

CLIMATE JUSTICE AND A JUST TRANSITION





Climate Justice and a Just Transition

We need to confront global warming, and the methods and alternatives we use must be inclusive and democratic.

Sinn Féin believes that the transition to ecological sustainability must be framed by principles of social justice and equality. We need a just transition to a carbon-free future. If the process is not fair, neither will the outcome, that is for certain.

Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil want to leave it to market forces. They want us to believe that structural change can be achieved through leaflets and ad campaigns. At the same time it is carving up the Irish Sea into speculative boxes for fossil-fuel extraction and agreeing to a beef deal with Brazil that has hastened the demise of the Amazon. Its flagship policy of electric cars for everyone has already been dismissed by the Department of Transport as pie-in-the-sky thinking, and its deep retrofit scheme is aimed only at a small section of Irish society.

The Green Party also wants a market approach to climate action, believing that the manipulation of market signals via taxation will lead to deep structural and behavioural change. This is a deeply regressive approach in terms of social cohesion, but such is the ideological bent of its current leaders that it is treated as unquestioned doctrine, a 'common sense' that is common only to those who believed that bailing out bankers and imposing austerity was fair and balanced and reasonable.

All these strategies are limited and self-defeating. They are mere gestures, ones that do not address the core issue, which is both structural and behavioural.





Without a government policy that is framed by climate justice and a just transition, the leadership and direction of climate action will become the plaything of bankers and corporate investors. They will be concerned with only one thing: how to make a buck out of the crisis. That is what they do, it is in their nature, and it is killing the planet.

We cannot allow corporate interests to push false solutions and misleading definitions on us, dumping the cost of climate action onto the shoulders of ordinary communities the same way they dumped the cost of global warming and pollution. 'As is always the case' the UN Secretary-General António Guterres recently said in relation to global warming, 'the poor and vulnerable are the first to suffer and the worst hit'.

Sinn Féin is committed to climate justice and a just transition for Ireland, north and south. This means a fairer and more democratic society, one which protects workers' rights and empowers communities with more input and control over their future.

These commitments include:

- ▶ **A Just Transition Task Force**
- ▶ **No carbon tax increases in the absence of viable alternatives**
- ▶ **No new licences for offshore fossil fuel drilling and no new fossil fuel infrastructure**
- ▶ **A total ban on fracking across the island of Ireland, including exploratory drilling, and a total ban on the importation of fracked gas**
- ▶ **Termination of all peat and coal electricity over the next five years**
- ▶ **State divestment in fossil fuel projects**
- ▶ **All data centres to be powered through self-generated 100% renewable energy**
- ▶ **A legal and structural framework for domestic microgeneration of renewable energy**
- ▶ **Greater community ownership and public participation in renewable energy projects.**

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sustainable economy. It ensures that all climate policies are socially and rurally proofed.

No workers or communities can be left behind in the move away from peat production and into more sustainable forms of energy generation. This is of prime importance for Bord na Móna and the Midlands, and also Moneypoint in Clare.

At the same time, we cannot allow social justice to be removed from climate action. We need to invest in public transport; build good quality public housing; invest in wind and solar renewable energy; undertake a truly ambitious afforestation programme; begin the process of retrofitting our housing stock, starting with older people; and expand our energy renewable infrastructure.

We also need to ensure that such expansion has buy-in from local communities, and the way to do this is to democratise the ownership of the infrastructure as much as possible. Green energy is best produced locally. This is the way forward.

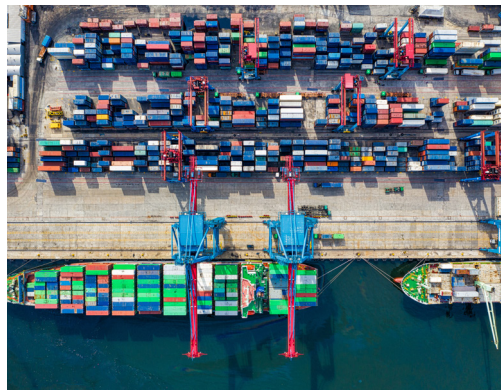
A Just Transition Task Force

A just transition provides decent jobs, social protection and security to workers, as well as communities most affected by the transition, to a sustainable economy. It ensures that all climate policies are socially and rurally proofed. No workers or communities can be left behind in the move away from peat production to more sustainable forms of energy generation. This is of prime importance for the midlands and Moneypoint in County Clare. To ensure a just transition for peat workers, we need to establish a Just Transition Task Force based on dialogue with trade unions and other stakeholders. This task force should negotiate a fair deal for

fossil fuel workers and their communities and should ensure an orderly exit from coal and peat as soon as possible. The people who work in these areas need to be part of that transition.

No carbon tax increases in the absence of viable alternatives

The carbon tax increase will make people poorer, but it won't make the state greener or cleaner. It is a regressive tax, and its sole purpose is to raise funds. Any further increase will widen poverty and inequality, and will hit low to middle income households harder. All talk of using it for climate action is simply a ruse because the alternatives are not in place – nor will they be in place under a Fine Gael or Fianna Fáil government. We know the barriers to climate action in this state and the main one is the lack of investment. We are still suffering from the consequences of almost a decade of cuts in capital expenditure. Nowhere is this seen more clearly than in our public transport system. People cannot shift from private to public transport if no alternatives are available. The pathway is clear: we need to dramatically increase our investment in public transport and renewable energy. Until we do that, increase in the carbon tax will only penalise people for not being wealthy enough to make changes.





No new licences for offshore fossil fuel drilling and no new fossil fuel infrastructure

We need to stop all future exploration for fossil fuels and invest in renewables. There is simply no alternative. While it is true that Ireland will have to continue to use fossil fuels as it transitions to a sustainable environment, it is pointless to pretend that new exploration or new fossil fuel infrastructure has a role to play in this process. It does not. More than 80% of known and proved reserves on the planet must remain in the ground if we are to limit global temperature increases to under 1.5° Celsius.

Sinn Féin is opposed to new infrastructure that will lock us into fossil fuel use for decades to come and greatly impede the transition to a zero carbon society.

A total ban on fracking across the island of Ireland, including exploratory drilling and the importation of fracked gas

Sinn Féin is totally opposed to fracking. This has been our position for years. We are proud to stand on an anti-fracking platform, including opposition to exploratory drilling in the north and the importation of fracked gas at any future terminal at Shannon. In government we would remove any project from the EU list of Projects of Common Interest that could support the building of an LNG facility that would act as a gateway for fracked gas entering the Irish energy mix. We are also working to build support in Europe to prioritise sustainability criteria in the assessment of candidate PCI projects, that will address fossil fuel lock in and the long-term impacts of fracked gas in the European energy mix, given the expected change in climatic conditions. The government's attempts to import fracked gas into the Irish state are disgraceful. Fracking is an environmental disaster.

Termination of all peat and coal electricity over the next five years

All of the Irish state's peat and coal-fuelled electricity plants are due to close by the end of 2025, if not sooner. This is a necessary move, but one that must be framed by the principles of a just transition, and headed by a Just Transition task force.



State divestment in fossil fuel projects

There is a need to divest from fossil fuels by obliging public bodies such as the Strategic Ireland Investment Fund to move its money out of fossil fuel companies. There is also a need to prohibit such future investment in the industry by state or semi-state enterprises; removing the investment capital of public pension schemes in fossil fuel companies; and to redirect this investment where possible into green bonds.

All data centres to be powered through self-generated 100% renewable energy

It is estimated that data centres could account for up to 36% of the Irish state's electricity demand by 2030. The Irish Academy of Engineering has said that the centres could increase our electricity carbon emissions by 1.5 million tonnes. The Renewable Electricity Policy and Development Framework needs to be updated to deal with this potential situation by stipulating that all data centres must be powered by onsite or new offsite renewable energy that is generated by the companies themselves. In other words, going forward data centres must directly add to the renewable energy infrastructure itself, and not just simply purchase "clean" energy from the grid.

A legal and structural framework for domestic microgeneration of renewable energy

To address climate change, we cannot just call for the end of fossil fuels. We need solutions to directly replace fossil fuels and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. We need to put in place alternative energy solutions and microgeneration will form a part of this, as well as being an energy source that lowers household energy bills.

In March 2019 Sinn Féin introduced the Microgeneration Support Scheme Bill under which suppliers would have to pay the householder for excess electricity supplied to the grid from small scale renewable energy. This would lower energy bills, provide some income, and would add to the State's overall renewable energy production.

Up to now it is ordinary households and businesses that pay high energy prices and pay for our switch to renewables. They pay to support large-scale renewable energy through the Public Service Obligation levy on their electricity bills and pay the current carbon tax. We cannot continue to



place all the obligations on householders and small businesses. We need to shift the burden from households towards those who profit most from energy, the suppliers.

Allowing ordinary households and businesses produce their own energy means lower energy bills and higher rates of renewable power across the State. We need to switch from fossil fuels and we can do it by getting everybody involved, not just large-scale developers. Small scale renewable energy has a big part to play in our energy future.

Greater community ownership and public participation in renewable energy projects

The majority of our renewable energy production to date has come from onshore wind. Onshore wind is currently the cheapest source of renewable energy to produce. It is a valuable source of energy which must continue to be utilised as part of our future energy mix. Governments should do more to promote better community engagement around proposed wind projects and opportunities for full or part-ownership by local communities should be encouraged. In these arrangements, shares of the energy and revenue generated come back to the local owners and community. Templederry Community Windfarm in Tipperary is one such example of community ownership.

Sinn Féin's climate action measures are framed by the principles of climate justice and a just transition, both of which we outline here.



A JUST TRANSITION

A Just Transition is a set of principles, processes, and practices that ensure that the move towards a sustainable environment and economy is one that strengthens social cohesion, respects the rights of workers, and empowers communities. It redresses past harms and creates new relationships of power for the future through reparations, and acknowledges that if the process of transition is not democratic and just, neither will the outcome.¹

Its origins lie in the U.S. in the 1970s and the efforts of Tony Mazzocchi, leader of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers union. He proposed that workers whose jobs might be threatened by disarmament should receive support, and this principle was soon applied to those in toxic chemical industries. It was recognition that without a just transition, workers would be financially penalised for the loss of industry and activity brought about by the move to a sustainable environment. This is a double burden, one that goes against principles of social justice and equality.

The term spread fast in the north American trade union movement. 'By 1997, the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers Union officially endorsed just transition, as did the Canadian Communications, Energy, and Paperworkers Union', and by 2001, 'the Service Employees International Union, the largest union in the United States, issued an official energy policy that included a call for Just Transition.'² The International Trade Union Confederation, in its 2009 submission to the Copenhagen Accord, said that,

An economic transition is needed that shifts global economic growth patterns towards a low emission economy based on more sustainable production and consumption, promoting sustainable lifestyles and climate-resilient development while ensuring a just transition of the workforce [and that this must be achieved] through socially responsible and green investment, low-carbon development strategies, and by providing decent work and social protection for those whose livelihoods, incomes and employment are affected by the need to adapt to climate change and by the need to reduce emissions to levels that avert dangerous climate change.³

In 2015 the trade union movement succeeded in getting the phrase "Just Transition" into the preamble to the Paris Climate Agreement, which calls on the signatories to consider 'the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs in accordance

¹ <https://climatejusticealliance.org/just-transition/>

² https://ecology.iwww.org/PDF/LNS/JustTransitionReport-FINAL.pdf?bot_test=1

³ https://ecology.iwww.org/PDF/LNS/JustTransitionReport-FINAL.pdf?bot_test=1



with nationally defined development priorities'.⁴ It is now incumbent on governments to follow this lead.

We cannot have a situation whereby corporate investors are protected while ordinary people are made to pick up the tab for behaviour that was not of their making nor choosing. The move towards environmental sustainability must be inclusive and democratic. We cannot have just any transition for workers and communities, we must have a just transition. Fine Gael promises the former; Sinn Féin will only accept the latter.

This means that dialogue with the trade union movement, local communities, and civil society groups is essential and must form a central part of the overall process. This should be done through a Just Transition Task Force, one that has the active participation of local communities and affected workers, and not just another government-appointed panel of right-wing economists and civil servants.

The just transition model means that the move towards environmental sustainability must be democratic, and must include the following:

- ▶ **Income support for workers during the full duration of transition**
- ▶ **Local economic development tools for affected communities**
- ▶ **Realistic training/retraining programs that lead to decent work**
- ▶ **Knowledge sharing—the adoption of best practices from other jurisdictions**

4 https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf

- ▶ A framework to support labour standards + collective bargaining
- ▶ A sectoral approach customized to regions and work processes
- ▶ Research and development to provide support for technological adjustment
- ▶ An equity lens to understand the impacts in terms of gender, race, and class.⁵

In the Irish state the most immediate workers affected by the move towards low carbon are those in Bord na Móna and at Moneypoint coal power plant.



Bord na Móna

We are facing a dire situation in respect of Bord na Móna. There are huge problems and it is facing a perfect storm. Workers have been told that their jobs will be gone in 14 months' time. This will have a very significant effect right across the midlands, particularly in Laois and Offaly.

It is unacceptable that these two power stations would be closed without any alternative arrangements in place.

What is needed is a proper Just Transition fund to secure jobs and to commence the rehabilitation of bogs. This needs to be done and we need a proper plan for each bog. We need investment in alternative employment and training and upskilling in new industries.

We also need to protect reasonable conditions of employment and to

⁵ <https://www.wri.org/climate/expert-perspective/toward-just-transition>

underpin the company's pension scheme. This is very important because there are almost more pensioners than workers with Bord na Móna because of the historical context in which Bord na Móna employed multiples - many thousands more - of what it does now.

Time is of the essence in this regard.

Clear direction is needed with regard to biomass, biogas, wind, solar, and forestry. These are the new industries that will be needed to replace peat in the midlands.

At the moment, Bord na Móna's BioEnergy division sources sustainable biomass that is used at the Edenderry power station. In addition, there is demand for biomass for use in industry and in residential heating, with the Government's Support Scheme for Renewable Heat due to create a demand for biomass supplies in the coming years.

Bord na Móna currently imports biomass to make up for the shortfall in domestic supply. As that supply increases, supported by the forestry programme and other measures, imported biomass will be displaced.

Bord na Móna and Coillte in the South are to form 'Bioenergy Ireland' which aims to stimulate the supply of biomass. This should also work with the Forestry Service in the North.

Both biogas and biomass have the potential to create jobs in Ireland





and could provide an alternative or additional source of income for farming communities.

Some of our existing power stations across Ireland are approaching the end of their useful lives. Project Ireland 2040 envisages converting the currently coal-based Moneypoint to burn natural gas before 2025 at an estimated cost of €1 billion. While Sinn Féin welcomes this commitment to phase out coal-combustion, the government's plan is short-sighted because natural gas is also a finite fossil fuel.

Consideration should be given to converting existing fossil fuel based electricity plants which are currently approaching the end of their useful lives over to biogas and to a lesser extent biomass or to constructing new plants instead along with carbon capture technology.

As part of a just transition for the midlands, we must prioritise investment in the achievement and delivery of a wider portfolio of energy sources including and sustainable replacements such as biogas and to a lesser extent biomass, for fossil fuels currently underpinning dispatchable power i.e. power that is available on demand.

Both Bord na Móna and the ESB are renowned for their apprenticeship schemes. Both companies have previously been at the heart of Ireland's power hub. There is no reason why they can't play a central role in the upscaling of workers currently employed in the peat industry.

We need investment in alternative employment and training in new green industries. This is why Sinn Féin is proposing that the Offaly Mount Lucas training centre be expanded to become the national location for apprenticeship training in retrofitting and high-efficiency construction.

It should be noted that a lot of people in the Irish state, including stakeholders in the green environment, are looking at Bord na Móna as a sort of litmus test for how well the government is going to handle a just transition process.

The consequence of the Government's poor handling of Bord na Móna's transition to date only serves to turn communities against climate action.

The Bord na Móna transition must be handled well in order for trust to be gained of other communities who will soon be entering a just transition phase themselves – with Moneypoint as a case in hand.

Moneypoint

The ending of the burning of coal at Moneypoint in West Clare is going to have a very significant impact on the region where it is one of the biggest employers.

The ESB has said that it will cease all generation from coal in Moneypoint no later than 2025.

However, the company has said that it may close sooner than that. This is because of increasing competition in the energy market and the impact of carbon prices on the power station's output which has led in turn to reduced income.

There are currently 194 people employed at Moneypoint. The ESB has already announced that it has ceased all contract work at the plant. It is only a matter of time before the other jobs follow.

While the ESB has said that it is examining technology options for Moneypoint beyond 2025, nothing has been made definite as of yet.

As with Bord na Móna, a just transition deal must be put in place for the workers at the plant and for West Clare in general.

We cannot allow our regions to fade due to inaction and a lack of political will.

At a local level there is no role for Local Authorities in terms of energy planning and climate action. This needs to be reconsidered.

The principles of a Just Transition need to be applied across the board.

This means the government sitting down the workers at Moneypoint, their trade union representative, the local community, local businesses, and local representatives to ensure that the people of West Clare are not forced to carry an undue burden for the rest of us as we transition to a sustainable energy environment.





CLIMATE JUSTICE

Sinn Féin is committed to climate action through climate justice, a process that,

- ▶ respects and protects human rights;
- ▶ supports the right to sustainable development;
- ▶ shares benefits and burdens equitably;
- ▶ guarantees that decisions on climate change are participatory, transparent and accountable;
- ▶ gives privilege to the need for equality and equity in terms of gender, class, and race;
- ▶ harnesses the transformative power of education for climate stewardship; and
- ▶ Uses effective partnerships to secure climate justice.

In terms of policy, this means prioritising the following areas:

- ▶ public transport;
- ▶ renewable energy;
- ▶ afforestation;
- ▶ food security and sustainable agriculture;
- ▶ housing;
- ▶ work;
- ▶ regional development and infrastructure;
- ▶ Green finance, banking and credit.

Global warming is not just about changes in energy, travel, and consumerism: it is a social, ethical, political and cultural issue as well. We have seen political conservatives offer up market solutions in lieu of systemic change, but this is a dead-end – one that transfer the cost of climate action onto ordinary people rather than corporate polluters.



The values of climate justice must underpin climate action. There is simply no other equitable and just way to approach the dominant political issue of our time.

Sinn Féin is fully committed to these principles. They have informed our policies for decades, and will continue to do so in the future. When it comes to climate action, no community should be left behind or left to carry the can. A just transition only works when it is framed by principles of equality and justice, and Sinn Féin will ensure that this is the case.

Climate justice also means challenging received wisdom on the ownership of energy going forward.

In order for Irish society to have a fair, functioning economy which works for workers and our communities, ownership must be shared.

Sinn Féin is serious about addressing inequality in our society, and we are therefore serious about dealing with the inequality of ownership which exists in our economy.

That is why Sinn Féin is committed to developing an economy in which workers have a greater share of ownership through Worker Co-operatives (WCOP's). These are businesses in which the workers of the enterprise own at least 51% of the shares.

In a WCOP, ownership and labour work together. By giving workers control, you give control to their communities and their local economies to stimulate community and regional wealth building. WCOP's put worker outcomes, worker well-being and community sustainability at the forefront of their objectives. These are all characteristics that our economy should welcome and embrace.

Sinn Féin wants a society in which the current economic model of shareholding which concentrates power and wealth in the hands of a few is challenged.

We believe that a different kind of society is possible; but to achieve that new society, we need a different kind of economy that is based upon shared ownership.

We believe that such a model is perfectly suited to the democratisation of energy creation and distribution, produced locally and owned locally through the shared ownership model.





CONCLUSION

A Just Transition provides decent jobs, social protection and security to workers, as well as communities most affected by the transition to a sustainable economy

It ensures that all climate policies are socially and rurally proofed.

No workers or communities can be left behind in the move away from peat production and into more sustainable forms of energy generation.

This is of prime importance for Bord na Móna and the Midlands, and also Moneypoint in Clare.

At the same time, we cannot allow social justice to be removed from climate action.

We need to invest in public transport; build good quality public housing; invest in wind and solar renewable energy; undertake a truly ambitious afforestation programme; begin the process of retrofitting our housing stock, starting with the homes of older people; and expand our energy renewable infrastructure.

We also need to ensure that such expansion has buy-in from local communities, and the way to do this is to democratise the ownership of the infrastructure as much as possible. Green energy is best produced locally. This is the way forward.

In summary, we need to ensure that the principles of climate justice and a just transition run through everything we do going forward.

Working towards a just and fair transition for climate change and environmental protection



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