



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

# National Youth Assembly on Climate

## Summary Report

2024



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# 1. Key Recommendations from the Assembly

The National Youth Assembly on Climate convened on Thursday April 11th 2024, at the offices of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth (DCEDIY) in collaboration with the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC).



## National Youth Assembly on Climate 2024 RECOMMENDATIONS

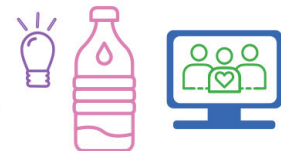
The National Youth Assembly on Climate represents a delivery of the commitment under the Programme for Government and constitutes the medium through which young people can guide the direction of the National Climate Action Plan through the National Dialogue on Climate Action.

The third annual National Youth Assembly on Climate took place on the 11th April 2024. 67 youth delegates aged 12-24 from across Ireland attended, representing youth organisations, Comhairle na nÓg (Youth Councils) and other interested organisations. The delegates attended a preparation session in advance of the Assembly and then took part in a day of discussions. They have produced nine key recommendations for the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications and The Government to consider. These are outlined below.



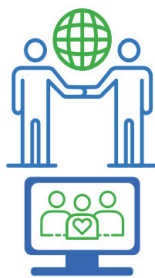
### Education

The Government should make sure that **everyone has access** to the same services and information about **climate change**. Climate change, sustainability and climate action should be **actively taught** in CSPE classes.



### Engagement

The Government should provide opportunities for those who are engaged in **climate action** to have an influence at a decision making level. All people should have an **equal voice** in decisions. In order to keep people engaged in Climate action there should be initiatives, careers and **reward systems** in place.



The Government should provide easily accessible **funding** given through youth organisations and NGOs for local youth-led climate initiatives.



The Government should publish accurate and relevant **information** about Climate Change and the **real people** being affected by it.



Involve local **stakeholders** in the process of developing programmes and initiatives in their area that address their **climate needs** e.g. tidy town committees



Introduce less taxation on **eco-friendly items** or more taxation on non-eco friendly items.



### Transport

Improve transport in Ireland:

Introduce a universal, nationwide **travel card** that works like a leap card, which covers the whole island and all forms of transport.



Prioritise more money and investment into **public transport** e.g. from infrastructure, climate and Nature fund bill.



Improve accessibility of public transport to **people of all backgrounds**, needs and abilities e.g. more systems like quiet buses.



Invest in more **electric power** and EV within the public transport system.



Improve bus timetables, availability and **rail infrastructure**, with a focus on rural and smaller towns, and standardise pricing countryside on buses.



The Government should provide **accessible grants** for first time car buyers on eco-friendly cars. The cost of driving lessons should be reduced.



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## 2. Summary

The Climate Action Plan is a detailed plan for achieving a climate-neutral economy and includes a commitment to convene a Youth Climate Assembly. The National Youth Assembly on Climate is a joint initiative led by DCEDIY and DECC under the **National Dialogue on Climate Action (NDCA)**.

Ahead of the annual National Youth Assembly on Climate approx. 50 youth delegates attended a preparation session on 9 March 2024, where they discussed public and community engagement with experts Niall McCaffrey, Director at IPSOS B&A, Lisa Fingleton, Eco social Artist, Writer and Organic Grower and Jennifer Salmon, Ireland's Youth Climate Ambassador. The preparation session provided young people with information to enable them to make their own informed opinions. It was also an opportunity to ask questions and have initial interaction with decision makers.

The National Youth Assembly on Climate 2024 convened on Thursday 11th April 2024, from 11am to 4pm. 67 youth delegates (aged 12 to 24) from across Ireland gathered at the DCEDIY offices, Miesian Plaza, Baggot Street, Dublin 2. The Assembly was opened by members of the Youth Advisory Group and a pre-recorded video welcome from Minister for the Department of the Environment, Climate, and Communications was shown to the assembly. Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth of Ireland, Roderic O'Gorman also addressed the Assembly during this opening.

An interactive workshop took place in groups that included discussion about who could be engaged in climate action, how to engage people, and the challenges to engagement on climate issues. Delegates then created pen pictures of three types of individuals – those not engaged in climate action, those somewhat engaged with climate action and those very engaged with climate action.

The delegates then took part in a World Café session which explored what the Government needs to do to engage the public on climate action. Following this session the Assembly reviewed the recommendations made during the World Café and voted on recommendations to Government.

Delegates from the Assembly presented their draft recommendations to Dr. Robert Mooney (DECC) who then addressed the Assembly. Closing remarks were provided by the Youth Advisory Group. United Nations Youth Delegate to for Ireland Mohammad Naeem attended the assembly as an independent observer to ensure that it was facilitated according to best practice in terms of youth participation.

On May 2nd 2024, following the confirmation of the delegates recommendations, an interactive webinar attended by Minister Ryan was convened. At this event, delegates presented the assembly's recommendations directly to Minister Ryan. Following the presentation of recommendations Mr. Ryan and key policy stakeholders across DECC, DECDIY and the Department of Education responded with their views on the recommendations. At the end of the webinar, Minister Ryan opened the forum to a range of questions from delegates.

This short summary report presents the recommendations and summarises the proceedings of the National Youth Assembly on Climate 2024, compiled from written views from the delegates and notes of discussions taken on the day. It also includes Minister Ryan's responses to each of the assembly recommendations.



## 3 Discussions

### 3.1 Pen Pictures of People & Climate Engagement

A persona is a fictional character created to represent the different characteristics of a target audience. Creating personas helps people to understand the perceived needs, experiences, behaviours and goals of a specific group.

One of the first tasks for delegates was to create individuals personas of people that they believed were either very engaged, somewhat engaged, and not at all engaged with climate action. In total, 81 personas were created by delegates. Of the 81 personas, 24 were identified as very engaged, 12 were not at all engaged and 45 were identified as sometimes engaged.

#### 3.1.1 Those Very Engaged

Of the 22 that were identified as very engaged, all bar 4 were identified as being under the age of 25. Responding to a question about that the positive environmental action that this audience was engaged focused on participation in recycling schemes, using public transport frequently, and some transportation in electric vehicles. They also were likely to engage in activities such as volunteering as part of green schools or tidy towns with activities such as litter picking. They were identified as growing fruit and vegetables when they can, utilise thrift shops and buy second-hand furniture. Those who were a little older but also very engaged were identified as flying less often, driving electric vehicles, having solar panels on their home and being involved in protests.

These personas were not immune to actions that negatively impacted the environment. They were still purchasing some fast fashion and single-use plastics. Transport was also an issue identified with driving to work and travelling abroad.

This very engaged audience was believed to be negatively impacted by government policies. Frustrations included poor public transport options. Incomplete infrastructure was also identified with towns being made pedestrian-friendly but lacking other infrastructure to make the town work better.

Emotional levels were viewed as high amongst this audience with significant levels of anxiety and worry about the climate impact. There was also a sense of frustration at the perceived lack of action from organisations including government and businesses.

#### 3.1.2 Those Somewhat Engaged

A total of 45 personas were identified as being somewhat engaged in climate action, 32 of these were aged between 30 and 50. This group were often characterised as having children and working full time. Although these personas were only somewhat engaged, they took part in many positive actions. These included using public transport, ride sharing, posting about environmental issues on social media, planting native flora, and buying second hand furniture or clothing. They were also viewed as the type of people to own electric vehicles, solar panels, and reusable coffee cups.



The somewhat engaged personas took part in many of the same positive actions as the very engaged personas. However, they were viewed as taking part in more negative actions. The negative actions included using disposable vapes, pesticides in their gardens, fossil fuels in their homes, and single use plastic. They were also identified as the type of people to drive everywhere, buy fast fashion, travel abroad every year, and forget to turn off lights in their house.

Personas who were somewhat engaged were impacted positively by the recycling return scheme, green initiatives in their workplaces, and solar panel grant schemes. They were negatively impacted by the higher price of eco-friendly products, extreme weather events, and disruptions in their daily life due to climate protests.

Those who were somewhat engaged do care about climate and wish they could do more. They feel they do not understand climate change and do not have the time to make it a priority. However, many would like to learn more and would like to make the world a better place for their children.

### 3.1.3 Those Not At All Engaged

The 12 personas identified as not at all engaged were viewed as being over the age of 25, with just 2 personas in this group being younger than this. Many were identified as having children.

Though these personas were viewed as not being at all engaged, some evidence of positive actions towards the environment was evident. These actions included not driving a car, thrift shopping, recycling and the purchase of organic meat. Despite not being engaged themselves some were believed to educate their children about climate action.

The actions that were viewed as being negative to the environment included the purchase of fast fashion, long-haul travel and the ownership of two cars. They were also believed to litter, use single-use plastic and have high water usage.

Looking at the impact of policies, this audience is annoyed by the imposition of the recycling scheme. They also view the cost of living especially fuel costs as being a problem determined by tax policy.

Those not engaged do not have an emotional concern about the climate. They believe that they are not impacted by climate change. They are viewed as not caring and have a tendency not even to consider the environment.

## 3.2 Why is it Important to Engage Population in Climate Actions

During the World Café session, delegates were asked to consider three questions for these same different audiences:

- Those who are very engaged in climate action
- Those who are sometimes engaged with climate action
- Those who are not engaged in climate action

When considering these audiences, delegates were then asked to consider three questions.

- Why is it important to engage this group?
- What are the challenges to engaging this group in climate action?
- What can the government do to support the engagement of this group and to address these challenges?

The following sections summarise the findings of discussions for each of the questions. Firstly, the common themes for all groups are summarised. The themes that are distinct for each of the three groups are then discussed individually.

### Why is it important to Engage all Three Groups in Climate Action?

Attendees referenced the following:

**Collective Responsibility:** Everyone contributes to the problem and therefore everyone should be part of the solution.

**Strength in Numbers:** We are more effective when we work together. A united front is crucial for tackling this massive challenge.

**Education and Awareness:** Knowledge is power. People need to understand the seriousness of the issue and how they can contribute to positive change.

#### 3.2.1 Why is it important to Engage those not Engaged in Climate Action?

Attendees referenced the following:

**Promoting Inclusivity and Equity:** It's crucial to ensure that climate action is accessible and relevant to everyone, regardless of their background or circumstances. Diverse perspectives are essential for developing comprehensive and effective solutions.

**Emphasizing Shared Rights and Responsibilities:** Everyone has a right to be informed about climate change and a responsibility to contribute to solutions. Engaging this group helps ensure that the necessary changes are fair and just for all.



### 3.2.2 Why is it important to Engage those Sometimes Engaged in Climate Action?

Attendees referenced the following:

**Nurturing Growing Interest:** This group has some awareness and concern but may need additional encouragement and information to become more actively involved.

**Highlighting Accessibility and Impact:** Showcasing the variety of ways to participate and emphasizing that even small actions can make a difference and motivate this group to do more.

### 3.2.3 Why is it important to Engage those Very Engaged in Climate Action?

Attendees referenced the following:

**Leveraging Existing Knowledge and Passion:** This group is already informed and motivated. The focus should be on utilizing their expertise, enthusiasm, and leadership to inspire others to develop innovative solutions.

**Maintaining Momentum:** It's important to keep this group engaged and energized, as they are the driving force of the movement. Providing them with opportunities to learn, contribute, and connect with others is key.

## 3.3 What are the Challenges to Engaging all Three Groups in Climate Action?

### 3.3.1 Challenges that are Common to all Three Groups

Attendees referenced the following:

**Knowledge Deficit:** A lack of understanding about climate change and its consequences is a universal barrier. Education on the subject is necessary for all levels of engagement.

**Economic Concerns:** The costs associated with green initiatives are a recurring theme. Financial barriers prevent individuals from acting, regardless of their level of engagement.

**Cultural and Social Dynamics:** Peer pressure and cultural norms can discourage climate action, making it seem unattractive or uncool.

**Information Overload and Complexity:** Difficulty understanding complex information and feeling overwhelmed by the volume of climate change messaging discourages engagement.

**Time and Resource Constraints:** Busy lifestyles and a lack of resources limit people's ability to participate in climate action.

**Influence of Corporations:** The role of big companies in contributing to climate change and their perceived lack of action is a widespread concern.

### 3.3.2 Challenges that are Common to those Not Engaged

Attendees referenced the following:

**Motivation:** This group often lacks personal incentives to engage in climate action.

**Resistance to Change:** A tendency to stick to current habits and ways of living makes it hard to adopt new, eco-friendly behaviours.

**Media Strategy:** The challenge of effectively communicating the climate message to a diverse audience through various media outlets.

### 3.3.3 Challenges that are Common to those Sometimes Engaged

Attendees referenced the following:

**Expense and Effort:** The cost and effort required for climate initiatives can be discouraging, especially when projects run over budget or are delayed.

**Trust Issues:** A distrust in government and scepticism about the adequacy of their environmental plans.

**Overwhelm and Fatigue:** Feeling tired of hearing about climate change or the belief that one's actions won't make a difference can lead to apathy.

**Relevance:** Making climate action personally relevant to encourage deeper engagement is a key challenge.

### 3.3.4 Challenges that are Common to those who are Very Engaged

Attendees referenced the following:

**Climate Anxiety:** Highly engaged individuals may experience anxiety and hopelessness due to the scale of the problem and the slow pace of change.

**Responsibility:** A belief that significant action should come from those in power rather than individuals.

**Bias and Extremism:** The potential for personal bias and extreme actions to alienate others and narrow the scope of the conversation.

**Safety Risks:** Concerns about the personal safety of climate activists due to their visibility and confrontational activities.

**Single Narratives:** The risk of a single narrative dominating, which can overshadow the diverse impacts of climate change on different communities.

**Limited Impact and Unity:** Challenges in mobilizing large-scale action and fostering unity among local groups to increase the effectiveness of the movement.

**Activist Burnout:** Addressing the risk of burnout due to the intense pressure and emotional toll of sustained activism.

## 3.4 What can the Government do to Support the Engagement of People and to Address the Challenges?

### 3.4.1 Supports that are Common for Everyone

Common Supports necessary across all audiences:

**Education:** Delegates emphasized the need for increased education on climate change and climate action. This includes integrating it in school curriculums, making it a mandatory topic, and using various platforms to disseminate information about climate action.

**Engagement:** There was a common desire across delegates for more opportunities to engage in climate action. This includes more events, increased reach of existing programs, and creation of more opportunities for wider groups of people.

**Support:** The need for government support was highlighted by delegates. This included the provision of grants, acknowledging the efforts of those who are engaged, asking for their opinions, and supporting those who are willing to speak out.

**Infrastructure:** Improvement of infrastructure was a common theme. This involved providing modern infrastructure to rural areas, providing regular, suitable and sustainable transport links, and improving the internet.

**Communication:** Delegates stressed the importance of communication. This included cross-communication, using social media to promote climate action, and having more frequent discussions about climate change.

### 3.4.2 Supports that are Recommended for those Not Engaged

**Personal and Cultural Relevance:** Making climate change more personal and relatable is seen as a key support for those not engaged. This includes rebranding the issue to resonate with individuals and altering messages for different cultural groups.

**Economic Viability:** Making green choices economically viable is also seen as important for those not currently engaged. This includes reducing taxes, offering funds and compensation for participation in climate action, and reducing taxation on eco-friendly shops.

### 3.4.3 Supports that are Recommended for those Somewhat Engaged

**Policy and Corporate Responsibility:** Delegates highlighted the role of policy and corporate responsibility for this population. This includes implementing clearer labelling for recycling and increasing emission charges on companies.

**Social Engagement:** Social engagement is seen as a key support for this population. This includes promoting climate awareness through entertainment and making climate action appear fun and engaging.

### 3.4.4 Supports that are Recommended for those Very Engaged

**Action:** Many respondents in this group emphasized the need for immediate action. This includes creating continuous and unique projects to maintain engagement, organising climate action quickly, and setting up groups that will take action.

**Recognition:** Recognition of efforts was particularly important to keep this population engaged. This includes showcasing successes, acknowledging young people for achievements, and providing a seat at a decision-making level for those who are engaged.

## 4. Recommendations

### 4.1 Improve Transport in Ireland

#### Recommendation 1

<b>Situation</b>	Public Transport: Low capacity. Rural and urban issues. Inaccessible, too expensive, lack of consistency, should be cheaper, incentives, Leapcard accessibility.  Barrier to participation, no trains, options in certain areas. Better options - more people - less cars - less emissions.
<b>Action</b>	Fund: ringfence/ earmark public funding. Promote public transport, Economics pushing towards public transport. Transport: Buses/ trains, improve underground (metro). Highlight ways to report a.s.b [antisocial behaviour]. Lack of drivers with transport industry. Get people to respect public transport safer - police a.s.b Better system for reporting a.s.b.
<b>Recommendation</b>	Improve transport in Ireland: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduce a universal, nationwide travel card that works like a leap card, which covers the whole island and all forms of transport.</li><li>• Prioritise more money and investment into public transport e.g. from infrastructure, climate and Nature fund bill.</li><li>• Improve accessibility of public transport to people of all backgrounds, needs and abilities e.g. more systems like quiet buses.</li><li>• Invest in more electric power and EV within the public transport system.</li></ul>

#### Recommendation 2

<b>Situation</b>	Many people are trying to be sustainable but are unable to due insufficient public transport (must drive places, costs are high).
<b>Action</b>	Improve bus timetables and railway infrastructure especially in rural towns and areas. Review Leapcard system. Regulate prices. Improve availability going to places that aren't Dublin.
<b>Recommendation</b>	Improve bus timetables, availability and rail infrastructure, with a focus on rural and smaller towns, and standardise pricing countrywide on buses.



### Recommendation 3

<b>Situation</b>	There's too much CO <sub>2</sub> emissions as eco-friendly cars are not widely used due to the cost being too expensive. If you want to afford eco-friendly cars the government needs to provide grants.
<b>Action</b>	Find a way to lower the price of eco-friendly cars so more people buy them.
<b>Recommendation</b>	The Government should provide accessible grants for first time car buyers on eco-friendly cars. The cost of driving lessons should be reduced.

#### 4.1.1 Final Recommendations after voting and review

##### Recommendation 1

Introduce a universal, nationwide travel card that works like a leap card, which covers the whole island and all forms of transport.

##### Recommendation 2

Prioritise more money and investment into public transport e.g. from infrastructure, climate and Nature fund bill.

##### Recommendation 3

Improve accessibility of public transport to people of all backgrounds, needs and abilities e.g. more systems like quiet buses.

##### Recommendation 4

Invest in more electric power and EV within the public transport system.

##### Recommendation 5

Improve bus timetables, availability and rail infrastructure, with a focus on rural and smaller towns, and standardise pricing countrywide on buses.

##### Recommendation 6

The Government should provide accessible grants for first time car buyers on eco-friendly cars. The cost of driving lessons should be reduced.

## 4.2 Influence/Engagement

### Recommendation 1

<b>Situation</b>	Lack of funding. Climate groups struggle to finance initiatives.
<b>Action</b>	Easily Accessible funding options for young people through established youth organisations.
<b>Recommendation</b>	The Government should provide easily accessible funding given through youth organisations and NGOs for local youth-led climate initiatives.

## Recommendation 2

<b>Situation</b>	Irish citizens feel a disconnect between themselves and the reality of climate changes.
<b>Action</b>	Show people the truth about climate change.
<b>Recommendation</b>	The Government should publish accurate and relevant information about Climate Change and the real people being affected by it.

## Recommendation 3

<b>Situation</b>	Young, engaged people don't have a say in climate action/ don't have access.
<b>Action</b>	The Government need to make the changes and keep people engaged by setting up educational programmes.
<b>Recommendation</b>	The Government should provide opportunities for those who are engaged in climate action to have an influence at a decision making level. All people should have an equal voice in decisions. In order to keep people engaged in Climate action there should be initiatives, careers and reward systems in place.

## Recommendation 4

<b>Situation</b>	People need initiatives that are readily available and accessible to further engage in climate action.
<b>Action</b>	To create initiatives/ programmes on climate.
<b>Recommendation</b>	Involve local stakeholders in the process of developing programmes and initiatives in their area that address their climate needs e.g. tidy town committees.

## Recommendation 5

<b>Situation</b>	[Blank]
<b>Action</b>	[Blank]
<b>Recommendation</b>	Introduce less taxation on eco-friendly items or more taxation on non-eco friendly items.

### 4.2.1 Final Recommendations after voting and review

#### Recommendation 1

The Government should provide opportunities for those who are engaged in climate action to have an influence at a decision-making level. All people should have an equal voice in decisions. In order to keep people engaged in Climate action there should be initiatives, careers and reward systems in place.

#### Recommendation 2

Involve local stakeholders in the process of developing programmes and initiatives in their area that address their climate needs e.g. tidy town committees.

#### Recommendation 3

Introduce less taxation on eco-friendly items or more taxation on non-eco friendly items.

## 4.3 Education

#### Recommendation 1

<b>Situation</b>	Lack of information from government. Lack of education. Stigmatisation of young activists. Some schools not teaching CSPE.
<b>Action</b>	Change the lack of education on climate action - Department of Education, DCEDIY, Dept of Environment, Climate and Communication.
<b>Recommendation</b>	The Government should make sure that everyone has access to the same services and information about climate change. Climate change, sustainability and climate action should be actively taught in CSPE classes.

### 4.3.1 Final Recommendation after voting and review

#### Recommendation 1

The Government should make sure that everyone has access to the same services and information about climate change. Climate change, sustainability and climate action should be actively taught in CSPE classes.



## 5. Feedback on the Assembly's Recommendations

The Assembly presented their recommendations directly to the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications at a follow up webinar on Thursday May 2nd 2024 at 6:15pm, where they discussed their recommendations with Minister Ryan. The Minister responded directly to each of the recommendations presented by nominated delegates at the webinar.

The Minister acknowledged that young people have led the way on calling for stronger, more urgent climate action. He highlighted that it is so important that the Government, as decision-makers listen to the voices of young people and heed their call to action. He thanked the Assembly for their participation and work done in preparation.

### 5.1 Improve Transport in Ireland

Minister Ryan's Response:

- I am very grateful to the Assembly for the ideas they have contributed on how my Department can deliver meaningful improvements across our Transport system and deliver on our climate commitments.

#### 5.1.1 Public Transport Improvements

- We are strongly committed to improving public transport services throughout the country and to piloting new transport initiatives for people of all ages and abilities living here. We have been working to deliver improvements to the availability and regularity of public transport across urban and rural areas.
- Beginning with our Bus Network, **Connecting Ireland** is a major 5-year public transport initiative developed by the NTA to increase connectivity outside our major cities and towns.
- Under the Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan,
  - Over 100 new or additional service introduced since Connecting Ireland commencement in mid-2022.
  - Over 190 towns and villages have been connected to the public transport network, and 366,100 people have access to new and enhanced bus services; and
  - 65 new and enhanced services implemented during 2023.
- Looking to our metropolitan areas, our **BusConnects programme** for Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford will introduce a series of new bus corridors, making bus journeys in our cities faster and more reliable.



### 5.1.2 Rail

- As for our rail network, **DART+**, will provide for the expansion of our electrified rail network in the Greater Dublin Area, extending the existing electrified railway from 50km to 150km while also increasing frequency and capacity.
- We have also been working to progress the delivery of **MetroLink**, a fully segregated and mostly underground railway line between Swords and Dublin City Centre, connecting key destinations including Dublin Airport and the rail, light rail and bus network.
- The All-Island Strategic Rail Review, which is being undertaken in co-operation with the Department for Infrastructure in Northern Ireland, has made 30 recommendations for the rail system across the island out to 2050, including new rail routes in the North-Midlands and North-West, increased capacity and electrification on the intercity network, higher train speeds and frequencies, and airport connectivity. Following approval in both jurisdictions, I look forward to publishing the final review in the Summer to guide future investment across our network.
- I'm confident that our delivery of these projects will bring lasting and meaningful improvements both now and into the future.

### 5.1.3 Accessibility and Fares

- I'm proud of the work we have undertaken to make our Public Transport more accessible for people of all backgrounds, needs and abilities.
- The **Young Adult Card (YAC)** has allowed any person nationwide who is between 19 and 23 years old, to avail of an entitlement for discounted travel costs, and to increase the level of discount over and above the current student discount to an average of discount of 50% across all services, including city, intercity and rural services.
- This initiative not only promotes modal shift in the transport sector among this age group but also contributes towards a reduced reliance on private transport with associated benefit of transport emission savings.
- The NTA's next-generation ticketing (NGT) project, currently in development, will also improve the overall customer experience by enabling customers to use a debit or credit card or smartphone to pay for travel. Payment methods will be smarter, offering a greater choice of payment options and the ability for the best fare for customers to be automatically charged.
- Thinking of **persons with reduced mobility or disabilities**, all new public transport infrastructure is now accessible from the design stage.
- We also have dedicated, ring-fenced funding programme to Retrofit old inaccessible infrastructure, such as in our Victorian era train stations. The **Public Transport Accessibility Retrofit Programme** provides ringfenced funding for projects to progressively make public transport accessible, including accessible bus stops in rural/regional areas and Grant Aid for accessible taxis.
- As well as accessible infrastructure, we are continuing to provide supports to enable People with Disabilities (PWD) to travel independently on Public Transport. Among other programmes, the **Travel Assistance Scheme**, which is free of charge and successfully operating in the Greater Dublin Area, is being piloted in Cork since 2022 with plans underway to extend it to the other regional cities.

#### 5.1.4 Electrification

- I'm also particularly pleased that we are moving towards the greening of our public transport fleet on the whole.
- The **DART+ Programme** intends to triple the amount of electrified track in the Greater Dublin Area from 50km to 150km, resulting in a lower carbon and higher capacity system.
- Furthermore, the first of **100 double deck electric buses** have entered service in Dublin following charging infrastructure being installed in Summerhill and Phibsboro bus depots.

#### 5.1.5 Investment

- As you may know already, many of these critical transport projects are provided for under our National Development Plan - the largest investment plan in the history of the state. €35 billion of which has been allocated specifically to transport infrastructure, and I welcome the Assembly's reference to the establishment of a new **Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund**.
- The Fund is specifically designed to provide resources for spending in future economic downturns, so that even if we encounter economic headwinds, we will still continue to invest in the critical transport infrastructure we need.
- This investment will ensure that we have greater resilience to withstand the challenges of today and tomorrow and that we are better positioned as a society to take advantage of new potential opportunities.
- I thank the Assembly once again for their valuable input, and I look forward to continuing our work to deliver a sustainable and green transport system into the future.

### 5.2 Influence/Engagement

Minister Ryan's Response:

- Delivering on our climate ambition requires that the Government and the people of Ireland come together in a strengthened social contract for climate action and the co-creation of real solutions to these challenges.
- It is clear that climate change affects everyone but not equally, and that it is incumbent on the Government to engage, enable and empower organisations, communities of practice, and individuals across the country to take climate action. For Ireland to make the transition in a fair way, it is critical that as many people as possible are given the opportunity to share their views, perspectives, and co-design the annual Climate Action Plan and related sectoral policies.
- Under the National Dialogue on Climate Action (NDCA), the annual Climate Conversations is the mechanism through which DECC engages with a broad range of people across society through an online public consultation; workshops with populations vulnerable to the transition to climate neutrality; and interviews with people taking climate action to capture their stories. The findings are analysed and directly inform the annual Climate Action Plan.

- In 2023, the NDCA expanded its outreach to proactively engage with populations not yet engaged and those particularly vulnerable to the transition to climate neutrality, through focus groups, workshops and interviews, as well as focusing in on a number of significant issues of concern – namely the gap emerging between people’s intention to take climate action and their capacity to do so.
- The approach adopted in 2024 will build on the momentum achieved in 2023 and continue to be based on inclusiveness, fairness, and accessibility, grounded in measurable outcomes.

### 5.2.1 Climate Actions Work Programme

- The ‘Climate Actions Work’ programme was launched on March 28th and aims to meet the objectives of the whole of Government climate communications strategy to:
  - Enhance awareness and understanding
  - Build support for climate action
  - Empower people to act
- There are already great things happening across the country. The programme will promote these to create a sense of positive energy and action and a mandate across all society. Working through partners the programme will promote “access points”, identify communicators and surface inspiring stories that will be shared within their networks but also wider locally and (possibly) amplified regionally/nationally.
- The programme, supported by a national communications campaign, specifically aims to achieve the following:
  - Broaden and deepen the national understanding of climate change and its impacts.
  - Identify specific barriers to climate action, and how they can be overcome.
  - Show how climate action can mean better and more sustainable livelihoods, better air, better water, better food and more resilient communities.
  - Strengthen support for Government leadership on climate and to ensure that Irish society generally supports government initiatives to counter climate change, including decisions on investments and public policy.
- The programme builds on the work of the National Dialogue on Climate Action, expanding public engagement on climate action and reaching people who call Ireland home.
- This campaign aims to educate and inform key audiences in relation to climate change and its specific impacts on Irish communities, as well as opportunities to act and benefit from this transition.
- The campaign further aims to support these communities to take action and identify solutions in their communities that will help to realise the benefits and opportunities of climate action, as well as ways to adapt to climate change.

- The campaign will draw a number of partners and initiatives together, building a cross-sectoral, cross-societal momentum on climate action. It will highlight ways that communities can become involved in order to build a broad contract of climate action within which everyone feels they have something to contribute. It will involve and reach new audiences (especially in rural areas) and help them feel respected, heard and involved. The words and content will therefore be very varied, designed by partners (with support) generating a wide range of voices and opinions. The campaign will focus on the real people and real stories of the climate transition. Through encouraging people to tell their climate stories, the campaign will:
  - Encourage people to come together in their own place, in their own time, to think and talk about climate and to collectively put forward solutions that make most sense for their circumstances, their communities and their lifestyles.
  - Help a critical mass and diversity of Irish people understand the causes of climate change and know the collective and individual actions that can be taken to help mitigate and adapt to it in their own communities.
  - Increase public acceptance of the need for lower-carbon lifestyles and practices that enhance resilience to climate change.
  - Emphasize the principle that climate action will only work if it is fair, if it is better for communities and is something that can be addressed collaboratively.
- In relation to funding DECC provides funding to a number on youth led climate action initiatives such as the ECO-UNESCO Young Environmentalist Awards and the An Taisce Green Schools programme. The Department also funds the Irish Environmental Network which is an umbrella organisation of 38 eNGO's, many of whom of youth programmes.

### 5.2.2 Climate Youth Delegate Programme

- Each year, the Climate Youth Delegate Programme will appoint one young person from Ireland aged between 18-25 years to be part of Ireland's national and international climate change efforts for a term of 20 months. The goal of this programme is to provide the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications with a channel to support the active participation of young people in international climate policy and processes and ensure Ireland's official delegation to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) benefits from the perspectives and knowledge of youth in its work.
- Each Climate Youth Delegate will be tasked with raising awareness of Ireland's international climate action efforts through informative and engaging social media posts, including, where possible, interviews with high-level representatives. Additionally, the Climate Youth Delegate will conduct outreach with youth communities and networks across Ireland to share knowledge and gather ideas and solutions to feed into Ireland's national and international climate change priorities.



- For roughly six months of each year there will be an overlap of two Climate Youth Delegates, one serving as a junior and one as a senior. This longer term was implemented to enhance the learning opportunities arising from the role, encourage the building of strong networks and allow for additional support for each Delegate upon appointment to their role, with the senior Delegate acting in a mentorship role.
- As part of their remit, the Climate Youth Delegate will be invited to accompany the Taoiseach, Ministers and departmental officials at different national and international climate change negotiations each year to represent the voices of Irish youth. These events may include:
  - the National Youth Assembly on Climate
  - the Annual Climate conference ‘COP’ (Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC)
  - the meeting of the Subsidiary Bodies of the UNFCCC (SBs)
- COP29 is the 29th Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). COP29 will take place in Baku, Azerbaijan from 11 to 24 November 2024.

### 5.3 Education

Minister Ryan’s Response:

- Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) aims to ensure that all learners have the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including climate change, in line with SDG Target 4.7.
- ESD themes and principals are embedded across the curriculum at all levels including in CSPE which aims to ‘inform, inspire, empower and enable young people to participate as active citizens in contemporary society at local, national and global levels, based on an understanding of human rights and social responsibilities.
- ESD to 2030, our 2nd National Strategy has five priority areas for action including:
  - ensuring that all of our teachers have the capacity to deliver ESD through enhanced and increased provision of CPD and through the inclusion of ESD as a mandatory element of Initial Teacher Education and empowering and mobilising young people to take action for sustainable development.
- To enhance existing cross curricular content, a new area of learning at primary level is being developed “Social and Environmental Education” together with a new subject for Leaving Certificate “Climate Action and Sustainable Development”. Both will be introduced from September 2025.
- The Department of Education provides funding to schools and organisations to support ESD projects, has published a Sustainability Toolkit for Schools and as part of our awareness raising campaign, also publishes a quarterly ESD Newsletter which goes to all schools and to subscribers, highlighting available supports and resources and sharing good practice and ideas on ESD.

- Further details on all of the above are available on our ESD to 2030 webpage here: [gov - National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development in Ireland \(www.gov.ie\)](https://www.gov.ie/en/publications-and-resources/articles/2022-05-23-esd-to-2030/)
- The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFERIS) provides opportunities for reskilling and upskilling for the green transition via Springboard + and HCI Pillar 1 programmes. All together, there are over 40 courses related to green skills under both of these schemes.





## 6. Assembly Proceedings

Delegates to the National Youth Assembly of Ireland are aged between 12 and 24 years and come from all across the country, representing a wide range of youth organisations (Appendix A), community organisations and Comhairle Na nÓg (Local Youth Councils).

67 young people attended the Youth Assembly on Climate 2024, this included 42 sitting delegates from the National Youth Assembly of Ireland and 25 guest delegates from organisations with a special interest in Climate Action.

The delegates represented 25 Comhairle Na nÓg (Local Youth Councils) and 29 youth and community organisations.

25 counties were represented including Cork, Wexford, Louth, Leitrim, Roscommon, Tipperary, Limerick, Longford, Laois, Meath, Dublin, Kilkenny, Waterford, Offaly, Kerry, Monaghan, Cavan, Kildare, Donegal, Galway, Mayo, Carlow, Westmeath, Sligo, and Clare.

The National Youth Assembly of Ireland is convened according to rights-based, best practice in child and youth participation, as set out in the National Framework for Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making.

This involves the principle of participation with purpose, so that the views of children and young people are listened to, taken seriously and given due weight by decision-makers with the intention that these views will influence an outcome in relation to policymaking.

It also conforms to the nine key principles of participation, which require that processes to include the views of children and young people are transparent and informative, voluntary, respectful, relevant, child friendly, inclusive, supported by training, safe and sensitive to risk, and accountable.

The key approach adopts the Lundy Model, which conceptualises Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in terms of Space, Voice, Audience and Influence.

## Space

*Children and young people must be given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their views.*

The National Youth Assembly on Climate arose from recommendations made by Youth Voices in the Climate Conversations which informed the design of Ireland's 'National Climate Action Plan' 2021. This was followed by a commitment in the Programme for Government 2020. The involvement of young people is sustained annually and with follow up activities throughout each year. The broad range of organisations and Comhairlí who nominate delegates ensures inclusivity and engagement by those directly affected.

Youth Advisory Group (YAG) members volunteered for roles, including hosting, running and reviewing both the Preparation Session and the Assembly, with group briefings and individual support sessions provided. Nominated delegates and YAG members attended the review session of the recommendations in the week after the Assembly convened.

Delegates are nominated from Comhairle na nÓg (local youth councils) and a broad range of different organisations to represent different perspectives, with guest delegates from organisations that specialise in Climate issues. Delegates are selected through a fair and transparent process with clear selection criteria, and they have support from staff from their Comhairle or organisations.

All materials, designed using the Dyslexia Association of Ireland guidelines, were available printed, online and, where possible, videos had subtitles. The National Youth Assembly on Climate was convened in person with accompanying meetings online, requests for assistance were met and staff were available to assist with any issues. Any measure requested to ensure accessibility for delegates was met. Accommodations for sensory issues were made and period products were available in all bathrooms. Independent observers were there to verify that best practice, in terms of youth participation, was met.

A Code of Conduct was circulated to all delegates ahead of all events and delegates were reminded to abide by this code. Facilitators were trained in youth participation, and all attended a briefing in advance of events. Young people were encouraged and supported to feel relaxed and get to know the others there, with name tags and icebreakers, a quiet space and availability of dedicated staff for support. Young people could provide their views through a variety of means.

All delegates were invited to attend the webinar following the National Youth Assembly on Climate, where Members of the Youth Advisory Group presented the Assembly's recommendations to the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communication Eamon Ryan.



## Voice

*Children and young people must be facilitated to express their views.*

The National Youth Assembly on Climate is an annual Assembly which identifies areas of priority for young people within the Climate Action Plan and makes recommendations on actions for Government focus over the coming year. For the Youth Assembly on Climate 2024, DECC aimed to continue to build on the work of the 2023 Assembly.

Young people were supported to give their own views by facilitation from experienced and trained facilitators provided by the National Participation Office. There were a range of ways in which young people could give their views. Workshops in the morning allowed in depth exploration of those who are very engaged, somewhat engaged, and not engaged in climate action. After lunch, World Cafe discussions at tables, where delegates moved around in small groups identified the key issues and proposed solutions. In groups, delegates then agreed which of these solutions would be put forward as a recommendation. Delegates were then given the opportunity to voice their recommendations to the DECC.

Requirements for additional needs in giving views were accommodated. Voluntary participation was made clear in the Code of Conduct and was explicitly stated at the beginning of the preparation session, the Assembly itself and the Evaluation session. It was also highlighted as part of the briefing session for facilitators, so that they could facilitate delegates' withdrawal if needed.

## Audience

*The views must be listened to.*

The Climate Action Plan is a cross government and cross sectoral plan for halving Ireland's emissions by 2030 and reach net zero no later than 2050, as committed to in the Programme for Government. The plan is led by DECC and therefore the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications along with his department are the audience for the views and recommendations of the National Youth Assembly on Climate. One official from DECC attended the Assembly, the Minister was unable to attend but welcomed the delegates through a pre-recorded video that was shown at the start of the assembly.

Feedback was provided on the recommendations of the 2024 Assembly via a webinar, where Minister Ryan heard the recommendations and provided his responses. The Assembly is also a key element in the broader National Dialogue on Climate Action (NDCA). DECC have committed to taking the views of children and young people into account when making decisions on priority actions on climate.

## Influence

*The views must be acted upon, as appropriate.*

Recommendations from the National Youth Assembly on Climate feed into the annual iteration of the Climate Action Plan, there is no guarantee that recommendations will be included but they are considered and incorporated where feasible. The recommendations of the National Youth Assembly on Climate 2024 are intended to feed into the Climate Action Plan 2025 and the National Dialogue on Climate Action (NDCA). Delegates were provided with information on how their views will be communicated to decision-makers and were introduced to the DECC representative who attended the Assembly. Nominees from each of the group discussions, YAG members reviewed the recommendations for clarity and to ensure that they would have the desired impact. Delegates presented their views directly to Minister Ryan via Webinar.

The outline for reporting on the Assembly was clearly explained and approved by the YAG and the approach to reporting was made clear to Assembly delegates. The report was reviewed by the YAG before publication. The report is circulated to all delegates and is available online, as well as being incorporated into the report of the NDCA.





## Appendix A

### Organisations

- Youth Work Ireland
- Tallaght Foroige Club
- Young Voices (NYAI)
- UNICEF Ireland
- TENI
- Ashbourne Youthreach
- Irish Refugee Council
- Whitechurch Foroige Club
- Roscommon Youth Service
- InSynch Youth and Family Services
- Foroige
- Ógras
- Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- Dunmore Foroige Club
- Ballyhaunis Family and Community Resource Centre
- Irish Girl Guides
- ISSU
- An Taisce
- Limerick Clare ETB
- Spunout
- Foroige Club at the Deck
- ECO UNESCO
- ISSU
- Foroige Ecollective
- YMCA
- Feachtas Balbriggan
- An Taisce
- Lus na Griene Family Resource Centre
- Balbriggan Foroige
- Cork County Comhairle na nÓg
- Wexford Comhairle na nÓg
- Louth Comhairle na nÓg
- Leitrim Comhairle na nÓg
- Roscommon Comhairle na nÓg
- Laois Comhairle na nÓg
- Cork City Comhairle na nÓg
- Meath Comhairle na nÓg
- Kilkenny Comhairle na nÓg
- Waterford Comhairle na nÓg
- Offaly Comhairle na nÓg
- Kerry Comhairle na nÓg
- Monaghan Comhairle na nÓg
- Cavan Comhairle na nÓg
- Tipperary Comhairle na nÓg
- South Dublin Comhairle na nÓg
- Longford Comhairle na nÓg
- Fingal Comhairle na nÓg
- Carlow Comhairle na nÓg
- Sligo Comhairle na nÓg
- Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Comhairle na nÓg
- Donegal Comhairle na nÓg
- Clare Comhairle na nÓg
- Kildare Comhairle na nÓg
- Roscommon Comhairle na nÓg



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland



Department of the Environment,  
Climate and Communications  
Tom Johnson House,  
Haddington Rd,  
Dublin,  
D04 K7X4

 <https://www.gov.ie/en/>