



**Opening Speech by Chairperson, The Honourable Mary Laffoy,
at the Second Meeting of the Citizens' Assembly on
*How the State can make Ireland a Leader in Tackling Climate
Change***

4 November 2017

Good morning everyone and welcome back to the Grand Hotel in Malahide for what is the ninth meeting of the Citizens' Assembly and our second on *how the State can make Ireland a leader in tackling climate change*. I would like to welcome all of you joining us online, the large numbers of observers present with us today and of course the Members themselves.

This weekend we will complete our consideration of and make recommendations on our third topic which I have just referred to - *how the State can make Ireland a Leader in Tackling Climate Change*. This is in keeping with the process set out in the resolution of the Houses of the Oireachtas.

In the time since we last met, we have witnessed the consequences of climate change on our doorsteps. Three weeks ago, Storm Ophelia swept across the country and exposed our vulnerability to these

national-scale, extreme weather events. It brought into sharp focus much of the material we considered at the last weekend.

Storm Ophelia demonstrated the need to be prepared for the increasing frequency of these occurrences. Linked to this, we must face the challenge before us and meaningfully address the ways in which we can reduce our contributions to climate change.

However, when we look at the scale of climate change on a global level it can appear insurmountable. In the context of our work programme, the crucial phrase from the resolution guiding our discussions is how to *make Ireland a leader* in tackling climate change.

Our goal this weekend is to provide guidance on how to surmount what is within our control, on both a national and individual level, and make Ireland an exemplar to other nations in doing so. We have been charged with the task of offering citizen insight to the Oireachtas and thereby to the Government on feasible ways of addressing this issue that would be likely to have the support of the public and, in turn would allow us to meet our existing international and European obligations.

This task is not quite as easy as it sounds. We have already seen, and will see again today, that innovation and progress in one area can have consequences in other areas, such as competitiveness. Balance must be struck between competing interests and we will touch on this again over the weekend.

Our consideration will conclude with voted recommendations which will indicate support for policies that can be implemented at a national level and adopted as part of our everyday lives.

Ballot Paper

Associated with this, I would like to briefly make reference to the ballot paper which will dominate most of tomorrow's proceedings and is the mechanism by which we formulate recommendations.

In consultation with the Expert Advisory Group, the secretariat prepared a draft ballot paper based on the discussions at the last weekend. We received feedback from the members of the Steering Group on two occasions and it was amended in light of those comments.

The draft was circulated to the Members earlier this week and the secretariat and Expert Advisory Group will continue to work on it throughout the course of the weekend in response to issues as they arise from the Members. Members have been encouraged to provide any feedback or thoughts they may have to the secretariat at any stage over the weekend to aid efficiency of this process. I would gently remind the Members of this and encourage them to do so.

I will provide a detailed explanation of the draft ballot paper tomorrow morning. The Members will then have the opportunity to critically discuss its contents in their roundtables and the wording will be finalised in public session.

Submissions

I want to say something about the submissions the Assembly received on this topic.

1,200 submissions were received from advocacy groups and professionals and academics with experience and expertise on the topic and from individuals with a concern for the environment. The

submissions were of exceptionally high quality, solutions-based and directly responded to the core question in the terms of reference.

I want to reiterate my thanks to all of those who made a submission and engaged with the process. I believe I am right in saying that it is to date the highest level of public engagement on climate change witnessed in an Irish context.

It demonstrates the prevalence of the issue in the minds of the public and the strong desire for action.

In order to make the best possible use of these submissions, the Secretariat has prepared a signpost document to give an overview of the main issues and range of perspectives which emerged.

The signpost document factually summarises the main points emerging from the 153 submissions received from non-governmental organisations, representative/advocacy groups, political parties, commercial entities and academics.

A random sample of 100 of the submissions (approximately 10% of the total number received) was also considered when preparing this signpost document to give Members a wider sense of the types of comments received.

The Members received the document last weekend in order to read and consider it before coming here today.

I must acknowledge that I am aware that many of the Members had already read large numbers of individual submissions received as the publishing of them online began in July. For these Members, the

signpost document is a supplement to the work they have already done on the submissions.

The signpost document is available to view on our website from this morning.

Focus of this weekend's discussions

Finally, I do not propose to describe in detail this weekend's agenda and what each speaker will cover as I will provide those explanations as the day progresses.

Briefly, following on from last weekend's sectoral session on energy and using the same format, today's discussions will focus around two further sectors – transport and agriculture.

In both these instances we will learn about current policies and what our national policies would look like if Ireland was a leader in these areas.

We will briefly look beyond our shores with a session on international perspectives on climate leadership. We will learn about the Danish and Scottish experiences as both Denmark and Scotland are recognised as forerunners in tackling climate change.

In a break with tradition we will hear one final speaker on this topic tomorrow morning before we commence our discussions on the ballot paper - Professor John Fitzgerald, Chair of the Climate Change Advisory Council.

As always, I fully expect that our Members will give the information which they are presented their full attention and will interrogate all of the information they will receive.

Conclusion

Returning to this morning, our first session is a sectoral session specifically on transport.

We begin our first session by looking at the transport sector. We know from the information presented by Laura Burke from the EPA at the first weekend, that in 2015 emissions from transport accounted for almost 20% of total emissions in Ireland. That is why we are looking at the transport sector in some depth today, as addressing emissions in this sector is an important aspect of the required response to climate change.

In feedback from the members at the end of the last weekend, there were a significant number of requests to hear from the state body in charge of transport.

Today we are joined by Anne Graham, CEO of the National Transport Authority. As Anne explains in her paper, the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTAS) has a principal role in directing the national objective to achieve a cost effective emissions reduction pathway. The NTA is a statutory non-commercial body, which operates under the aegis of the Department. Its aims and objectives focus on the development of public transport modes, cycling and walking nationally in order to achieve greater sustainability in transport modes and patterns.

I would like to invite Anne Graham to the podium to begin this weekend's proceedings.

ENDS