



**Coalition 2030**  
**Submission to the National Economic and Social Council *Shared Island* Consultation:**  
**Climate and Biodiversity Challenges and Opportunities**

**19 March, 2021**

## 1 Introduction

1.1 Coalition 2030 is an alliance of 75 civil society organisations and networks in Ireland<sup>1</sup>. These organisations come from the international development, environment, social inclusion/anti-poverty, trade union and academic sectors. We are committed to upholding Ireland's commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at home in Ireland and in over 50 countries by 2030.

1.2 We commend NESC for its comprehensive analysis of common climate and biodiversity challenges and policy developments in Northern Ireland and Ireland. We welcome in particular the focus on sustainable development, including its relevance to mitigation and adaptation policies and its importance to increasing resilience in the context of Covid-19.

1.3 The main message of this consultation response is that the Sustainable Development Goals uniquely address all five policy challenges raised in NESC's research and constitute a common framework to facilitate progress by administrations, academia and civil society in both jurisdictions. Coalition 2030 has not had an opportunity to undertake a detailed analysis of NESC's research of an integrated and collaborative all-island approach to both climate and biodiversity emergencies. At this stage we would appreciate NESC's consideration of our initial points below and would welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues in more detail at a later date.

1.4 The Coalition supports the recommendations of the Environmental Pillar on the need for improved collaboration in climate and environment policy-making, including in relation to the importance of Good Friday Agreement structures and institutions.

## 2 Priority Areas

*Should one of the five areas identified be prioritised for more detailed consideration in a Shared Island context? If so, which one and why?*

2.1 It is recognised that it is not currently possible for NESC to comprehensively address collaboration in all five noted areas. However, it may be useful to consider which aspects of the five noted areas:

- provide the most opportunity for substantive collaboration in the short to medium-term;
- constitute the greatest risk to vulnerable communities/individuals;
- are interlinked and may allow for an integrated or cross-cutting approach.

2.2 There are several references to such opportunities and risks highlighted in NESC's consultation paper. The issue is that an exclusive prioritisation, i.e. where consideration of one of the five areas is delayed, may not be strategic or satisfactory given the scale of the challenges.

2.3 We would note that consideration of the five areas in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals would allow for an integrated approach given that the SDG framework include targets related to climate mitigation, resilience, environmental protection, agriculture as well as inclusive and participatory decision-making.

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.ireland2030.org/about-us> . Our full membership is available [here](#).

### 3 Additional Areas

*Is there another area, not listed in the five areas identified, that should be considered for further exploration on a Shared Island basis? If so, what is it and why?*

3.1 We strongly support the statements that ‘Sustainable development is an integrated, collaborative challenge that lends itself well to an all-island perspective’ and that ‘the SDGs are unique in that they provide a platform for considering public policy within the context of multiple pillars—the environment, economy, and society—together, underpinned by a partnership approach to policy implementation’. However, we would note that challenges to progress are not limited to environmental sustainable. The failure to integrate targets and indicators across Department plans and strategies, as well as the absence of appropriate governance and accountability measures across Government has prevented substantive progress to date. We would recommend that NESC research addresses in particular constructive approaches to SDG implementation and prioritise differences in SDG progress, as noted in the paper.

### 4 Additional Points of Clarification

*Are there any points of clarification required in this paper, or new issues which should be considered in relation to climate and biodiversity in a Shared Island context?*

4.1 The COVID-19 pandemic is reversing progress made towards the SDGs. Coordinated responses in Ireland and Northern Ireland must mitigate and counteract this trend and connect investment to the SDGs. We welcome NESC’s consideration of the SDGs in relation to Covid impacts and linking of sustainable development with a just recovery. It is important that NESC not only highlights interlinked policy challenges but also addresses specific governance weaknesses. We would recommend that NESC seeks to put forward steps necessary to institute proper accountability and reporting measures specifically on SDG implementation.

4.2 In 2020, Coalition 2030 collaborated with several other civil society organisations to produce “[A Shared Vision for a Just Recovery](#)”. The landmark joint statement endorsed by 14 national coalitions and more than 50 organisations from all sectors of Irish civil society, from trade unions to women’s and youth advocates, to community and homelessness organizations. The joint statement is structured around six key principles:

1. Protect and invest in public services, prioritising public health and wellbeing
2. Invest in people
3. Deliver faster and fairer climate action and restore and protect nature
4. Build solidarity and community across borders
5. Ensure inclusive and participatory decision-making
6. Redefine progress through a focus on wellbeing and sustainable development

The joint statement (which is available [here](#)) sets out the steps necessary for a fair and sustainable recovery from the social and economic shock of the Covid-19 pandemic in the context of these 6 principles. Our vision is for a just recovery in Ireland, the EU and internationally that results in open, fair, equal and healthy societies, flourishing within the ecological limits of our one planet

4.3 As noted in UN analysis, the SDGs are a framework to ensure a transformative recovery from Covid-19 that reduces risk of future crises and brings inclusive and sustainable

development.<sup>2</sup> The objective must be to ensure a green, digital, just and resilient recovery which brings Ireland closer to achieving the SDGs and the Paris Agreement. Ireland's forthcoming National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) must address the economic, social and environmental advantages of a recovery based on SDGs targets and indicators, and the relevance of transformative investments for a just transition for affected communities. NESC research should address effective monitoring systems based on SDG indicators in order to evaluate progress under recovery plans and assess compliance with the minimum shares of expenditure on climate, environmental, social, objectives. NESC research should also address the necessary climate and environmental conditionalities to be incorporated into Covid recovery decisions. These should address the need for transparent assessment of emissions associated with proposed infrastructure during the planning phase and that investment in fossil fuel infrastructure are explicitly excluded.

4.4 As noted in the consultation paper, separate climate legislation to be considered in both jurisdictions constitute a major opportunity to ensure collaboration and integration is integrated into policy-making from the outset. It is considered that NESC examine the relevant bills when available and put forward recommendations on how joint planning and implementation can be enhanced, for example with regard to

- (i) renewable energy and energy efficiency measures, including at household level
- (ii) fossil fuel phase out, including removal of fossil fuel subsidies, removal of supports for fossil gas and ending of investments in fossil gas infrastructure.
- (iii) the mandates and operations of relevant public bodies and semi-state companies in both jurisdictions. The possibility for joint mitigation responses equally arises in the context of new climate action plans and carbon budgets to be given effect through the new legislative proposals.

4.5 Evidently the departure of the UK from the EU, raises considerable risks of divergence across environment, climate and energy policies and this develop merits attention across all priority areas. While failure to align with EU align must equally be considered in the context of energy and decarbonisation policy, we would note that the establishment of the Single Electricity Market constitutes a particularly useful example of a far-sighted collaborative approach to joint challenges. Common legal obligations, governance, reporting and coordination measures taken by both energy regulators in this regard should be examined further.

4.6 It is equally important that risks regarding existing policy incoherence and current lack of progress on existing policy commitments are addressed. This includes where misalignments in industry, infrastructure or supply chains in the agriculture, energy and transport sectors may serve to undermine progress on climate and environmental commitments. To take one example, cross-border trade of prohibited fuels and pressure of certain companies has hindered progress on air pollution.

4.7 In accordance with SDG principles to reach the furthest behind first and to leave no behind, it is important that impacted communities and vulnerable groups are given the opportunity to provide input on Shared Island research and policy proposals. It is also important that there are ongoing processes for engagement in the delivery, monitoring and review of future joint measures or mechanisms by Government. Several of our members

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<sup>2</sup> UN/DESA Policy Brief #84: Achieving SDGs in the wake of COVID-19: Scenarios for policymakers, 31 August 2020 <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-desa-policy-brief-84-achieving-sdgs-in-the-wake-of-covid-19-scenarios-for-policymakers/>  
UN/DESA Policy Brief #81: Impact of COVID-19 on SDG progress: a statistical perspective <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/un-desa-policy-brief-81-impact-of-covid-19-on-sdg-progress-a-statistical-perspective/>

have affiliates, counterpart organisations and links with organisations in Northern Ireland. We would welcome the opportunity to both facilitate engagement with relevant communities/groups and to support collaborative partnerships as part of NESC's research.

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