

JOIN THE CLIMATE CONVERSATION

Sligo PPN Climate Conversation
Consultation Feedback
25th March 2021



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

National Dialogue on Climate Action

WHO ATTENDED?

Moderators

Melinda Swann, Joan Swift, Pete Murtagh (standing in for Yvonne Lang)

PPN Staff

Emer McGrath, Sarah Wetherald

Attendees

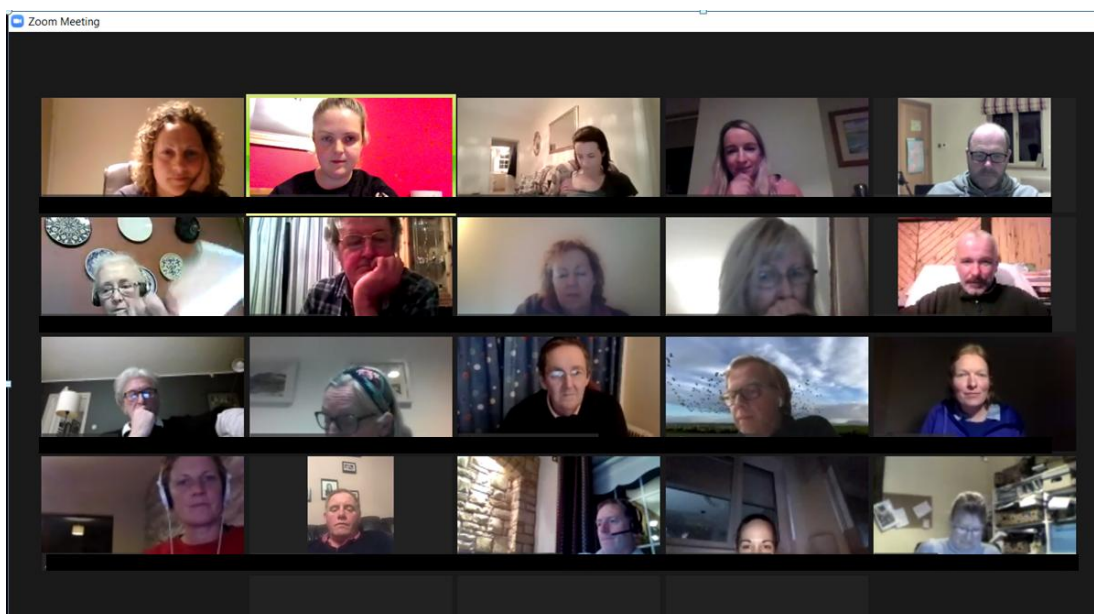
Sinead Maguire
Michael Kirby
Pete Murtagh
Patricia Gardener
Connie Nell
Blaithin Sweeney
Gemma Woods

Attendees

Michael Bell
Maggie Wade
Declan Feeney
Fiona Britton
Nessa Cosgrove
Bernadette Ni Ruairc
Siobhan Ward

Attendees

John O'Dea
Gabriel Browne
Tomas Gilmartin
Bernie Finan
Frank Barrett
Michael Breen
Liam Boland



SLIGO PPN : CLIMATE CONVERSATIONS

CONSULTATION WRITE UP

Thursday 25th March, 7pm



Workshop 1

What community led climate action initiatives are happening in our area that work well? Any new ideas or existing actions we'd like to develop?

Part 1 : What is Working Well?

- Tidy Towns are working to incorporate biodiversity actions into their work – (this has been pushed by the department of environment for Tidy Town competition entrants but people are becoming more aware). E.g. Locally in North Sligo (Carney) less pesticides are being used allowing insects to survive and thus, not upsetting links in food chains. Sligo PPN are running a training programme to support Tidy Town member groups to enhance their performance in this area.
- Community groups are getting better at looking at sustainability and novel ideas are appearing and being put into practice. Sligo PPN are currently implementing a support programme for all member groups to offer practical support to become more environmentally friendly.
- IT Sligo are looking to obtain a Green Flag status in the coming months and this is a student led initiative. The IT aims to make their students 'Climate Informed' with less waste to landfill, more recycling and overall lower energy use on campus. The IT is looking to be the first 3rd level campus in Ireland to ban single use cups. Tramore was highlighted as a great example of being climate aware as they have become a Water 'Refill town'

For info on Tramore see

<https://www.munster-express.ie/opinion/keeping-an-eco-friendly-eye-on-tramore/>

<https://www.munster-express.ie/opinion/editorial/climate-change-campaign/>

<https://www.changex.org/blog/people-in-tramore-are-joining-forces-to-stop-the-use-of-single-use-plastic-bottles/>

These initiatives are being trialled on campus and then the hope is to roll it out in the community.

For more info on this see <https://www.sligococo.ie/greenaware/Week6-ITSligoArticle/>

- Sligo General Hospital has also obtained a green flag and is working along with Sligo Grammar school and NUI Galway. They have already reduced their energy consumption by 18% since 2016 and they have promoted waste reduction through recycling and educational campaigns promoting awareness of the correct segregation of waste, reducing single use cups and containers and introducing creative solutions that divert waste from landfill. They have also established walking routes and a biodiversity corridor around the hospital grounds and surrounds to link health awareness to sustainability, with support from Healthy Ireland and IT Sligo students. For more info see <https://www.saolta.ie/news/sligo-university-hospital-awarded-taisce-green-flag>
- Individual groups and programmes such as Clean Coasts, Spring Cleans, Green Schools, Tidy Towns are working well
- Sligo Cycle Campaign highlighted the novel idea of 'Cycle Buses' that has been rolled out in Strandhill as a great initiative and that it should be rolled out to the whole of Ireland, as it is beneficial for the whole community. Sligo Cycle Campaign <https://www.facebook.com/SligoCyclingCampaign/> and Scoil Ursula are trying to get another model of this 'Cycle Bus' going.
- There was a generally positive response to the announcement regarding funding for Active Travel in County Councils.
- Identification that there has been an increase in biodiversity planting in the town and area such as Ballinafad and signage had been put up to express this.
- St Patrick's National School, Maugherow have installed water refill fountains and are in the middle of other initiatives to start the process for a Green Flag status.

- National Schools are very active in the green flag area. The Green Flag programme has been very successful in creating an awareness of environmental issues in children of national school age. Embedding programmes such as Green Flag at all levels of education is important to ensure continuity of engagement with environmental issues.

Part 2 : What Should be Done / Promoted

Emerging Themes : Education, Networking, Promoting & Protecting Local, Built Environment & Public Health, Other

Education

- The importance of nature based learning should be reflected in the curriculum at all levels of education.)
- Already almost every subject on the curriculum has Climate Change, Sustainability and the Global Goals incorporated. It's in Business Studies, Geography, Science, Home Economics, Religion, and probably more as short courses. In my opinion the problem doesn't lie in schools or the curriculum, it's that students don't see what they're learning being modeled in society around them. What 13 year olds learn in the Business studies/Sustainability section could more relevantly be directed at their parents.
- Need to have greater awareness and appreciation of biodiversity/ the environment at every level of society
- There is a need for this training in second level schools.
- Progress the idea of making community poly tunnels as organic as possible and that there should be more poly tunnels in schools.
- There should be more training rolled out to the public by the council.
- More training on sustainability/biodiversity/climate change and nature to be provided for local groups.
- Better engagement with sections of society that do not have a connection or place a value on environmental issues. There has been an emphasis placed on the importance of embedding awareness of environmental issues across all levels of education. However, there is a need to reach out to groups outside of the education sector and identify how to encourage change to a more environmentally friendly way of living. In truth the only way to achieve this is to engage with these sections of society directly and ask the questions - Why do you do what you do? How can you be encouraged/assisted to change? Only by understanding the challenges as informed directly from the horse's mouth can we devise policies/plans that will be implemented in a compliant manner.

Networking

- There should be more joined up efforts/ connectivity between communities and Local Authorities. Groups (and the Council) should not be working in isolation.
- Adopt a holistic approach to tackling climate change, etc., i.e. cannot allow "silo thinking" to continue, but sustainability should be prioritised in everything we do
- Many people are unaware of what people were doing for Climate Change within Sligo and there needs to be a 'central hub' to find out what is going on within all the groups working on projects.
- More resources to be given for the formation of an umbrella association for Tidy Towns and Community Groups (again a central hub, connected to the PPN)
- It was brought up that things are going on in isolation and that there is a need to connect people with other projects – again the 'central hub' idea.
- The local hub idea is worth exploring further too. Physical space or online? Ask companies to sponsor as part of their Corporate Responsibility? IT Green Campus to be involved? Sources of funding? Something that could probably begin without Central Gov intervention.

Promoting and Protecting Local

- Each Municipal District should have a local biodiversity plan
- Tourism (business) should not be prioritised over the natural environment/ climate change
- It was suggested there be some kind of Climate Action branding used in Sligo (for groups, businesses etc. that are taking part in initiatives to halt climate change). Tramore was mentioned again.
- It was pointed out that there are many beautiful nature spots and Special Areas of Conservation in Sligo which are being neglected or not promoted for visiting and that perhaps more signage and marketing needs

to be funded so they are not forgotten about. (For example the Cartron Estates are right beside the estuary and this area could be promoted more for birdwatching)

- More marketing around local biodiversity and that the newspapers could be utilized more for this for example running 1/2 page articles on nature issues such as climate change, sustainability, biodiversity etc. in local and national papers so people become more aware and informed.
- Regular coverage of sustainability issues in the local media is needed. Perhaps the PPN or the Environmental Network could take on the task of approaching the media to ask if they would broadcast/publish such and if answer is positive ask for volunteers to write/talk re a particular topic and draw up a rota for contributions.

Built Environment & Public Health

- People are fed up getting wet in the rain in Sligo town and that there were seats, but they do not have any shelter – and perhaps nice canopies made from sustainable sources such as wood would be an idea. Green roofs could be incorporated onto these and green roofs promoted all around Sligo as well as sustainable urban drainage systems.
- Sligo PPN identified that a walkability audit had been conducted of the town to try and make it more accessible and navigable to the whole community. This audit also included the identification of opportunities for green planting and pocket garden developments. By making the town itself a safer and more attractive place to be there is a promotion of positive physical and mental health.
- Safer roads with better cycle paths and Greenways are needed so that there can be cycle to work and schools initiatives adopted. Better connectivity of people and habitats.
- The connection between mental health and environmental health was highlighted and recent work around Blue & Green spaces schemes was identified as something similar that could be followed here.

Local Authority Action

- Appoint a Sustainability Officer/ Section that will actively promote sustainability and engage with all sections of society. We discussed the importance of including all aspects of sustainability and not only working with environmental experts but also with experts on social and economic sustainability to lead the whole community into a just transition.
- There should be a biodiversity officer and ecological team within the council to tackle all these issues and National Parks and Wildlife be better resourced.
- It was highlighted that Strandhill had utilised a local Environmental consultancy agency to produce a tailored Biodiversity Action Plan for the area. They are still awaiting release of the plan by the Heritage Officer in Sligo County Council. Strandhill have also been looking at coastal erosion and have secured funding but are waiting on the Biodiversity Action Plan for 2 years so they cannot go any further with this. There are a number of other groups in the same situation whereby work is halted by this delay.
- The local group has carried out areas of planting Strandhill have also secured funding for sustainable tourism and the SEAI have assessed some houses in the area.
- Concern was raised that if a Councillor cannot get a reply around these issues then who can!
- It was highlighted that when new roads are being constructed thousands of trees (example given of Glencar) are removed and then replaced with fences. Participants would like to see a policy put in place such as - for every tree cut down there should be 3 trees planted and for every metre of hedgerow removed that there should be 3 metres of hedgerow re-planted.
- Planning laws need to be looked at and that there should be actions for biodiversity and sustainability within every planning application for any new builds/retro fittings/businesses etc. before planning be granted.
- There should be environmental impact assessments carried out for all planning applications be it for houses, paths by Tidy Towns/Community groups etc. as well as for the cutting of hedgerows by councils/contractors so that habitats are protected no matter how small. There should also be training provided for council staff, farmers and contractors on more eco-friendly cutting regimes for hedgerows. The flailing of hedgerows and trees is extremely damaging.
- Final note: Local Authorities need to ensure there is environmental oversight for all key activities – climate change and the environment is not a solo focus. Every planning application that comes in, every grant application should be reviewed with an environmental impact assessment

Other

- The importance of Rural Social Scheme and other schemes in supporting environmental management at local levels
- Action needs to be taken to tackle the issue of cars being left running, especially around schools and outside shops. Local campaigns do not seem to have much impact – does legislation need to be looked at as in other countries.
- It was mentioned that project workers (maybe they mean FAS workers) should be trained as Climate Officers.
- It was highlighted that in rural area in south Sligo there was nothing really happening in terms of environmental action, other than the National Spring Clean that they take great pride in. Most things are going on in the towns of Easky and Enniscrone and rural farming areas need funding to be made available for climate change initiatives aimed at the farming community. There is no scheme for farmers.
- It can be difficult to get volunteers for the Sligo Environmental Network and to keep them. This is the case with many volunteer groups and funding could go towards actually employing people to run these types of groups which could act at the 'Central Hub' for information.

SUMMARY POINTS

- The conversation highlighted some great things happening in the county that maybe not too many people knew about – how many other such initiatives are going on. There really needs to be an exercise to map these across each county and the PPN are ideally placed to be involved.
- There is a need for a Central Hub of Information sharing for community groups.
- More staff in the council based on Climate Change – a Team of ecological experts employed like a sustainability officer and a biodiversity officer as well as the heritage officer and waste enforcement officer already in place. These members of staff should be supported in the team by staff who are also social and community experts who are skilled in participation methods and are able to deliver this type of work at community level.
- More training for all age cohorts on climate change, energy consumption & sustainability and biodiversity.
- More training for council staff, farmers and contractors in the area of habitat conservation and restoration.
- Environmental impact assessments carried out for all planning applications.
- Better marketing to bring sustainability to the forefront.
- Climate Action branding for Sligo.
- Planning law changed to incorporate climate change actions in all planning applications.
- Management plans or Biodiversity Action Plans for towns, businesses and schools should include stopping cars idling unnecessarily. (Maybe a campaign under the Branding for Sligo)
- Incentives for farmers and rural communities to create biodiverse areas and restore habitats for carbon sequestration.
- Habitat restoration after destruction for projects such as roads, footpaths, walks buildings etc.
- Safe travel to work/school funding.
- Habitats should be promoted for their beauty as well as ecosystem services
- Community gardens should be promoted and promote sustainable growing organically and rolled out to many interested groups, businesses and schools in Sligo.

Funding & how the Climate Action Fund could be designed & delivered?

Emerging Themes : Communication & Networking, Infrastructure, Education & Training, Promotion, Funding

Communication and Networking

- Communication about local & national initiatives could be improved. Repository of case studies for community groups looking to do similar projects would avoid reinventing the wheel. Retired professionals as volunteer teachers/mentors should be used more. Lots of knowledge & experience in the community already. Sharing of info and experiences should be improved.
- Networking is improving and should continue to be worked upon. PPN network facilitating this quite well.
- Help housing associations communicate with each other about related issues.
- Improve communication between various groups. There are many housing estates, but very little communication between them. Training could also be provided.
- We need more 'joined up thinking'.
- Communication with staff in LA can be difficult. This should be addressed. More uniformity required between LAs.

Infrastructure

- More cycling facilities/ infrastructure
- Prioritising pedestrians over cars, both in relation to infrastructure, speeds in urban and rural areas, and general traffic management
- Reduce traffic levels nationally through investment in public and carbon-free transport alternatives, e.g. Local Link services, etc.
- Traffic & transport are big issues
- Emphasis required on cycling & walking. Rural public transport needs significant improvement. Speeds need to be reduced for cars on road network. Recycling facilities need to be improved

Promotion

- A 'Green Identity' could be created for Sligo to help promote good work already ongoing.
- Community guides could be developed for different areas.
- RTE should have better messaging.

Training and Education

- Provide training to community groups on different topics like how to erect poly tunnels and organise community gardens.
- Education & training on Climate issues should be made available to all.

Funding

- More funding for recycling facilities, especially for plastics. Help communities get more involved in Circular Economy. Better enforcement of existing environmental laws required also i.e. Litter & Waste Management.
- All the barriers to funding like long forms, insurance, time frames etc. need to be addressed. Difficult to actually obtain funding.
- Sligo LEADER has access to a large fund (€7M) but has no real environmental expertise. This should be addressed. More assistance for groups applying for funding required. Training for LA and other public staff also badly needed.
- Funding should be made available for more bog restoration projects as they are very beneficial from many perspectives i.e. just transition, biodiversity, education, water quality.
- Investment needed in renewable energy & public transport. Biodiversity related work needs more support. Additional staff for LAs would be great. Coastal erosion and retrofitting also need more focus & support.

- Reduce barriers to accessing funding for environmental/ climate change projects by minimising grant requirements, e.g. insurance, need for bridging finance, local contributions, etc.
- Provide support for accessing grants and delivering environmental/ climate change projects
- Applying for grants can be confusing. Needs to be streamlined. Too much info. Clarity needed.
- Some members hadn't heard of CAF. Groups find it difficult to apply for funding even when they are familiar the LA
- Timelines for funding can be very tight, especially for volunteer applicants, and this is a barrier.
- Also issues like insurance and other barriers to applying for funding need to be addressed.

Other

- Link between positive climate actions and mental health needs to be examined and used positively. Healthy environment helps improve mental health.
- Contradictions in Gov policy need to be addressed. Data centres vs. emissions. Big companies should be asked to contribute more. Corporate Social Responsibility model to be addressed.
- Biodiversity Officer needed in LA
- Big picture issues need to be tackled more directly. Issues like continued reliance on road network and its ongoing development.
- More re-wilding projects required. Get communities involved.
- Waste ground owned by the LA should be made better use of. Tree planting and wild gardens etc.
- LA staff need to know more about what communities need and should be able to assist more. Staff need to get out into communities.
- Local Authority to adopt a holistic view in relation to sustainability/ the environment/ climate change, and to provide leadership to communities
- Unused landbanks to be re-wilded for biodiversity

Additional Comments:

Good session, but very limited due to time. It might be a good idea to have a series of these talks where topics can develop more. Less of a conversation than an opportunity to get some of your points across.

Reflecting on local concerns and ambitions, what broader suggestions do we have for the Climate Action Plan

Thinking about how national policy might have enabled or constrained your ambitions before - what new actions could address this....

This question asked about the Climate Action Plan, but Sligo participants took the view that the plan needs to be a whole of government one if it is to succeed. Some of the suggestions therefore apply to other government departments.

GENERAL:

There was consensus that leadership has to come from central government. It was pointed out that successful environmental initiatives such as the smoking ban and the plastic bag tax were national government policies backed up by legislation and enforcement.

1. **Community Engagement:** There was a strong sense among participants that communities need two kinds of support both of which should be initiated at National level.
 - a) Support and education to help people understand the gravity of the climate crisis and the need to fundamentally change our lifestyles. This requires a nationwide education programme. It should incorporate factual information about the climate crisis and education re the need for a Just Transition. Since agriculture is our biggest source of emissions this is particularly important for the farming sector.
 - b) Support in carrying out environmental projects. According to our participants the type of support needed comes under two headings.
- **Financial:** The current model for obtaining funding for an environmental project at community level, e.g. under LEADER and other programmes, requires the sponsoring body to provide the entire funding upfront and claim it back later and also to provide 25% of capital funding from local resources. For example, Sligo LEADER says the new Rural Transition Programme will fund “*New and innovative projects in the areas of climate change, environmental protection and the green economy*” but only 75% of capital costs will be covered. This requirement and the interest payments until grants are paid retrospectively are prohibitive for community groups.
- **Mentoring:** Community groups may have an idea for a worthwhile environmental project but may need hand-holding and input from people with relevant skills in order to bring their project to fruition. Two models for supporting communities were suggested by our workshop participants.
 - I. **Paid Staff:** A model based on the current SEAI community engagement scheme for retrofitting could be applied to other areas such as biodiversity and community energy schemes. There was a very strong sense that community engagement is key and that as well as desk-based data collection local authority Climate Officers need to go out into the field and engage with communities. Communication skills are as vital as scientific expertise.
 - II. **Volunteers:** There is a lot of untapped skill among retired professionals from various disciplines, be it from IT Sligo, Sligo County Council, the teaching profession etc. This pool of potential volunteers is replicated across the country. Many of these people would be willing to visit communities to share expertise in their particular field. First there would need to be a Training Course set up online to brief volunteers on the main aspects of the Climate Plan and what priority areas need to be addressed. This is a matter for National Government. Such a group of trained “Green-Jacket” or “Shock-Troop” Climate Action volunteers would be an enormous asset to community groups who want to explore the steps involved in for example, installing solar panels on a community centre, establishing a community garden, or community shop, creating a wildlife corridor and so on.

Whole of Society buy-in: Just as the Climate Action Plan is a whole of government responsibility, so too the whole of society must be involved in its implementation. This means that environmental and carbon reduction initiatives

cannot any longer be left to groups with a specific environmental remit such as Tidy Towns or Birdwatch Ireland. Instead, every organisation must take responsibility and government grants should only be available to bodies which can show that they are engaging in climate or biodiversity initiatives. The GAA was given as one example as a body which this condition should apply to but participants felt it should apply across the board. Every single organisation in a community should be taking responsibility for a Green agenda. This would include the organisation's core activity becoming climate friendly but also partnerships with other community groups involved in specific environmental activities.

To support and incentivise community engagement thought could be given to inter-county reward schemes and competitions.

SPECIFIC AREAS OF CLIMATE ACTION:

Energy: Participants expressed concern that on the one hand, the Climate Plan has set ambitious targets re switching from energy generated from fossil fuels to renewable energy. At the same time our policy of maximising Foreign Direct Investment means that multi-national companies and in particular Data Centres are enormous users of energy, require substantial capital investment to meet their energy needs and make it more difficult for us to meet our energy targets. This needs to be kept in mind.

The Just Transition is especially important when it comes to dealing with fuel-poverty, if the more polluting fuel is cheaper than the alternative, we can't blame people experiencing fuel poverty for opting for it. The deep retrofitting programme needs to be rolled out urgently so that people at risk of fuel poverty have warmer homes which are cheaper to heat. This measure will require national programmes to retrain the many tradespeople currently engaged in conventional plumbing, heating and insulation.

Different views were expressed re the use of the excess energy generated by households from renewable sources. Options of

- I. Selling it on to the power company
- II. Donating it to a community group
- III. Improving battery storage so the household could use the energy later were all proposed.

Transport: Proposals re moving to more sustainable transport ranged from introducing 30 km/h speed limits in all areas where people walking and cycling mix with motor traffic, with a special emphasis on the areas around schools as part of Safe Routes to School. This measure which does not involve great expense would make a huge difference to active travel. It needs to be legislated for at national level before local authorities can introduce by-laws to mandate it.

Public Transport: for public transport to become a viable alternative to the private car it needs to be both cheaper and faster. This is particularly true for family travel where a train trip is much dearer than the equivalent trip by car. Some participants felt there was merit in making public transport free at point of use. Participants also pointed out that if it takes longer to get to Dublin by train than it does to drive, people will opt to drive.

- More/ better engagement with communities, businesses, etc.
- Communities/ individuals should not be out-of-pocket in transitioning to alternative energies, etc.
- Move to carbon neutrality needs to be "fair"
- Need to address packaging waste at national level, much like plastic bag and smoking initiatives, as retailers/suppliers are not changing their practices
- Local authority needs to actively engage and display leadership at local levels, i.e. be seen out in the community encouraging and assisting the delivery of change and coordinating with others

Additional Information Provided Post Consultation

The health food stores which sell sustainably sourced products (eg. Tir Na Nog & Raw Health Food shops, Sweet Beat & Sligo Wellness Centre, Cosgroves is great also for displaying their goods in hessian bags etc.). From the Ground Up 2020 Tubercurry -A sustainability shop with the first refill station in Sligo

<https://magnumlady.com/2021/01/15/sligo-first-refill-station-opens/>

There is a second refill station in town now All Things Natural, beside Cosgroves: <https://www.allthingsnatural.ie/>
<https://www.facebook.com/AllThingsNaturalNorthwest>

Carney Tidy Towns Group also had a Biodiversity Action Plan written by Woodrow and they are still waiting to have it released by the SCC Heritage Officer which is halting progress.

They have stopped using pesticides and have developed a walk around Carney with native trees being planted by Coilte. The Coast Care group in Carney does litter picks from time to time.

SCC Parks department has done some 'don't mow let it grow' areas around Sligo Town (e.g. the lovely meadow on the side of the road as you enter Sligo on left before Private hospital), but there must have other areas too –Doorly park is a start but maybe all the parks and roundabouts need to be left as don't mow let it grow areas not to mention all the green areas in businesses around Sligo. Parks Dept and local ecologists are currently advising Lough Gill Brewery on a pollinator friendly approach to the green areas in their business park and the hope is that other businesses will get involved in the future. Businesses will also be encouraged to adopt a sustainability plan for their business.

Green roofs should be promoted all around Sligo as well as sustainable urban drainage systems.

<https://www.susdrain.org/delivering-suds/using-suds/background/sustainable-drainage.html>

A car pooling initiative should be rolled out all over Sligo.

Cycleways and Greenways installed to allow for safe cycling and walking.

Below is the Governments Road map for the **Climate Action Plan for Ireland**, notes for Sligo are in green

70% of all electricity generated to be from renewable sources

IT Sligo is involved in a number of initiatives aimed at realising the potential of renewable energy in the North West region for the benefit of communities. The IT is facilitating industry to challenge the reliance on expensive carbon intensive oil and LPG and begin transitioning to a low carbon economy. They are currently working with SEAI on The Sligo Satellite Gas Network project as well as with community groups.

<http://www.thea.ie/impact2020/it-sligo-helps-realise-the-potential-of-renewable-energy-in-the-north-west/>

There needs to be a call for solar farms and solar panels on homes as well as small wind farms in non scenic areas, as Sligo is so beautiful it would be sad to see mountains covered in large wind farms.

950,000 electric vehicles on the road

Currently there are 7 electric charging points in Sligo and one high speed charging unit in Union Place Sligo. I am unsure as to how to find out how many electric cars are in Sligo, so this could be looked into more and we definitely need the prices of electric cars to be more affordable with grants available for the people of Ireland.

<https://www.sligococo.ie/parking/ElectricChargingPoints/#:~:text=With%20an%20extensive%20nationwide%20charging,The%20Square%2C%20Tubbercurry>

500,000 existing homes to be upgraded to B2 Building Energy rating (BER)

The table below shows the BER ratings for Sligo and this shows that only 10% of all the houses with a BER rating have a B rating, which is extremely low.

County	A(%)	B (%)	C (%)	D (%)	E (%)	F (%)	G (%)	Average age
--------	------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-------------

Sligo	2	10	35	25	14	6	9	31
-------	---	----	----	----	----	---	---	----

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/environment/how-green-are-the-homes-in-your-county-only-one-in-20-houses-has-top-energy-rating-1.4106088>

All plastic packaging should be reusable or recyclable

Perhaps a move away from packaging altogether is the way to go...why are some organic vegetables still packaged in plastic? Pressure needs to be put on the large companies but also small producers to use cardboard more and no double packaging.

50% reduction in food waste

Marketing on commercials and radio to promote sustainable buying, don't over buy, use up what you have first and bulk buy with neighbours and friends... co-ops for this could be formed. Milk could be bought directly from local co-ops or the farmer.

Specific single-use plastic convenience items banned including polystyrene food and drinks

Sustainability needs to be taught in schools and put on the curriculum by the department of education so that teachers and heritage in schools programmes can get this message across at a young age.

1,200 low-emissions buses in cities for public transport

There needs to be help for rural areas also.

Homeowners to generate their own electricity and sell back to the grid under scheme for micro-generation

These are the figures for Fuel Type used in Sligo and as you can see Oil use is very high.

Mains Gas (1%) Heating Oil (63 %) Electricity (21%) Solid Fuel (9%) LPG (6%).

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/environment/how-green-are-the-homes-in-your-county-only-one-in-20-houses-has-top-energy-rating-1.4106088>

Perhaps there could be local initiatives for this like a small local windmill to power a town or village.

600,000 heat pumps installed (400,000 in existing buildings)

I would think this figure is very low for the whole of Ireland. Grants for the installation of heat pumps should be available to a wide number of households and there should be larger grants for the older cohort of society as well as low income households.

Carbon proofing all Government decisions and major investments

The fact that the Taoiseach did not Travel to the US for St Patrick's day is a plus for his carbon footprint and perhaps Covid 19 has shown us that we can do more meetings virtually via Zoom etc.

Companies and investors into Ireland/Sligo should only be allowed in if they have a sustainability plan in place before set up.

CO2 emissions from the public sector to be reduced by 30%

All buildings in the public sector should be audited for energy usage and plans put in place to decrease energy consumption, as well as an education/sustainability officer employed to decrease expenditure on stationary, cleaning products etc.

The fleet of cars available to government ministers, public sector employees such as NPWS, the OPW etc. should all be electric and indeed the fleet reduced with an embargo on changes of logos on fleets and in buildings for at least 10 years.

Make other public buildings in Sligo more energy efficient and turn out lights at night. This should be done for businesses also.

8,000 ha of newly planted forest per year -

This needs to be promoted in Sligo at all levels from households to community groups to schools to industries.

There is nothing in the plan about habitat restoration which would help with Carbon sequestration. Restoration of bogs should be carried out across Sligo. One project happening already is Sessuegilroy, Ox Mountains, Co. Sligo -

http://www.irishbogrestorationproject.ie/project_sites/sessuegilroy-sligo.html

<https://birdwatchireland.ie/our-work/species-habitat-conservation/countryside-wetlands/cabb-bog-restoration/>

There is also nothing about Carbon emissions from other forms of travel such as trains and aircraft.