



Tourism and the Green New Deal

The **Programme for Government – Our Shared Future** has a comprehensive section focusing on embedding Environmental Sustainability within the economy.

The tourism sector has a major influence on emissions, especially carbon dioxide (CO₂) in terms of;

- Consumption of energy
- Consumption of water
- Creation of waste – especially single use plastics
- Production of Food Waste
- Provenance and Types of Foods sourced
- Embedded carbon in new builds, extensions, goods and services
- Allied emissions from the transport sector – especially inbound tourism

The programme sets out a challenging annual 7% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 2021 to 2030 which is an overall 51% reduction over the decade.

This reduction is based on current emissions so any increase in capacity within the sector will increase the absolute scale of the challenge.

It is also noted that there is a strong move worldwide to implement an Aviation Carbon Tax to ensure that aviation plays its part in the reduction of CO₂.

The increase in water charges was deferred but will return with increases of up to 100% per annum for some tourism & hospitality businesses.

The net result of these commitments is that the cost of doing business will rise as increased carbon taxes and statutory regulations will result in increased business costs.

The Irish Tourism Sector has traded historically on our “Green” image whilst the country is a laggard in actual achievements. Ireland is one of the few European Countries to have increased its carbon emissions in the last decade. The Tourism Sector currently has no Climate Change Policy or Strategy – this is a “Work in Progress” – and is constantly overshadowed by various crises or other.

We have an opportunity now to place at the core of our sectors Post Covid-19 recovery Environmental and Climate Change strategies which will deliver on our Green Image worldwide and enable the sector to future proof its Economic Sustainability by achieving Environmental Sustainability.



Adopting such an approach will enable the sector to deliver on the commitments the Green New Deal will require of us and to be part of the planning of the Green New Deal as opposed to being regulation takers. It will also enable the sector gain access to substantial funding that will be available through the Climate Action Fund and Environment Fund – especially with respect to investment in Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency.

This is a pivotal moment for the Tourism Sector to adopt and embed environmental sustainability as a core pillar of our sector – which fundamentally relies on the Natural Environment as our primary attraction for overseas visitors.

The biggest challenges for the sector are for current businesses as new build operations will embed large climate friendly improvements. Retrofitting existing businesses is more costly and where greatest support will be required.

What is required?

- Formal and sustained leadership from the sector, agencies, sub-sectors and businesses – To embed Climate Change and Environmental Strategies as core pillars with specific quantifiable goals and targets combined with annual reviews and reports.
- Setting up of a Climate Change/Green New Deal section within the Department of Tourism tasked with driving change to achieve the required targets.
- A Tourism Sector Green Deal Taskforce representative of all major sub-sectors including industry support agencies and experts, with expert third-party guidance, to identify the key actions required in the short, medium and long-term.
- Comprehensive Guidelines & Standards for each sub-sector – similar in depth to the Guidelines developed for re-opening of businesses following the current lockdown
- Sectoral and Sub-Sector Benchmarking and KPEI's (Key Performance Environmental Indicators) utilising existing measurements such as the Hotel Carbon Measurement Index (HCMI) etc.

Issues that should be addressed could include;

- Aviation Carbon Tax and its implications for inbound tourism
- Source markets for inbound tourism – how do we achieve our climate change targets if our aim is to continually grow inbound tourism and should we be encouraging growth from source markets where environmental degradation is rampant.



- Long Haul Inbound Tourism – how does the development of these markets support climate change actions – when short-haul markets represent 460 million potential visitors.
- Development of an all-Ireland Electric Vehicle Rental service to eliminate fossil fuel personal travel
- Engagement with the Climate Action/Environment Funds to support Zero Capital Renewable Energy Investments
- Engagement with Government to support extensive roll out of renewable energy plant, especially Solar PV and Wind Turbines, by changing/removing current planning restrictions and by enabling Energy Credits to be secured by Obligated Parties for all renewable energy investments.
- Promotion of environmental certification as a competitive advantage across the sector with a view to making it a mandatory requirement to secure national/international marketing by Fáilte/Tourism Ireland – utilising indigenous Irish certification programmes.
- To develop a sectoral Carbon Neutral programme focusing on Scope 1 & 2 emissions
- To develop a low carbon food network to support a wider vegetable-based diet and minimise imported food from countries that engage in deforestation
- To actively support the All Island Greenway Plans and associated walking & cycling routes
- Incorporate Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change as mandatory modules within all secondary schools and third-level educational establishments – especially tourism and hospitality
- Ramp up the Single Use Plastic avoidance campaign and work to avoid increasing SUP's as a Covid-19 response.
- Demand a Good Samaritan Law to enable food service businesses supply unused edible food for charitable purposes without fear of liability

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