December 2020

Local Authority Climate Change Adaptation Strategy / Climate Action Plan

Annual Progress Report 2020

An Overview

Introduction

The local authority progress reporting template was developed to enable the local authority sector to report on the progress of the implementation of their climate change adaptation strategies / climate action plans on an annual basis. The National Adaptation Framework (NAF) "mandated the development and implementation of sectoral adaptation plans and local authority adaptation strategies which together, would form part of the national response to the impacts of climate change." Additionally, the NAF outlined the requirement to report on progress in terms of meeting the terms of the Framework and sectoral plans. This is the first of those reports and follows on one year after the adoption of these plans by all 31 County Councils. The progress reporting template was designed to take into account the different methods and styles used by local authorities across the country, in the publication of their strategies / plans. It enables the information from each to be collated into a national progress report for the sector. The following is an overview / summary of this report.

Progress

In total, Local authorities adopted 2451 actions covering areas including adaptation, mitigation, awareness building, and community engagement. The template required local authorities to categorise the progress they've made on implementing their actions across five categories including; not started, ongoing, postponed, completed and new. These categories match categories used in Covenant of Mayors reporting. The following charts show a total breakdown of action categorisation.
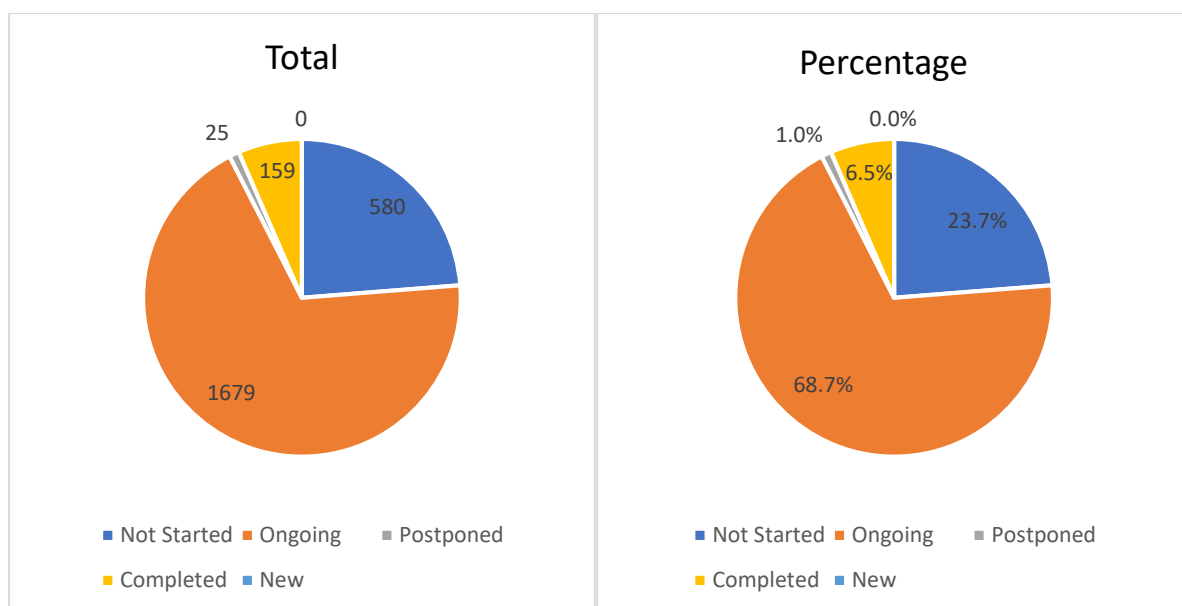

Chart 1.1 & 1.2 - Breakdown of Actions by number and percentage – based on progress category

One year after the adoption of the strategies / action plans local authorities have completed 6.5% of all actions. Local Authorities have made significant progress on actions with 68.7% of all actions now started and ongoing towards completion. 23.7% of actions have not yet started however they are still planned to commence on the timeframe outlined in their respective strategies / plans. 1% of actions were postponed for several reasons, outlined below, with no actions being categorised as new. This was as expected with this being the first year of progress reporting.

As outlined above 75.2% of all actions are either ongoing or completed. The actions that are ongoing are broad ranging, a lot of these actions will take several years to be completed while others will have a rolling duration. For example, actions such as gulley cleaning or flood defence monitoring activities will always be fundamental in increasing the adaptive capacity of council services to address the impacts of more frequent and intense rainfall events due to climate change. The rolling nature of such actions will be required as an ongoing endeavour and are likely to take a higher level of priority in the future. As such the progress of the local authority sector should not be solely measured on the number of 'Completed' actions, but rather the mainstreaming of climate action across all LA functions and services, and enabling the Country to increase its overall resilience to the impacts of climate change.

The dashboard on the Reporting Template provides a breakdown of progress by local authorities and is provided below. The full colour part of each bar shows the percentage of actions ongoing with the dashed part of each bar showing the addition of the percentage of actions that have been completed.
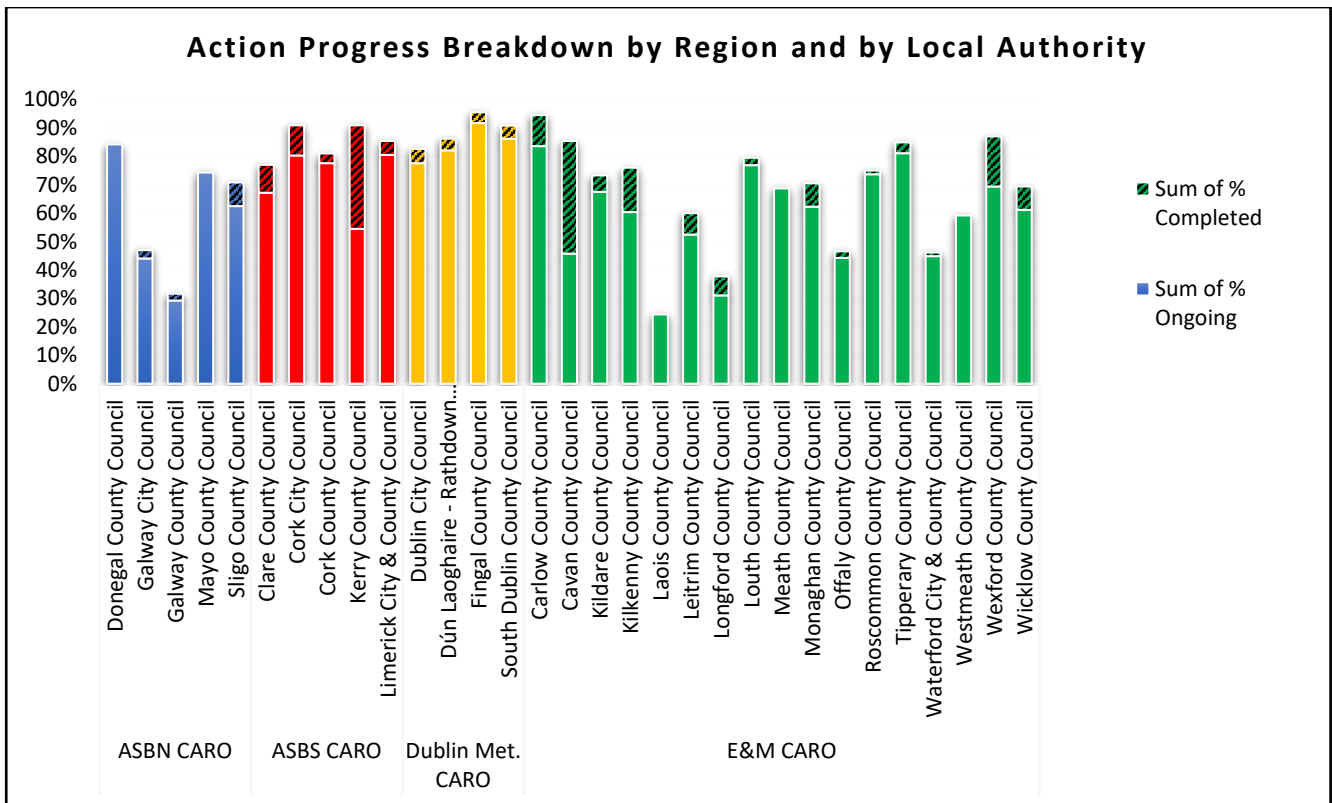
Chart 1.3 - Action Progress by local authority and region – showing percentage of actions completed and ongoing

Actions Postponed

1% (25) of actions were categorised as postponed. Several reasons were provided for why these actions were postponed. The main reason identified was COVID-19 (14 actions). This was mainly for actions that involved community engagement or in person events but the redistribution of resources towards COVID-19 response was identified by one local authority. A further breakdown of the impact of COVID-19 is provided later in this overview. Other reasons identified for why actions were postponed included:

- Budget / funding constraints.
- Waiting on preceding steps to be taken before an action could start to be implemented. For example, in relation to ISO 50001 and a national review of plans to be completed).
- Waiting to get alignment / timing right with other local authorities / stakeholders.
- Resourcing issues.
- Waiting on the rollout of the training programme developed by the CARO.
- For 3 postponed actions a reason why was not provided.

Actions Completed

6.5% (159) actions have been completed by local authorities. All actions in strategies / plans can be classified as either soft, green or grey. As stated in the Local Authority Strategy Development Guidelines 2018, 'Soft' adaptation actions involve alterations in behaviour, regulation or systems of management, such as land-use planning policy. 'Green' adaptation actions are those that seek to use ecological properties to enhance the resilience of human and natural systems in the face of climate change. With 'Grey' adaptation typically involving technical or engineering-oriented responses to climatic impacts. Most actions completed to date can be classified as soft.

- 12 actions relate to establishing an adaptation steering group, with another 4 putting a Climate Action Officer in place.
- 14 actions lead to the mainstreaming of climate change / action considerations into plans and policies of local authorities as well as 7 actions also mainstreaming biodiversity considerations into relevant plans / policies.
- 5 actions put climate action as a standing item on the agenda for senior management team meetings,
- 5 actions relate to business continuity plans
- 8 actions focused on increasing the capacity of emergency response around and clean-up after extreme events.
- 4 actions related to monitoring & review systems of impacts during extreme events including resources used
- 5 actions relating to flooding management and flood alleviation schemes.
- Other common actions include actions relating to
    - Waste management & single-use plastic policies (5),
    - Building energy efficiency and retrofit plans (6)
    - Improving teleconferencing facilities / working hubs (4)
    - Incorporating climate considerations into the design, planning and construction of infrastructure (2)

COVID-19 Impacting Actions

COVID-19 is mentioned 108 times in the progress report with both positive and negative impacts identified. In general, there were more negative impacts than positive impacts such as:

- 41 actions either delayed or postponed as a result of the pandemic.

- An additional 18 actions stated COVID-19 had negatively impacted their implementation.

- 7 actions were cancelled due to COVID-19. These 7 actions related to annual events that will take place again next year, restrictions permitting.

- Some actions (9) were redesigned / restructured and instead delivered online. These involved awareness building and community engagement events.

- The approaches originally outlined in another 2 actions are to be reviewed for 2021 on account of COVID-19.

COVID-19 has had some positive impacts on the implementation of actions. The main areas that have benefitted include:

- Travel / mobility related actions (5)

- Video conferencing / online meeting capacity (3) with these actions fast-tracked or accelerated.

- On 2 occasions COVID-19 restrictions were stated as assisting with business continuity planning

- 2 actions stated the processes put in place during COVID-19 can apply to addressing climate change going forward.

- Other actions have benefitted from being run in unison with COVID-19 supports or their planning has benefitted from taking learnings from COVID-19 services, including communication protocols with customers / communities.

External Stakeholders Identified

Many external stakeholders have been identified by Local Authorities to help deliver on action implementation. These stakeholders were originally identified in the strategies / plans and updated through the completion of their progress reporting. Government departments were listed the most with a total of 204 entries. The progress reports were mostly completed before government departments were restructured and therefore have listed the previous name of departments while others have used the new names for restructured departments. A breakdown of all of these is provided here:

Government Department	No. of Entries	Actions Ongoing	Actions Completed
*Department of Environment, Climate & Communication (formally DCCAE) – both included	51	33	2
Department of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht	45	24	1
Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine	35	23	0
Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government	33	19	0
Department of Transport Tourism and Sport	26	19	0
Government Department (no specific dept mentioned)	9	8	0
Department of Health	3	2	0
*Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	2	0	0
Total	**204**	**128**	**3**

The remaining external stakeholders, most identified and National Bodies, are listed as below:

External Stakeholder	No. of Entries	Actions Ongoing	Actions Completed
Office of Public Works (OPW)	161	111	10
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	111	69	3
National Parks & Wildlife Services (NPWS)	81	51	1
Academia / 3rd Level Institutions	79	52	1
Irish Water	68	50	1
Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)	62	45	6
Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)	44	32	0
National Transport Authority (NTA)	38	33	0
Met Eireann	36	22	1
Climate Ireland	35	24	0
The Health Service Executive (HSE)	29	13	0
Local Authorities Waters Programme (LAWPRO)	28	21	0
Marine Institute	24	17	0
Regional Assemblies	21	16	1
National Biodiversity Data Centre	20	10	1
Waste Enforcement Regional Lead Authorities (WERLA)	13	13	0
Enterprise Ireland	13	10	0
The Heritage Council	12	6	0
Geological Survey Ireland (GSI)	12	8	0
Irish Farmers Association (IFA)	12	10	0
An Taisce	11	8	1
ESB	9	6	1
Teagasc	9	4	0
Failte Ireland	8	3	0
Bord Ná Mona	6	4	0
Inland Fisheries	6	5	0
Listed as - Sectors in the National Adaptation Framework (NAF)	5	5	0
Bord Gais	2	1	0
Eirgrid	2	2	0

	2	2	0
Gas Networks Ireland	2	2	0
Invasive Species Ireland	2	2	0
Waterways Ireland	2	1	0

National Adaptation Framework Themes & Sectors

The above information categorised under sectors identified in the National Adaptation Framework, where relevant follows:

Themes, Sectors and Lead Departments under the National Adaptation Framework			
Theme	**Sector Level**		**Lead Departments**
Natural and Cultural Capital	**Seafood, Agriculture, Forestry, Biodiversity, Built & Archaeological Heritage**		**DAFM; DCHG**
External Stakeholder	**No. of Entries**	**Actions Ongoing**	**Actions Completed**
Department of Agriculture, Food & Marine	35	23	0
Department of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht	45	24	1
Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	111	69	3
National Parks & Wildlife Services (NPWS)	81	51	1
National Biodiversity Data Centre	20	10	1
The Heritage Council	12	6	0
An Taisce	11	8	1
Teagasc	9	4	0
Inland Fisheries	6	5	0
Bord na Mona	6	4	0
Invasive Species Ireland	2	2	0
Waterways Ireland	2	1	0
Total	**340**	**207**	**7**

Critical Infrastructure	**Transport Infrastructure, Electricity and Gas Networks, Communication Networks**		**DTTAS; DCCAE**
External Stakeholder	**No. of Entries**	**Actions Ongoing**	**Actions Completed**
Department of Transport Tourism and Sport	26	19	0
*Department of Environment, Climate & Communication (formally DCCAE)	51	33	2
Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)	44	32	0
National Transport Authority (NTA)	38	33	0
ESB	9	6	1
Bord Gais	2	1	0
Eirgrid	2	2	0
Gas Networks Ireland	2	2	0
Total	**174**	**128**	**3**

Water Resource and Flood Risk Management	Flood Risk Management, Water Quality, Water Services Infrastructure		OPW; DHPLG
External Stakeholder	**No. of Entries**	**Actions Ongoing**	**Actions Completed**
Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government	33	19	0
*Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	2	0	0
Office of Public Works (OPW)	161	111	10
Irish Water	68	50	1
Local Authorities Waters Programme (LAWPRO)	28	21	0
Marine Institute	24	17	0
Geological Survey Ireland (GSI)	12	8	0
Total	**328**	**226**	**11**

Public Health	Health		Dept. of Health
External Stakeholder	**No. of Entries**	**Actions Ongoing**	**Actions Completed**
Department of Health	3	2	0
The Health Service Executive (HSE)	29	13	0
Total	**32**	**15**	**0**

Conclusion

The local authority sector, through the first annual progress report, has shown that progress has started on the implementation of actions from their climate change adaptation strategies / climate action plans. There has been increased engagement with climate adaptation across most departments in the local authority which is translating into a growing demand on CARO resources for supports and coordination. The business case 'Delivering Effective Climate Action 2030' outlines the need for increased climate action resources within Local Authorities and for an enhanced CARO structure. It will be important for the sector to maintain or increase the momentum it has gained as it faces increased challenges, requirements and responsibilities in the area of climate action. The Climate Action Regional Offices (CAROs) will continue to assist their local authorities on driving the implementation of these actions as well as actions from sectoral adaptation plans where local authorities are identified as stakeholders. Additionally the CAROs will continue to work with their local authorities to implement actions outlined in the All of Government Climate Action Plan 2019, the Local Authority Climate Action Charter and new actions that will be identified and delivered through the development of Local Authority Climate Action Plans as set out in the Climate Action (Amendment) Bill 2020.