



Comhairle Cathrach  
Bhaile Átha Cliath  
Dublin City Council

# Towards the Implementation of a Transformative Climate Action Plan in Dublin

**Climate Neutral Dublin 2030  
Local Authority Climate Action Plan 2024 - 2029**

# INTRODUCTION

Dublin City is one of the 112 cities that are part of the EU Mission 100 Climate Neutral and Smart Cities. As part of the Mission, cities develop a Climate Action Plan (CAP) and an Investment Plan to guide the city towards system's change for carbon neutrality by 2030. In the National context, Dublin City Council (DCC) was required to develop a Climate Action Plan that contributes to halving greenhouse gases emissions by 2030 (compared to 2018), and neutrality by 2050 at the latest.

The Plan that was published and adopted by the City Council - Climate Neutral Dublin 2030 - responds to both these asks. It aims to achieve a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and strives for neutrality before 2050.

However, developing a plan is not sufficient to achieve these targets. Whole society behaviour needs to change towards more sustainable lifestyles. To spark (and to nurture) change, systems need to be designed so that sustainable choices are the most convenient options.



# THE PROJECT

In recent years, it has become clear that siloed work is unfit for purpose. Triggering systems change requires, instead, an interdisciplinary and collaborative approach. While DCC staff in charge of the Plan see climate action as an opportunity for more interdisciplinary and proactive ways of working, DCC staff identified several challenges to embracing such an approach. These include:

- Climate action is recognized as a responsibility of the City Council, however, greater clarity is needed on how to weave in to day-to-day tasks and responsibilities.
- Staff are pre-occupied with business as usual and with the public acceptance of transformative policies, they feel time is poor and that they could get overwhelmed by the magnitude of the changes that the net-zero transition entails.
- Day-to-day work practices and organization may hinder the staff's capacity to contribute to the Plan as needed, e.g. very specific key performance indicators leading to a narrow focus and trade-offs between teams' efforts.

The OECD will contribute to enable and build the capacity of DCC to embrace a challenge-led and systemic approach to the CAP implementation, as part of the organisations' efforts to support Governments across the OECD in their transition towards net-zero.



# WHAT IS A CHALLENGE LED APPROACH?

A challenge-led approach is a way of working that is focused on the enabling conditions necessary for cross-sectoral collaboration to address complex societal issues which individual actors are unable to solve on their own. The approach involves defining a shared challenge and establishing processes for creating the enabling conditions necessary for the challenge goal(s) to be achieved. Creating the enabling conditions for challenge achievement involves bringing actors together, mobilising resources, defining sub-targets and monitoring frameworks and, when needed, creating governance structures that are responsible and accountable for the challenge.

A challenge-led approach can be compared to that of an orchestra preparing for a performance. The challenge is the piece that will be performed by the orchestra. The notes and chords are the actions that are taken to achieve the challenge. Learning the notes and practicing is the iterative process of implementing the actions, and identifying who plays when and how. As the implementers of the actions, the musicians need the leadership, support and guidance of the orchestra conductor to achieve their goal(s).

In the context of Climate Neutral Dublin 2030, the challenges can be seen as concrete steps towards the achievement of the Plan's vision.



# HOW WILL A CHALLENGE-LED APPROACH WORK CONCRETELY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CAP?

The first step in the process focuses on the challenge definition and the creation of a challenge Core Team within DCC, via a participatory approach. The challenge Core Team is the “orchestra conductor”, responsible for the day-to-day logistics, coordination and strategy to ensure the challenge achievement. This first step includes: i) the identification of key stakeholders for the challenge definition via tools such as actors’ mapping; ii) the definition of the challenge scope striking a balance between ambition and feasibility; and iii) the mobilisation of resources for establishing a Core Team to run the challenge.

In the second step, key stakeholders (the “musicians”) gather to reflect on the challenge and form ad-hoc Task Forces responsible for advancing the testing of actions and their scale up at a later stage. Workshops with citizens impacted by the challenge will also be organised at this stage.

The analysis carried out in this second step, and the workshops organised, will be guided by the 3 steps of the OECD process on Systems Innovation for Net Zero:

- **envision** Dublin once the challenge has been achieved;
- **understand** why the challenge is still one (using tools such as systems dynamics);
- identify transformative actions to redesign systems and reflect on barriers and opportunities, governance and monitoring mechanisms to enable the conditions for testing and, later on, implementing those actions at scale, so that the challenge can be achieved.

The OECD process builds on a key insight from systems thinking, namely that the results we observe – some of which we may wish to change (e.g. unsustainable levels of emissions, air pollution, increased obesity) – are consequences of the systems in place. Thus, to significantly change those results, systems need to be redesigned. Each of the steps described above uses systems thinking tools to support the identification of transformative policies able to redesign the system structure at the roots of challenges. The

foundations of the Plan – a resilient, resourceful, social and creative Dublin – will also serve as a compass to identify the actions with the most potential to reduce emissions and accelerate the transition towards the CAP’s Vision.

The third step moves into the experimentation phase. The strategies, governance and monitoring mechanisms – initially discussed in the previous step – are refined and expanded, and the actions identified in step 2 are tested via prototypes. The results of these prototypes are monitored to allow learning and improvements.

The “last” step involves the scaling up of the actions that were the most successful in the prototype phase. “Last” is among quotation marks as this is an iterative, rather than a linear, process. Ensuring learning and adaptation throughout the process is a key role of the challenge Core Team, and governance and monitoring frameworks will be designed with this function in mind.

Throughout the process, the challenge Core Team is also responsible for building an ecosystem of actors working in a coordinated manner to trigger systems change, so that the challenge can be achieved. This involves coordination, facilitation, and communication functions.



Each stage is co-designed with actors in the system, from the public and private sectors, the civil society, and academia.



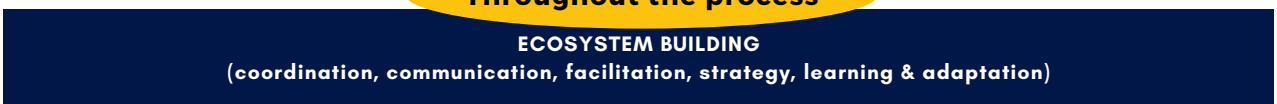
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**Throughout the process**



# WHAT IS THE FIRST CHALLENGE AND WHY WAS IT SELECTED?

Dublin City Council is in the midst of transforming how people move through the city and is striving to ensure that it is sustainable and designed for all ages. With the ambition to pedestrianize the city centre and build 310 kms of cycle paths over the next 6 years, public support and multi-disciplinary collaboration are vital, but challenging to gain and maintain.

In this context Dublin City Council's first challenge focuses on childrens' movement through the city, specifically their ability to move safely whether by walking, cycling wheeling or scooting.

With less than half of school trips done by active travel, allowing children to walk and cycle throughout the city can significantly reduce emissions. The challenge can also bring together efforts from multiple actors and shed light on the impact of mobility on children's health (e.g. via better air quality, reduced obesity thanks to opportunities for physical activity), which can contribute to increasing public support for the on-going transformation.

# WHAT ARE THE OECD PROJECT TIMELINE AND OUTPUTS?

The project will run from October 2023 to December 2024. It will apply steps 1 and 2 to a selected challenge, focused on allowing children to walk and cycle safely in the city, which can lead to reduced emissions, while improving well-being via air quality and health improvements.

## MARCH

### Step 1. Identify the Challenge & Set up the Core Team

- Identification of a first challenge, able to contribute to emission reductions while improving well-being
- Introduction of a challenge-led approach during the CAP launch event organised by DCC on March 6th 2024
- Working sessions with key stakeholders to define and refine the first challenge and identify the challenge's Core Team
- An initial communication plan for the challenge

## SEPTEMBER to DECEMBER

### Step 2. Imagine the Future & Strategize to Get There

- Workshops with key stakeholders based on the OECD process Systems Innovation for Net Zero
- Presentation of key findings and learnings via a public event and a webinar with EU cities