Draft National Mitigation Plan

A consultation process on climate change mitigation is to be welcomed. The concept of the living document is also welcome.

I have, however, serious reservations about the nature of the current document. The proposed Draft National Mitigation Plan document is in my opinion overly technical. Climate change science is clearly built on the findings of many disciplines within science but these findings have been made clear to the general public in many non-technical publications. (The latest of these might be Climate Change: A Ladybird Expert Book by HRH The Prince of Wales, Tony Juniper and Emily Shuckburgh).

The target audience for Draft National Mitigation Plan is not just the general public but in particular future generations. We cannot consult with the unborn but many of the teenagers in the country today will live their working lives in a climate change world, one where the impacts/scenarios currently estimated for 2050 are in effect. This document needs to be communicating with 14 – 18 year olds in the country. All secondary school students should be engaged in the conversation. What kinds of policies are they happy with, what kind of worlds are they happy to live in and what sacrifices are they willing to make to mitigate climate change?

The Draft National Mitigation Plan should be amended to speak clearly to everyone in the country and this should be done before the proposed broader consultation and conversation. The danger with the current document is that it is overly technical and vague. The document is not user friendly, it is overly technical and lacks any informative illustrations in the form of diagrams/tables, graphs and, charts and case studies. Because of this it excludes many people from the opportunity to contribute to the consultation process. I say this as a lecturer XXXXXXXXXXXXX with thirty years’ experience of teaching. I have deciphered IPCC documentation for students and read many articles in the scientific literature on the topic but I still found the Draft National Mitigation Plan to be a difficult read.

The Draft National Mitigation Plan needs to consider the concept of environmental justice. Many of the global impacts are not relevant to Ireland but that does not mean we should ignore our role in causing climate change.

A clear overview of scenarios for policy development should be presented. These are alluded to in the SEA, where it is again best practice to consider scenarios, but are not mentioned in the policy document.

This policy document is an opening of the discussion at best; it should be redrafted in the light of a meaningful consultation with the public and particularly with the younger members of society.
Where the policy document should be taking us?

1. Clear actions / scenarios with the outcomes of these scenarios.
2. What will Ireland be like in 2050 without action?
3. What would be the impact of moving away from milk and beef production?
   a. Eliminating beef and dairy farming
   b. Maintaining current levels of production
   c. Reduction by 10%
   d. Reduction by 25%
4. Do we want to pay higher carbon taxes
5. Do we want to reduce GHG emissions
6. Should we invest in transport infrastructure that reduces dependence of private cars
7. Should we increase forest cover to 30%
   a. What tree species should we use
8. How much investment should we have in renewables
   a. What forms should renewables take
      i. Wind
      ii. Solar
      iii. Biomass
      iv. Hydro
      v. Tidal
      vi. Geothermal
      vii. An appropriate mix of renewables
9. How should Education for Sustainable Development be incorporated in to national CC policy? The document does not outline the need for concerted educational policy on CC
10. The impacts of climate change for Ireland need to be clearly addressed in the preamble to this document. In addition the impacts on other countries and on developing economies need to be clearly set out. Such an outlining of the reasons for doing this will help the public to prioritise the need for mitigation policies.

The Government needs to take a stand on delivery of mitigation policy in Ireland. The present policy document is vague and the targets set weak. Key sectors Agriculture and Transport need to contribute substantially to the mitigation process and the costs of not taking action in these sectors need to be clearly outlined.

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