

OVER 7,300 SOCIAL HOMES RETROFITTED BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES SINCE 2022

Ireland's local authorities retrofitted more than 7,300 social homes since 2022, saving enough energy to power more than 6,000 households annually, according to the findings of the '2024 Local Government Climate Action Key Performance Indicators' report, which has outlined the key responses of the 31 local authorities to climate change.

The report has tracked how county and city councils in Ireland are successfully implementing climate action measures across housing, transport, business, community engagement and emergency response.

The data reveals that last year alone, 2,634 social homes were retrofitted, bringing the three-year total to 7,362, cutting 29,336 tonnes of CO₂ emissions. Most of those completed last year (93%) achieved a BER rating of B2 or higher,

and 91% were fitted with heat pumps.

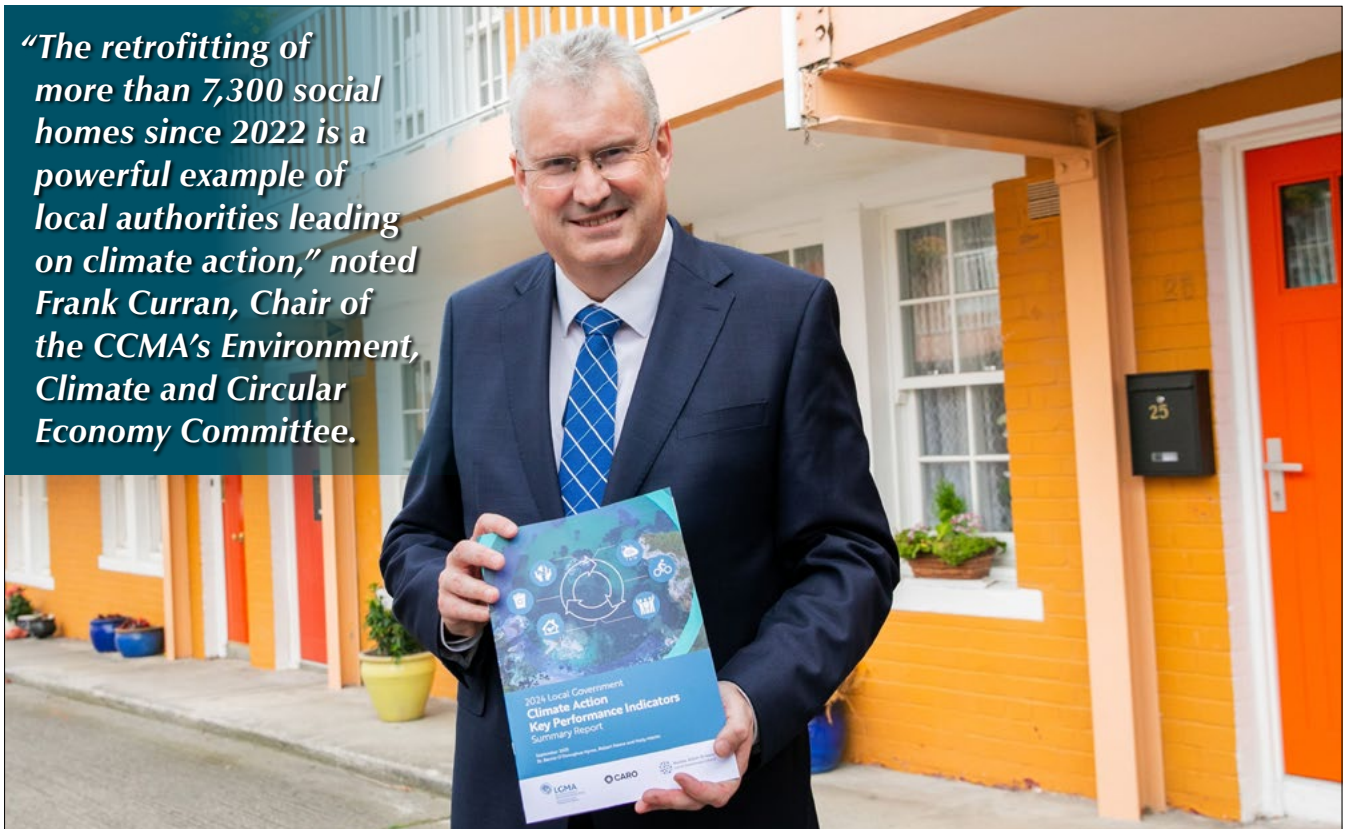
It also shows that 1,012 active travel projects were active or completed in 2024, including 181km of cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, while councils activated 133 Severe Weather Emergency Response Plans last year, with wind (56%) and rain (27%) accounting for most alerts.

Frank Curran, Chair of the County and City Management Association's Environment, Climate and Circular Economy Committee, said that the

retrofitting of more than 7,300 social homes since 2022 is a powerful example of local authorities leading on climate action.

"These upgrades have delivered significant benefits – cutting greenhouse gas emissions, lowering energy bills and improving living conditions. The report illustrates the broad range of activities being carried out by the local government sector and the positive impact these actions are having on addressing this critical issue."

"The retrofitting of more than 7,300 social homes since 2022 is a powerful example of local authorities leading on climate action," noted Frank Curran, Chair of the CCMA's Environment, Climate and Circular Economy Committee.





Data highlights that local authorities reduced their CO₂ emissions by 34% last year, according to Dr Bernie O'Donoghue Hynes, LGMA's Head of Research and lead author of the report.

He noted that using KPIs to monitor progress “helps to track positive impacts and also holds the sector to account as they highlight areas where it is not performing well”.

CLIMATE ACTION OFFICERS

In responding to storms such as Ashley, Bert, Conall and Darragh, which swept across Ireland last year, local authorities are being confronted with more intense weather, according to Frank Curran, who is also Chief Executive of Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown. “Summers are getting warmer, and last year was the world’s hottest on record,” he added.

The report also reveals that all 31 local authorities had Climate Action Officers and Community Climate Action Officers in place by the end of 2024. Dr Bernie O'Donoghue Hynes, Head of Research at the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) and lead author of the report, said that the data highlights that local authorities reduced their CO₂ emissions by 34% last year.

“These officials are ensuring climate actions are integrated within local authorities practice and are driving climate action initiatives across county and city council services. Almost 4,000 climate-related actions have been identified across the 31 authorities.

“By the end of 2024, 178 (5%) were fully completed, 1,152 (29%) were completed but were recurring so commenced again, 1,779 (45%) were in progress, and 842 (21%) had not started.”

CASE STUDY: MEATH'S SUSTAINABLE FASHION DRIVE

Several initiatives and projects have already been rolled out by a number of councils across the country, to coincide with the publication of this climate report.

These include a sustainable fashion drive spearheaded by Meath County Council, which has successfully prevented 1,500 items of clothing going to landfill, and found new wearers during the council-run ‘EcoChic’ initiative.

Green fashion hubs, repair cafés, and community-driven clothing swaps are all now envisaged as part of the council’s strategy to reduce textile waste and promote mindful consumption.

“The production and disposal of this amount of clothes would require 889,000 litres of water and result in 10.5kg of carbon dioxide emissions,” said Marc Cahill of Meath’s Climate

Action and Environment Department.

Launched in April 2025, EcoChic equipped 150 people – from primary school pupils to senior citizens – with sewing skills to mend and extend the life of clothes.

It aimed to reduce textile waste and raise awareness of the impact of fast fashion through clothing swaps, upcycling workshops and information events. “Long term, it would be wonderful to see green fashion hubs or repair cafés established in disused buildings,” noted Marc Cahill.

The EcoChic project, run with assistance from local community groups, concluded in June. Now more sustainable fashion projects are in the pipeline as the council endeavours to meet its Climate Action Plan goals.



Meath County Council’s ‘Eco-Chic’ project provided a sustainable alternative to fast fashion.

CASE STUDY: DONEGAL'S COASTAL RESILIENCE

Donegal County Council is empowering communities across the county to take meaningful climate action, by backing a growing network of initiatives to strengthen coastal resilience. On Fanad Peninsula, Transition Year students from Loreto Community School, Milford and volunteers from Fanad Coastal Group are restoring sand dunes and protecting fragile ecosystems at Ballyhiernan Bay, a sandy beach along a rural stretch of northeast Donegal.



A five-year plan is now in place to extend Donegal's coastal resilience initiative to other beaches in the northeast of the county.

The proactive approach is now laying foundations for long-term environmental stewardship of Donegal's coastline. To protect the dunes, the authority has supported trained volunteers to plant marram grass and install chestnut fencing for the past two summers, with help from the transition year pupils. Before the project got underway volunteers attended a two-day Beach and Dunes for Climate Adaptation training course in 2024.

With the support of Donegal County Council, a five-year plan is now in place to extend these actions to other beaches in the area. The council is helping shape a sustainable future through strategic funding, education, and hands-on support.

Fiona Kelly, Community Climate Action Officer at Donegal County Council, said the course, funded by Pobal and the Department of Rural and Community Development, was about empowering communities to safeguard coastal environments.

"Community groups have been doing so much work, bringing manpower and local contacts. They are very passionate because it is on their doorstep. When they go to these stunning beaches, they can see the fruits of their work," she noted.

CASE STUDY: WESTMEATH'S REGENERATIVE TOURISM

Swapping high-emission activities like peat production to become a leading regenerative tourism destination, Westmeath County Council aims to enhance biodiversity and reduce the negative impact of tourism.

With projects ranging from heritage site upgrades to eco-friendly transport and infrastructure, the council is leading the way, to demonstrate how tourism can benefit both communities and the climate.

Westmeath is one of the Midlands counties to benefit from Fáilte Ireland's €68m Regenerative Tourism and Placemaking Scheme, to protect the region's natural environment, and benefit and enhance its tourism and trails.

Council officials are now working to support local tourist businesses that have received a funding boost for their eco-friendly plans and upgrades ahead of the completion deadline in August 2026.

Fáilte Ireland has also granted financial support to ambitious regenerative tourism projects in Westmeath. These include €3.2m improvements to Athlone Castle, a boardwalk and swimming pool design for Athlone, and the development of a visitor experience masterplan for Belvedere House near Mullingar.

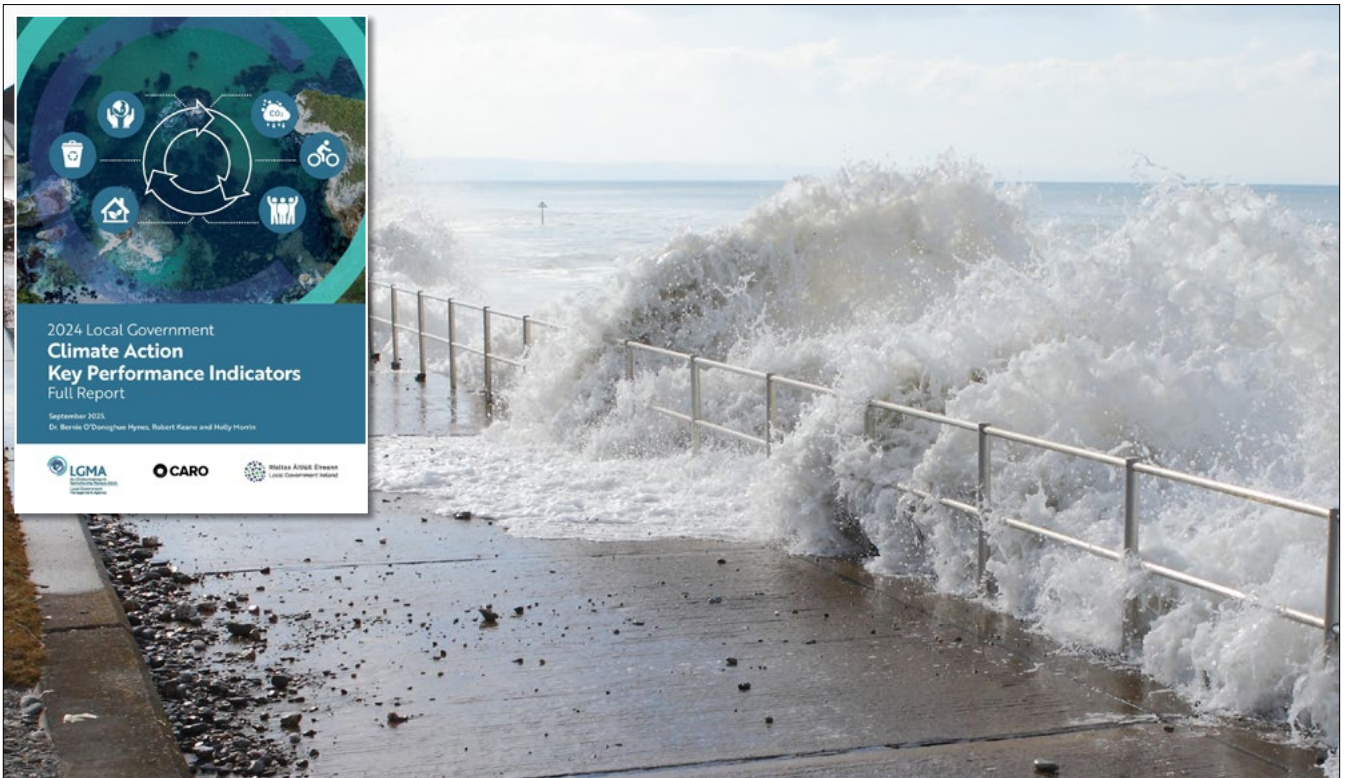
The three-year Regenerative Tourism and Placemaking Scheme, co-funded by the Government and the EU's Just Transition Fund, will help the Midlands become a low-carbon economy after the move from peat production and electricity generation from peat.

Westmeath County Council's Tourism Officer, Una Doris, said the scheme is part of a long-term vision for the county and region to become one of the leading regenerative tourism destinations.

"All the work that we're doing to develop our region for tourism will have a benefit for the natural environment. Years ago, it was all about increasing numbers of visitors. Now, it's about creating this unique destination: how it will benefit local communities, create job opportunities and give people a sense of place and pride in where they live," Una Doris pointed out.



Fáilte Ireland's financial support to regenerative tourism projects in Westmeath, includes the €3.2m improvements to Athlone Castle.



Local Authorities activated 133 Severe Weather Emergency Response Plans last year, in response to several storms which swept across Ireland.

CASE STUDY: TIPPERARY’S NEW ‘MINI FOREST’

In Tipperary, a new ‘mini forest’ of more than 5,000 trees capable of capturing 65 tonnes of carbon every year, is starting to flourish on a local housing estate, just months after the trees were planted.

Tipperary County Council teamed up with volunteers from Thurles, as part of the council’s aim to transform unused public land into thriving green spaces. The group participated in a tree-planting session of over 5,500 saplings on a 2,300 square metre patch of disused public land, supplied by the council.

Part of a nationwide project to plant 100 million native trees, they used the Japanese ‘Miyawaki method’, where trees are planted close together to encourage rapid growth in small areas. Each tree captures an estimated 10-14kg of carbon per year, which means the native forest of 5,500 trees is expected to capture up to 65 tons of carbon per year.

Sharon Scully, District Administrator for the Thurles Municipal District at Tipperary County Council, said the trunks are already acting as a “carbon sink”, absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

She first learned of the not-for-profit ‘100 million Trees Project’ scheme, when it featured on an episode of RTE’s ‘Nationwide’ show. The local authority supplied an area of waste ground next to the recently built Dun Muileann Housing Estate in Thurles.



Tipperary’s new ‘Mini Forest’ will be capable of capturing 65 tonnes of carbon every year.