



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

## Monaghan Community Climate Action Programme

### Briefing Note and Guidelines for Applicants

Strand 1: Action: Building Low Carbon Communities

Strand 1a: Shared Island Community Climate Action

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Briefing Note and Guidelines

## 1. Objective of the Community Climate Action Programme

The overall objective of the Community Climate Action Programme is to support and empower communities 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.

This guideline document has been prepared for groups in the operational area of Monaghan County Council (MCC) to learn more about the Community Climate Action Programme and it may be subject to change. Groups are advised to contact the Community Climate Action Officer to discuss the Programme by emailing: [climateaction@monaghancoco.ie](mailto:climateaction@monaghancoco.ie)

## 2. Overview of the Community Climate Action Programme

The Community Climate Action Programme has been developed under two strands addressing both direct climate action, and climate education and capacity building. An initial €24 million is being allocated over an 18-month period for strand 1 with a focus on direct climate action. In parallel, the Government's Shared Island Fund is providing €3 million for strand 1a of the Programme. Strand 1a enables communities and Local Authorities to propose a cross-border project in partnership with organisations in Northern Ireland. Strand 2 is focused on education and has been allocated to Pobal for management and administration. Applications for phase 1 are now closed and it is envisioned that phase 2 will open in mid-2024, further information on strand 2 is available on [www.pobal.ie](http://www.pobal.ie).

## 3. Overview of Strand 1 and Strand 1a

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

MCC have been given an allocation of €392,000 for projects under strand 1 for the next 18 months. Under this strand communities will carry out projects that have a direct climate action impact.

A number of projects will be selected from across the county which demonstrate the delivery of national climate action at local level.

### Strand 1a – Shared Island Community Climate Action

This strand enables communities to carry out a cross-border direct climate action project in partnership with a community/ organisation in Northern Ireland.

Unlike strand 1, Local Authorities have not been automatically allocated funding under strand 1a. Monaghan communities can apply, and their project must have a clear North/South basis, with a cross-border partnership approach and impact.

Projects from both strands must meet the objectives of the Programme as set out in project eligibility below and be completed within 18 months. 100% funding is available for projects. Projects can include a suite of measures, not just one specific action.

This Programme is an opportunity for groups to take a holistic approach in making their community less carbon intensive and more sustainable for the future. The Programme is open to a range of community groups – from those new to climate action to those with more experience.

### 3. Eligible Communities

Community groups 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. Groups must be able to demonstrate their ability to carry out the proposed works.

#### Communities eligible for strand 1

To be eligible to apply under strand 1, community organisations must:

- be a not-for-profit organisation
- be located in County Monaghan
- be registered with the 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. Want to join the PPN click [here](#)
- must submit a completed application form before **6<sup>th</sup> of March 2024, at 4:00pm**

The following types of organisations are **not** eligible to apply for strand 1:

- Private individuals
- Commercial undertakings (including sole traders)
- Schools, third levels institutions etc.
- National community and environmental organisations
- Financial institutions

#### Communities eligible for strand 1a (Shared Island Project)

To be eligible to apply under strand 1a, organisations must:

- be a not-for-profit organisation.
- however, national community and environmental organisations are eligible to apply under strand 1a due the scope for all-island projects
- lead organisation must be located in County Monaghan

- lead organisation 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
- must submit a completed application form on or before **6<sup>th</sup> of March 2024, at 4:00pm**
- have a partner organisation in Northern Ireland. Partner organisations must be either a:
  - not-for-profit organisation or,
  - Local Authority local/ national community and environmental organisation registered in Northern Ireland

The following types of organisations are **not** eligible to apply for strand 1a:

- Private individuals
- Commercial undertakings (including sole traders)
- Schools, third levels institutions etc.
- Financial institutions.

## 4. Eligible Projects

Projects must:

- meet the overall objective “to shape and build low carbon, sustainable communities in a coherent way to contribute to national climate and energy targets.”
- address one or more of the five Programme themes and national climate action targets, as set out below.
- comply with all statutory requirements in relation to planning, building regulations, Health and Safety, insurances, and Fire Codes etc., if applicable.

## 5. Programme themes

Projects will address the following themes:

- Theme 1: Energy
- Theme 2: Travel
- Theme 3: Food and waste
- Theme 4: Shopping and recycling
- Theme 5: Local climate and environmental action

Projects can address one, all or some of the five themes. However, communities should try to incorporate as many themes as possible. Below is a breakdown of each theme and some suggested projects. These are only examples and communities are encouraged to be as innovative as possible with their projects.

For further examples of projects, you can read the case study document on the webpage covering each of the themes, including things to consider for different types of projects.

### a. 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 (ghg) emissions. How we build, heat, and run our buildings can play a big part in reducing Ireland’s ghg emissions. We

### National Climate Action Targets

Apart from the Programme themes, projects should seek to demonstrate the following:

- 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.

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.

Project examples include but are not limited to:

- small community renewable energy projects (solar, hydro, wind)
- retrofitting community buildings
- LED community lighting

### b. 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 ghg 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.

Project examples include but are not limited to:

- Bike racks or storage
- Bike repair station
- E cargo bike
- Improving access to cycle ways

### c. 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 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](http://stopfoodwaste.ie)).

We are interested in projects that reduce food waste.

Project examples include but are not limited to:

- community gardens
- allotments
- repair hubs
- community composting facilities
- community fridge

#### d. 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 aim to promote the reduction, reuse and repair of materials, and increase the number of recycling facilities.

Project examples include but are not limited to:

- community repair hubs
- swap shops
- water filling stations
- increasing recycling facilities in community building

#### e. Local Climate & 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.

Project examples include but are not limited to:

- mini forests
- dispersed orchards
- community gardens
- roof gardens
- pollinator projects
- water harvesting

#### Project location

It is essential that projects be available to the community, where applicable. If the group do not own the land/ building(s)/ floor space then they must have a minimum of a five years lease or agreement in place from date of project completion. Groups may be asked to provide proof of ownership, lease, or access agreements.

#### Additional note for projects eligible under strand 1a

While projects seeking funding under strand 1a should address the same five themes and targets as strand 1 projects, there are also specific areas that may be particularly suited to a cross border approach. In recognition of the integration of climate and biodiversity action policies, these could include - valuing networks for nature; just transition; peatland restoration; renewable energy; or flood forecasting.

## 6. Funding/ Grant Sizes

Funding is available for 100% of the project costs. There are three project sizes:

- Small projects (Up to €20,000) - about 10% of projects selected will be small scale
- Medium projects (€20,000 – €50,000) – about 40% of projects selected will be medium scale
- Large projects (€50,000 - €100,000) – about 50% of projects selected will be large scale



## Eligible Costs

The Programme will cover principally capital costs. Below is a guide to the eligible and ineligible costs for projects. Eligible costs will be considered on a case-by-case basis. However, the following general conditions will apply:

Eligible costs	Ineligible costs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• For the sole purpose of implementing the project, be necessary and shall not be used for any other purpose</li><li>• Verifiable and reasonable</li><li>• No duplicate public funding</li><li>• Other funding may be leveraged for the project, but the Community Climate Action Programme funding component must be able to stand on its own merits and be independent of the other funding</li><li>• Funding must comply with State Aid requirements</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Projects that solely benefit an individual or income generating projects</li><li>• Training, staff costs etc.</li><li>• Equipment, unless directly associated with the project</li><li>• Overheads, operating, travel, transport, subsistence, notional, legal, insurance or banking, loan costs etc.</li><li>• Costs incurred before the Letter of Offer is issued</li><li>• Costs where more appropriate funding opportunities already exist</li></ul>

VAT is considered eligible for grant payment in cases where it cannot be reclaimed. For groups who cannot reclaim VAT, all their costs should be inclusive of VAT. If a group is able to reclaim VAT then their expenses should be exclusive of VAT. Documentation may be sought by MCC confirming the VAT status of the group, i.e. a recent letter, or letters, from the Revenue Commission confirming the VAT status. Every group will be required in their application form to declare their VAT status.

## 7. How to apply

Please contact the Community Climate Action Officer if you require assistance or guidance in relation to the online application process.

### Application form:

To apply groups must complete the application form. The application window will be open from Wednesday the 13th of December (9:00am) to Wednesday the 6th of March (4:00pm). Applications must be completed through Monaghan County Councils application platform:

- [Strand 1: Building Low Carbon Communities](#)
- [Strand 1a: Shared Island Community Climate Action](#)

Documents to submit with the application form:

- Governance Documents for the organisation e.g., terms of reference, constitution, AGM minutes etc.
- Costings breakdown i.e., written proof of quotes, (3 quotes for each project component)
- if required planning permissions and lease agreements

- Any relevant supporting documentation, e.g., biodiversity reports, energy audits etc. This is not compulsory and only relevant documents should be submitted.

Irish versions of the application form can be requested by contacting the community climate action officer.

### Cost and budgeting

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.

MCC 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. Groups should consult with the Community Climate Action Officer prior to submitting their application if this situation arises. When drawing up costs it is advised to include a contingency to address any unforeseen changes to costs or inflation. This would be especially important for bigger projects.

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 (Q3/4, 2024) otherwise procurement may need to be repeated if groups are awarded funding. 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. The Community Climate Action Officer can advise groups on this.

### State Aid and De Minimis

Public funding is deemed to be 'State Aid' where it provides the recipient, whether an enterprise, not-for-profit organisation, or an individual, an economic advantage over others. To comply with State Aid rules, the level of funding provided to a project promoter must not exceed €200,000 - this is known as the De Minimis ceiling. De Minimis regulations sets a limit on how much assistance can be given to organisations. The current limit for a company, or group, irrespective of size or location, is €200,000 during the previous three-year fiscal period.

Many groups/ projects under this Programme would not be considered State Aid and therefore will not be subject to the De Minimis ceiling. However, community groups when submitting their application will need to clarify their status and if necessary, declare if they have previously received any De Minimis State Aid (e.g. from a state agency, government department, Local Enterprise Office, local authority, LEADER funding etc.). The Community Climate Action Officer will be able to assist groups on this requirement.

## 8. Evaluation, Selection and Approval

The selection of projects is a competitive process and success at the evaluation stage is not a guarantee of funding due to the competitive nature of the programme. For a project to be successful and receive funding they need to first pass the evaluation stage, then the selection stage and finally the approval stage.

### 1. Evaluation:

All applications will be evaluated by MCC to ensure they align with the objectives and eligibility of this Programme and will be marked against the selection criteria below. Projects must be achievable, relevant, and demonstrate impact. Thought should be given to the potential for replication in other communities.

Value for money is a key consideration. Three quotes are required at application stage however, there is no requirement to choose the cheapest option. Communities must also consider green procurement where possible.

### 2. Selection:

Following evaluation, MCC will then select the final projects taking account of the highest scores and:

- o the geographical distribution of projects
- o the desirability to fund a variety of different projects and across multiple themes
- o the contribution of the projects to the climate action objectives of MCC.

### 3. Approval:

MCC will submit the selected projects to the Minister of the Environment, Climate and Communications for final approval. Success at the evaluation, and selection stages is not a guarantee of funding. The Minister will decide what projects are ultimately approved and any specific conditions of funding.

## Evaluation criteria

To ensure projects are selected in a transparent and fair manner, applications will be first evaluated on the following criteria. The maximum 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 MCC.

Selection Criterion for Strand 1	Weighting	Min. Required	Basis for Assessment
<b>Relevance and impact</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>15%</b>	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>	<b>20%</b>	-	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>	<b>20%</b>	<b>10%</b>	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>	<b>10%</b>	<b>5%</b>	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>	<b>10%</b>	-	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>	<b>10%</b>	<b>5%</b>	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>		
<b>Selection Criterion for Strand 1a</b>	<b>Weighting</b>	<b>Min. Required</b>	<b>Basis for Assessment</b>
<b>Shared Island Relevant and Impact</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>15%</b>	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 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>	<b>20%</b>	-	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>	<b>20%</b>	<b>10%</b>	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>	<b>10%</b>	<b>5%</b>	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>	<b>10%</b>	<b>5%</b>	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>	<b>10%</b>	<b>5%</b>	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>		

## 9. What to expect if your application is successful

Following the Minister's approval, MCC will issue a Letter of Offer to the successful communities setting out the terms and conditions. Groups are responsible for carrying out their projects and will have 18 months from the Letter of Offer to complete their projects.

MCC reserves the right to withdraw from a project if all requirements are not met within a reasonable period. 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 MCC. 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 and carrying out works.
- Community groups must ensure that they have indemnified Monaghan County Council on their public liability policy and employers' liability policy and apply level of cover deemed appropriate.
- Agree to retain all documentation for 10 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 MCC and DECC.
- Site Visits: The Department and/or MCC 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.

## Procurement during the project

Those who are approved for funding in the Programme, will need to comply with Public Procurement guidelines in relation to the purchase of all goods/services when actually carrying out the project. Below are the National Procurement Thresholds.

In line with the Office of Government Public Procurement Guidelines, if the group/organisation are doing **works** e.g., installation of solar panels for the community hall – 5 written quotations from suitable candidates must be sought from €5,000- €200,000 ex vat. Quotations can sought via email etc, or through eTenders. If it's over €200k ex vat, then it must be advertised on eTenders. If its **goods/services** e.g., purchase of bikes for a bike library- 3 quotations up to €50k ex vat must be sought. If it's over €50k ex vat, it must be advertised on eTenders. Proof of quotations sought must be submitted with all applications and kept on file.

Threshold Amounts (ex VAT)	Works (e.g supply and fit)
< €1,000	1 Verbal Quote
€1,000 - €200,000*	Direct Invitation. 5 quotes to be sought in writing by email/ post from interested and competent companies.

Threshold Amounts (ex VAT)	Supplies or General Services
< €1,000	1 Verbal Quote
€1,000 - €50,000	Direct Invitation. 3 quotes to be sought in writing by email/post from interested and competent suppliers/service providers.
€50,000 and above	Must Publish Contract Notice on eTenders**

## Payment and reporting

Successful applications for funding under this Programme will only be paid to the applicant group/organisation's Bank Account. Groups will submit quarterly expenses to MCC including invoices, proof of payments, contracts and a brief update on progress (e.g. any information on progress of the project, conditions of funding, challenges/issues etc.) The Community Climate Action Officer will be developing case studies/ reports on projects and groups will be asked to provide details about their works and experiences. These reports will be carried out at a 6 month, 12 month and 18 month period after the project starts.

All payments are subject to:

- Evidence of compliance with the public procurement guidelines. If the grantee does not comply with the public procurement guidelines, financial sanctions may apply e.g., expenditure will be deemed ineligible and will not be reimbursed.
- Evidence of compliance with Climate Action Fund Guidelines.
- Eligibility of the costs as per the guidelines for the Programme and Letter of Offer.

## 10. Data Protection

Information provided by applicants and those who receive funding will be utilised for the purposes of evaluating and administering this Programme, and to facilitate reporting, auditing and any site visits. When evaluating the applications and during the lifetime of the projects, MCC may share information with the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications. Find MCC privacy statement for the fund [here](#).

## 11. Important Dates

<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Date</b>
Application Period	13 <sup>th</sup> December 23 - 6 <sup>th</sup> March 23
Evaluation and selection by MCC	Q2 2024
Approval by DECC	Q3 2024
Results announced	Q3 2024