to improve community facilities, public spaces and the wider local environment alongside housing retrofit, with investment shaped by local needs and priorities. Private homeowners should also be supported to benefit from area-based programmes, including opportunities to undertake retrofit alongside works to neighbouring social homes or within the same housing estate.

6. Create a national network of independent local Energy Advisers.

Government should establish a national network for independent, locally based Energy Advisers who can provide households with practical, administrative and technical support before and after retrofit. Energy Advisers should play a proactive role in engaging and supporting a wider range of households, particularly those currently underserved or less likely to participate in retrofit programmes.

This should form part of a wider investment in community capacity to participate in the transition.

7. Build the workforce needed to deliver the transition and ensure green jobs are good jobs.

Government should establish a coordinated mechanism with SOLAS, education and training providers and industry to identify future skills needs and translate them into training. Public procurement and multiannual funding should support decent work, apprenticeships and long-term workforce development, with accessible pathways for SMEs, self-employed workers and underrepresented groups.

8. Give communities a meaningful role in shaping and benefiting from the transition.

Government should ensure that people and communities can influence decisions about retrofit, heating, regeneration and investment in their local areas, with engagement beginning early enough to shape decisions. As the next iteration of the National Dialogue on Climate Action is in development, clarity is needed to give confidence to citizens on the role of their voice in shaping climate action in Ireland. The Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment should implement the Commission's existing recommendations for the next iteration of the National Dialogue on Climate Action, including clarifying its intended outcomes and ensuring that vulnerable and most impacted groups are identified and supported to participate. Communities should also be supported to move beyond consultation into developing and delivering projects.

Towards a Just Transition in the Built Environment

The Commission believes that Ireland's homes are at the heart of the transition in the built environment. Many of the changes required for the climate transition will happen in people's homes, including how they are heated, how much energy they use and how they are improved.

This transition is taking place amid significant pressure on housing supply, affordability and housing security. Done well, it can deliver warmer, healthier homes, lower energy costs and greater resilience while reducing emissions and reliance on fossil fuels. **Short-term supports can help households manage high energy costs, but they do not remove their underlying exposure to fossil fuel prices. A Just Transition must also reduce that exposure over the longer term by enabling households to move away from fossil fuel heating.**

The transition also extends beyond homes to workplaces, schools, hospitals, public and community buildings and neighbourhoods. Approximately 90% of Ireland's heat demand is currently met by fossil fuels. Reducing energy demand and moving buildings away from fossil fuel heating must therefore be central to the transition, alongside making better use of existing, vacant and underused buildings.

People do not have equal opportunities to participate in or benefit from this transition. Income, housing tenure, location and personal circumstances shape the choices available, and those who could benefit most can face the greatest barriers. **Faster climate action must therefore be accompanied by fair and realistic pathways to participate, including appropriate financial support, trusted advice and practical assistance.**

The Commission believes that the success of the transition should therefore be understood in terms of both climate and people's outcomes. Reducing emissions, improving energy performance and moving away from fossil fuels are essential. So too are reducing energy poverty, improving housing quality and resilience, creating good jobs and ensuring fair access to public investment. **Ultimately, the transition should be judged not only by how Ireland's buildings change but by whether those changes improve people's lives and whether the costs, benefits and opportunities are shared fairly.**



Just Transition Commission visits NICHE Community Health Project hosted by Cork City Council

The Just Transition Principles Framework

Strategic Direction and Evidence Base

The wider social and economic context; the housing crisis and affordability

The transition in the built environment is taking place at a time of significant pressure on housing supply, affordability and energy costs. These pressures affect people's ability to participate in and benefit from the transition, and mean that people start from very different positions.

Addressing Ireland's housing needs therefore requires both the delivery of new, low-emission homes and a much faster improvement of the homes and buildings already in use. The need to build new homes should not result in the existing building stock, or the people living in its least efficient homes, being left behind.

Ireland's continued dependence on imported fossil fuels for heating leaves households and businesses exposed to international energy-price volatility. Reducing energy demand and moving towards renewable and low-carbon heating are therefore important not only for emissions reduction, but for energy security and greater resilience to future price shocks.

They are particularly significant for vulnerable groups including renters, Travellers and those in social housing who may have little control over the energy performance of their home or decisions to retrofit. Energy poverty also remains a significant challenge. Despite existing social welfare and retrofit supports, not all households experiencing energy poverty are able to access the support they need. Low-income households and people experiencing energy poverty may also face financial and practical barriers to participation.[1]

Where people live also matters. Access to retrofit supports, skilled workers, advice and infrastructure differs across Ireland. Policy should recognise these differences and ensure that people and communities with fewer resources or less capacity are not disadvantaged in accessing public support.

The transition of the built environment is also taking place as our climate is breaking down. Homes and other buildings will increasingly need to protect people from overheating, flooding and other climate risks, as well as cold. Ensuring the homes are resilient to future extreme heat and cold conditions must be considered going forward in building design and retrofit, as well as urban policies on infrastructure, access to green spaces, shade and tree cover.

Emerging policy must address not only emissions reduction, but fairness, access and participation. This will require a more holistic approach with co-operation across government departments to ensure just transition objectives are addressed. There are a number of forthcoming policy opportunities to embed just transition objectives. These include the National Building Renovation Plan, the Social Climate Plan, the National Energy Affordability Taskforce Plan, the Climate Action Plan and the annual budgetary cycle. In addition, the work of the National Energy Affordability Taskforce provides an important opportunity to strengthen this approach.

1 Economic & Social Research Institute (2026) Energy Poverty and affordability in Ireland https://www.esri.ie/publications/energy-poverty-and-affordability-in-ireland

The Commission notes that Government has committed to mainstreaming the Just Transition Principles across climate policy. However, the Commission has previously found that the Principles have seen little formal uptake in policymaking and programme design and are not yet being applied systematically across Government.

The Commission has previously recommended the establishment of national Just Transition Indicators and noted that work was underway within Government to develop them. However, this work has not yet resulted in a national indicators framework, limiting the ability to assess systematically whether Just Transition outcomes are being achieved.

The Commission recommends the urgent and systematic application of the Just Transition Principles across the design, implementation and review of climate policy, including policies and public investment relating to the built environment. Government departments should be required to demonstrate how the Just Transition Principles have been applied, and to measure and report on Just Transition outcomes based on strategic KPIs.

The retrofit direction of travel

The Commission believes that the pace of the transition in the built environment must now accelerate. Improving the buildings Ireland already has, reducing their energy demand and moving away from fossil-fuel heating are central to meeting Ireland's climate commitments. A faster transition can also reduce households' exposure to fossil-fuel price volatility and improve Ireland's energy security.

In practice this means more insulation; replacing oil and gas boilers with heat pumps or connecting buildings to district energy networks; and installing solar power and other renewable technologies. Ensuring buildings can adapt to extreme heat is also likely to become more important as climate change intensifies. Building in adequate ventilation and shades will be essential to ensure homes are thermally resilient during times of heat stress.[2]

Done well, this transition can reduce energy bills for households and deliver more comfortable and healthier homes and buildings, while reducing emissions and reliance on fossil fuels. The Commission supports this overall direction and recognises the significant State investment already being made to support the transition. Retrofit supports have expanded in recent months and years, including through increased and more targeted financial supports and additional pathways for households to undertake home energy upgrades. The State also continues to invest in social housing retrofit, skills and training, and measures supporting renewable energy and low-carbon heating.

2 Climate Action Network (CAN Europe) (2025) National Building Renovations Plans (NBRP): A powerful tool for a just and climate resilient built environment https://caneurope.org/publications/national-building-renovations-plans-nbrp-a-powerful-tool-for-a-just-and-climate-resilient-built-environment/

The Commission welcomes this expansion of support. Continued and long-term State intervention will be necessary both to deliver the scale of change required and to ensure that people who cannot participate through the market alone have a pathway to benefit. However, the existence of supports does not in itself ensure fair access. The next phase of the transition should therefore focus increasingly on whether supports are reaching those who need them, overcoming financial and practical barriers to participation, and delivering fair outcomes across different households and communities.

The Commission also notes that while significant progress has been achieved, the scale of delivery is not at the pace required to meet the targets of the Climate Action Plan, or remain within the Carbon Budgets[3]. Recent reductions in emissions from buildings have been driven in part by milder winter conditions rather than by structural change. Furthermore, energy poverty and energy bill arrears remain pressing concerns.

The Commission considers that policy for the built environment should therefore pursue climate and social outcomes together: reducing emissions while also reducing energy poverty, improving the quality and resilience of homes and buildings, creating good-quality employment, and providing fair and realistic pathways for people and communities to participate.

Beyond individual buildings: creating better places and communities

The transition in Ireland's built environment presents an opportunity to do more than improve the energy performance of individual homes and buildings. The European Union's New European Bauhaus initiative recognises the potential to bring together climate action, inclusion and quality of life through improvements to buildings, neighbourhoods and public spaces.[4]

The Commission believes that public investment should build on this wider opportunity to create warmer, healthier, more attractive and resilient places to live. Area-based approaches can bring together improvements to homes, community facilities and public spaces, while supporting local employment and businesses. The National Economic and Social Council (NESC) has also highlighted the importance of place-based approaches and community participation in ensuring that people benefit from the energy transition.[5]

A Just Transition should prioritise those with the greatest need while seeking to deliver wider benefits for whole neighbourhoods and communities. Investment should respond to local circumstances, with communities involved in identifying priorities and shaping improvements.

The Commission recommends that Government maintain long-term investment in the transition of the built environment, while placing greater emphasis on ensuring that its benefits are fairly shared. Policy and investment should be designed and assessed against both climate and Just Transition outcomes, including reductions in energy poverty, improved housing quality and resilience to hot and cold temperatures, access to good-quality employment, and fair participation across different households and communities.

3 From 2015 – 2026, 364,000 privately owned properties have been upgraded with some form of retrofit measure using SEAI grants, 103,000 homes have achieved BER B2, and 21,000 heat pumps and 140,000 solar PV installations have taken place. Over half of these upgrades have happened since 2023. However, these achievements are significantly behind the targets set in the Climate Action Plan, which aim by 2030 for 500,000 BER B2 retrofits and 400,000 heat pumps installed. See Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (2026) Energy Statistics for National Home Retrofit Programmes https://www.seai.ie/grants/home-energy-grants/home-upgrades

4 Council of the European Union (2026), Council Recommendation on the New European Bauhaus, 11 May 2026. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2026/05/11/new-european-bauhaus-council-calls-for-sustainable-and-inclusive-neighbourhoods-across-the-eu/

5 National Economic and Social Council (2025), Connecting People to the Energy Transition, Council Report No. 170 https://www.nesc.ie/news-events/press-releases/council-report-170-people-energy-transition/

The EU Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, and Ireland's National Renovation Plan

The revised EU Energy Performance of Buildings Directive 'sets a framework and a path for modernising and fully decarbonising the EU's building stock by 2050'. The Directive requires each EU member state to submit a National Building Renovation Plan outlining how member states will reduce the average primary energy use of buildings, with specific measures targeting the worst performing buildings. Importantly, from a Just Transition perspective, the Directive goes beyond emissions and energy performance. National plans must address issues including: vulnerable households; protection of tenants; energy poverty; technical assistance and actions to support social housing renovation.[6]

Ireland did not submit its draft Plan by the December 2025 deadline and, as of October 2026, it remains outstanding. The European Commission has now issued Ireland with a reasoned opinion for its continued failure to submit the draft Plan.[7] The final Plan is due by 31 December 2026.

The Commission recommends that the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment progress the draft National Building Renovation Plan and public consultation as a matter of urgency. The Plan should embed the Just Transition Principles and include measurable Just Transition outcomes alongside decarbonisation and energy-performance targets. The Commission further recommends that the National Residential Retrofit Plan is subsequently reviewed to ensure alignment with this broader approach to the transition in the built environment.

The National Residential Retrofit Plan

The Climate Action Plan sets targets of 500,000 home upgrades to BER B by 2030, as well as 400,000 installed heat pumps in existing homes.[8] Ireland's National Residential Retrofit Plan[9] sets out the principal measures to achieve this. The Plan was updated in 2026, with additional measures to support household participation.

While the Plan recognises the importance of making retrofit more accessible and affordable, and commits to specific supports for households experiencing energy poverty,[10] the Commission maintains that a new approach will be required in order to meet the ambition of the Climate Action Plan, and to ensure that the transition in the built environment is just.

The Commission believes that the National Residential Retrofit Plan is lacking in its ambition to ensure vulnerable households are not left behind.

Pending the development of national Just Transition Indicators, the Commission recommends that the National Residential Retrofit Plan include measurable Just Transition outcomes alongside its delivery and decarbonisation targets. These should include:

- the proportion of funding going to vulnerable households, including social housing tenants, Traveller households and households experiencing energy poverty;
- reductions in energy poverty;
- vacant or derelict housing stock brought back into use following retrofit;
- improvements in the energy performance of the private rental and social housing stock; and
- the number of low-income households undertaking retrofit.

6 The EU Energy Performance of Buildings Directive includes targets to reduce average primary energy use in buildings by 16% by 2030 and 20-22% by 2035, with at least 55% of the savings coming from the worst performing buildings.

7 European Commission (01.10.2026) INFR(2026)2023 Failure by Ireland to notify to the Commission its draft national building renovation plan as required by Directive (EU) 2024/1275 on the energy performance of buildings

8 The Climate Action Plan targets 500,000 homes retrofitted to BER B2 and the installation of 400,000 heat pumps. From 2015 – 2026 103,000 homes were retrofitted to BER B2 and 21,000 heat pumps were installed. Data: SEAI Statistics for National Home Retrofit Programmes https://www.seai.ie/grants/home-energy-grants/home-upgrades

9 The Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (2026) Ireland's Residential Retrofit Plan https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-climate-energy-and-the-environment/publications/national-residential-retrofit-plan/

10 The Warmer Homes scheme is an SEAI funded scheme that offers free retrofit to homeowners in receipt of certain social welfare payments. Budget 2026 included €340 million to bring homes up to a B2 standard. The current waiting time from application to completion of works is approximately 2 years.

The Social Climate Plan and Social Climate Fund

European climate policy increasingly recognises that additional measures are required to protect households and other groups that may face disproportionate costs during decarbonisation. Ireland is developing its Social Climate Plan in the context of the EU Social Climate Fund, with a particular focus on measures supporting people vulnerable to energy and transport poverty. The Commission notes the development and implementation of this Plan provides an opportunity to connect climate investment with the just transition outcomes identified in this report, including improved housing quality, energy affordability and reducing energy poverty.

Ireland was required to submit its Social Climate Plan to the European Commission by 30 June 2025. The Commission notes with concern that Ireland's Plan remains outstanding, delaying an important opportunity to target climate investment towards those most vulnerable to the costs of the transition.

The Commission recommends the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment (DCEE) ensure Ireland's Social Climate Plan and the use of the EU Social Climate Fund are explicitly aligned with national energy poverty and retrofit policy with measurable just transition outcomes based on strategic KPIs.

Measuring energy poverty, and targeting support

Energy poverty remains a significant challenge in Ireland. Recent ESRI research highlights the limitations of relying on a single measure of energy poverty, which can underestimate its extent and leave vulnerable households unidentified.[11] A more multidimensional approach is needed to understand who is experiencing energy poverty and to target support effectively.

The indicators used therefore matter: they determine which households are identified as experiencing energy poverty and can influence how support is targeted. More timely and multidimensional monitoring would provide a stronger basis for identifying vulnerable households and responding to changes in energy affordability. There is also a need to better understand whether social protection and retrofit interventions are reducing energy poverty over time. Measuring outcomes, rather than only the uptake of supports, should form part of assessing whether the transition is just. The National Economic and Social Council (NESC) has similarly identified eliminating energy poverty as an important objective of the energy transition and has highlighted the need for more targeted support for groups at particular risk.[12]

The Commission recommends the Department of Social Protection (DSP) examine the current definition and indicators of energy poverty and the approach to monitoring trends so that welfare support and the associated access to home retrofit schemes can be targeted to more vulnerable households.

11 Economic and Social Research Institute (2026) Energy Poverty and affordability in Ireland https://www.esri.ie/publications/energy-poverty-and-affordability-in-ireland

12 National Economic and Social Council (2025) Energy Transition as an Opportunity to Eliminate Energy Poverty, Council Report 36 https://www.nesc.ie/publications/energy-transition-as-an-opportunity-to-eliminate-energy-poverty/

Prepayment meters and hidden energy poverty

Prepayment meters create particular risks for those experiencing energy poverty. When households cannot afford to top up their meters, their energy supply may stop automatically. This is known as self-disconnection. The Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP) has raised concerns that self-disconnection is not adequately captured in national monitoring, meaning households going without essential energy may remain largely invisible in official disconnection statistics.[13]

These households may also fall outside some of the protections available to registered vulnerable energy customers. The Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) provides additional protections for customers with specified age-related, disability or medical needs, but financial hardship alone does not automatically qualify a household for registration.[14] Although additional protections exist for prepayment customers, including emergency credit and limits on debt recovery from top-ups, these do not remove the underlying risk of self-disconnection.[15]

The Commission considers that self-disconnection should be recognised as an important indicator of energy poverty and a trigger for targeted support. This is consistent with European Commission Recommendation (EU) 2026/1001, which calls for improved monitoring of self-disconnection and prioritises energy efficiency and building renovation as long-term measures to protect vulnerable households.[16] Households experiencing repeated self-disconnection should be proactively offered immediate assistance and assessed for appropriate retrofit supports, including pathways for those who fall outside existing eligibility criteria. The objective should be to reduce their underlying energy needs and exposure to fossil-fuel prices, rather than relying solely on emergency financial assistance.

13 Society of St Vincent de Paul (2024), Submission on Article 28a, Protection from Disconnections, section on prepayment self-disconnection. https://www.svp.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/SVP-Response-to-EMD-Consultation-Article-28a-Protection-from-Disconnections.pdf?

14 Commission for Regulation of Utilities, Vulnerable Customers. Sets out eligibility for registration and additional disconnection protections https://www.cru.ie/consumer-information/your-rights/vulnerable-customers/

15 Commission for Regulation of Utilities (2026), Additional Customer Protection Measures for Household Electricity and Gas Customers 2026/27, 12 October 2026. https://www.cru.ie/about-us/news/cru-publishes-additional-winter-protections-to-help-households-manage-energy-bills-and-avoid-disconnection/

16 European Commission (2026), Commission Recommendation (EU) 2026/1001 on the protection of vulnerable customers and customers in energy poverty from energy disconnections and during the phase-out of natural gas, particularly Recital 6 and Recommendations 4, 13 and 18. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reco/2026/1001/oj/eng

New technologies and a flexible energy system

Technologies such as smart meters, flexible tariffs and batteries can help households reduce costs and support greater use of renewable energy. District heating networks also have the potential to offer renewable heat at scale and significantly contribute to decarbonising heat in Ireland.

However, the ability to benefit from these changes is not equally distributed. Households with capital to invest in storage, solar or automation may have a greater ability to shift to time-of-use and dynamic tariffs and the associated technology, while other households may have limited discretion over timing of essential energy use because of disabilities, health needs and work patterns. Digital exclusion may create additional barriers.

The Commission welcomes recent progress towards the development of district heating, including the proposed regulatory framework and increased State support for network development. As district heating expands, it will be important that its benefits are widely shared and that consumers are adequately protected. **The Commission supports the inclusion of strong consumer protection measures and the expansion of the Commission for Regulation of Utilities' (CRU) powers in this regard, and recommends the legislation proceeds without delay.**

In addition, the Commission recommends that the DCEE undertake a distributional impact assessment of the CRU's National Energy Demand Strategy[17] to assess how the costs and benefits of increased reliance on time-of-use tariffs, pre-pay meters and household demand flexibility are shared. The assessment should seek to understand how households with limited ability to switch technology or shift behaviours are being protected, and how the wider social benefits of the transition to demand flexibility are being shared.

17 Commission for Regulation of Utilities (2024, and subsequent updates in 2025 and 2026) The National Energy Demand Strategy https://www.cru.ie/about-us/news/cru-national-energy-demand-strategy/

A reflection from Commissioners Michelle Murphy and Tanya Ward



Michelle Murphy is an expert in social policy and is the Community and Voluntary Pillar representative on the Commission.



Tanya Ward is an expert in human rights and is a leading advocate for children's rights in Ireland. Tanya is an Independent Commissioner.

For households experiencing energy poverty, the transition can mean warmer, healthier homes, lower energy use and less exposure to fossil fuel prices. But the people with the most to gain are often those with the least ability to make these changes themselves. Low incomes, poor housing conditions, tenure, disability, age, gender, ethnicity, and where people live, and discrimination in relation to same, can all affect whether they are able to participate and benefit.

We believe that reducing energy poverty should be one of the clearest measures of whether the transition is just. Public investment should prioritise those living in the poorest-performing homes and those least able to afford or undertake improvements themselves. The transition should reduce vulnerability over the longer term by improving homes, reducing energy demand and enabling people to move away from dependence on fossil fuels. The transition also creates opportunities for good-quality employment and skills in communities across Ireland. These opportunities should be accessible to people and places that might otherwise be left behind, with investment in skills matched by decent work and accessible pathways into employment.

If Ireland gets this right, the people who are currently most vulnerable to energy costs and poor housing should be among those who benefit most from the transition. Its legacy should be not only lower emissions, but also reduced energy poverty and inequality, warmer and healthier homes, greater energy security and good jobs in communities across Ireland.

Skills for a Just Transition

Building the workforce and creating good jobs

Labour and skills shortages across the retrofit and renewable energy sectors are consistently identified as major barriers to the transition in the built environment.[18] [19]

Achieving Ireland's retrofit ambitions will require substantial workforce expansion. Estimates suggest upwards of 22,000 new retrofit workers are required between 2023 and 2030, particularly in trades such as electricians, plumbers, carpenters, and plasterers.[20] During consultation with retrofit project co-ordinators, the Commission heard of difficulties sourcing local workers and of delays to planned retrofit projects due to a lack of available skilled workers.

The Commission heard that long-term workforce shortages are likely to continue unless retrofit jobs offer attractive and sustainable employment supported by better conditions and more stable funding and planning across the sector. International research indicates that existing challenges within the construction industry such as insecure employment, fragmented contracting, risks to occupational health and safety, barriers to training and unequal access to career progression, are likely to be maintained as construction becomes greener, unless there is some intervention.[21]

For a just transition in the built environment the expansion of the retrofit workforce must be underpinned by decent work, including secure employment, fair pay, occupational health and safety, access to skills development and respect for employment and collective-bargaining rights.

Ireland has established significant training and upskilling infrastructure for retrofit, including regional training centres and flexible and accredited training opportunities.[22] However, important skills gaps remain, including in BER assessment, heat-pump installation, traditional building retrofit, district energy and digital technologies. Training provision also needs to respond more quickly to emerging technologies and anticipated policy and labour-market needs.

Specific skills and labour shortages are identified by SOLAS in their Green Skills Strategy to 2030 and Build Up Skills Ireland including BER assessors, heat pump installers, specialist skills relating to heritage buildings and digital skills needed for increasingly complex building and energy technologies, smart systems and low carbon technologies.[23] [24] The National Skills Council highlights the need for appropriate skills and training to enable workers to participate in Ireland's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.[25]

Research suggests that training provision can lag behind policy and labour-market needs. Greater coordination between government, education and training providers can help anticipate emerging skills needs, as demonstrated in countries such as Germany, France and Denmark.[26]

18 Expert Group on Future Skills Needs (2021) Skills for Zero Carbon The Demand for Renewable Energy, Residential Retrofit and Electric Vehicle Deployment Skills to 2030 https://www.skillsireland.ie/media/2eng44zf/5119-dete-egfsn-skills-for-zero-carbon-web.pdf

19 SOLAS (2025) Green Skills 2030 Implementation Plan https://a.storyblok.com/f/70398/x/5eb093ebc1/green-skills-2030-implementation-plan-final-web.pdf

20 Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (2022) Report on the analysis of skills for residential construction and retrofitting 2023 to 2030. Government of Ireland https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-further-and-higher-education-research-innovation-and-science/publications/report-on-the-analysis-of-skills-for-residential-construction-retrofitting-2023-to-2030/

21 Ecorys (2026) Towards a Just Transition for Workers in the Built Environment in Europe https://www.ecorys.com/case-studies/towards-a-just-transition-for-workers-in-the-built-environment-in-europe/

22 The Green Skills for Further Education and Training Roadmap 2021 – 2030, and the National Residential Retrofit Plan.

23 SOLAS (2024) Green Skills Strategy 2030 https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/135e0f3789/solas-green-skills-strategy-2030.pdf

24 Build Up Skills Ireland 2030 (2024) National Upskilling Roadmap 2030; For the built environment https://build-up.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2025-03/mxWBCZkDje_20_03_2025_094848.pdf

25 National Skills Council (2026) Strategic Advice 2026 From Evidence to Action, An integrated skills infrastructure for an inclusive Ireland https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/826b4519/NSC_2026_From_Evidence_to_Action_-_An_Integrated_Skills_Infrastructure_for_an_Inclusive_Ireland.pdf

26 EnvEcon (2026) Residential Retrofit Skills; Briefing Note for the Just Transition Commission

The Commission recommends that Government establish a coordinated mechanism between relevant departments, the National Apprenticeships Office, SOLAS, education and training providers and industry to regularly identify and forecast skills needs in the built environment and translate these into apprenticeships and training provision. A socio-economic and Just Transition lens should be applied to this planning, including consideration of who can access training and employment opportunities, where skills and jobs are needed, and the barriers faced by underrepresented groups, SMEs and self-employed workers. Priority should be given to areas of identified skills shortage, including district energy, traditional building retrofit and digital technologies, alongside the non-technical skills needed to support community participation in the transition.



SMEs and self-employed workers

SMEs, micro-businesses and self-employed workers are an important part of the construction and retrofit supply chain. However, smaller businesses and sole traders can face particular barriers to upskilling, including the cost of training and the time spent away from paid work. SOLAS recognises this challenge and identifies short, stackable training tailored to micro-businesses, sole traders and contractors as part of the skills response for the built environment.[27]

Greater certainty in the pipeline of retrofit work is also important. The Commission heard that short-term funding arrangements can make it difficult for contractors to plan ahead, recruit workers and invest in training. A more stable pipeline of work can give businesses greater confidence to build capacity and develop their workforce. This is consistent with the National Retrofit Plan's emphasis on supporting industry confidence to invest, grow and take on workers.[28]

The Commission recommends that skills and retrofit policy include targeted pathways for SMEs, micro-businesses and self-employed workers to access training and upskilling. This should include flexible and modular training, measures to reduce the cost and time barriers to participation, and greater multiannual certainty in public retrofit programmes to support investment in skills and workforce capacity.

Using public investment and procurement to support good jobs

The Commission heard that the annual nature of many State funding programmes results in an inability for workers and employers to plan ahead. This is of particular importance for Local Authority retrofit works where the Commission heard deep dissatisfaction within the market in response to the current 'Letters of Comfort' that are offered to contractors, which prevent long-term certainty in work. Coupled with the reputation of high administrative costs in complying with Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) grants, workers and employers are not enthused to work in retrofit.

Given the scale of public investment in retrofit and renewable energy, the State has significant influence over the development of this labour market. State contracts and grant programmes influence the pipeline for work, the supply chain and employment conditions.

Public procurement provides one means of using this investment to support wider Just Transition outcomes. International research identifies measures such as social-value criteria, workforce training requirements and apprenticeship clauses as ways of linking public construction investment to skills development and employment outcomes.[29]

The Commission recommends that Government examine how existing public procurement and retrofit funding arrangements can more consistently support Just Transition outcomes, including decent work, workforce training and apprenticeships. In particular, the Commission recommends that the DCEE, and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) work to provide certainty to the market with multiannual policies and funding to encourage contractors and employers to plan for long-term work in the retrofit industry and undertake the necessary training.

27 SOLAS(2024) Green Skills 2030; The 1st National Further Education & Training (FET) Strategy for the Green Transition https://www.solas.ie/f/70398/x/135e0f3789/solas-green-skills-strategy-2030.pdf

28 The Government's National Retrofit Plan (2021) https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/national-retrofit-plan.pdf is the predecessor to the National Residential Retrofit Plan which was updated in 2026 https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/658e9beb/Nat-Retrofit-Res-Plan-2026.pdf

29 Institute of Human Rights and Business (2024) Advancing Just Transitions in the Built Environment: A Global Research Project Exploring Human Rights in the Green Transition https://www.ihrb.org/resources/advancing-just-transitions-in-the-built-environment-exploring-human-rights-in-the-green-transition

Workforce diversity and inclusion

Increasing workforce numbers will require construction and retrofit employment to become accessible and attractive to a wider section of society. Women and persons with disability remain underrepresented, while migrant workers and young people entering construction can experience distinct barriers to recruitment, training, retention and career development.

The research undertaken by Ecorys specific to Ireland identified both the continued male dominance of construction and the expected importance of migrant workers in meeting labour demand.[30] Missed wages, training costs, transport, childcare responsibilities, and disability awareness all affect who can participate in this emerging green labour market.

The Commission recommends the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) introduce targeted supports for underrepresented communities to participate in retrofit skills training and upskilling, including self-employed workers. In addition, the Commission notes that recognition of prior learning and overseas skills and qualifications should be considered to improve the ability of migrant workers with distinct skills to participate in the labour market.

Constructing Equality Ireland

Women remain significantly underrepresented in Ireland's construction sector, accounting for just 10.9% of the workforce, as well as 9.1% of board positions and 15.2% of senior leadership roles.

In October 2026, Constructing Equality Ireland[31] was launched as an industry-led initiative to accelerate gender equality and increase the representation of women across the construction sector. Facilitated by Business in the Community Ireland and supported by organisations from across the built environment, the initiative brings employers and industry bodies together to identify practical ways to improve the attraction, retention and progression of women.

Its initial work will focus on early-career recruitment and the retention of women through industry roundtables, which will inform an industry-wide Gender Equality Action Plan.

Initiatives such as this demonstrate how employers and industry can work collectively to address barriers to participation. As employment in retrofit and the wider built environment expands, improving access for women and other underrepresented groups will be important to ensuring that the employment opportunities created by the transition are shared more widely.

30 Ecorys (2026) Towards a Just Transition for Workers in the Built Environment in Europe: Annex 1: Country Fiche – Ireland

31 Constructing Equality Ireland is a coalition of organisations from across Ireland's built environment sector. The coalition is facilitated by Business in the Community https://bitc.ie/irelands-built-environment-joins-forces-to-accelerate-gender-equality/

St Andrews Resource Centre Education and Training Hub

The Education and Training Hub in Dublin's city centre offers free training courses in construction and retrofit skills, including pathways to apprenticeships. This centre showcases the important role local community centres can provide for the just transition in the built environment.

The initial 3 week course in Construction Skills has recently celebrated the 4,000th graduate from this centre, where 60% of participants start work within one month of graduation. The skills course is complemented by their follow-on QQI Level 4 Retrofitting Course, and entry to a range of apprenticeships in traditional crafts such as electricians and plumbers.

Participants come from a wide range of backgrounds, including those who have experienced addiction, homelessness or prison. Women are also encouraged to participate in what is traditionally a male dominated space.

The course is open to anyone unemployed, entitled to work in Ireland and living in the community and is supported in partnership with the Department of Social Protection, SOLAS and the National Construction Training Centre.

Trusted advisers; Building community capacity to lead

A just transition in the built environment must ensure that people have the information, confidence and practical support needed to participate in retrofit. Research indicates about 40% of homeowners have no intention of retrofitting their home.[32] Many of those who have already participated in a retrofit of their homes are likely to have been highly motivated early adopters. The Commission therefore cautions that reaching the wider population will require greater attention to the practical, financial and information barriers they face. NESC similarly identifies cost, complex processes, uncertainty and practical issues as barriers to household participation.[33]

The Commission heard many fears and concerns from residents before and after retrofit works. These included disruption, unexpected costs, poor-quality work, rising energy costs from heat pumps, and difficulties learning to use new technologies such as heat pumps, solar power and solar PV. Even where local authorities covered the cost, residents were uncertain that the benefits would justify the disruption. For others, the grant application process itself is a barrier, due to difficulties accessing online information and concerns about completing forms correctly.

Research on household participation examines both the number of households abandoning retrofit projects and the characteristics of projects that are completed. The evidence shows that even when residents are not paying for the works themselves, 9% of applicants drop out before works start, and that shallow measures such as ventilation upgrades are more likely to be abandoned, while deeper measures offering perceived higher benefits are more likely to be completed.[34]

Community-led approaches can overcome these challenges through the provision of locally appropriate knowledge, advice and support. However, the capacity to participate is not evenly distributed. Some communities have established organisations, experienced volunteers and access to professional expertise, while others have limited or no resources or capacity to develop an energy project or support its implementation. A Just Transition should therefore not depend on communities already having the resources, expertise or volunteer capacity to organise for themselves.

32 Lynch, M. (2026) A review of residential heat decarbonisation in Ireland Economic and Social Research Institute, Quarterly Economic Commentary https://www.esri.ie/system/files/publications/QEC2026SPR_SA_Lynch.pdf

33 National Economic and Social Council (2025) Council Report No.170 – Connecting People to the Energy Transition https://www.nesc.ie/news-events/press-releases/council-report-170-people-energy-transition/

34 A. Pillai, M. Tovar Reaños and J. Curtis, (2021) An examination of energy efficiency retrofit scheme applications by low-income households in Ireland, Heliyon, 7, e08205 https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2405844021023082

The National Economic and Social Council has previously recommended the introduction of independent community-based advisers to support people through reducing energy use and removing fossil fuels from their homes.[35] NESC further highlights the role local energy and community actors can play in supporting take-up of energy-efficient measures and new technologies such as solar PV, and recommends supporting and resourcing community advisers to reach out to vulnerable communities and those areas with high levels of energy poverty. The National Residential Retrofit Plan highlights the role of 'Energy Champions' as a best practice model for home retrofit, however a policy to support this concept has not yet been implemented on a national scale.

The Commission recommends the development of a national network of independent, locally based energy advisers as part of the infrastructure required to build community capacity and support participation in the transition. Energy advisers should draw on local knowledge and trusted community relationships to reach households and groups that may otherwise struggle to access support and provide practical, administrative and technical support to households before and after retrofit, including help accessing supports, navigating building works and adapting to new heating and energy technologies.

Southend, Wexford

In 2023, the Wexford Town Sustainable Energy Community partnered with the Sláintecare Healthy Community, and Wexford County Council to hire a local energy advisor on a part-time basis to support the local community with advice on home energy with the local Family Resource Centre.

The advisor offered a drop-in clinic once a week and helped people understand home energy use, opportunities to lower their energy costs, and navigate grant applications.

Ringsend, Dublin

The Raytown Energy Dock[36] is a free, independent energy advice clinic for the local Ringsend and Irishtown community, providing support on everything from lowering energy bills right through to home energy upgrades.

The service is provided as a drop-in clinic one morning a week by Codema, Dublin's Energy Agency and is supported and co-funded by the European Union through the Horizon Europe programme.

35 National Economic and Social Council (2025) Council Report No.170 – Connecting People to the Energy Transition https://www.nesc.ie/news-events/press-releases/council-report-170-people-energy-transition/

36 Codema, Dublin's Energy Agency hosts Raytown Energy Dock https://www.codema.ie/our-work/raytown-energy-dock/

Shared Costs and Equity

Who captures the benefit of public investment in the built environment?

There is a clear tension between accelerating retrofit and modern energy solutions and ensuring fairness. Those who could benefit most, including households in energy poverty and those in the least efficient homes, often face the greatest financial and structural barriers to participation and may be more costly to reach. This is exacerbated in Ireland today by the housing crisis and the reality that renters, social housing tenants, Travellers and many others cannot choose the quality of their home and many people simply do not have the opportunity to live in a warm or efficient home.

Public investment in the built environment can produce several forms of benefit: reduced household energy consumption, improved health and comfort, increased property value, lower operating costs and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

The scale of investment required also has the potential to create benefits beyond improvements to individual properties; employment, apprenticeships, SMEs and community organisations could all realise benefits from local investment in the built environment. A just transition assessment should consider how these benefits and the costs and risks associated with the transition are distributed and plan for a greater share of the economic and social value to be retained within communities.

The Commission recommends that public investment in the built environment should be designed and assessed to ensure that its costs and benefits are shared fairly. Investment should prioritise those with the greatest need and seek to retain a greater share of its wider economic and social benefits within communities, including through good-quality employment, apprenticeships and opportunities for local businesses and community organisations.

The Commission recommends that the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation (DPEIPSRD), working with relevant Government departments, develop an approach to ensure that major public investment in the built environment is assessed for how its costs and benefits are distributed. This should include consideration of who benefits from public investment and how a greater share of the economic and social value created can be retained within communities through good-quality employment, apprenticeships and opportunities for local businesses and community organisations.

Private home retrofit; Ensuring more households can participate

Existing schemes including the Warmer Homes Scheme, the Home Energy Upgrade Loan Scheme and enhanced supports for particular households provide important routes to participation. However, gaps remain. Some households experiencing energy poverty do not qualify for fully funded retrofit, while others may have incomes above existing eligibility thresholds but still be unable to meet the cost of works or take on additional debt. There is also a wider group of low and middle-income households who may be above the eligibility thresholds for fully funded support but still cannot reasonably afford the remaining cost of retrofit or take on additional debt. These households risk falling between existing levels of support.

The Commission considers that the current approach should therefore evolve to provide greater levels of support according to household circumstances and ability to pay. This could include additional support for low-income households, older people and households living in the least energy-efficient homes. It should also recognise particular barriers that may arise for households in rural areas.

Eligibility for fully funded retrofit should also be reviewed to ensure that support reaches more households experiencing energy poverty and those least able to finance improvements themselves. Alongside this, reducing waiting times for fully funded retrofit should be a priority so that eligible households can benefit from improvements more quickly.

For some households, the principal barrier may not be eligibility but the inability to meet upfront or co-funding costs. Government should therefore consider additional financing approaches for households that cannot reasonably meet these costs or take on conventional debt. This could include deferred payment arrangements under which some or all of the cost is repaid at a later point, including following the sale or transfer of the property.

The Commission recommends that the DCEE review existing home retrofit supports to ensure that households facing the greatest financial and practical barriers can participate in and benefit from the transition. This should include

- **reviewing and expanding eligibility for fully funded retrofit and accelerating delivery for eligible households.**
- **providing higher levels of grant support where households cannot reasonably meet the remaining cost of retrofit.**
- **examining deferred payment and other financing mechanisms for households that cannot meet upfront costs or take on additional debt.**

The Commission further recommends that the DHLGH ensure that housing policy and housing supports contribute to improving the energy performance of Ireland's housing stock. This should include considering how energy performance can be better integrated into supports for the renovation and reuse of vacant and derelict homes.

Local authority led retrofit programmes; A case for sharing the benefits wider

Local authorities own approximately 8% of homes nationwide and have ambitious targets to improve the energy performance and conditions of their properties. Since retrofit programmes began, local authorities have delivered significant results and improved the living conditions for many social housing tenants across Ireland. Since 2022 more than 10,000 properties have been retrofitted to a BER B2 or higher.[37]

However, the Commission heard that the pace and capacity for delivery varies significantly between local authorities. For example, twenty-seven properties have been retrofitted by Kerry County Council over the past 3 years, while Cork County Council has undertaken 513 over the same period. For the cities where there are higher numbers of properties, discrepancies still exist, Galway City Council has retrofitted 108 properties, Waterford, 255, while Dublin City has undertaken 1,067 retrofits over the same time period.[38]

The JustHousing research team outline some of the barriers to implementation for local authorities and point to structural challenges with annual funding cycles that hamper the ability of local authorities to plan and deliver projects beyond one year in advance.[39]

The Commission recommends the DHLGH provide sustained, multiannual funding for local authority retrofit programmes and ensure greater consistency in delivery across all local authorities. Long-term funding signals are needed so that local authorities can plan and implement county-wide retrofit strategies alongside the ongoing maintenance of social housing stock. Retrofit budgets should also account for ancillary costs arising from the transition, including the replacement of appliances such as ovens or showers where gas had previously been used.

The Commission further recommends that the DHLGH and Local Authorities co-ordinate with the SEAI to share the benefits of social housing retrofit projects to adjacent private homeowners, particularly when housing type, age and condition are broadly the same within housing estates. While the private homeowner may not benefit from the works being paid for in full by the State, as the social tenant would, sharing expertise, contractors and opportunities for efficiencies could encourage greater participation from neighbouring private homeowners.

37 Parker, S. et al (2026) 2025 Local Government Climate Action Key Performance Indicators Report Summary, LGMA

38 O'Donoghue, B. et al (2025) 2024 Local Government Climate Action Key Performance Indicators. Full Report, LGMA

39 JustHousing is a research project led by Dr. Patrick Bresnihan in Maynooth University. JustHousing examines how current retrofitting policies exacerbate or alleviate social inequalities associated with Ireland's housing system https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/a1125eaaee11494c85a5536f307ab4c3/page/The-Project

Traveller accommodation and energy poverty

Traveller households can face particular barriers in the transition. Traveller representative organisations have consistently highlighted overcrowding, substandard accommodation, sanitation issues and energy poverty within the community. These challenges can be particularly acute for families living in mobile homes, where poor insulation and energy efficiency can result in high heating and electricity costs.[40]

The way energy is supplied to some Traveller accommodation can also create barriers to accessing mainstream supports. Pavee Point has highlighted the impact of shared utilities, while Government has previously acknowledged that requirements for an individual electricity account excluded some Traveller families in local-authority accommodation from electricity-credit schemes.[41]

There are also gaps in access to mainstream retrofit supports. Many existing schemes are designed around conventional homes and individual homeowners, while Traveller-specific accommodation, including mobile homes, can require different solutions.

Projects such as MOBILISE are important in developing approaches that reflect these different circumstances. The SEAI-funded project is working with Traveller stakeholders and local authorities to identify barriers and develop a roadmap for improving the energy efficiency of mobile homes.[42] [43]

Traveller organisations have called for energy efficiency and climate considerations to be embedded in Traveller accommodation policy, including prioritised retrofit and high energy standards in new accommodation.[44] Applying a Just Transition lens to Traveller accommodation therefore requires more than extending mainstream retrofit schemes. Policy needs to recognise different accommodation types, patterns of energy use and barriers to accessing existing supports, while ensuring that solutions are developed with Traveller communities and respect culturally appropriate accommodation needs.

The Commission recommends that the DHLGH and SEAI develop a targeted national approach to improving the energy efficiency of Traveller accommodation, in partnership with Traveller organisations and communities. This should build on the findings of MOBILISE and other existing research, address barriers to accessing mainstream energy and retrofit supports, and provide appropriate solutions for different accommodation types. Where existing mobile homes cannot be effectively retrofitted, the approach should consider their replacement with more energy-efficient accommodation, alongside opportunities for renewable energy on Traveller-specific sites.

40 Pavee Point, The Traveller and Roma Centre website https://www.paveepoint.ie/our-work/accommodation/

41 Pavee Point (2022) Submission to Department of the Environment, Climate, and Communications Energy Poverty Action Plan Consultation https://www.paveepoint.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Pavee-Point-Response-to-Energy-Poverty-Strategy-Consultation-1.pdf

42 MOBILISE: Measures to Improve Energy Efficiency and Ensure a Low Carbon Future for Irish Traveller, Direct Provision and Displaced Communities Living in Mobile Homes, is a research led project being undertaken by Atlantic Technological University, with funding from SEAI https://www.seai.ie/seai-research/research-database/research-projects/details/mobilise-measures-improve-energy-efficiency-and-ensure-low-carbon-future-irish-traveller-direct-provision-and-displaced-communities-living-mobile-homes

43 O'Keeffe,M. et al (2026) Irish Traveller communities and energy poverty: Methodological reflections on human-centred and community-based research Energy Research & Social Science, Volume 136, 2026 linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S2214629626001763

44 Irish Traveller Movement (2024) Submission to the Development of the Traveller AccommodationProgramme 2025 - 2029 by Irish Traveller Movement, National Traveller Women's Forum and Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre https://itmtrav.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Submission-to-the-Development-of-the-Traveller-Accommodation-February-2024.pdf

Approved Housing Bodies: supporting retrofit at scale

Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) have an important role in ensuring that social housing tenants benefit from the transition. The Commission welcomes the increase in retrofit support introduced in 2026, with grant support for AHB homes increased to around 75% of overall upgrade costs, and higher levels available for fuel-poor homes. The enhanced support is intended particularly to help address poorly performing homes and multi-unit developments, which can be more difficult to retrofit.[45]

However, increased grant rates alone will not necessarily enable AHBs to retrofit their housing stock at the scale required. The Housing Alliance has highlighted the need for greater long-term certainty and has called for a dedicated AHB retrofit scheme, reflecting the scale and particular circumstances of the sector. It has also stressed the importance of incorporating the recent funding improvements into longer-term arrangements so that AHBs can plan and budget effectively.[46]

The Commission recommends that AHBs should be supported as long-term delivery partners in the transition, rather than treated solely as recipients of individual retrofit grants. This requires predictable multiannual funding and sufficient organisational and technical capacity to assess housing stock, plan programmes, procure and oversee works, and support tenants through the transition.

45 Department of Climate Energy and the Environment (2026) Press release Minister O'Brien announces increased grant rates for Approved Housing Bodies and households at risk of energy poverty https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-climate-energy-and-the-environment/press-releases/minister-obrien-announces-increased-grant-rates-for-approved-housing-bodies-and-households-at-risk-of-energy-poverty/

46 Housing Alliance (2026) Housing Alliance Pre-Budget 2027 Submission https://housingalliance.ie/housing-alliance-pre-budget-2027-submission/

Addressing the landlord split incentive; protection against "renoviction"

People living in rented accommodation face a particular challenge in the home energy transition. Tenants pay energy bills and experience the consequences of poor quality and inefficient housing, but generally do not control decisions about investment in the property.

While incentives for landlords do exist to retrofit their properties, including grants and tax relief for insulation, solar power and improved heating systems, relatively few landlords take up these opportunities. The Commission heard landlords are not sufficiently motivated to make such investments given they do not typically experience the benefits of the investment. The Commission also heard that many tenants do not feel secure enough in their tenancy to seek retrofit upgrades and fear being made homeless or facing a rent increase, if a retrofit was to take place.

Improving the energy performance of rental housing is essential, but it must not come at the expense of affordability or security of tenure, and policy in this area should be guided by emerging evidence on how to raise standards without contributing to displacement or undermining rental housing supply within the market. Research underway at present with Tyndall National Institute should be used to guide the appropriate policy response.[47]

The Commission recommends that a laddered approach to minimum energy-performance standards in the private rental sector is introduced. This could begin with a minimum BER at the time of a new tenancy being advertised, and/or could require owners of the least performing properties to implement shallower retrofit measures such as attic insulation or cavity wall insulation which can be undertaken without the need for tenants to move out.

To prevent evictions, unaffordable rent increases and greater homelessness and housing insecurity, appropriate tenant protections will be essential. Government should monitor the effects of these requirements on rents, tenancy security, displacement and rental housing supply, and adjust implementation where necessary to avoid unintended consequences. The Commission is clear that any public investment to support the retrofit of rental properties must deliver clear benefits for tenants as well as property owners.

Energy Cloud; Sharing the benefits of renewable energy

Energy Cloud is a registered charity that diverts surplus renewable energy, which would otherwise be wasted, and redistributes it to those in energy poverty.

The Age Friendly Energy Cloud programme is a pilot project in Cork city which connects the Age Friendly programme with Energy Cloud, and diverts surplus renewable energy to elderly residents in Cork City living in both private and local authority homes.

During periods of high renewable electricity generation, residents receive a notice, via email, that they will receive free hot water.

To account for the free hot water, a credit is added to the householder's electricity bill. Residents are able to keep watch over their hot water via a mobile phone app. Throughout 2025 it was anticipated that participants would save €90 from their electricity bills which represented roughly 10% of the median household annual electricity bill.

Participants noted that they found the concept difficult to grasp at first and did not believe the offer of free hot water, however many were encouraged to participate and did so as they trusted the local Age Friendly Officer, and described good experiences with them in the past.

47 Tyndall National Institute, ongoing, Research project Polinreb: Policy Innovation to Solve the Split-Incentive Issue in Multi-Sectoral Rented Buildings https://www.tyndall.ie/news/polinreb-unlocking-energy-efficiency-in-irelands-rental-sector/

Social Dialogue and Participation

Social dialogue

A people-centred just transition requires ongoing social dialogue that goes beyond one-off consultations and enables communities, workers and affected groups to participate meaningfully in the shaping of policy and delivery. There is an important distinction between consultation, participation, and community leadership. Consultation provides people with an opportunity to express their views, while meaningful participation gives people an ongoing role in shaping decisions that affect them. Community-led approaches can go further by enabling communities to identify priorities, initiate projects and participate in their governance and delivery.

The Commission believes lived experience must be placed at the centre of decision-making, with particular attention to the inclusion of vulnerable and underrepresented groups, so that those most affected are supported to co-create responses to the challenges they face. The Commission heard of consultation fatigue and a lack of trust in participation when decision-making processes are not clearly understood or communicated.

The Commission recommends strengthening place-based dialogue on the transition in the built environment, particularly with people and communities facing the greatest barriers to participation. The National Dialogue on Climate Action should provide a framework for this engagement, building on the Commission's previous recommendations for its development. Engagement should begin early to influence policy and delivery, identify the practical and financial supports people need to participate in and benefit from retrofit and wider regeneration, and actively include groups such as tenants, social housing residents, older people and people experiencing energy poverty. Government departments, local authorities and agencies should report back on what was heard and how this feedback influenced decisions, with citizens informed on how their participation contributed to outcomes.

The Commission welcomes the establishment of the National Energy Affordability Taskforce and the development of a National Energy Affordability Action Plan. The Commission considers that the Just Transition Principles should inform this work and that people and organisations with direct experience of energy poverty and affordability challenges should have a structured role in its development and implementation. The Energy Poverty Network,[48] which brings together environmental, social justice and voluntary organisations working on energy poverty and a fair energy transition, provides one existing forum through which this experience and expertise could inform policy.

48 Membership of the Energy Poverty Network includes; Friends of the Earth Ireland; Society of St. Vincent de Paul; Age Action; Irish Rural Link; Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed; National Women's Council of Ireland; Social Justice Ireland; Disability Federation of Ireland; Irish Green Building Council; Environmental Justice Network Ireland; Irish Council for Social Housing.



The Just Transition Commission hears from local community groups about regeneration projects during its visit to Cork City

Regeneration and community-led design

Many people and communities may not experience home retrofit as a stand-alone priority, particularly in disadvantaged communities where wider concerns such as dereliction, accessibility, public space, transport and community facilities are often considered more pressing.

However, taken together, home retrofit and housing-led regeneration have the potential to reduce emissions while simultaneously building resilience and advancing social justice. Rather than beginning solely with a particular technology or retrofit target, place-based approaches can begin with the needs and priorities of a community and consider how investment in energy performance can contribute to wider regeneration.

The Commission recommends that housing-led regeneration be recognised as part of Ireland's climate transition, with national funding supporting the integration of home retrofit with wider regeneration of community and public spaces. Communities should be involved in identifying priorities and shaping regeneration programmes from an early stage.

Local authorities are well placed to support this type of coordinated regeneration, particularly when buildings and facilities are owned by local authorities.

Delayed community regeneration in Cork

The Cork City Northwest Quarter Regeneration Programme in Knocknaheeny demonstrates both the potential and the challenges of long-term, place-based regeneration. The programme provides for more than 650 new homes alongside new streets, public spaces, parks, community facilities and wider social, economic and environmental initiatives.

However, delivery has taken place over many years and has experienced significant delays. Concerns have also been raised locally about the pace of delivery and the length of time residents have waited for promised homes, amenities and wider regeneration. The Commission heard similar frustration during its engagement in the area, including concerns about commitments not being delivered within expected timeframes and tensions around the balance between social and private housing within regeneration.

At the same time, the experience demonstrates that the outcomes of investment need to be considered after new homes or retrofit works have been delivered. During its Cork visit, the Commission heard directly from residents about both the benefits and challenges associated with housing and retrofit.

The experience in Knocknaheeny reinforces the importance of sustained dialogue throughout regeneration: before decisions are made, during delivery, and after people move into new or retrofitted homes. Engagement should consider not only whether projects have been delivered, but whether commitments have been met and how investment is affecting residents' energy bills, health, comfort and wider community life.

Community-led approaches: from participation to delivery

Ireland's retrofit programmes are largely organised around individual households and properties. While financial supports are important, affordability, complexity, information and trust all affect whether households participate.

Community-led approaches provide another pathway. They can build trust, share knowledge, identify common barriers and coordinate activity across streets and neighbourhoods. Community participation should mean more than encouraging households to participate in centrally designed programmes. Communities should also have opportunities to identify priorities and develop solutions that respond to local circumstances.

There are already examples of this approach in Ireland. The SEAI Sustainable Energy Communities (SEC) network supports communities through a Learn–Plan–Do model, including support to develop Energy Master Plans based on locally identified priorities.[49] The Commission heard, however, of challenges in moving from planning to implementation, including reliance on volunteers, limited capacity and difficulties navigating delivery.

Other models demonstrate the potential to go further. In Phibsborough, the People's Transition process used community engagement to identify local priorities and developed proposals for a community-owned retrofit cooperative, connecting better housing with local employment and community wealth.[50] This work has since been built upon through The Spark, a community-led climate initiative developed by Bohemian FC and local partners, supporting practical action on green skills, retrofit and community wealth building.[51] Community organisations can also build the practical capacity of people to participate more directly in the transition. Common Knowledge in County Clare provides hands-on learning in building, renovation and repair. Its Build School covers areas including insulation, energy, plumbing, construction and the practical use of building materials and tools. Its approach is aimed at giving people greater knowledge and confidence to undertake projects themselves and engage more effectively with building and renovation work.[52]

These examples demonstrate that community participation can extend beyond consultation to communities identifying priorities, developing projects and sharing in the benefits of the transition. However, this requires sustained capacity and support. A Just Transition should not depend on communities already having the time, expertise and resources to organise themselves.

The Commission recommends strengthening support for community-led approaches to retrofit and the wider built-environment transition, with particular attention to communities with limited organisational or financial capacity. Existing programmes should provide clearer pathways from planning to delivery and support communities to develop and participate in projects that respond to locally identified needs.

The Commission recognises that communities have a wider role to play in Ireland's energy transition, including through community energy, shared renewable generation and community ownership. **The Commission will explore these issues in greater detail in its forthcoming work and consider further recommendations in that context.**

49 Sustainable Energy Community Network, hosted by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland https://www.seai.ie/plan-your-energy-journey/for-your-community/sustainable-energy-communities

50 The People's Transition Phibsborough https://www.peoplestransition.ie/peoples-transition-projects/the-peoples-transition-phibsorough

51 https://www.thespark.coop/our-work

52 The Common Knowledge https://www.ourcommonknowledge.org/

Delivering a Just Transition in the Built Environment

Ireland has an opportunity to ensure that the transition in its built environment delivers lasting benefits for people as well as for the climate. This will require sustained investment in improving homes and buildings, but also a wider understanding of what successful delivery means.

A Just Transition means ensuring that those who could benefit most are not the least able to participate. It means addressing energy poverty, providing realistic pathways for households that cannot meet the costs or complexity of retrofit, improving social and rental housing without increasing housing insecurity, and recognising the different circumstances of people and places.

It also means investing in the people needed to deliver the transition. The scale of change required can create good-quality employment, new skills and career opportunities. Long-term public investment should provide sufficient certainty to build workforce capacity and should support decent work and wider access to training and employment.

Delivery should increasingly consider homes as part of places and communities, rather than only as individual properties. Local authorities, community organisations and trusted advisers can help connect retrofit with regeneration, climate resilience and wider local priorities. Community-led approaches can also enable people to move beyond consultation and participate in identifying, developing and delivering solutions.

Above all, the transition needs to be judged by its outcomes. The Commission considers that Ireland should measure not only how many buildings are upgraded and how much carbon is reduced, but **who benefits from public investment, whether energy poverty and inequality are being reduced, whether good jobs are being created, and whether people and communities can meaningfully participate in the changes affecting them.**

Delivering a Just Transition in the built environment is therefore not simply about changing Ireland's buildings. It is an opportunity to improve homes, strengthen communities, create good work and ensure that the benefits of the transition are shared fairly.

Government Action Checklist

This checklist has been prepared by the Commission to demonstrate the list of actions necessary to implement the recommendations of this report.

Strategic Direction and Evidence Base

- The urgent and systematic application of the Just Transition Principles across the design, implementation and review of climate policy across Government. **Government departments** should be required to demonstrate how the Just Transition Principles have been applied, and to measure and report on Just Transition outcomes based on strategic KPIs.
- Government maintain long-term investment in the transition of the built environment and places greater emphasis on ensuring that the benefits of this investment are fairly shared.
- Policy and investment should be designed and assessed against both climate and Just Transition outcomes. These include reductions in energy poverty, improved housing quality and resilience to hot and cold temperatures, access to good-quality employment, and fair participation across different households and communities.
- **DCEE** progress the draft National Building Renovation Plan and public consultation as a matter of urgency. The Plan should embed the Just Transition Principles and include measurable Just Transition outcomes alongside decarbonisation and energy-performance targets.
- **DCEE** update the National Residential Retrofit Plan to ensure alignment with the National Building Renovation Plan, and the broader approach to ensuring a just transition in home retrofit.
- **DCEE** ensure Ireland's Social Climate Plan and the use of the EU Social Climate Fund are explicitly aligned with national energy poverty and retrofit policy with measurable just transition outcomes based on strategic KPIs.
- **DSP** examine the current definition and indicators of energy poverty and the approach to monitoring trends so that welfare support and the associated access to home retrofit schemes can be targeted to more vulnerable households. This should include consideration of households experiencing self-disconnection through prepayment meters, who may not be adequately captured by existing measures of energy poverty.
- **DCEE** undertake a distributional impact assessment of the CRU's National Energy Demand Strategy to assess how the costs and benefits of increased reliance on time-of-use tariffs, pre-pay meters and household demand flexibility are shared.

Government Action Checklist (cont.)

Skills for a Just Transition

- **Government** establish a coordinated mechanism between relevant departments, **the National Apprenticeships Office, SOLAS, education and training providers** and industry to regularly identify and forecast skills needs in the built environment and translate these into apprenticeships and training provision.
- Priority is given to areas of identified skills shortage, including district energy, traditional building retrofit and digital technologies, alongside the non-technical skills needed to support community participation in the transition.
- Skills and retrofit policy should include targeted pathways for SMEs, micro-businesses and self-employed workers to access training and upskilling. This should include flexible and modular training, measures to reduce the cost and time barriers to participation, and greater multiannual certainty in public retrofit programmes to support investment in skills and workforce capacity.
- Government examine how existing public procurement and retrofit funding arrangements can more consistently support Just Transition outcomes, including decent work, workforce training and apprenticeships.
- **DCEE**, and **DHLGH** work to provide certainty to the market with multiannual policies and funding to encourage contractors and employers to plan for long-term work in the retrofit industry and undertake the necessary training.
- **DFHERIS** introduce targeted supports for underrepresented communities to participate in retrofit skills training and upskilling, including self-employed workers. In addition, the Commission notes that recognition of prior learning and overseas skills and qualifications should be considered to improve the ability of migrant workers with distinct skills to participate in the labour market.
- **Government** develop a national network of independent, locally based energy advisers. Energy advisers should draw on local knowledge and trusted community relationships to reach households and groups that may otherwise struggle to access support, and provide practical, administrative and technical support to households before and after retrofit, including help accessing supports, navigating building works and adapting to new heating and energy technologies.

Shared Costs and Equity

- **Government** design public investment in the built environment to ensure that its costs and benefits are shared fairly. Investment should prioritise those with the greatest need and seek to retain a greater share of its wider economic and social benefits within communities, including through good-quality employment, apprenticeships and opportunities for local businesses and community organisations.
- **DPEIPSRD** working with relevant Government departments develop an approach to ensure that major public investment in the built environment is assessed for how its costs and benefits are distributed. This should include consideration of who benefits from public investment and how a greater share of the economic and social value created can be retained within communities through good-quality employment, apprenticeships and opportunities for local businesses and community organisations.
- **DCEE** review existing home retrofit supports to ensure that households facing the greatest financial and practical barriers can participate in and benefit from the transition. This should include;
    - reviewing and expanding eligibility for fully funded retrofit and accelerating delivery for eligible households.
    - providing higher levels of grant support where households cannot reasonably meet the remaining cost of retrofit.
    - examining deferred payment and other financing mechanisms for households that cannot meet upfront costs or take on additional debt.
- **DHLGH** ensure that housing policy and housing supports contribute to improving the energy performance of Ireland's housing stock. This should include considering how energy performance can be better integrated into supports for the renovation and reuse of vacant and derelict homes.
- **DHLGH** provide sustained, multiannual funding for local authority retrofit programmes and ensure greater consistency in delivery across all local authorities.
- **DHLGH** and Local Authorities co-ordinate with the SEAI to share the benefits of social housing retrofit projects to adjacent private homeowners, particularly when housing type, age and condition are broadly the same within housing estates.

Government Action Checklist (cont.)

- **DHLGH** and **SEAI** develop a targeted national approach to improving the energy efficiency of Traveller accommodation, in partnership with Traveller organisations and communities. This should build on the findings of MOBILISE and other existing research, address barriers to accessing mainstream energy and retrofit supports, and provide appropriate solutions for different accommodation types. Where existing mobile homes cannot be effectively retrofitted, the approach should consider their replacement with more energy-efficient accommodation, alongside opportunities for renewable energy on Traveller-specific sites.
- **AHBs** should be supported as long-term delivery partners in the transition, rather than treated solely as recipients of individual retrofit grants. This requires predictable multiannual funding and sufficient organisational and technical capacity to assess housing stock, plan programmes, procure and oversee works, and support tenants through the transition.
- **Government** introduce a laddered approach towards minimum energy-performance standards in the private rental sector, beginning with the least energy-efficient homes. This should include realistic timelines, practical routes to compliance and appropriate support for landlords. New requirements and any public funding for landlords should be accompanied by safeguards against unaffordable rent increases, eviction and displacement, ensuring that tenants benefit from improvements. Government should monitor the impact on rents, tenancy security and rental housing supply, and adjust implementation where necessary to avoid unintended consequences.

Social Dialogue and Participation

- **The National Dialogue on Climate Action** should provide a framework for engagement on the transition in the built environment, building on the Commission's previous recommendations for its development. Engagement should begin early to influence policy and delivery, identify the practical and financial supports people need to participate in and benefit from retrofit and wider regeneration, and actively include groups such as tenants, social housing residents, older people and people experiencing energy poverty. **Government departments, local authorities and agencies** should report back on what was heard and how this feedback influenced decisions, with citizens informed on how their participation contributed to outcomes.
- The Just Transition Principles should inform the **National Energy Affordability Taskforce,** and the **National Energy Affordability Action Plan** and that people and organisations with direct experience of energy poverty and affordability challenges should have a structured role in its development and implementation. **The Energy Poverty Network**, which brings together environmental, social justice and voluntary organisations working on energy poverty and a fair energy transition, provides one existing forum through which this experience and expertise could inform policy.
- Housing-led regeneration be recognised as part of Ireland's climate transition, with national funding supporting the integration of home retrofit with wider regeneration of community and public spaces. **Communities** should be involved in identifying priorities and shaping regeneration programmes from an early stage.
- **Government** strengthen support for community-led approaches to retrofit and the wider built-environment transition, with particular attention to communities with limited organisational or financial capacity. Existing programmes should provide clearer pathways from planning to delivery and support communities to develop and participate in projects that respond to locally identified needs.

Acronyms

AHB	Approved Housing Body / Approved Housing Bodies
BER	Building Energy Rating
CRU	Commission for Regulation of Utilities
DCEE	Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment
DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
DHLGH	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
DPEIPSRD	Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation
DSP	Department of Social Protection
EC	European Commission
EPBD	Energy Performance of Buildings Directive
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
EU	European Union
FET	Further Education and Training
KPI / KPIs	Key Performance Indicator / Key Performance Indicators

NBRP	National Building Renovation Plan
NESC	National Economic and Social Council
NRRP	National Residential Retrofit Plan
PV	Photovoltaic
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
SEAI	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland
SME / SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprise / Enterprises
SVP	Society of St Vincent de Paul

Glossary

Carbon budgets	Ireland's carbon budgets are legally binding, five-year economy-wide limits on total greenhouse gas emissions, allocated to each sector of the economy.
Climate Action Plan (CAP)	The CAP aims to provide a decarbonisation pathway to 2030 consistent with Carbon Budgets and an overall aim to achieve climate neutrality in Ireland by 2050.
Energy poverty	Energy poverty means a household's lack of access to essential energy services, where such services provide basic levels and decent standards of living and health, including adequate heating, hot water, cooling, lighting, and energy to power appliances, caused by a combination of factors, including at least non-affordability, insufficient disposable income, high energy expenditure and poor energy efficiency of homes. This definition has been adopted by the Irish Government for the purposes of the Social Climate Plan, and is aligned with the EU's Recast Energy Efficiency Directive.
Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD)	The EPBD is the European Union's primary legislative framework designed to decarbonise and improve the energy and carbon performance of the building stock across Europe.
Greenhouse gas emissions	Greenhouse gases are a group of gases that prevent heat escaping into space, raising the surface temperature of the planet. Human-induced increase in their presence in the atmosphere contribute to anthropogenic climate change and global warming.
Just Transition Principles Framework	The Just Transition Principles Framework is made up of four principles: • An integrated, structured, and evidence-based approach to identify and plan our response to just transition requirements; • People are equipped with the right skills to be able to participate in and benefit from the future net zero economy; • The costs are shared so that the impact is equitable and existing inequalities are not exacerbated; and Social dialogue to ensure impacted citizens and communities are empowered and are core to the transition process.

National Building Renovation Plan (NBRP)	Ireland must publish a National Building Renovation Plan (NBRP) which will outline how Ireland will ensure the renovation of the national stock of residential and non-residential buildings, both public and private, into a highly energy-efficient and decarbonised building stock by 2050, with the objective of transforming existing buildings into zero-emission buildings. These Plans are a requirement under Article 3 of the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD).
National Residential Retrofit Plan (NRRP)	The NRRP was published in 2026 and is Ireland's national strategy to make homes warmer, more comfortable, and energy-efficient while cutting emissions and lowering energy bills
Nearly Zero Energy Building (NZEB)	A Nearly Zero Energy Building is a building with very high energy performance and very low energy needs, with the energy required covered to a significant extent by renewable sources, including energy produced on-site or nearby. The NZEB standard has applied to new buildings across the EU since the end of 2020.
Social Climate Plan	Ireland is required by EU law to develop a national Social Climate Plan. This mandatory plan, co-funded from the Social Climate Fund, will set out measures to cushion the impact, on those who may struggle the most, of rising energy and transport costs as Europe and Ireland moves towards climate neutrality
SOLAS	SOLAS is the state agency responsible for Further Education and Training in Ireland.
Split incentive	In the case of rented properties the split incentive is deemed to occur as landlords are not incentivised to invest in retrofit as they do not primarily benefit from the investment. At the same time tenants would benefit from the investment but are not incentivised/not permitted to invest in a property they do not own and do not have sufficient long term security of tenure to justify the investment.
Sustainable Energy Community (SEC)	An SEC is a group of local energy users in Ireland who work together to reduce energy use, lower costs, and cut greenhouse gas emissions. In Ireland the SEC programme is funded by the SEAI.
Zero-Emission Building (ZEB)	A Zero-Emission Building is a building with very high energy performance that produces no on-site carbon emissions from fossil fuels. Under the revised EU Energy Performance of Buildings Directive, the ZEB standard will apply to new buildings owned by public bodies from 1 January 2028 and to all other new buildings from 1 January 2030.

Supporting Information

About the Commission

The Just Transition Commission was established in late 2024 as an advisory body to Government. Commissioners were appointed by Government for a three-year term (2024-2027). The Commission is composed of representatives nominated through the five recognised pillars of social dialogue:

- Environmental
- Agriculture
- Community and Voluntary
- Trade Union
- Employer

In addition, independent experts are appointed to provide specialist expertise in areas including climate policy, labour markets, governance, economics, and social inclusion.

This composition is intended to ensure that a range of perspectives are reflected in the Commission's advice and that the public voice is represented in the development of just transition policy.

Secretariat Support

The Commission would like to thank the Secretariat of the Just Transition Commission for their ongoing support and contributions. The Secretariat is provided by the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment by Catherine O'Leery Reid, Michael Keegan, Rónán Stokes and Conor Reynolds. The Commission extends its sincere appreciation to all those who engage with its work. The Commission is grateful for the input, expertise, insights and first-hand experience shared, as well as the support of those who help facilitate this engagement.

The Commission would also like to thank Kate Ruddock for support with drafting this report.

List of Stakeholders Consulted

Policy & Academic

- Economic, Social and Research Institute
- National Economic and Social Council
- Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland
- Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Cork City Council

Representative Groups

- Energy Poverty Network (Member organisations included: Friends of the Earth Ireland; Society of St. Vincent de Paul; Age Action; Irish Rural Link; Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed; National Women's Council of Ireland; Social Justice Ireland; Disability Federation of Ireland; Irish Green Building Council; Environmental Justice Network Ireland; Irish Council for Social Housing.)
- Irish Property Owners Association
- Eco-Vision
- Feminist Communities for Climate Justice
- National Youth Council of Ireland
- Irish Rural Link
- County and City Management Association
- Pavee Point
- Just Housing, Maynooth University

Locations Visited

- Churchfield, social housing retrofit project
- Knocknaheeny Regeneration Project
- Cork City Partnership, Harbour View Road
- Participants in Age Friendly Energy Cloud project
- NICHE Community Garden



Ali Sheridan - Chair

Independent Expert
Appointed October 2024



Oisín Coghlan

Environment Pillar Representative
Appointed October 2024



Conor Minogue

Business Pillar Representative
Appointed October 2024



Ryan McKinney

Trade Union Pillar Representative
Appointed October 2024



Dr. Diarmuid Torney

Independent Expert
Appointed October 2024



Suresh Kumar

Independent Expert
Appointed October 2024



Dr. Evan Boyle

Independent Expert
Appointed October 2024



Tanya Ward

Independent Expert
Appointed October 2024



Michelle Murphy

Community and Voluntary Pillar Representative
Appointed October 2024



Vanessa Kiely O'Connor

Agriculture Pillar Representative
Appointed October 2024



Brian Flynn

Independent Expert
Appointed March 2026

Just Transition Commission's Terms of Reference

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
	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.

Get in touch!

The Commission is keen to hear from people, communities, organisations and wider societal actors working towards a just transition. We are eager to hear about both the challenges being faced and positive examples of how social and climate goals can be integrated to support action, inclusion, justice and equality. To share your insights or stories, please email us at

info@justtransitioncommission.ie
justtransitioncommission.ie

Just Transition Commission of Ireland
Coimisiún na hÉireann um Aistriú Cóir



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