Community Climate Action Programme

Please note this is a live document and may be subject to change; it should be used as a guide however it is important to begin discussions now with your Community Climate Action Officer on the specifics of your project. Get in touch at climatechange@sdublincoco.ie

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1. AIMS OF THE PROGRAMME

Ireland is aiming to become a <u>climate neutral economy</u> and <u>resilient society</u> by 2050.

To achieve a climate neutral economy, it is about dramatically reducing the amount of greenhouse gases that we release into the atmosphere.

To achieve a resilient society, we need to adapt our communities to be better prepared to face the impacts of climate change, for example flooding or heat.

The overall objective of the Programme is to support and empower communities, in partnership with SDCC, to shape and build low carbon, sustainable communities in a considered and structured way to contribute to national climate and energy targets.

Communities can play a critical role in driving such positive change. South Dublin County Council, in conjunction with the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, will support this through the Community Climate Action Programme. Projects should also seek to maximise the community gain as broadly as possible.

2. HOW IT WORKS

The Community Climate Action Programme has two strands, **Strand 1** and **Strand 1a**.

Strand 1 - For Local Community Climate Projects

A total of €1,073,000 is available for community groups in South Dublin over an initial 18-month period.

Strand 1a - For All-Island Community Climate Projects with Local Impact

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.

In addition to Strand 1, a total of €3 million is being provided by the Government's Shared Island Fund to support cross-border[1] and all-island[2] community climate action initiatives as an integrated part of the Community Climate Action Programme. The €3 million Shared Island Fund resourcing is not pre-allocated to individual local authorities in the Republic such as SDCC. Instead, all local authorities in this jurisdiction can assess an application received under strand 1a and make a recommendation for funding to the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications.

Strand 1a projects 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 community groups in South Dublin and SDCC to propose a cross-border project in partnership with organisations in Northern Ireland.

Both Strand 1 & Strand 1a will support three levels of projects:

Small scale projects	10% of the funding will go to small projects up to €19,999
Medium scale projects	40% of the funding will be allocated for medium sized projects valued in the range of €20,000 - €50,000
Large scale projects	50% of the funding will be allocated for larger projects in the range of €51,000 - €100,000

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[1] Cross-border projects involve projects that are both north and south of the border.
[2] All-island projects are broader than cross-border projects and could involve multiple projects across Ireland.

3. ELIGIBILITY

It is important to begin discussions with SDCC about the eligibility of your group and potential projects at an early stage. We are here to support you with any eligibility questions. Please get in touch at climatechange@sdublincoco.ie

Strand 1 - For Local Community Climate Projects

Community organisations must meet the following criteria to apply:

- must be a not-for-profit organisation
- must be registered with a PPN or connected with other collectives such as the Wheel, Tidy Towns and/or be a community group with Articles of Association or a Constitution, which hold an AGM, and for which approved minutes are available
- must be located in the operational area of South Dublin County Council
- must submit a completed application form on or before the specified closing date and time
- Furthermore: Only one application per organisation may be submitted for consideration – projects proposed could cut across several climate action themes and be bundled together as part of a single application.

For clarity, the following entities are not eligible to apply to Strand 1:

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

Strand 1a - For All-Island Community Climate Projects with Local Impact

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

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 registered with a PPN or connected with other collectives such as the Wheel, Tidy Towns and/or be a community group with Articles of Association or a Constitution, which hold an AGM, and for which approved minutes are available.
- are located in the operational area of South Dublin County Council
- submit a completed application form on or before the specified closing date and time

Additionally:

- Strand 1a applications must be made by a lead organisation in South Dublin, with at least one partner organisation in Northern Ireland

- 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
- Furthermore: Only one application per lead organisation may be submitted for consideration – projects proposed could cut across several climate action themes and be bundled together as part of a single application

For clarity, the following are not eligible to act as the lead organisation or the Northern Ireland Partner:

- **Private individuals;**
- **Commercial undertakings (including sole traders);**
- **School and educational organisations.**

4. KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The project applied for must be in line with the aim/purpose of the funding and should seek to demonstrate the delivery of national climate action at local level by:

- Reducing or supporting the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
- Increasing the production, or use, of renewable energy
- Improving energy efficiency
- Increasing climate resilience (helping us to live alongside the impacts of climate change)
- 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
- 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
- Involving potentially innovative solutions to address the above asks.
- Having the ability to be scaled up or replicated in other communities post funding.

In developing projects, communities should also consider how their projects contribute to progress in relation to relevant Sustainable Development Goals.

5. **POTENTIAL PROJECTS**

Projects will address the following five themes.

Projects must also be developed to take climate action across as many of the following five programme themes where possible.

Please note applicants are not limited to selecting these project types and are encouraged to explore innovative projects that meet the fund objectives.

1. **Community Energy**
2. **Travel**
3. **Food & Waste**
4. **Shopping & Recycling**
5. **Local Climate & Environmental Action**

Community 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), 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, for example, small community renewable energy projects (solar, hydro, wind), retrofitting community buildings, LED community lighting, but you are not limited to choosing these.

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 which has led to a high car dependency.

We are interested in projects which contribute to emissions reductions related to travel. This can include, for example, improving access to cycle ways, cycle parking, safe or active travel routes to schools, but you are not limited to choosing these.

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.

We are interested in projects that reduce food waste. This can include, for example, developing community gardens to promote local food production, food markets, or community composting facilities, but you are not limited to choosing these.

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).

For example, 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, but you are not limited to choosing these.

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.

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 (helping us to live alongside the impacts of climate change), but you are not limited to choosing these.

Smaller Projects

Smaller projects may also be supported and encourages participation by communities wishing to start out on their low carbon transition.

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.

Comhairle Contae Átha Cliath Theas
South Dublin County Council

6. TERMS & CONDITIONS; ELIGIBLE / NON-ELIGIBLE PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

Please note the below is not exhaustive. It is important to begin discussions with the Community Climate Action Officer about the eligibility of your group and potential projects at an early stage. Please get in touch at climatechange@sdublincoco.ie.

- Projects must be eligible for funding from the Climate Action Fund as set out in the Eligibility section above
- Projects must comply with all statutory requirements in relation to planning, building regulations, Health and Safety, and Fire Codes, where 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
- Projects must be completed within 18 months of signing the contract with SDCC
- Projects which involve capital works may require on-site checks to verify that the works are being realised and/or have been completed as specified for Project delivery
- No assets purchased from the programme shall be hired out, pledged, mortgaged or charged for financial gain without prior written approval
- Projects must operate for five years from the date of final project payment.

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
- SDCC 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
- Up to 100% funding may be provided to projects. Other funding may be leveraged for projects (e.g., LEADER, Tidy Towns, Town and Village Enhancement funding, etc.) although that is not a requirement of this programme. It must be clear that the funded element of the project can complete without being subject to or compromised by the delivery of the larger project.
- Funding must comply with State Aid requirements (see below section)
- 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

Non-Eligible Costs & Projects

- Projects that solely benefit an individual

- Teaching/staffing
- Travel and transport costs except in exceptional circumstances
- Equipment, unless directly associated with the project
- Income generating projects
- Overheads, ongoing running costs
- Insurance
- Accommodation and subsistence
- Redundancy costs
- Penalties/Interest/Bank Interest/Charges
- Loan repayments
- Retrospective costs i.e., expenditure which has taken place prior to commencement date of the project
- Costs for which more appropriate funding opportunities already exist are ineligible, where it is clear that Community Climate Action Programme funding is a substitute for other public funding which is currently available
- Notional costs e.g., the room hire within the applicant's own premises
- Legal Fees
- Rent/location set up fees
- Applicant organisations nor their partners cannot include the cost of using their own equipment or premises i.e., items such as the use of a photocopier or use of their own rooms for meetings
- Costs being claimed which do not relate to the approved Programme or project activity and/or include ineligible activity, where not pre-approved
- Excessive costs in any regard
- Costs claimed for which there is no or insufficient supporting documentation
- Costs or requests for additional funding to cover increased costs
- Costs for a project which requires a lease/licensing agreement and where no signed lease/licensing agreement has been confirmed to be in place in the application form.
- Third party costs which have not actually been paid for
- Costs claimed that are already the subject of separate exchequer grants and for the same activity which constitutes double funding
- Consultancy costs
- Construction costs that are not verifiable

Terms and Conditions

- The application must be signed by the Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer or responsible person of the group/organisation making the submission.
- It is the responsibility of each group/organisation to ensure that it has proper procedures and policies in place including appropriate insurance where relevant.
- Evidence of expenditure, receipts /invoices must be retained and provided to SDCC or their representative to support payment of funds.
- Photographic evidence of the project may also be required to facilitate draw down of grants.
- The Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications or SDCC may carry out unannounced site visits to verify compliance with Programme terms and conditions.

- Applications to strand 1 and strand 1a must be separate. The Climate Action Fund, or Shared Island Fund, contributions must be publicly acknowledged in all materials associated with the purpose of the grant.
- No third party or intermediary applications will be considered.
- In order to process your application it may be necessary for SDCC to collect personal data from you. Such information will be processed in line with SDCC's privacy statement which is available to view here.
- A grant agreement will be put in place between successful applicants and SDCC.

Considerations around Land, Leasing & Planning

Where a project will be delivered from a site/building/floor space that is not in the ownership of SDCC, it must be in the ownership of the organisation applying to the fund, or either party must have a minimum five year lease or agreement in place from date of the final project payment., making it available to the community.

Purchase or leasing of land cannot be the entirety of the proposed project; a minimum of a five year lease is required from completion of the project. The project would have to demonstrate how it meets the objective and criteria of the Community Climate Action Programme. Purchase or lease of land alone would not meet the programme objectives.

SDCC will seek assurance through the application forms from each partner organisation that it has all required planning and regulatory permissions and consents and has secured the necessary authorisations and/or rights of access to all required land, buildings and property for all associated work required for each project delivery.

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 organisations 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

7. MAKING AN APPLICATION

Application Portal

Project Proposals should be submitted through our dedicated online portal, which you can access by contacting climatechange@sdublincoco.ie

If you require any assistance with the application portal, your Community Climate Action Officer will be available to assist you. SDCC are committed to ensuring that this fund is accessible to all who wish to make an application. The application portal will be open for 12 weeks after which project proposals will be assessed under a competitive process.

Budgeting & Procurement

As part of the application community groups will need to prepare a budget detailing everything that they will need to pay for during the project. To ensure an application represents value for money, three written quotes must be sought and must be submitted with the application. Communities must also consider green procurement where possible.

SDCC must be satisfied that the application represents value for money and that the applicant has engaged with suppliers in developing their proposal. Where three quotes for a particular product/service is not possible or is overly burdensome in the case of multiple project components, this requirement may be waived, and the application may be evaluated on the quotes available. You are not required to go with cheapest quote. Groups should consult with the Community Climate Action Officer prior to submitting their application if this situation arises.

For strand 1a projects, all quotes must be provided in Euros and the relevant community group must absorb the sterling conversion rate, if there is one.

When getting quotes from suppliers, groups should try to ensure that quotes will be valid for when they are carrying out the work i.e., this is envisioned to be from late summer 2024.

Please note that successful applicants will need to follow public procurement guidelines and depending on the type of work and cost, may need to get further quotes to satisfy this requirement. The Community Climate Action Officer can advise groups on this.

State Aid

Funding must comply with State Aid requirements.

The application forms require both SDCC and community groups to assess whether any funding received for their project would constitute state aid. Your Community Climate Action Officer can assist you in answering these questions. In the cases that involve state aid the groups will be asked to declare previous De Minimis State aid received and any funding will be aid offered through the De Minimis Regulation (Commission Regulation (EU) No 1407/2013), provided it would not breach the relevant De Minimis ceiling.

8. EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

The selection of projects is a competitive process.

This programme aims to ensure that projects are selected in a transparent and fair manner, according to clear criteria where due consideration is given to all eligible applications. Applications will be assessed on the following criteria. The maximum overall score is 100. Applications that score 50% or above and meet the minimum score required under the various selection criteria, will be considered for a project partnership with SDCC.

Strand 1 Evaluation Criteria

Selection Criteria	Basis for Assessment
Relevance and impact	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.
Innovation and scalability	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.
Value for money	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.
Achievability	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.
Partnership approach	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.
Governance arrangements	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.

Strand 1a Selection Criteria

Selection Criterion	Basis for Assessment
Shared Island relevance and impact	The project meets the objective of Strand 1A 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.
Innovation and scalability	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.
Value for money	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.
Achievability	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.
Cross-border partnership approach	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.
Governance arrangements	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.

Small Projects up to €19,999

Projects will be evaluated under the same criteria as above, however, consideration will be given to the smaller scale of the project. Projects should still be relevant to the aims of the fund 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. SDCC must be satisfied that the application represents value for money and that the applicant has engaged with suppliers in developing their trading online proposal.

Strand 1a projects, in addition, must demonstrate a cross-border partnership approach.

Please note that:

Once a project has been deemed suitable for funding, SDCC 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 SDCC, the geographical distribution of projects and the desirability to fund a variety of different projects.

9. WHAT TO EXPECT IF YOU'RE SUCCESSFUL

Key steps after the application stage

After a 12 week assessment period following the closing of the application period, SDCC will submit a portfolio of projects to the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications.

Once a project is approved for funding, SDCC 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 SDCC.

SDCC reserves the right to withdraw from a project if all requirements are not met within a reasonable period.

It is envisaged that projects can begin from August 2024, subject to change.

Funding

100% of project costs can be applied for from the fund. A maximum of 25% of project costs can be provided to groups to begin projects, on a need's basis. Further tranches of 25% of project costs can be drawn down once proof of spending of the last tranche is provided. Receipts must be provided to SDCC. SDCC can drawdown additional funds from the Department of Environment Climate and Communications on a quarterly basis only, it is therefore essential to plan your project and budget your spending carefully.

For Strand 1A, funding will only be paid to the lead organisation's bank account.

Monitoring and Auditing

Monitoring of successful projects will be undertaken by SDCC and reported to the Department of Environment Climate and Communications. SDCC will collect agreed individual project outputs/outcomes to facilitate this process through the Annual Report, Mid-Year Progress Report and Final Report, during claims requests. A sample of projects may be selected annually for audit and verification purposes.

The Department of Environment Climate and Communications reserves the right for Departmental officials to make site visits to both SDCC or their partner organisations as part of a compliance and audit function, which may not be notified in advance. Site visits may include verifying technical capacity, project progress, and that financial expenditure and purchases procedures have been adhered to.