Community Climate Action Programme

Guidance Document

Programme Objective

The overall objective of the Community Climate Action Programme is to support and empower communities, in partnership with their Local Authority, 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. If you would like to meet with the Community Climate Action Officer, please contact Julie Sammiller at jsammiller@wicklowcoco.ie / ccap@wicklowcoco.ie or Tel: 087 4084441.

Programme Overview

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 expected that phase 2 will open in mid-2024, further information on Strand 2 is available on www.pobal.ie.

Strand 1:

Entitled: *Building Low Carbon Communities*

A total of €646,000 has been allocated to Wicklow County Council to work in partnership with communities, large and small, rural, and urban, within County Wicklow to build low carbon communities in a considered and structured way.

Projects/initiatives eligible for funding:

The types of projects/initiatives, within communities, which are eligible for funding under the Programme, should seek to demonstrate the delivery of national climate action at local level by:

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.

Funding available:

Small scale projects:

10% of the funding allocated, **€64,600** is available for to fund small projects up to €20,000.

Examples of potential small-scale projects: community composting, micro allotments, rooftop gardens, water refill stations, pollinator projects, small renewable energy projects, bike lockers, rewilding, rainwater harvesting for use in gardens/washing boots at sports fields etc.

Medium scale projects:

40% of the funding allocated, **€258,400**, will be made available for medium sized projects valued in the range of €20,000 - €50,000.

Large scale projects:

50% of the funding allocated, **€323,000**, will be made available for larger projects in the range of €50,000 - €100,000.

Examples of potential medium and large scale projects: small community renewable energy projects (solar, hydro, wind), retrofitting community buildings, LED community lighting or community EV charging point(s), reductions in carbon footprint in services, improving access to cycle ways, cycle parking, safe or active travel routes to schools, developing community gardens to promote local food production, allotments, rooftop gardens ,market gardens, food pledges from local businesses, food markets, food hubs, repair hubs or community composting facilities, creating urban agriculture hubs,

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projects that increase the variety and number of recycling facilities in the local community; initiatives aimed at reducing, reusing and recycling, community repair hubs, swap shops, water filling stations or single use plastics elimination in businesses in communities, projects that take a holistic approach to managing the local environment, including in relation to climate action. This **can include** for example, mini forests, dispersed orchards, community gardens, roof gardens, pollinator projects or climate resilience projects.

Programme themes: (see also Case Studies document for specific ideas under each theme)

The community-based projects/initiatives will **take action** across at least one, preferably several, of the following **five themes**:

• **Community and 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 emissions. How we build, heat, and run our buildings can play a big part in reducing Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. We 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. This **can include** small community renewable energy projects (solar, hydro, wind), retrofitting community buildings, LED community lighting or community EV charging point(s).

• **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 greenhouse gas emissions. We know that changing our means of travel is not simple, and is often dictated by previous planning and housing choices, particularly in rural communities, leading 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. This **can include** reductions in carbon footprint in services, improving access to cycle ways, cycle parking, community electric bicycles, safe or active travel routes to schools.

• **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 national Climate Action Plan has set a goal for the agricultural sector to reduce their climate impact in the production of 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 and lower carbon proteins in their meals. While being mindful that different circumstances such as 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).

We are interested in projects that reduce food waste. This **can include** developing community gardens to promote local food production, allotments, food pledges from local businesses, food markets, or community composting facilities.

• **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).

We are interested in projects that increase the variety and number of recycling facilities in the local community; initiatives aimed at reducing, reusing and recycling, community repair hubs, swap shops, boot and jersey swap stations (sports clubs), water filling stations or single use plastics elimination in businesses/groups in communities.

• Local climate and environmental action

Ireland 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. This **can include** for example, mini forests, sustainable drainage systems such as raingardens, forest schools, dispersed orchards, community gardens, roof gardens, pollinator projects or climate resilience projects.

Community Group/Organisation Eligibility:

To be eligible to apply community groups/organisations:

• must be a not-for-profit organisation

• must be located in the operational area of Wicklow County Council

• must submit a completed application form on or before **6th March 2024, at 5:00pm**

• must 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

• The project applied for must be in line with the aim/purpose of the funding.

• Only one application per organisation may be submitted for consideration – projects proposed could cut across several of the themes and be bundled together as part of a single application.

In developing projects, communities should also consider how their projects contribute to progress in relation to relevant Sustainable Development Goals.

The following are not eligible to apply:

• Private individuals

• Commercial undertakings (including sole traders)

• National community and environmental organisations

• Schools, third level institutions

<u>**Mandatory requirements for projects:**</u>

• Projects must be eligible for funding from the Climate Action Fund as set out in the eligibility section above.

• Projects must comply with all statutory requirements in relation to planning, building regulations, Health and Safety, and Fire Codes, if applicable.

• Projects must comply with Public Procurement Guidelines, see table below:

VALUE	SUPPLIES / SERVICES	WORKS
< €50,000	<u>Seek</u> 3 quotes	<u>Seek</u> 5 quotes
€50,000 - €221,000	e-Tenders	<u>Seek</u> 5 quotes
< €200,000	see above	<u>Seek</u> 5 quotes

• Prospective partners 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.

• Prospective partners must be able to demonstrate their ability to carry out the proposed works.

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Governance for Community and Voluntary Organisations

Community partners are encouraged to adopt the Governance Code, a Code of Practice for Good Governance of Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations, which will assist in achieving excellence in all areas of their work. The Governance Code asks organisations to agree to operate to key principles in order to run their organisation more effectively in areas such as leadership, transparency and accountability, and behaving with integrity.

Further information on the Code is available at www.governancecode.ie.

Funding and eligible costs:

Eligible costs will be considered on a case-by-case basis. However, the following general conditions will apply:

• Costs submitted must be for the sole purpose of implementing the project and should not relate to any other purpose.

• Duplicate public funding must not have been received, or will be received, from other sources for the same purpose.

• Costs must be verifiable e.g., by evidence of public procurement, an invoice and receipt for payment.

• Community groups/organisations will be advised if some costs have been deemed ineligible from the outset. This will be taken account of in the grant amount recommended and the amount awarded and included in the grant agreement for the proposed project/initiative.

• Community groups/organisations cannot include the cost of using their own equipment or premises.

• Up to 100% funding may be provided from the Community Climate Action Programme. Other funding may be leveraged for projects (e.g., with LEADER, Tidy Towns, Town and Village Enhancement funding, etc.) although that is not a requirement of this programme.

• Pre-funding can be provided to community groups/organisations up to a maximum of 25% of the approved allocation in very limited circumstances and on a case-by-case basis. Pre-funding will only be considered for community groups/organisations where a clear need has been identified and is evidenced.

• Funding must comply with State Aid requirements.

• It is the responsibility of the administrators of/body responsible for any other funding scheme or programme to ensure that using this Programme to co-fund a project does not contradict the rules of that other scheme/programme.

Ineligible costs:

The Community Climate Action programme will not fund activities involving:

• Projects that solely benefit individuals

• Teaching/staffing

• Travel and transport costs except in exceptional circumstances

• Equipment, unless directly associated with the project

• Income generating projects

• Overheads, ongoing running costs

• Insurance

• Accommodation and subsistence

• Redundancy costs

• Penalties/interest/bank interest/bank charges

• Loan repayments

• Retrospective costs i.e., expenditure which has taken place prior to approval date of the project

• Legal fees

Please note, this list is not exhaustive

State Aid Requirements:

All expression of interest (application) forms currently require all community groups/organisations to assess whether any funding received for their project would constitute State Aid. There are simple questions that should help community groups/organisations to determine if their project constitutes State Aid. Please contact the Community Climate Action Officer if you require assistance or guidance in relation to State Aid.

Application Process:

Completed Expression of Interest forms (application forms) should be emailed to ccap@wicklowcoco.ie along with any relevant supporting documentation between 9.00am on 6th December 2023 and 5.00pm on 6th March 2024.

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

Evaluation Process:

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. Wicklow County Council reserves the right to withdraw from a project if all requirements are not met within a reasonable period.

Projects must be achievable, relevant, and demonstrate impact. Thought should be given to the potential for replication in other communities or groups in the same locality.

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

Where three quotes for a particular product/service is not possible or is overly burdensome in the case of multiple project components, the requirement for three quotes per item may be waived and the application may be evaluated on the quotes available. Please consult with the Community Climate Action Officer prior to submitting the application.

This programme aims to ensure that projects are selected in a transparent and fair manner, according to clear criteria where due consideration is given to all eligible expressions of interest (applications)..

Selection Criterion	Basis for Assessment
Relevance and Impact	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.
Innovation and Scalability	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.
Value for money	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.

Achievability	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 15 milestones are specified with an explanation of how these will be monitored.
Partnership Approach	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.
Governance Arrangements	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.

Programme Timelines:

Project Milestones	Dates
Open for expression of interest (applications) via email to ccap@wicklowcoco.ie	06/12/2023
Closed for expression of interest (applications) via email to ccap@wicklowcoco.ie	**06/03/2024 at 5.00pm**
Confirmation of Ministerial approved projects	10/07/2024 – 24/07/2024
Contracts in place between Wicklow County Council and Community Groups/Organisations	14/08/2023
First drawdown of prefunding for projects	14/08/2023
First drawdown of vouched expenditure for projects	14/11/2024
Final deadline (end of programme)	14/05/2026

Please contact the Community Climate Action Officer **Julie Sammiller** on:

jsammiller@wicklowcoco.ie / ccap@wicklowcoco.ie or Tel: 087 4084441 for further information.