

Building a Zero Carbon Ireland: 2026 Government Policy Scorecard

Key Findings

In 2022, the Irish Green Building Council (IGBC) published *Building a Zero Carbon Ireland – A Roadmap to decarbonise Ireland's built environment across its whole life cycle*. The roadmap is a living document that is regularly updated to reflect policy and industry developments, as well as societal and economic changes.

In February 2024, the IGBC launched its first **policy scorecard**, a document to track the progress of government and local authorities against the roadmap, and to identify gaps and priorities for government action. This was developed by reviewing key policies at national and local levels, and through extensive stakeholder engagement. Our **second policy scorecard** has followed the same methods while also reflecting on the progress made since 2024.

Key Findings

The Irish government has made progress on policy towards decarbonising the built environment since the publication of our first policy scorecard (2024). The priority now is to move from policy to delivery.



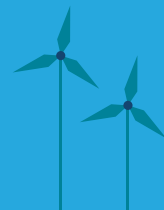
NATIONAL LEVEL

Decarbonisation policy has matured but delivery lags behind

- National decarbonisation policy has become more developed, with many roadmap actions now embedded in government strategies and sectoral frameworks e.g. residential retrofit policy through the *National Residential Retrofit Plan*, the *Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment* guidance on reducing embodied carbon in construction.
- Policy focus has expanded beyond operational carbon to include embodied carbon emissions.
- Despite stronger policies, implementation remains piecemealed and many measures are still in early-stage delivery.
- Industry stakeholders face uncertainty due to limited clarity around implementation timelines e.g. on the introduction of limit values on the Lifecycle Global Warming Potential (GWP) of buildings and Minimum Energy Performance Standards (MEPS) for non-residential buildings.

Decarbonisation funding has expanded but could be more effective

- Government funding for built environment decarbonisation has increased in recent years e.g. Vacancy and dereliction initiatives, low-carbon construction practices (Enterprise Ireland's *Built to Innovate* programme).
- While funding has improved, uptake, delivery and amount of funding remain below the scale required to meet national climate and housing targets.
 - Administrative complexity and structural barriers continue to limit the effectiveness of supports e.g. insufficient energy retrofit grants to support many vulnerable households, including renters, lack of phased or instalment-based grant payments.
- Funding often remains difficult to navigate, particularly for small property owners and retrofit applicants.



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#BUILDING LIFE



Support is needed to help local authorities learn from each other

- Since 2024, local authorities have increased capacity to support delivery of their Local Authority Climate Action Plans 2024–2029.
- Progress varies significantly between local authorities with some emerging as leaders in sustainable development and innovation while others face challenges in progressing climate action solutions.
- Resource limitations, staffing pressures, and competing operational priorities continue to constrain delivery across many local authorities.
- Uneven progress across regions highlights the need for stronger collaboration and knowledge-sharing.
- There is a significant opportunity to support peer learning and scale proven local initiatives across the country. e.g. Waterford City and County Council's Reviving Urban Living project, South Dublin County Council's Timber Frame Housing project.
- A longer-term approach to Local Development plans should improve consistency across the planning system, but it also means that development plans must fully address climate and decarbonisation from the outset.

LOCAL LEVEL

Implementation has begun at local level, but acceleration is needed

- Local authorities are increasingly playing an active role in implementing national decarbonisation policy at regional and local level.
- Early progress is visible through:
 - Initial implementation of Local Authority Climate Action Plans introduced in 2024
 - Greater integration of climate objectives within local planning frameworks
- However, scale and pace of local delivery is still insufficient relative to national climate and built environment targets.
- Increased funding for Decarbonising Zones can expand the impact of local climate projects in the coming years.
- Despite growing local ambition, implementation remains heavily dependent on national government funding, policy direction, and technical guidance, limiting the ability of local authorities to independently scale innovative approaches.

