



**Rialtas na hÉireann**  
Government of Ireland

# **Framework for the Community Climate Action Programme**

Strand 1: Action: Building Low Carbon Communities

Strand 1a: Shared Island Community Climate  
Action

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Prepared by the Department of the Environment Climate and communications  
[www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie)

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# 1 Definitions

“Minister” means the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications

“Lead partner” on any project is the local authority based in Ireland

“Lead organisation” is the organisation based in Ireland for applications under strand 1a

“Partner” refers to the organisations partnering with the local authorities, whether they are in Northern Ireland or Ireland.

## **2 Introduction**

### **2.1 Climate action in Ireland**

Ireland is aiming to become a climate neutral economy and resilient society by 2050. This means that the amount of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere is dramatically reduced and is balanced by the amount removed by our land, forestry, or technology. In line with EU ambition, Ireland has committed to achieve an average 7% per annum reduction in overall greenhouse gas emissions from 2021 to 2030. Becoming a climate resilient society will help us to cope with the impacts of a changing climate.

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021 will support Ireland's achievement of a climate neutral economy by no later than 2050. It establishes a legally binding framework with clear targets and commitments set in law and provides that the necessary structures and processes are embedded on a statutory basis to ensure we achieve our national, EU and international climate goals and obligations in the near and long term. Successive Climate Actions Plans will set out how we propose to achieve these goals.

Our transition to a climate neutral economy will impact on all of us. We are committed to achieving this future through a just transition, meaning all voices will be heard in a fair and equal manner, and that new opportunities will mean no one is left behind.

### **2.2 Climate Conversations**

The Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) undertook a substantial consultation process to collect the views of people on how Ireland could make the necessary transformation, and how individuals and communities could be supported to take their own positive climate actions. Climate Conversations engaged with over 4,700 people, collecting valuable information, and giving an insight into both community action and ambition.

Based on the outcomes from the climate conversations, it is clear citizens want to do more, to step up local climate action. It is also clear from the conversations that communities require support for this local activation.

In response, the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications launched the Community Climate Action Programme, which will see €60m from the Climate Action Fund invested in community climate action projects and initiatives, and capacity building over the next three years.

## 2.3 Local Climate Action

Through leadership, example and mobilising action at a local level, the local government sector has developed an agreed vision and mission to deliver transformative change and measurable climate action across our cities and counties, as well as within our own organisations, as outlined in [Delivering Effective Climate Action 2030](#) (DECA). Local authorities' (LAs) wide remit, which provides over one thousand services, positions the sector well to work alongside communities and businesses to drive the change necessary to address climate adaptation and mitigation.

The Strategic Goals (SG) within DECA 2030 neatly align with the proposed Climate Action Fund in that they set out that LAs want to:

- SG 1: "...build capacity and readiness in relation to working with communities and other strategic partners to effect transformative climate action in each city and county".
- SG 2: set out the ambition to develop investment strategies for transformative decarbonisation projects.
- SG 3: "...seize the opportunities from climate action by enhancing our natural environment, buildings and infrastructure to increase the climate resilience of... our communities"
- SG 4: engage and empower communities, with one of the objectives of this SG being to "seek out and develop partnerships with external agencies to catalyse climate action projects at community level".

The measures outlined in DECA are required to ensure LAs meet carbon budgets, collaborate effectively and work collectively as a sector to achieve Ireland's 2030 and 2050 targets. They align with the commitments made by local government in the Climate Action Charter, to cultivate and participate in partnerships with the community in relation to addressing climate impact.

## 2.4 Community Climate Action Programme 2021-2024

### 2.4.1 Objective

The overall objective of the Programme is to support and empower communities, in partnership with their LA, to shape and build low carbon, sustainable communities in a coherent way to contribute to national climate and energy targets. The Programme aims to support small and large, rural and urban communities to take climate action. This programme supports direct engagement with communities to both promote and assist in the scale up of community climate action from the respective starting points of the communities.

In addition to providing funding opportunities for relevant community projects and initiatives, the Programme also aims to provide education and information to communities to help them develop projects.

### 2.4.2 Overview

The Community Climate Action Programme has been developed under two strands addressing both direct climate action, and climate education and capacity building. An initial €30 million is being allocated over an 18-month period for two strands. In parallel, the Government's Shared Island Fund is providing €3 million for strand 1a of the Programme.

- Strand 1 has two parts: strand 1 entitled "*Action: Building Low Carbon Communities*" for €24 million, and strand 1a entitled "*Shared Island Community Climate Action*" for €3 million.
- Strand 2 is entitled Education: Climate Education, Capacity Building and Learning by Doing for €6 million. Within this strand €5 million is being managed by Pobal in an open call for projects, more info is available [here](#). A further €1m of the Climate Action Fund has been allocated to the Creative Ireland Programme to set up Creative Climate Action, a collaboration between Creative Ireland and DECC, more info is available [here](#).

For clarity, this framework encompasses strand 1 and 1a only. These parts have been separated into different chapters for ease of reading. A brief overview of each is below.

#### 2.4.2.1 Strand 1: Action: Building Low Carbon Communities - €24 million

A total of €24 million is being provided to LAs to work in partnership with communities, large and small, rural and urban, within their areas of operation to build low carbon communities in a considered and structured way.



The projects will address the following five themes:

- Home/energy
- Travel
- Food and waste
- Shopping and recycling
- Local climate and environmental action.

#### **2.4.2.2 Strand 1a: Shared Island Community Climate Action - €3 million**

In addition, a total of €3 million is being provided by the Government's Shared Island Fund to support cross-border<sup>1</sup> and all-island<sup>2</sup> community climate action initiatives as an integrated part of the Community Climate Action Programme.

Strand 1a projects will address the same five themes as strand 1 and must have a clear North/South basis, with a cross-border partnership approach and impact. At least 50% of awarded funding will be for project delivery in Northern Ireland.

Strand 1a enables communities and LAs to propose a cross-border project in partnership with organisations in Northern Ireland.

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<sup>1</sup> Cross-border projects involve projects that are both north and south of the border.

<sup>2</sup> All-island projects are broader than cross-border projects and could involve multiple projects across Ireland.

## 3 Strand 1: Action: Building Low Carbon Communities

### 3.1 How will it work?

Strand 1 funding will be provided to each LA to fund relevant projects in communities/areas within their area of operation. 12% of the funding has been allocated towards the cost of the engagement of a community climate action officer within each local authority. The balance of the funding is for investment in community projects, based on the tiered approach and allocation for small, medium and large scaled projects:

- **Small scale projects:** 10% of the funding allocated to LAs will be made available for to fund small projects. Communities should submit expressions of interest to partner with LAs in these projects. There is a separate simplified expression of interest form for projects such as community composting, water refill stations, pollinator projects, small renewable energy projects, rewilding etc. These proposals should be considered against the criteria set out in the [evaluation criteria for small projects](#) section below. When submitting these to the Minister for approval the LAs can consolidate the small grant applications together as one “Small Grants Project” containing multiple small grants.
- **Medium scale projects:** 40% of the funding will be allocated for medium sized projects valued in the range of €20,000 - €50,000. Communities should submit expressions of interest to partner with LAs in these projects. These proposals should be considered against the criteria set out in the [evaluation criteria for medium and large projects](#) section below. Example projects can be found for each theme in [the five programme themes](#) section below.
- **Large scale projects:** 50% of the funding will be allocated for larger projects in the range of €51,000 - €100,000. Communities should submit expressions of interest to partner with LAs in these projects. These proposals should be considered against the [evaluation criteria for medium and large projects](#) section below. Example projects can be found for each theme in [the five programme themes](#) section below.

LAs should work to apportion the funding across the three tiers, as outlined above. Every effort should be made to invest in suitable projects within these three tiers. However, if there is insufficient take up of appropriate projects within any of these tiers, the funding may be

reallocated to support other suitable projects in the other tiers, upon agreement in writing with the Department.

## 3.2 Eligibility

### 3.2.1 Community organisation eligibility

Community organisations meeting the requirements listed below are eligible to apply to partner with the Local Authorities to implement a project under this Programme, they:

- must be a not-for-profit organisation
- must be located in the operational area of the LA to which it is applying for funding
- must submit a completed application form on or before the specified closing date and time
- must be registered with a PPN or connected with other collectives such as the Wheel, Tidy Towns and /or a community group with Articles of Association or a Constitution, which hold an AGM, and for which approved minutes are available.

Furthermore:

- The project applied for must be in line with the aim/purpose of the funding as set out in the section on [Projects eligible for funding](#) below.
- Only one application per organisation may be submitted for consideration – projects proposed could cut across several of the themes and be bundled together as part of a single application.

In developing projects, LAs and communities should also consider how their projects contribute to progress in relation to relevant [Sustainable Development Goals](#).

The following are not eligible to apply:

- Private individuals
- Commercial undertakings (including sole traders)
- National community and environmental organisations.

### 3.2.2 Projects eligible for funding

The types of projects/initiatives, within communities, which are eligible for funding under the Programme, should seek to demonstrate the delivery of national climate action at local level by:

- a) Reducing or supporting the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
- b) Increasing the production, or use, of renewable energy
- c) Improving energy efficiency
- d) Increasing climate resilience
- e) Identifying nature-based projects that enhance biodiversity and seek to reduce, or increase the removal of, greenhouse gas emissions or support climate resilience in the State
- f) Assisting regions in the State (including communities in those regions) and within sectors of the economy impacted by the transition to a low carbon economy
- g) Involving potentially innovative solutions to address the above asks.

### 3.2.3 The five programme themes

More specifically, projects must also be developed to take climate action across as many of the following five programme themes as possible. A project may therefore comprise several of the suggested project types as set out in themes 1 to 5 below. While these themes provide suggestions for the types of projects which may be funded, applicants are not limited to selecting these project types and are encouraged to explore innovative projects that meet the objective of the Programme. The 5 themes are as follows:

- [Theme 1: Home/energy](#)
- [Theme 2: Travel](#)
- [Theme 3: Food and waste](#)
- [Theme 4: Shopping and recycling](#)
- [Theme 5: Local climate and environmental action](#)

#### 3.2.3.1 Theme 1: Home/energy

Many Irish buildings have very low energy ratings and high running costs, mainly due to heat loss. How we heat our buildings and the heat lost account for 10% of Ireland's greenhouse

gas emissions. How we build, heat and run our buildings can play a big part in reducing Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. We can make our buildings more energy efficient by retrofitting them (e.g. insulation), switching off and using low energy lights/ appliances, and using smart controls.

We are interested in projects which reduce the climate impact of buildings in communities by using less energy, utilising renewable energy and avoiding heat loss. This can include small community renewable energy projects (solar, hydro, wind), retrofitting community buildings, LED community lighting or community EV charging point(s).

### **3.2.3.2 Theme 2: Travel**

How we travel is one of the main areas where behaviour change can have a rapid and real impact on achieving our climate goals. Transport accounts for approximately 20% of Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. We know that changing our means of travel is not simple, and often dictated by previous planning and housing choices, particularly in rural communities, which has led to a high car dependency. However, there are real alternatives emerging. Working from home due to COVID 19 showed the potential to drastically reduce the travel related emissions in 2020.

We are interested in projects which contribute to emissions reductions related to travel. This can include reductions in carbon footprint in services, improving access to cycle ways, cycle parking, community electric vehicles, safe or active travel routes to schools.

### **3.2.3.3 Theme 3: Food and waste**

It takes a lot of resources to put food on our tables. Growing, processing and transporting food all use large amounts of energy and materials. It is estimated that 1/3 of the food we grow is wasted and food waste accounts for 10% of global emissions. The 2021 Climate Action Plan has set a goal for the agricultural sector to reduce their climate impact in producing food and there is a national commitment to reducing food waste by 50% by 2030. Some changes which people are already making to reduce their climate impact include reducing the amount of food they are wasting, as well as including more plant based and lower carbon proteins in their meals. While being mindful that different circumstances such as the culture, religion, health, abilities and tastes can affect the decisions individual people can make; at a systems, community and lifestyle level there are opportunities to connect and engage people in action on food, waste and climate change (see more at [stopfoodwaste.ie](https://stopfoodwaste.ie)).

We are interested in projects that reduce food waste. This can include developing community gardens to promote local food production, allotments, food pledges from local businesses, food markets, repair hubs or community composting facilities.

### **3.2.3.4 Theme 4: Shopping and recycling**

What we buy has a major contribution to emissions in terms of how they are made, transported, used, reused and recycled. Ireland is moving towards creating a circular economy, making products that last longer, can be repurposed, reused and eventually recycled more easily. One of our climate goals is to increase the amount of waste that is recycled and to make all packaging reusable or recyclable by 2030.

As shoppers we have the power to influence how our products are made, and to look for sustainable options. People are changing their shopping habits by buying products that last longer or repurposing clothing or furniture. People are also planning what they will do with things when they are finished using them, recycling as much as possible, actively segregating their waste for collection and using recycling centres and services near to them (see [mywaste.ie](http://mywaste.ie)).

We are interested in projects that increase the variety and number of recycling facilities in the local community; initiatives aimed at reducing, reusing and recycling, community repair hubs, swap shops, water filling stations or single use plastics elimination in businesses in communities.

### **3.2.3.5 Theme 5: Local climate and environmental action**

Ireland also has an abundance of natural resources, from our bogs and forests to our rivers and oceans. These natural resources need to be protected from climate change, and in return, they will help us by absorbing carbon, reducing the risk of flooding, increasing flowers and wildlife, and acting as places for us all to reconnect with nature. How local communities come together to take action is an important part of the Climate Action Plan, and some of the best ideas for environmental action begin in the heart of communities. Community action can take many forms from simple clean-ups to community energy schemes, to making plans to adapt to the changes already happening.

We are interested in projects that take a holistic approach to managing the local environment, including in relation to climate action. This can include for example, mini forests, forest schools, dispersed orchards, community gardens, roof gardens, pollinator projects or climate resilience projects.

## **3.3 Application process**

### **3.3.1 Small grants**

- This element encourages participation by communities wishing to start out on their low carbon transition. Each LA will invite communities to partner with them on a small

project by filling in a specific form and selecting from a menu of options e.g. community composting, water refill stations, pollinator projects, small renewable energy projects, rewilding etc. In terms of considering expressions of interest, LAs will have regard to the eligibility criteria in the evaluation criteria section below.

### **3.3.2 Medium and large grants**

The following are the key steps in progressing medium and large projects:

- LAs will inform relevant community development organisations about the opportunities to activate communities for the purposes of this funding.
- LA will invite expressions of interest from communities interested in being a project partner with the LA.
- As part of the expressions of interest invitation, LAs will issue guidance on the types of projects that may be funded under the Programme and identify who may be eligible to partner with the LA.
- Relevant community development structures and organisations will be encouraged to support local communities in the development of their projects; but the community groups will be the lead.
- In terms of considering expressions of interest, LAs will have regard to the eligibility criteria in the evaluation criteria section below.

## **3.4 Mandatory requirements for projects**

- Projects must be eligible for funding from the Climate Action Fund as set out in the Eligibility section above for strand 1.
- Projects must comply with all statutory requirements in relation to planning, building regulations, Health and Safety, and Fire Codes, if applicable.
- Prospective partners are required to self-certify that they do not have the funding available to undertake the work without support, or alternatively that the support will enable them to undertake more, work which they otherwise would not be able to afford.
- Prospective partners must be able to demonstrate their ability to carry out the proposed works.

### **3.5 Funding and eligible costs**

Eligible costs will be considered on a case-by-case basis. However, the following general conditions will apply:

- Costs submitted must be for the sole purpose of implementing the project and shall not relate to any other purpose.
- Duplicate public funding must not have been received, or will be received, from other sources for the same purpose.
- Costs must be verifiable e.g. by evidence of public procurement, an invoice and receipt for payment.
- LAs will be advised if some costs have been deemed ineligible from the outset. This will be taken account of in the grant amount recommended and the amount awarded and included in the grant agreement for the proposal.
- LAs or their partners cannot include the cost of using their own equipment or premises.
- Up to 100% funding may be provided from the Climate Action Fund. Other funding may be leveraged for projects (e.g. with LEADER, Tidy Towns, Town and Village Enhancement funding, etc.) although that is not a requirement of this programme.
- Funding must comply with State Aid requirements.
- It is the responsibility of the administrators of/body responsible for any other funding scheme or programme to ensure that using this Programme to co-fund a project does not contradict the rules of that other scheme/programme.

### **3.6 State Aid Requirements**

The application forms will require both the partner and community groups to assess whether any funding received for their project would constitute state aid. There will be simple questions that should help the groups to fill in the forms with the assistance of their Community Climate Action Officer, who should refer to the appendix on “state aid” for further information. In the cases that involve state aid the groups will be asked to declare previous De Minimus State aid received and any funding will be aid offered through the De Minimus Regulation (Commission Regulation (EU) No 1407/2013), provided it would not breach the relevant De Minimus ceiling. If a project is ineligible to receive funding through the De Minimus Regulation the group may be eligible to receive funding through the CAF GBER



Scheme. The Community Climate Action Officers can engage further in that case with Department Officials.

### **3.7 Evaluation of Proposals**

- All expressions of interest under this programme will be reviewed and assessed by each LA, in line with the criteria set out at [evaluation criteria for medium and large projects](#) section below in the first place to determine suitability for funding.
- Selection of suitable projects for consideration by the Minister is at the discretion of each LA. Once a project has been deemed suitable for funding, the LA may, in deciding the final selection of projects, take account of a number of factors including the contribution of the projects to the climate action objectives of the local authority, the geographical distribution of projects and the desirability to fund a variety of different projects.
- The selection of projects is a competitive process. Local Authorities should recommend projects up to their allocated amount under strand 1 of the programme.
- Only applications that, in the opinion of the Local Authority, have passed the evaluation should be sent to the Department.
- The Minister will approve payments to projects as provided in section 37B of the National Oil Reserves Agency Act 2007 (as amended). The LAs should highlight to applicants that success at the evaluation stage is not a guarantee of funding due to the competitive nature of the programme.
- The LA will issue a letter of offer to successful applicants, which must be followed by a letter of acceptance from the applicants to participate in the project.
- If an applicant is awarded a lower funding allocation from what was initially sought, the applicant may submit a revised programme of works to the satisfaction of the LA. It is envisaged that there will be engagement with the LA in the preparation of same.
- The LA reserves the right to withdraw from a project if all requirements are not met within a reasonable period.

### **3.8 Evaluation criteria for small projects**

Projects should be evaluated under the same criteria as the medium and large projects, however, consideration should be given to the smaller scale of the project. Projects should still be relevant and demonstrate impact. Thought should also be given to the potential for replication in other communities, but they do not need be innovative or scalable. Value for money is a key consideration, and can be achieved by applying a 3 quote minimum rule, however, there is no requirement to choose the cheapest option. Communities must also

consider green procurement where possible. The projects must be achievable and standard governance arrangements will apply.

Where 3 quotes for a particular product/service is not possible or is overly burdensome in the case of multiple project components, the requirement for 3 quotes per item may be waived and the application may be evaluated on the quotes available. Documentary evidence should be provided showing efforts made to obtain 3 quotes where possible. The applicant should consult with the Community Climate Action Officer prior to submitting their application. The LA must be satisfied that the application represents value for money and that the applicant has engaged with suppliers in developing their trading online proposal.

### 3.9 Evaluation criteria for medium and large projects

This programme aims to ensure that projects are selected by LAs in a transparent and fair manner, according to clear criteria where due consideration is given to all eligible expressions of interest. Expressions of interest will be assessed inter alia on the following criteria. The maximum overall score is 100. Applications that score 50% or above and meet the minimum score required under selected criteria as set out below, will be considered for a project partnership with the LA.

Selection criterion	Weighting	Min. required	Basis for assessment
<b>Relevance and impact</b>	30%	15%	The project meets the objective of strand 1 to shape and build a low carbon community, and can clearly demonstrate the impact of the project in contributing to Ireland's climate and energy targets.
<b>Innovation and scalability</b>	20%	-	The project contains practical innovation/(s) and/or approaches. It has the potential to be scaled up or replicated in other communities post funding. The project has a lasting impact.
<b>Value for money</b>	20%	10%	The costs applied for are reasonable, represent an efficient use of resources and are commensurate with the quality and nature of the activities proposed.  Realistic, specific and relevant outputs and outcomes are identified, which are commensurate with the level of investment.
<b>Achievability</b>	10%	5%	The organisation/partnership has the appropriate expertise to deliver the proposed project. The proposal is clear and coherent and is deliverable within the timeframe. Key

			milestones are specified with an explanation of how these will be monitored.
<b>Partnership approach</b>	10%	-	Any Partner/Consortium roles and responsibilities are clearly outlined with partnership agreements in place (where applicable). The proposal demonstrates how all key stakeholders will be involved in the planning and implementation of the proposal.
<b>Governance arrangements</b>	10%	5%	Any necessary governance and financial management systems, controls and processes are in place to meet the requirements of the programme. Where applicable, evidence of tax compliance and registration with relevant bodies is supplied. Details of track record in managing other state funding is supplied.
	<b>100%</b>		

### 3.10 Approval of the Minister

Following the selection of suitable projects in line with the criteria above, each LA must submit a report to the Minister setting out the following details.

Section	Details
<b>Introduction</b>	<p>Narrative on LA climate objectives and how the recommended projects will contribute to these.</p> <p>Brief overview of the appraisal process.</p> <p>Highlight any significant concerns or observations for consideration by DECC.</p>
<b>Summary recommendations table</b>	<p>This table will list details on all projects by small, medium and large proposals.</p> <p>Details of all applications for partnership who have passed evaluation by local authorities and are being recommended for funding, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner organisation(s) names (if applicable)</li> <li>• Amount of funding applied for</li> <li>• Brief descriptor of the Project</li> <li>• Total score awarded</li> <li>• Overall rationale for the score awarded</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Score awarded for each criterion and rationale for each score awarded</li><li>• Any specific conditions of funding, including if de minimus funding is being used.</li><li>• Funding amount recommended</li><li>• Cumulative total of funding recommended</li></ul>
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Following consideration of this report, the Minister will decide if the projects may be funded from the Climate Action Fund and will issue approval to LAs to proceed.

## 4 Strand 1a: Shared Island Community Climate Action

### 4.1 Context

The Programme for Government and the National Development Plan 2021-30 (NDP) set out the Government's objectives for strategic cooperation and investment for mutual benefit on the island of Ireland, including on climate action.

The Shared Island chapter of the NDP includes investment objectives on:

- Climate action funding to take up opportunities for effective cross-border climate action partnerships and interventions.
- Coordinated investment to conserve cross-border region peatlands to support biodiversity, provide valuable ecosystem services and act as carbon sinks.
- Supporting more all-island approaches to biodiversity protection, building on the success of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.
- Investing for more efficient operation of the circular economy on an all-island basis.

### 4.2 How will it work?

To support the implementation of these NDP objectives, €3 million is being provided by the Government's Shared Island Fund for cross-border and all-island community climate action initiatives, as a part of the Community Climate Action Programme under strand 1a: Shared Island Community Climate Action.

The strand 1a application process will run in parallel with the strand 1 application process, with additional eligibility criteria relating to the cross-border elements. Strand 1a enables communities and LAs to propose a cross-border project in partnership with organisations in Northern Ireland. At least 50% of awarded funding will be for project delivery in Northern Ireland.

Communities may apply for a project under strand 1 and may apply for a separate project under strand 1a.

The €3 million Shared Island Fund resourcing is not pre-allocated to individual LAs. Instead, all LAs in this jurisdiction can assess an applications received under strand 1a and make a recommendation to the Minister.

Shared Island projects may be applied for under three tiers:

- Small sized projects of up to €20,000. Communities should submit expressions of interest to partner the LAs in these projects, by way of a specific application form and from a menu of options e.g. community composting, water refill stations, pollinator projects, small renewable energy projects, rewilding etc. These proposals should be considered against the [evaluation criteria for small Shared Island projects](#) set out below.
- Medium sized projects are valued in the range of €20,000 - €50,000. Communities should submit expressions of interest to partner the LAs in these projects. These proposals should be considered against the [evaluation criteria for medium and large Shared Island projects](#) set out below. Examples are set out in section 4.3.4.
- Larger projects are in the range of €51,000 - €100,000. Communities should submit expressions of interest to partner LAs in these projects. These proposals should be considered against the [evaluation criteria for medium and large Shared Island projects](#) set out below. Examples are set out in section 4.3.4.

Target thresholds have not been set for each tier under strand 1a, but every effort should be made to select suitable projects within these three tiers. If there is insufficient take up of appropriate projects within any of these tiers, the funding may be reallocated to other suitable projects in the other tiers.

The LA Director of Services/Head of Finance will maintain responsibility to sign off on grants allocated.

## 4.3 Eligibility

### 4.3.1 Organisation eligibility

Organisations meeting the requirements listed below are eligible to act as the lead organisation under strand 1a provided they:

- are a not-for-profit organisation
- are located in the operational area of the LA to which they are applying for funding
- submit a completed application form on or before the specified closing date and time
- are registered with a PPN or connected with other collectives such as the Wheel, Tidy Towns and /or a community group with Articles of Association or a Constitution, which hold an AGM, and for which approved minutes are available.

Additionally:

- Strand 1a applications must be made by a lead organisation in this jurisdiction, with at least one partner organisation in Northern Ireland.
  - Strand 1a applications will be submitted to the LA in this jurisdiction in which the lead organisation is based.
- Strand 1a applications must comprise a cross-border project in partnership with an organisation in Northern Ireland.
- Given the scope for all-island projects, national community and environmental organisations are eligible to apply under strand 1a.
- Partner organisations must be a not-for-profit organisation, a Local Authority, or a community or environmental organisation, registered in Northern Ireland.

The following are not eligible to act as the lead organisation or the Northern Ireland Partner:

- Private individuals
- Commercial undertakings (including sole traders).

Furthermore:

- The project applied for must be in line with the aim/purpose of the funding as set out below.
- Only one application per lead organisation may be submitted for consideration – projects proposed could cut across several of the themes and be bundled together as part of a single application.

In developing projects, LAs and communities should also consider how their projects contribute to progress in relation to relevant [Sustainable Development Goals](#).

### **4.3.2 Projects eligible for funding under strand 1a**

The types of projects/initiatives, within communities, which are eligible for funding under strand 1a, must seek to do the following on a cross-border basis of the island of Ireland:

- reduce, or support the reduction of, greenhouse gas emissions
- increase the production, or use, of renewable energy

- improve energy efficiency
- increase climate resilience
- identify nature-based projects that enhance biodiversity and seek to reduce, or increase the removal of, greenhouse gas emissions or support climate resilience
- assist regions within sectors of the economy impacted by the transition to a low carbon economy
- involve potentially innovative solutions to address the above asks.

### 4.3.3 The Five Programme Themes

More specifically, projects must also be developed to take climate action across as many of the following five programme themes as possible. A project may therefore be comprised of several of the suggested project types as set out in this section and in section 4.3.4. While this section sets out suggestions for types of projects which may be funded, applicants are not limited to selecting project types from this list and may submit their own innovative projects meeting the objective of the Programme.

- [Theme 1: Home/energy](#)
- [Theme 2: Travel](#)
- [Theme 3: Food and waste](#)
- [Theme 4: Shopping and recycling](#)
- [Theme 5: Local climate and environmental action](#)

#### 4.3.3.1 Theme 1: Home/energy

Many buildings have very low energy ratings and high running costs, mainly due to heat loss. How we heat our buildings, and the heat lost account for 10% of Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. How we build, heat and run our buildings can play a big part in reducing Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. We can make our buildings more energy efficient by retrofitting them (e.g. insulation), switching off and using low energy lights/ appliances, and using smart controls.

We are interested in projects which reduce the climate impact of buildings in communities by using less energy, using renewable energy and avoiding heat loss. This can include small community renewable energy projects (solar, hydro, wind), retrofitting community buildings, LED community lighting or community EV charging point(s).



#### **4.3.3.2 Theme 2: Travel**

How we travel is one of the main areas where behaviour change can have a rapid and real impact on achieving our climate goals. Transport accounts for approximately 20% of Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. We know that changing our means of travel is not simple, and often dictated by previous planning and housing choices, particularly in rural communities, which has led to a high car dependency. However, there are real alternatives emerging. Working from home due to COVID 19 showed the potential to drastically reduce the travel related emissions in 2020.

We are interested in projects which contribute to emissions reductions related to travel. This can include reductions in carbon footprint in services, improving access to cycle ways, cycle parking, community electric vehicles, safe or active travel routes to schools.

#### **4.3.3.3 Theme 3: Food and waste**

It takes a lot of resources to put food on our tables. Growing, processing and transporting food all use large amounts of energy and materials. It is estimated that 1/3 of the food we grow is wasted and food waste accounts for 10% of global emissions. The 2021 Climate Action Plan has set a goal for the agricultural sector to reduce their climate impact in producing food and there is a national commitment to reducing food waste by 50% by 2030. Some changes which people are already making to reduce their climate impact incorporate: reducing the amount of food they are wasting, as well as including more plant based and lower carbon proteins in their meals. It is recognised While being mindful that different circumstances such as the culture, religion, health, abilities and tastes can affect the decisions individual people can make; at a systems, community and lifestyle level there are opportunities to connect and engage people in action on food, waste and climate change (see more at [stopfoodwaste.ie](https://stopfoodwaste.ie)).

We are interested in projects that reduce food waste. This can include developing community gardens to promote local food production, allotments, food pledges from local businesses, food markets, repair hubs or community composting facilities.

#### **4.3.3.4 Theme 4: Shopping and recycling**

What we buy has a major contribution to emissions in terms of how they are made, transported, used, reused and recycled. Ireland is moving towards creating a circular economy, making products that last longer, can be repurposed, reused and eventually recycled more easily. One of our climate goals is to increase the amount of waste that is recycled and to make all packaging reusable or recyclable by 2030.

As shoppers we have the power to influence how our products are made, and to look for sustainable options. People are changing their shopping habits by buying products that last longer or repurposing clothing or furniture. People are also planning what they will do with things when they are finished using them, recycling as much as possible, actively segregating their waste for collection and using recycling centres and services near to them (see [mywaste.ie](http://mywaste.ie)).

We are interested in projects that increase the variety and number of recycling facilities in the local community; initiatives aimed at reducing, reusing and recycling, community repair hubs, swap shops, water filling stations or single use plastics elimination in businesses in communities.

#### **4.3.3.5 Theme 5: Local climate and environmental action**

The island has an abundance of natural resources, from our bogs and forests to our rivers and oceans. These natural resources need to be protected from climate change, and in return, they will help us by absorbing carbon, reducing the risk of flooding, increasing flowers and wildlife, and acting as places for us all to reconnect with nature. How local communities come together to take action is an important part of the Climate Action Plan, and some of the best ideas for environmental action begin in the heart of communities. Community action can take many forms from simple clean-ups to community energy schemes, to making plans to adapt to the changes already happening.

We are interested in projects that take a holistic approach to managing the local environment, including in relation to climate action. This can include for example, mini forests, forest schools, dispersed orchards, community gardens, roof gardens, pollinator projects or climate resilience projects.

#### **4.3.4 Projects eligible for funding specifically under Strand 1a**

While projects seeking funding under strand 1a should generally address the same five themes as strand 1 projects, there are also specific areas that may be particularly suited to a Shared Island approach. In recognition of the integration of climate and biodiversity action policies, these could include:

**Valuing Networks for Nature:** Communities working together in nature recovery networks or 'wildlife web' and developing corridors of natural vegetation between existing conservation areas.

**Sustainable farming:** Programmes focusing on regenerative and nature-based farming on

a cross-border and all-island basis could be developed and expanded.

**Just Transition:** Recognising the importance of a just transition for farmers and encouraging different agricultural practices on a cross-border and all-island basis, including to improve and protect land and water quality.

**Peatland restoration:** This has been identified as a key area of work, North and South, given the trans-boundary implications for carbon storage levels and inventory reporting, with potential for community and Local Authority cooperative interventions in border regions.

**Renewable energy:** Encouraging groups to build cooperation and share information in the areas of solar, off-shore wind, wave and tidal energy. Some Local Authorities have already engaged in these areas and cross-border partnerships offer additional potential to develop projects and seek solutions.

**Flood forecasting:** Using the “bottom-up” approach adopted by the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, small scale collaborations on flood forecasting and warning services could be piloted in particular -border regions.

**Coastal erosion:** Potential for significant cooperation in research, data-sharing and mitigation between communities and Local Authorities across the island.

## 4.4 Strand 1a Application process

### 4.4.1 Small grants

This element encourages participation by communities wishing to start out on their low carbon transition. Each LA will invite expressions of interest from communities interested in being a lead organisation and partner with the LA by filling in a specific form and selecting from a menu of options e.g. community composting, water refill stations, pollinator projects, small renewable energy projects, rewilding etc. for strand 1a. Under strand 1a communities will be able to secure funding to collaborate with another community partner based in Northern Ireland, enabling cross-border projects. In terms of considering expressions of interest, LAs will have regard to the eligibility criteria in the evaluation criteria sections below for strand 1a.

## 4.4.2 Medium and large grants

The following are the key steps in progressing medium and large projects:

- LAs will inform relevant community development organisations about the opportunities to activate communities on a cross-border basis for the purposes of this funding.
- LA will invite expressions of interest from communities interested in being a lead organisation and partner with the LA for strand 1a.
- As part of the expressions of interest invitation, LAs will issue guidance on the types of projects that may be funded under the Programme and who may be eligible to become a lead organisation and partner the LA for strand 1a.
- Relevant community development structures and organisations will be encouraged to support local communities in the development of their Shared Island projects; but the community groups will be the lead.
- In terms of considering expressions of interest, LAs will have regard to the eligibility criteria in the Evaluation criteria sections below for strand 1a.

## 4.5 Mandatory requirements for projects

- Projects must be eligible for funding from the Shared Island Fund as set out in the Eligibility sections for strand 1a.
- Projects must comply with all statutory requirements in relation to planning, building regulations, Health and Safety, and Fire Codes, if applicable.
- Prospective partners are required to self-certify that they do not have the funding available to undertake the work without support, or alternatively that the support will enable them to undertake more, work which they otherwise would not be able to afford.
- Prospective partners must be able to demonstrate their ability to carry out the proposed works.

## 4.6 Funding and eligible costs

Eligible costs will be considered on a case-by-case basis. However, the following general conditions will apply:

- Costs submitted must be for the sole purpose of implementing the project and shall not relate to any other purpose.
- Duplicate public funding must not have been received, or will be received, from other sources for the same purpose.
- Costs must be verifiable e.g. by evidence of public procurement, an invoice and receipt for payment.
- LAs will be advised if some costs have been deemed ineligible from the outset. This will be taken account of in the grant amount recommended and the amount awarded and included in the grant agreement for the proposal.
- LAs, lead organisations or their partners cannot include the cost of using their own equipment or premises.
- Up to 100% funding may be provided from the Shared Island Fund resourcing for strand 1a. Other funding may be leveraged for Shared Island projects although that is not a requirement.
- Funding must comply with State Aid requirements.
- It is the responsibility of the administrators of/body responsible for any other funding scheme or programme to ensure that using this Programme to co-fund a project does not contradict the rules of that other scheme/programme.

## **4.7 State Aid Requirements**

All application forms currently require all partners and organisations, North and South, to assess whether any funding received for their project would constitute state aid. There will be simple questions that should help the groups to fill in the forms with the assistance of their Community Climate Action Officer, who should refer to the appendix on “state aid” for further information. In the cases that involve state aid the groups will be asked to declare previous De Minimus State aid received and any funding will be aid offered through the De Minimus Regulation (Commission Regulation (EU) No 1407/2013), provided it would not breach the relevant De Minimus ceiling. If a project is ineligible to receive funding through the De Minimus Regulation the group may be eligible to receive funding through the CAF GBER Scheme. The Community Climate Action Officers can engage further in that case with Department Officials.

## 4.8 Evaluation of strand 1a proposals

- All expressions of interest under strand 1a received by a local authority will be reviewed and assessed by each LA, in line with criteria set out at [evaluation criteria for medium and large Shared Island projects](#) below in the first place to determine suitability for funding.
- Selection of suitable projects for consideration by the Minister is at the discretion of each LA. Once a project has been deemed suitable for funding the LA may, in deciding the final selection of projects to recommend to the Minister, take account of a number of factors including the contribution of the projects to the climate action objectives of the local authority, the geographical distribution of projects and desirability to fund a variety of different projects.
- .
- All Local Authorities in the jurisdiction can receive and assess Shared Island strand proposals from eligible applicants and submit for consideration to the Minister. There is no individual county allocation of the Shared Island strand funding, but the objective is that a broad geographic spread of projects are funded, involving community partnerships in the border region and across regions on the island more broadly, and from civil society partnerships that can deliver climate actions on a collaborative all-island basis. After receiving the evaluated applications the department may further evaluate projects to achieve this broad geographic spread.
- The LAs should highlight to applicants that success at the evaluation stage is not a guarantee of funding due to the competitive nature of the programme and the limited source of funding available for strand 1a.
- LAs will be Lead Partners for strand 1a projects and will receive, manage and be accountable for the funding, with necessary governance and oversight, as set out in the grant agreement.
- Each LA can assess applications that it receives under strand 1a and decide to partner with a lead organisation on the project. Applicants must be based within their jurisdiction. There must also be least one partner organisation in Northern Ireland. At least 50% of awarded funding will be for project delivery in Northern Ireland.
- As Lead Partner, the LA can then forward the assessed applications to the Minister who will evaluate the projects according to the criteria in the evaluation criteria for Shared Island projects and decide which projects may be funded. The Minister will

then put a grant agreement in place with the LA (as Lead Partner) in respect of each project approved for strand 1a funding.

- The LA can assess and select multiple strand 1a - Shared Island projects for recommendation to the Minister.

## **4.9 Evaluation criteria for small Shared Island projects**

Projects should be evaluated under the same criteria as the medium and large projects, however, consideration should be given to the smaller scale of the project. Projects should demonstrate relevance and impact, in addition to demonstrating a cross-border partnership approach. Thought should also be given to the potential for replication in other communities, but they do not need be innovative or scalable. Value for money is a key consideration, and can be achieved by applying a 3 quote minimum rule, however, there is no requirement to choose the cheapest option. Communities must also consider green procurement where possible. The projects must be achievable and standard governance arrangements will apply.

Where 3 quotes for a particular product/service is not possible or is overly burdensome in the case of multiple project components, the requirement for 3 quotes per item may be waived and the application may be evaluated on the quotes available. Documentary evidence should be provided showing efforts made to obtain 3 quotes where possible. The applicant should consult with the Community Climate Action Officer prior to submitting their application. The LA must be satisfied that the application represents value for money and that the applicant has engaged with suppliers in developing their trading online proposal.

## **4.10 Evaluation criteria for medium and large Shared Island projects**

This programme aims to ensure that projects are selected by LAs in a transparent and fair manner, according to clear criteria where due consideration is given to all eligible expressions of interest. Expressions of interest will be assessed inter alia on the following criteria. The maximum overall score is 100. Applications scoring 50% or above, and that meet the minimum score required under selected criteria as set out below, will be considered for a project partnership with the LA.

<b>Selection criterion</b>	<b>Weighting</b>	<b>Min. required</b>	<b>Basis for assessment</b>
<b>Shared Island relevance and impact</b>	30%	15%	The project meets the objective of sStrand 1 to shape and build a low carbon community, and can clearly demonstrate the impact of the project in contributing to climate and energy targets on a cross-border basis on the island of Ireland and the sustainability objectives in the Shared Island chapter of the revised National Development Plan.
<b>Innovation and scalability</b>	20%	-	The project contains practical innovation/(s) and/or approaches. It has the potential to be scaled up or replicated in other communities post funding. The project has a lasting impact.
<b>Value for money</b>	20%	10%	The costs applied for are reasonable, represent an efficient use of resources and are commensurate with the quality and nature of the activities proposed.  Realistic, specific and relevant outputs and outcomes are identified which are commensurate with the level of investment.
<b>Achievability</b>	10%	5%	The organisation/partnership has the appropriate expertise to deliver the proposed project. The proposal is clear and coherent and is deliverable within the timeframe. Key milestones are specified with an explanation of how these will be monitored.
<b>Cross-border partnership approach</b>	10%	5%	Any Partner/Consortium roles and responsibilities are clearly outlined with partnership agreements in place (where applicable). The proposal demonstrates how all key stakeholders will be involved in the planning and implementation of the proposal.  The proposal demonstrates how all key stakeholders will be involved in the planning and implementation of the proposal.  The proposal includes at least one partner in Northern Ireland, and at least 50% of awarded funding will be for project delivery in Northern Ireland.
<b>Governance arrangements</b>	10%	5%	Any necessary governance and financial management systems, controls and processes are in place to meet the requirements of the programme. Where applicable, evidence of tax compliance and registration with relevant



			bodies is supplied. Details of track record in managing other state funding is supplied.
	<b>100%</b>		

## 4.11 Approval of the Minister

Following the selection of suitable projects in line with the criteria above, each LA must submit a report to the Minister setting out the following details.

Section	Details
<b>Introduction</b>	<p>Narrative on LA climate objectives and how the recommended projects will contribute to these.</p> <p>Brief overview of the appraisal process.</p> <p>Highlight any significant concerns or observations for consideration by DECC.</p>
<b>Summary recommendations table</b>	<p>This table will list details on all projects by small, medium and large proposals.</p> <p>Details of all applications for partnership who have passed evaluation by local authorities and are being recommended for funding, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner organisation(s) names (if applicable)</li> <li>• Amount of funding applied for</li> <li>• Brief descriptor of the Project</li> <li>• Total score awarded</li> <li>• Overall rationale for the score awarded</li> <li>• Score awarded for each criterion and rationale for each score awarded</li> <li>• Any specific conditions of funding, including if de minimus funding is being used.</li> <li>• Funding amount recommended</li> <li>• Cumulative total of funding recommended</li> </ul>

Following consideration of this report, the Minister will decide which projects may be funded from the Shared Island Fund resourcing and will issue grant agreements to the LAs.

## 5 Governance

### 5.1 Grant agreements

Grant agreements will be put in place with each LA. In signing their grant agreements, each LA will agree to the following:

- Compliance with the Climate Action Fund Financial Guidelines.
- Compliance with Circular: 13/2014, from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.
- Compliance with Public Procurement guidelines in relation to the purchase of all goods and services.
- Agree to retain all documentation for 7 years
- The provision of data and information on the actions funded as may be requested by DECC.
- The maintenance of separate accounting records for its projects.
- The funding is subject to audit by DECC.
- Vouched receipts, photographs of completed works (where appropriate), and other documentation as necessary may be sought by DECC.
- Site visits: The Department may carry out unannounced site visits to verify compliance with Programme terms and conditions.
- The contribution of the 'Government of Ireland, and "Project Ireland 2040" must be acknowledged in publicity, promotions and signage, and other relevant matters as appropriate.

### 5.2 Reporting requirements

Reporting Requirements will be set out in the grant agreement. In addition, LAs will be required to submit an annual profile of expenditure and expected drawdowns. Progress reports will accompany drawdown requests.

### 5.3 The Code of Governance for Community and Voluntary Organisations

Community partners are encouraged to adopt the Governance Code, a Code of Practice for Good Governance of Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations, which will assist

in achieving excellence in all areas of their work. The Governance Code asks organisations to agree to operate to key principles in order to run their organisation more effectively in areas such as leadership, transparency and accountability and behaving with integrity. Further information on the Code is available at [www.governancecode.ie](http://www.governancecode.ie)

## **5.4 Partnership funding agreements between local authorities and communities**

Once the Minister's approval has been issued to the projects, the Community Climate Action Officer will engage with communities to finalise the agreed actions, outputs, outcomes, milestones etc. A letter of offer will issue from the local authority to the community and a funding agreement setting out the terms and conditions will be put in place by each local authority with each of the communities.

In signing their funding agreements, each community will agree to the following:

- Compliance with the Climate Action Fund Financial Guidelines.
- Compliance with Circular: 13/2014, from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.
- Compliance with Public Procurement guidelines in relation to the purchase of all goods and services.
- Agree to retain all documentation for 7 years
- The provision of data and information on the actions funded as may be requested by DECC and/or the local authority.
- The maintenance of separate accounting records for its projects.
- The funding is subject to audit by DECC.
- Vouched receipts, photographs of completed works (where appropriate), and other documentation as necessary may be sought by DECC.
- Site Visits: The Department and/or the local authority may carry out unannounced site visits to verify compliance with Programme terms and conditions.
- The contribution of the 'Government of Ireland, and "Department of the Environment, Climate Action and Communications" must be acknowledged in publicity, promotions and signage, and other relevant matters as appropriate.

## 5.5 Allocations under strand 1

The following allocations are proposed based on a minimum allocation of €200,000 to each LA with the balance divided based on population data sourced from the 2016 CSO data (source: <http://census.cso.ie/sapmap/>) adjusted for Cork. Funding will be available from later this year.

Local Authority	Allocation
Cork City	€ 860,000
Clare	€ 572,000
Cork County	€ 1,241,000
Cavan	€ 439,000
Carlow	€ 378,000
Dublin City	€ 1,938,000
Donegal	€ 699,000
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	€ 883,000
Fingal	€ 1,127,000
Galway City	€ 446,000
Galway County	€ 762,000
Kildare	€ 897,000
Kilkenny	€ 511,000
Kerry	€ 663,000
Longford	€ 328,000
Louth	€ 604,000
Limerick City and County	€ 811,000
Leitrim	€ 300,000
Laois	€ 465,000
Meath	€ 811,000
Monaghan	€ 392,000
Mayo	€ 609,000

<b>Offaly</b>	€	444,000
<b>Roscommon</b>	€	402,000
<b>South Dublin</b>	€	1,073,000
<b>Sligo</b>	€	405,000
<b>Tipperary</b>	€	700,000
<b>Waterford City and County</b>	€	564,000
<b>Westmeath</b>	€	478,000
<b>Wicklow</b>	€	646,000
<b>Wexford</b>	€	669,000

## 5.6 Allocations under strand 1a - Shared Island

The €3 million Shared Island Fund resourcing is not pre-allocated to individual LAs. All LAs in Ireland can assess an application received under strand 1(a) and make a recommendation to the Minister. LAs will be the Lead Partners for strand 1a projects. The funding will be available from 2023.

## 5.7 Key Dates

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Announcement of Launch</b>	Soft Launch 26 October 2022, official letters to CEOs in November
<b>Information webinar for Community Climate Action Officers</b>	Online December 2022
<b>Expressions of interest accepted</b>	8 – 10 weeks opening December
<b>Evaluation</b>	8 weeks
<b>Assessment by Department</b>	8 – 12 weeks
<b>Results announced</b>	June – July 2023