



An Roinn Comhshaoil,
Aeráide agus Cumarsáide
Department of the Environment,
Climate and Communications

Le Chéile 23

DELIVER - IMPROVE - TRANSFORM

STATEMENT OF STRATEGY
2021 - 2023



Welcome from Minister Ryan

EAMON RYAN



The Statement of Strategy of the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications is being published at a unique time in our country's and Department's history. As we near the 100th anniversary of the State's foundation, the Department is setting out its strategy to support economic recovery, job creation and the radical shift required for Ireland to become climate neutral by 2050 at the latest.

The challenges faced as a result of COVID-19 and Brexit are immense and it has brought out the best of society, where we have worked together, in unity with our European colleagues to ensure that we will prevail over the challenges we face. This all-of-society approach has always been Ireland's strength, to work together with a common vision and purpose for the wellbeing of all who live in our country. The climate challenge we face will be met with the same unified response, with an all-of-Government approach to ending our reliance on fossil fuels, to protecting and enhancing our biodiversity and to ensuring the air we breathe and the water we drink returns to a pristine condition.

This Department will support the digital economy; ensuring that all of our citizens are digitally connected; that all of our schools and children have the best opportunity to

learn; and that we protect society through digital and cyber security.

We will lead Ireland in the transition to a net zero carbon society. Over the next three years, we will set Ireland on a path to achieving this objective through harnessing our vast renewable energy resources; embracing the circular economy; retrofitting our homes for better health and wellbeing of our citizens; and ensuring the highest standards of stewardship of our natural environment.

It is critical that the journey to net zero is one that is taken by all of society and that we look after and support those who need to transition to a more sustainable future. This Department, through enhancing our own capacity and capabilities, collaborating with our colleagues across Government and engaging with civil society, will ensure that Ireland becomes a leader in tackling climate change.

Together with Minister of State Naughton, the Secretary General and staff of the Department, I look forward to delivering on this Strategy.



“ We have identified five strategic goals which will frame our delivery of relevant commitments in the Programme for Government. ”

Welcome from Secretary General

MARK GRIFFIN

This Statement of Strategy describes the vision, mission and strategic goals for our Department over the next three years. The development of this Strategy has provided us with an opportunity to consider the purpose, impact and direction of our work as the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications. Our vision of a climate neutral, sustainable and digitally connected Ireland is one which will have a transformative and positive impact on the quality of life of people living in Ireland.

We have identified five strategic goals which will frame our delivery of relevant commitments in the Programme for Government. The goals are set out at a high level and will be complemented by an annual statement of priorities which will also set out the broader list of deliverables for the Department in the year concerned. This approach provides flexibility and over the next few years, we will respond to our internal and external environment, take account of changing priorities and readjust our emphasis and resources, all the time maintaining a focus on our core work.

The name of our Strategy acknowledges a very important aspect of our work. The words Le Chéile – meaning together - reflect our commitment to collaboration, engagement and the partnership approach required to ensure successful delivery of our vision, mission and strategic goals. This Strategy was, therefore, shaped through extensive consultation with staff, colleagues across Government, our State Bodies

and other stakeholders. I would like to acknowledge their time and effort and thank them for the valuable contributions made.

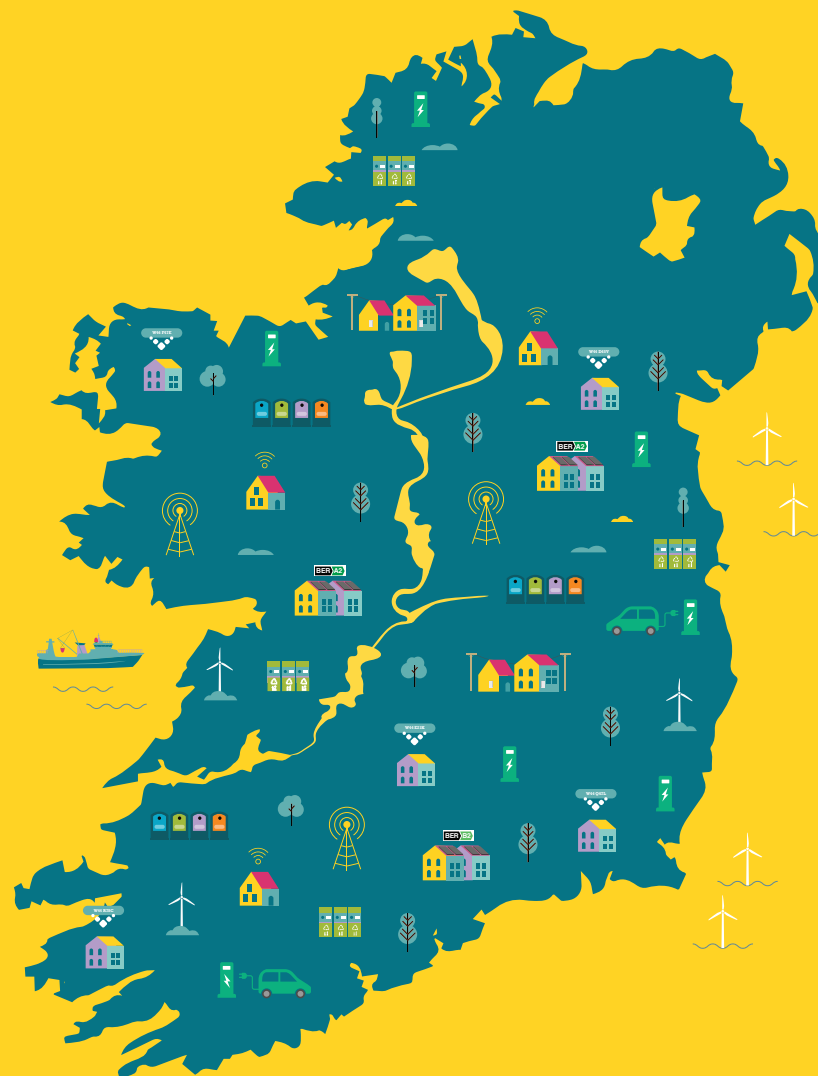
Delivering radical climate action and environmental protection, world-class connectivity and a fundamental shift in sustainable resource use can only be achieved by working in partnership with colleagues across Government and State Agencies as well as regulators, civil society and industry. We know that achieving the goals set out in the Strategy will require action from every individual, household, business and community in Ireland. We will continue to emphasise the importance of meaningful stakeholder engagement as we seek to involve and inform our stakeholders.

As Secretary General, I have always been proud of the work of this Department. Our staff are critical to our success and to our delivery. Throughout the challenges of the past year, our staff have continued to demonstrate dedication, commitment and professionalism. We are committed to developing our organisational capacity and investing in our staff to ensure that we are equipped to meet future challenges and be part of putting Ireland onto a sustainable growth path as we emerge from the pandemic.

I look forward to working with Minister Ryan, Minister of State Naughton and the staff of the Department on implementing this Strategy.

Our Vision

A climate neutral, sustainable and digitally connected Ireland.



Our Mission

We collaboratively deliver policies and programmes to empower people, communities and businesses to continue the transition to a better quality of life for current and future generations.

Our Department

The Department has over 400 staff across four different office locations in Dublin, Wexford and Cavan. Our staff have a diversity of experience and expertise and are bound together by a dedication and commitment to public service. We are responsible for a breadth of work across a number of different sectors. This diversity is evident not just in the type of work that we do but also in how we deliver it. We are responsible for policy development; programme implementation; regulation and enforcement; operational field work; contract management and compliance and governance oversight.

We are supported in our mandate by 14 State Bodies, comprising a number of leading commercial, non-commercial and regulatory bodies, who play a critical role in delivering the Government's vision for Ireland.

Underpinned by the values set out in the Civil Service Renewal Plan and a commitment to human rights, equality and anti-discrimination, the Department, in its dealings with staff, stakeholders and citizens, is committed to the public service ethos of independence, integrity, impartiality, fairness and respect.

“The Department, in its dealings with staff, stakeholders and citizens, is committed to the public service ethos of independence, integrity, impartiality, fairness and respect.”



A vibrant, stylized illustration of a smart city. A winding road with dashed white lines runs through the center, with various scenes unfolding along its path. On the left, a delivery truck with a 'D' logo and a 'Logistics Service' van are on the road. A green car is parked at a charging station. People are walking, pushing a stroller, and running. On the right, a person is on a bicycle, and a pink van is parked. A house with a red roof is visible. The background features colorful houses, mountains, and wind turbines. Smart infrastructure is highlighted with labels like 'W44 D45V', 'BER B2', 'BER A2', and 'W44 M65N'. Wireless signals are shown as concentric circles emanating from buildings. The bottom of the image shows a cross-section of the ground with a grey, textured layer.

Our Enablers

Our ability to deliver the best outcomes for citizens and Government requires strong and dynamic management. The Department is a welcoming and open organisation, supportive of our colleagues. The Department strives for a high standard of professionalism and a strong public service ethos with dedicated and committed staff serving Ireland's needs.

“The Department strives for a high standard of professionalism and a strong public service ethos.”



PEOPLE

Focus on staff development; wellbeing and involvement to allow us individually and collectively fulfil our potential whilst delivering business goals.

Align our workforce planning with strategic goals to ensure that we have the capacity, skills and expertise to deliver. In line with the public sector strategy 'Making Innovation Real', we will continue to foster a culture of innovation and embed it in our work.



ENGAGEMENT

Enhance our reputation, build trust and have the respect of both internal and external stakeholders through collaboration and engagement underpinned by considered strategic communications.

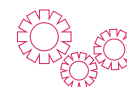
Deliver insight to add value and shape the development of our work.



GOVERNANCE

Further embed our assurance architecture to ensure accountability and transparency.

Ensure compliance with statutory obligations and governance standards, both internally and by the bodies under our aegis through best practice oversight.



PROCESSES

Build our capacity to measure and evaluate outcomes to facilitate clear measurement of the impact of our work.

Develop the management of our knowledge base to deliver a cohesive and unified system to support our work.



WORK ENVIRONMENT

Adopt blended working within the organisation in accordance with Government policy on this issue.

To achieve this goal, develop a fit-for-purpose physical environment, harness digital technology and implement health and wellbeing strategies.

Our Work in Context

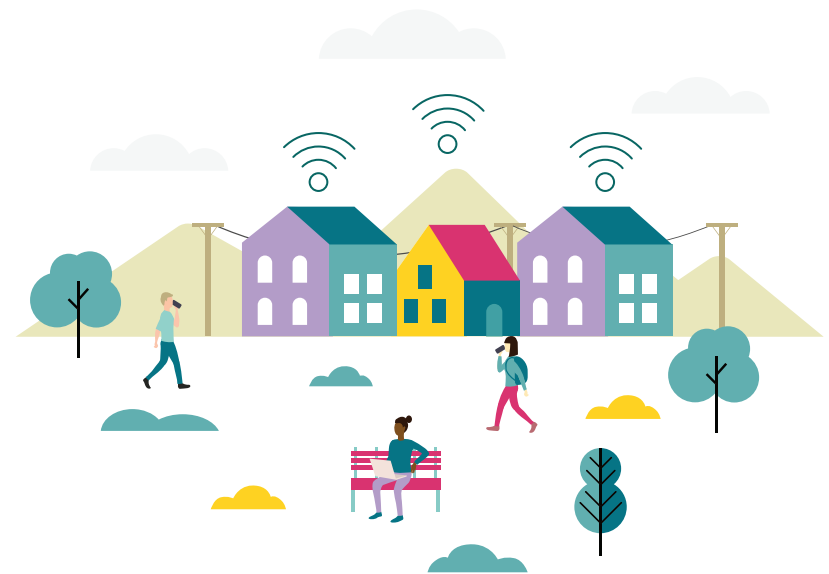
The Programme for Government – Our Shared Future - has shaped and influenced this Statement of Strategy. The ambition set out by Government is reflected in our vision for a climate neutral, sustainable and digitally connected Ireland.

As a Department, we will take a leadership role in developing and implementing the policies and programmes needed to fully leverage the economic and job creation potential of a climate neutral economy in areas such as retrofitting, renewable energy, sustainable resource use, clean mobility and the bioeconomy.

Providing high speed and robust telecommunications networks is key to sustainable economic and social development. The pandemic has highlighted the importance of high capacity and reliable digital connectivity to ensure that people, communities and businesses across Ireland can avail of the opportunities presented by the digital economy including remote working, education, healthcare, farming and rural development. This is reflected in this Strategy which identifies delivery of world-class connectivity as a key enabler to a more inclusive and sustainable future.

We are committed to partnering across Government to progress our strategic goals and supporting other Departments in cross-cutting Government priorities. Our collaborative relationships with regulators, local government, businesses, civil society and citizens are critical to realising our vision of a climate neutral, sustainable and digitally connected Ireland.

“We are committed to partnering across Government to progress our strategic goals.”



Climate Leadership

The step change in our ambition from a low carbon to climate neutral Ireland requires strong leadership across Government and the wider public sector. The Department will drive the climate agenda by working with Government Departments and State Bodies in order to build resilience in citizens, communities and businesses to overcome climate adaptation challenges, and maximise climate mitigation and adaptation opportunities. The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill, to be published in the near term, will set out the governance framework to reach our ambition for a climate neutral Ireland. The next Climate Action Plan will detail the actions that must be taken in every Government Department and Body in order to ensure we deliver on our climate ambition.

We will also create a stronger mandate in our public bodies by leading and engaging with colleagues across the public sector to develop a new Public Sector Decarbonisation Strategy for 2030.

Mainstream Sustainable Development across Government and Society

In addition to our climate ambition, we will continue to coordinate Government action on embedding the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into the programmes and policies of every Department and lead the whole-of-Government effort to foster public awareness and participation around the SDGs. In 2021, we will lead the development of the second Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan which will consolidate the mainstreaming approach adopted to date, i.e. a 'whole-of-society' vision for the successful implementation of the SDGs. As a Department, we will drive achievement of Goal 12 on Sustainable Consumption and Production, as well as Goal 7 on Energy and Goal 13 on Climate Action. The changes required to achieve the SDGs in their entirety will require fundamental changes in many parts of Irish life, but it is also an opportunity to create a cleaner, greener economy and society.

“The Department will drive the climate agenda by working with Government Departments and State Bodies.”



A Changing World

Over the past number of years, we have often described the world in which we operate as uncertain. Global geopolitical, economic and social changes have been considered and taken account of in the development and implementation of past strategies. A global pandemic and its short, medium and long-term impacts on nearly every aspect of our lives were unforeseen. The effects of this pandemic continue and this Statement of Strategy covers a period of significant uncertainty. The Department's response to COVID-19 has demonstrated our organisational resilience and our ability to adapt and continue to deliver on our priorities. That experience provides us with a strong assurance as to our capacity to respond to and manage uncertainty and change.



TRANSITIONING TO A CLIMATE
NEUTRAL SOCIETY AND ECONOMY

EFFECTIVE INTERNATIONAL
RELATIONSHIPS

TECHNOLOGICAL
ADVANCEMENTS

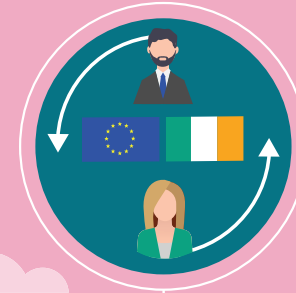
NATIONAL STAKEHOLDER
ENGAGEMENT AND
COLLABORATION

CHANGING WORLD
OF WORK

SOCIETAL AND ECONOMIC
IMPACTS OF COVID-19

PROGRAMME FOR
GOVERNMENT AND NATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT PLAN

SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS



Our Strategic Goals

GOALS



01 Be a recognised leader in climate action

BY 2023



Ireland will be on a clear pathway to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions by an average 7% per annum from 2021 to 2030, and becoming a leader in tackling climate breakdown.

BY 2030



Ireland will have taken significant steps to address the climate crisis which threatens our safe future on this planet, by more than halving our greenhouse gas emissions over the course of the decade. This will require fundamental changes in all aspects of our social and economic lives - increasing our reliance on renewable electricity; having energy efficient homes, enterprises and services; accelerating the electrification of transport, and ensuring an unprecedented modal shift to walking, cycling and public transport; supporting sustainable food production and diversification in agriculture, including realising the carbon sink potential of our land and marine environments; and using our resources wisely by "making more with less". We will have adapted to many of the "locked-in" consequences of climate change; and ensured an inclusive and just transition for all, harnessing the enormous economic opportunities of this transformation, as well as improving the health, welfare and security of all our people.

02 Transform our energy system for a net zero emissions future

Ireland will have accelerated the deployment of renewable energy and will have significantly increased investment in energy efficiency in the residential and built environment, as part of a sustainable, reliable, competitive and affordable energy sector.

Ireland will have transformed its energy sector to a high-renewable, low-carbon system. This will include achieving 70% renewable electricity through increased onshore and offshore wind, solar, microgeneration, and grid system infrastructure. The way we heat our homes and buildings will produce less greenhouse gas emissions, and will be more energy efficient and comfortable. Ireland's energy system will be more sustainable, secure, reliable and competitive, and will be on a pathway to net zero emissions by 2050.

GOALS



03 Transition to a Circular Economy - protecting and restoring our environment through sustainable resource use

BY 2023



Ireland will be an EU and global leader in the circular economy transition, protecting our natural resources, environment and health while also assisting in the journey to net zero by 2050.

BY 2030



Ireland's economic model will be underpinned by sustainable consumption and production patterns. Circularity behaviours and principles will be an innate part of the daily lives of our citizens, households and businesses. Our circular economy will be making a significant contribution to protecting and restoring our national habitats, managing our natural resources, supporting climate neutrality, and delivering sustainable, regionally-targeted, economic and employment opportunities.

04 Deliver world class connectivity and communications

Ireland will support universal access to high-speed broadband for better connected communities with service providers properly regulated and strengthened cyber security.

Ireland will have widespread access to connectivity underpinned by agile, responsive and resilient digital infrastructures. We will embrace digital transformation to innovate, be creative and thrive, resulting in sustainable economic growth and positive social dividends.

A fully connected digital economy and society will have enhanced Ireland's competitiveness; led to the creation of more quality employment opportunities and provided a better quality of life for individuals, communities and businesses.

05 Ensure best in class governance and regulation

Ireland will have robust, transparent and effective regulatory frameworks in place to support a sustainable society and economy and a well-protected environment.

Ireland's governance and regulation framework will be further developed to achieve international best practice. It will be characterised by transparency, responsiveness and accountability which will instil confidence from businesses and individuals and ultimately encourage trust in the public service.

Sectors which we regulate will be climate sustainable, fair and competitive with minimal barriers to entry. Regulation will be responsive to the achievement of policy goals and climate/environmental objectives, as well as market dynamics and technological advancements.

The highest standards of governance will encourage robust decision making and the most effective use of resources, ensuring a positive contribution to Ireland's economy, society and sustainable development.



GOAL

STRATEGIC GOAL

01

Be a recognised leader in climate action

The next 10 years are vital if we are to address climate breakdown and ensure a safe and bright future for all of us on this planet, especially our children. We are committed to an average 7% per annum reduction in our overall greenhouse gas emissions from 2021 to 2030 (a 51% reduction over the decade), and to achieving net zero emissions by 2050 at the latest; as well as ensuring that we build the resilience of our key infrastructures to the already locked-in consequences of climate change, such as coastal erosion, flooding and prolonged drought. While this will be challenging and will require fundamental changes to our economic and social lives, it will also bring enormous economic opportunities, as well as improving our health, welfare and security. Delivery of this scale of emissions reductions will require significant consultation, detailed planning, organisation, and policies and measures that empower people to make the necessary changes in their lives; while also ensuring a just transition to sustainable future communities.



OBJECTIVE

Put Ireland on a pathway to becoming a leader in tackling climate breakdown.

Consult and empower all communities and sectors in the design and delivery of pathways to achieve our climate goals.

Ensure the transition to climate neutrality and resilience is just and fair, including capitalising on the new economic opportunities that it will bring.

Continue to take climate adaptation measures to ensure that people are protected from the effects of climate change in Ireland that are already locked in.

Establish world-class governance structures to underpin climate action.



KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Develop and implement annual Climate Action Plans that achieve a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

Develop and implement periodic Long-term Climate Strategies that set out pathways to climate neutrality by 2050 at the latest.

Develop and implement enduring structures for climate dialogue and action built on public sector leadership, national consultations, and local dialogue informing action.

Develop and implement a Public Sector Climate Mandate.

Develop and implement calls from the Climate Action Fund.

Prepare and implement National Implementation Plans in response to recommendations of the Just Transition Commissioner.

Prepare and implement a Territorial Plan for the EU Just Transition Fund.

Update and implement the National Adaptation Framework, including at sectoral, regional and local levels.

Enact a Climate Action Bill that will give legal underpinning to climate action governance, including setting the 2050 target in law, and introducing a system of five-year carbon budgets.



GOAL

STRATEGIC GOAL 02

Transform our energy system for a net zero emissions future

Energy powers our daily lives in the way we live at home, how we work in business and how we move people and goods. The use of energy for the purposes of electricity, heat and transport generates almost 60% of Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, action in the energy sector will be critical to the achievement of Ireland's climate targets – in particular the Government's commitment of net zero emissions by 2050. The Department will, as part of the electrification and decarbonisation of the energy system, aim to ensure the sustainability, reliability, competitiveness and affordability of energy supplies for households, businesses, communities and public organisations, which are vital for the prosperity of Ireland's economy and society.



OBJECTIVE

Transform Ireland's energy sector to a high-renewable, low-carbon system to reduce greenhouse gas emissions on a pathway to net zero emissions by 2050.

Ensuring continued secure and reliable supplies of energy necessary to support our economy and society on the pathway to net zero emissions.



KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Hold competitive auctions for onshore and offshore wind and solar electricity, and develop a microgeneration and small-scale generation framework, to deliver at least 70% renewable electricity by 2030.

Ensure an appropriate planning and development framework is in place for energy grid development, onshore and offshore wind energy and solar PV energy.

Transpose and implement the EU's Clean Energy Legislation Package to support the clean energy transformation of the electricity sector and to ensure access to sustainable, secure, competitive and affordable energy.

Reduce emissions in the residential sector through a scaling-up of investment in retrofitting of residential buildings, and provide assistance to energy efficiency and renewable energy actions in public and commercial sectors.

Manage security of supply policy in the natural gas and electricity sectors and carry out a review of Ireland's security of supply of electricity and natural gas.



GOAL

STRATEGIC GOAL

03

Transition to a Circular Economy - protecting and restoring our environment through sustainable resource use

Meeting our climate action targets will require a transformation in the way we produce and use goods and in how we protect and manage our natural resources. Carbon emissions reductions based on a 'business as usual' linear consumption model will not deliver the emissions reductions we need. Climate action efforts focusing on a transition away from fossil fuels towards renewables, including geothermal and supplemented by energy efficiency measures can only address 55% of emissions. The remaining 45% comes from our current patterns and systems of production and resource consumption. Therefore, making less 'stuff'; making 'stuff' with fewer resources and sustainably managing our natural resource – the essence of the circular economy – has a key role to play in climate action and improving the state of our environment.



OBJECTIVE

Put Ireland on a trajectory to become an EU and global leader in the transition to a Circular Economy, supporting a jobs-rich, green recovery based on sustainable patterns of consumption and production.

Protect and restore our environment by preventing and minimising waste generation, extending the productive life of the materials and products we use, tackling waste crime and pollution and eliminating certain single-use items.

Support the Circular Economy transition, the transformation of our energy system for a net zero emissions future through the management, protection of our natural resources and the sustainable supply of required raw materials.

Protect and sustainably manage Ireland's inland fisheries resource to realise the true potential of the sector as a catalyst for health and wellbeing, for social inclusion and youth development.



KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Develop and implement Ireland's first whole-of-Government Circular Economy Strategy.

Implement actions from the Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy, including the introduction of the legislative framework to support a deposit and return scheme; measures to tackle single use plastics; reduce food waste and construction and demolition waste; fully quantify and start to reduce textile waste; tackle illegal dumping; and introduce new systems for national end-of-waste and by-products decisions.

End the issuing of new licences for the exploration for oil and gas in the Irish offshore and support the decommissioning of existing fields.

Develop and implement a policy and legislative framework to support the greater use of geothermal energy as part of the transformation of our energy system for a net zero emissions future.

Develop and implement a policy framework for minerals exploration and mining that supports the sustainable supply of critical raw materials.

Effectively research and map our geological natural resources including groundwater, minerals, aggregates, seabed and geothermal potential to enhance our understanding of Ireland's geological resources and contribute to policy development across Government.

Collaboratively develop and implement a comprehensive policy framework for inland fisheries.



GOAL

STRATEGIC GOAL

04

Deliver world class connectivity and communications

Ireland's national and international digital connectivity is critically important to maintaining and enhancing Ireland's competitiveness in global markets and in the knowledge and information economy while supporting the shaping of Europe's digital future. We will provide digital policy leadership and foster investment in high-quality communications infrastructure while driving digital entrepreneurship and innovation and promoting the digital society at national, European and international levels. An agile, responsive and resilient digital infrastructure is needed to support the development of the digital economy while improved cyber security will build trust and confidence in online activities and support digital transformation for the benefit of every citizen, business, and community in Ireland. The creation of a gigabit and fully connected digital society, that safeguards the citizen in their use of digital services and applications will promote the use of digital services to meet societal needs, foster innovation and enhance the quality of citizens' lives.



OBJECTIVE

Ensure quality connectivity to all premises and businesses in Ireland, regardless of location, through policy measures and a regulatory framework that encourages commercial investment and through Government-led initiatives.

Improve cyber security and resilience of network and information systems to support the development of the digital economy and deliver the highest standard in online safety in a fast-changing digital environment.

Provide digital policy leadership, promoting the digital society nationally and at European and international level, driving digital entrepreneurship and innovation.

Support An Post in continuing to develop as a strong and dynamic commercial State company, delivering on its Strategic Plan which reflects Government objectives and delivers a sustainable nationwide post office network offering a range of eCommerce, financial and Government services.

Oversee the Eircode licencing framework and support increased use of Eircodes especially in the public sector.



KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Oversee the delivery of the National Broadband Plan (NBP) through effective governance of the contract with National Broadband Ireland (NBI).

Effectively collaborate on the development of options and implementation strategies to accelerate the delivery of the NBP.

Develop and implement further actions through the Mobile Phone and Broadband Taskforce to remove barriers to the efficient deployment of infrastructure and services across the country.

Establish Ireland as a leader in the adoption and provision of advanced mobile connectivity solutions.

Effective and timely implementation of the actions in the 2019 National Cyber Security Strategy to respond to the rapidly developing challenges to the security of information, networks and key infrastructure, and ensure that citizens continue to have access to reliable services.

Clearly and consistently communicate Ireland's digital connectivity policy position at national, EU and international level, consolidating strategic alliances with like-minded EU Member States.

Collaborate on the development and implementation of a new National Digital Strategy.

Oversight of performance by An Post and delivery of its strategic plan.

Key Performance Indicators set out in Eircodes contract are achieved.

Develop and implement on the appropriate governance framework for Eircodes post 2023.



GOAL

STRATEGIC GOAL

05

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Ensure best in class governance and regulation

The Department and its agencies and regulators, working together, contribute to Ireland's social and economic development; economic efficiency; competitiveness; achievement of our climate change goals and balanced regional development. We are supported in the delivery of our mandate by 14 State Agencies, operating in the commercial, non-commercial and regulatory spheres. Having an appropriate governance framework facilitates the necessary balance between corporate governance and the independent nature of many of the agencies. Effective regulation either by statutory regulators or the Department itself is a key underpinning for the sectors we are responsible for. The Department is responsible for ensuring that the regulatory framework is robust and clear and is in line with international best practice.



OBJECTIVE

Ireland's regulatory framework is robust and clear, in line with EU obligations, international best practice and promotes certainty, investment and sustainability, while delivering for people living in Ireland.

State Bodies under the aegis of the Department are operating in line with best practice corporate governance and support the Department in delivery of its mandate.



KEY STRATEGIC ACTIONS

Update the electricity regulation statutory framework to continue to provide certainty and stability for effective regulation and for significant investment in the energy transition, as well as delivering competitive electricity markets and consumer benefits.

Effective operation of the newly established Geoscience Regulation Office in licensing, monitoring and enforcement of minerals, mining, petroleum and geothermal sectors.

Effective operation of the European Electronic Communication Code and the development of legislative proposals to strengthen ComReg's enforcement powers.

Regular review of governance frameworks for our State Bodies to provide clarity and guidance on strategic priorities; including in relation to climate action policy direction and performance and reporting requirements.

Compliance by the Department's State Bodies with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

Regular, formal engagement with State Bodies, working with NewERA in relation to relevant bodies.