

LONG-TERM PLANNING FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

March 2018

Climate change is one of the greatest global challenges for this and future generations. Engineers Ireland endorses the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind.

Engineers have a key role to play in the transition to a sustainable, carbon-free society. For example, SDG 9 calls for the building of resilient infrastructure, promotion of inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and fostering innovation. Engineers also are to the forefront of renewable energy and other technologies.

Sticking to ambitious targets

The Sustainable Progress Index 2017, published by Social Justice Ireland, measures performance against the UN SDGs. It ranked Ireland 11th of EU-15 countries overall and in last position on environment-related goals.

Since the Paris Agreement and the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act (2015), Ireland has embarked on several plans such as the National Planning Framework, National Mitigation Plan, Sectoral Adaptation Plans, and the Clean Air Strategy as part of the national transition objective. It is vital that we set - and stick to - ambitious emissions targets and introduce extensive and effective measures to achieve them.

The latest greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions accounts show a 7.3% increase from 2014 to 2016, making for alarming reading. EPA projections suggest that Ireland's emissions in 2020 may only be 6% below 2005 levels, far behind the 20% reduction target. This makes the 2030 target for a 30% reduction all the more challenging (see Fig.1). Missing these targets will mean that Ireland could incur fines of up to €610 million each year.

The need for long-term planning

Planning in Ireland has been inadequate and frequently based on a short-term and local view. The transition from a high-carbon, fuel import economy to one that is low-carbon and sustainable will require leadership and long-term planning to develop resilient and smart infrastructure and technologies.

Climate action must be integrated into the planning system, using long-term modelling and evidence-based solutions, while engaging communities and the general public on the benefits of each development.

The National Planning Framework (NPF) 2040 is a critically important framework for sustainable development over the next generation. Long-term investment plans, such as the National Development Plan 2018-2027, must be aligned with the NPF.

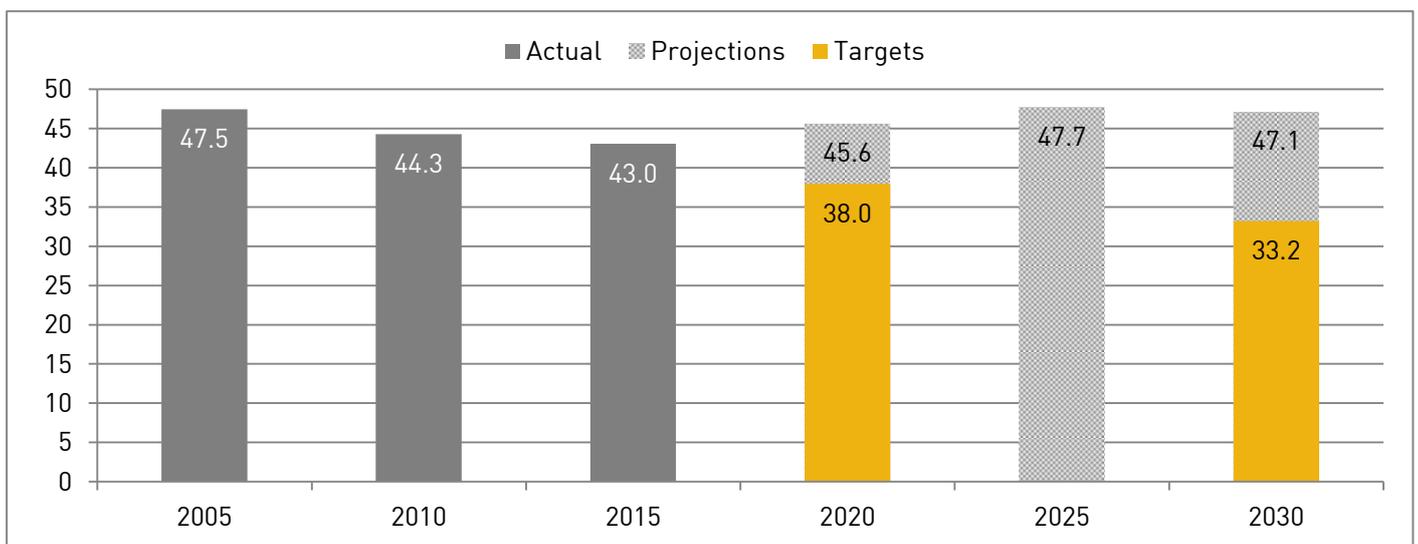


Figure 1. Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions, projections (based on existing measures) and targets (all non-ETS in MtCO₂e) [EPA]

Engineers Ireland Policy

Click [here](#) for more policy briefs on Strategic Planning & Infrastructure

Further reading

Government of Ireland (2018)
National Planning Framework
2040

Government of Ireland (2018)
National Development Plan
2018-2027

DCCA (2017) National Mitigation
Plan

Social Justice Ireland (2017)
Sustainable Progress Index

EPA (2017) Ireland's Greenhouse
Gas Emissions 1990-2016

EPA (2017) Ireland's Greenhouse
Gas Emission Projections

Bioregional (2017) Guide to the
One Planet Principles

UN (2015) Sustainable
Development Goals

Engineers Ireland West Region
(2011) Engineering the West to
2020 – Reinventing Our Region

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Engineers Ireland

With over 25,000 members, Engineers Ireland is the voice of the engineering profession in Ireland. Engineers Ireland was established in 1835 making us one of the oldest and largest professional bodies in the country.

Members come from every discipline of engineering, and range from engineering students to fellows of the profession. For more information, see www.engineersireland.ie.

Infrastructure policy reform

An Infrastructure Policy Centre should be established to bring together the multiple institutions and policy instruments currently involved in infrastructure planning and delivery to ensure an integrated, efficient and sustainable approach. This Centre would work collaboratively with external experts on the economy, environment and society to develop a long-term vision and strategy, identify priority projects, and explore innovative financing and funding mechanisms.

Smart, sustainable city regions

Spatial planning, including housing, commuting and access to services, is a major determinant of health and wellbeing. Engineers Ireland is strongly supportive of building up smart and sustainable city regions as part of an all-island approach. Population and jobs growth should be spatially aligned and should be concentrated in urban areas with access to services. Furthermore, connectivity along an Atlantic Economic Corridor (from Waterford to Derry) would enable city regions to act as magnets for growth, generating a critical mass of population, employment and housing to attract further industry. Such a corridor could act as a counterbalance to Dublin as well as supporting an enhanced range of local services and attractions.

Engineers Ireland and sustainability

Engineers Ireland has long been committed to the principles and practices of sustainable development, as stated in our Code of Ethics. In 2011, Engineers Ireland West Region prepared a major report 'Engineering the West to 2020 – Reinventing Our Region', based on a 'One Planet Living®' sustainability framework (see box). The report outlines a vision for 'an agile and sustainable west region benefitting from world-class industrial clusters, a vibrant economy and our rich natural and cultural heritage' and makes 60 specific recommendations to achieve that vision. Guided by One Planet Living® and other indicators, Engineers Ireland will continue to research and campaign on priority projects necessary to tackle climate change and transition to a sustainable society.

One Planet Living® sustainability framework

As a global society, we are consuming far more than the planet can sustain. The One Planet Living® framework consists of 10 simple principles that make it easy to plan, deliver and communicate a commitment to sustainability.

The framework was created by the organisation Bioregional and uses two headline indicators of living sustainably on Planet Earth: ecological footprinting and carbon footprinting.

The 10 guiding principles are:

- Health and happiness
- Equity and local economy
- Culture and community
- Land and nature
- Sustainable water
- Local and sustainable food
- Materials and products
- Travel and transport
- Zero waste
- Zero carbon energy

