Friends of the Earth

How to Answer Guide - for the individual climate consultation

You can access the consultation itself at this link

Introduction

This cheat sheet will help you fill out the Government's climate action consultation as an **individual**. The consultation's official name is the *Climate Conversation - Climate Action Plan 2021* and it can be accessed here. (This should not be confused with a different consultation that groups and organisations can submit to - called the Call for Evidence).

Remember, you don't need to be an expert to submit to this consultation! And you can keep your answers short if you're tight on time.

This cheat sheet will go through each question of the consultation in turn. You might like to have the consultation itself open as you read it. The cheat sheet will give you some prompts to help you write a few sentences - or more if you like - for each of the long form answers. And give you some tips on answering the multiple choice questions too.

If you have an important point that you'd like to write about it, but don't see a relevant question on it, you can include it in the very last question - question 3 of the last question. Or feel free to also weave it into your answers elsewhere!

As you answer each section try to keep the following three issues in mind:

1. Emissions Reductions - reducing our dependence on fossil fuels
2. Increasing Biodiversity - supporting nature
3. Social Justice - leaving no-one behind

This is a guide to help people answer the individual climate consultation - not official Friends of the Earth policy.

Good luck with your submission!

Section 1: About you

This is a short section - fill it in with your own personal details!

Section 2: Taking action on climate change

Question 1

This question asks you to rank how serious a problem climate change is on a scale of 1-10. We would recommend ranking climate change as a very serious problem - i.e. giving it a 10 or close to 10 - as we know this issue is a serious problem that needs to be addressed in a time sensitive manner.

Question 2

Question 2 asks you if climate action should be increased or decreased in the 2021 Climate Action Plan - using a multiple choice questionnaire. We know that Ireland's current level of climate action is far, far below what is needed - so we recommend that you vote for a "**big increase in climate action**" here!

Question 3

Question 3 asks you about your own climate action plans for 2021 - again using multiple choice questions. Answer these questions according to your own personal circumstances and plans. For many people, some of the action options in these questions are not currently possible, due to a lack of Government support. Therefore, the "**Want to, not able" answer is a very good answer** to select - **to put pressure on the Government to make climate action easier for everyone.**

People living in rural areas may want to avoid car usage to reduce their climate impact but this is often not possible due to a lack of public transport infrastructure in their area. Similarly, people may wish to reduce heat waste in their homes but may not be able to afford to retrofit their homes to stop heat escaping. We need to put pressure on the Government to give people more support to live in climate friendly ways. Climate action will only be successful on a large scale if

climate friendly options are also the easiest, cheapest options for people to choose. **This makes "Want to, not able" an important answer in this section.**

Question 4

This question gives you a good opportunity to talk about **the need for a systems change approach to addressing the climate crisis.** You could also mention that the list of actions in question 3 above is very weak - we need much deeper, transformative actions to address the climate crisis. In particular, it's concerning that there is no reference to moving away from fossil fuels.

This question is a good place to talk about the need for Government to make it easier for everyone to automatically live climate-friendly lives. To do this we need to make major changes to our economic, social and political systems. For example, you could mention that infinite economic growth is simply not possible on a finite planet - which means that we need to move away from a growth based economic system and use different measures, such as human well being, to measure our success.

You could point out that climate action will only be successful if system change to address structural inequalities takes place - climate policies must correct, rather than reinforce, existing inequalities and injustices. You should write about the need for climate action to be incorporated into all areas of policy, from foreign affairs and international cooperation, to agricultural policies, to the regulation of companies and support for displaced migrant communities here and in the global South.
You could mention that we need more corporate transparency and accountability and better regulation of corporate activity. It is wrong that shareholders have more power than the communities and environment impacted by their business decisions!

You might like to talk about the need for greater Government control over climate related resources - for example you might like to say that the selling off of public assets such as land, forestry estate and utilities must be ended - so that these services, that are closely connected to environmental and energy resources, remain in public ownership.

While answering question four you might also like to talk about the specific actions that are listed in question 3 - saying that you really want to take them but that Government support is essential to make this possible for you - and others. For example, you might say that you would really like to save energy in your home but that the Government needs to provide better grants to make energy-saving retrofitting projects affordable to you and to everyone.

Section 3: Travel

Question 1: As with question 3 in the previous section, answer these multiple choice questions according to your own personal circumstances and plans - and be aware that **"want to not able"** is a good answer to use if you want to put pressure on the Government to become a better a facilitator of climate action for all. For many people, taking the listed actions is not possible without Government support to make these actions easier!

Question 2:

You could use question 2 to talk about the need for major, transformative changes to Ireland's transport system - and how all investment decisions when it comes to transport must be viewed through a climate lens. At the moment there is far too much investment in infrastructure that is bad for the climate - such as road building. This is locking Ireland into climate damaging activities for decades to come and depriving climate friendly transport infrastructure of the funding it needs.

You could write about the need for Ireland's transport system to be transformed so that public transport is a viable option for most or all people. You could write about your dream for a massively improved public transport system that is also friendly to cyclists and walkers. You could also write about how important it is for public transport infrastructure to be accessible to all - especially for disabled people. Government should talk to everyone when they are designing transport systems and infrastructure

You could also point out that simply switching fossil fuel powered cars to electric cars is not a real climate solution as electric cars also come with a host of environmental, human rights and resource constraint issues. And you could write about the need to address Ireland's aviation emissions - pointing out that the vast majority of highly polluting flights are taken by a small percentage of wealthy frequent flyers which is unfair. Government intervention, such as higher taxes for frequent flyers, is needed to address this issue.

You could also point out that SUVs were the second biggest driver of global carbon emissions growth between 2010 and 2018 and that there needs to be a mechanism to promote more sustainable options (you can read more about this here).

Question 3

This a multiple choice question, asking about your level of support for a range of climate actions. We recommend that you choose "strongly support" for most or all of these.

Question 4

Question 4 gives you a chance to talk about the need for a major transformation of Ireland's transport system and the need to apply a "climate test" to all investment decisions. You might

like to expand on some of the suggestions we made for answering question 2 above when answering this question.

Section 4: Shopping, reuse and recycling

Question 1

This is a multiple choice question asking you what you are doing to try and reduce your climate impact from shopping and by reusing and recycling more. It's a good place to show that you are willing to take action yourself - and that you plan to take even more action! There be some actions on the list that you would like to do, but that are currently not possible for you due to lack of Government support or intervention - "want to not able" is a good answer to use in these cases.

Question 2

Question 2 is a great opportunity to talk about Government action that would it easier for you - and others - to reduce your climate impact when shopping and by reusing more.
You might like to talk about the need for Government to intervene so that **everyone** reduces their climate impact when shopping - regardless of whether they care about the environment or not. It's not enough to simply support those who want to take climate action - and who have the time and money to think about making green shopping choices. Instead climate friendly shopping needs to become the new normal, which is affordable, easy and practical for all.

You could also talk about the need to prioritize reuse over recycling - stressing that recycling is not a real solution to the overproduction of single use products and packaging materials - especially those made from plastic. Instead this overproduction needs to be stopped at source - by forcing the companies that make plastics and other single use materials to drastically reduce their output. And by introducing regulations to reduce the amount of single use items and single use packaging that retailers have in their stores.

The Sick of Plastic Ireland campaign has a list of measures, which if implemented, would help reduce Ireland's waste problem. You can read a short blog about them here - you might like to include them in your answer to this question.

Question 3

This is a multiple choice question, asking you to give your level of support for a number of Government actions to reduce the climate impact of shopping. Answer according to your own opinion! We recommend supporting these actions but then writing about why we need more action beyond the actions listed in the next question - i.e. in question 4.

Question 4

You could expand on some of the ideas we mentioned in question 2 above here. In particular, it's important to stress that the Government needs to make climate friendly shopping the new normal - not just an optional choice for those who have the time or money to consciously make environmentally friendly purchases.

Writing about the need for Government to reduce production in the first place - instead of relying on recycling as a "quick fix" - is also important. We know that petrochemical companies that produce plastic from fossil fuel products are banking on increased plastic production to sustain their profits into the future. These companies have huge resources and marketing tools at their disposal - and will aggresively push more and more plastics to the market if Governments don't step in to intervene. In some cases these companies will use recycling campaigns to "green" their image - but in reality their warm words about recycling are being used to help ensure they can keep producing more and more plastic, at great cost to people and planet.

Section 5: Food and food waste

Question 1

This question asks you about actions you might be taking to reduce the climate impact of your food. You may feel that more Government action is needed to make some of these actions possible or affordable for you and others. The "want to not able" action is a good answer to pick in these cases. For example, if the Government provided good support to organic farmers (instead of channelling most agricultural supports into intensive farming) the price of organic food could become more affordable for more people.

Question 2

Like with section 4 above, talking about the need for Government action that results in everybody automatically reducing the climate impact of their food is important here. Our entire food production system needs to be changed - individual behaviour change by a fraction of the population - even if it's a considerable fraction - won't be enough.

We need to look at how we produce food in the first place. Ireland's agriculture sector needs to be supported to diversify away from being predominantly livestock, which will also make it more resilient. Farmers need to be supported to move to low-input, low-intensity agriculture - with fewer livestock numbers. You could talk about the need to cut fertiliser use, pollution and run off from agriculture, which would be better for the health of both people and planet. It's crucial that low input farming, such as organic farming gets strong Government support while supports for commodity exports such as milk powder, cheese and beef needs to be removed. Compensatory measures to facilitate and incentivise herd reductions and diversification in the

beef suckler and finishing sectors are required. Farmers relying on CAP payments for the bulk of their farm incomes should not be financially worse off by implementing herd reductions on a gradual basis.

You could also write about the need to scale up small scale, local food production. For example local, innovative initiatives that shorten, amplify and democratise local food supply chains linking producers to consumers - such as Community Supported Agriculture schemes- should be scaled up.

Stop Climate Chaos, the Environmental Pillar and Sustainable Water Network recently published a report with recommendations on how to transform Ireland's food and agriculture sector to make it more sustainable, resilient and climate friendly. You can read it here - if you'd like more material to shape your answers to this section.

Question 3

Answer these multiple choice questions according to your own opinion!

Question 4

This question give you a good opportunity to talk about the need for systemic, transformational changes to Irish food production and agriculture. You could mention that the actions mentioned in question 3 are welcome but that deeper changes are needed. You could express your concern about the Government's draft AgriFood strategy for 2030, which is entirely inadequate from a climate and environmental perspective - and which lets down small farmers and rural communities.

You might like to expand on some of the suggestions we made in question 2 above - or include some more recommendations from this alternative vision for Irish Agriculture and Food.

You could ask the Government to develop, fund and implement a Just Transition action plan for the agricultural sector to identify and address the specific needs of farmers and communities in rural areas. In developing this plan, emissions reductions and the environmental benefit of diversification options should be assessed alongside the potential economic viability and employment opportunities of diversification strategies. Those affected by policy changes should be involved in identifying sustainable alternatives to business-as-usual, with support and input from the wider community and civil society working collectively toward rapid and fair solutions.

Section 6: Home

Question 1

Answer these multiple choice questions according to your own personal situation. The “want to not able” answer is again important here, as for many people, these actions require Government support to make them feasible.

Question 2

This question gives you a good opportunity to write about how the Government can make the actions listed in question 1 feasible for you. You might also need to talk about the need to make these actions affordable to everyone - including those who are unwaged or on low incomes.

Question 3

Answer these multiple choice questions according to your own opinion - showing your support for actions like this can be important!

Question 4

As with other sections, it’s important to stress here that climate friendly homes need to be become the new normal - and that major Government action is needed to ensure that this happens. Climate proofing Ireland’s homes gives us an important opportunity to address inequities in our society - for example it is crucial that issues like energy poverty are addressed as part of our move to low carbon living. Tailored approaches will be needed to support low-income households in rental accommodation to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, alongside the better regulation of this sector, including a phasing in of minimum BER ratings by 2025. Older local authority housing must be prioritised in large-scale retrofitting plans.

You could also think about community energy schemes here.

Section 7: Local environment and climate action

Question 1

Answer this question according to your own personal situation.

Question 2

This question gives you a great opportunity to write about how your local community climate action activities could be better supported. Don’t be afraid to think big while answering it!

Question 3

Use this question to talk about Government action you would like to see that you were unable to mention elsewhere in the consultation. It's a good place to re emphasise the importance of system change to address the climate and ecological crises - you might like to refer back to the guidelines for answering question 4 in section 2 for some pointers on talking about system change. It's also a good place to talk about biodiversity.

Stop Climate Chaos has produced a detailed guide for organisations and groups that are answering a different climate consultation called the Call for Evidence - you might like to dip into some of its recommendations when answering this final question - you can access this here.

You've reached the end! Well done! Thank you so much for submitting to the climate consultation - your voice is so important! :-)