

# Decarbonising Dublin Summit

Audience exercise summary



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# Introduction

The very first Decarbonising Dublin Summit took place on Thursday, 14th November 2024 in the Camden Court Hotel.

This event focused solely on the Dublin region and explored the challenges and opportunities for the capital to meet its climate and energy targets towards 2030 and 2050, while highlighting best practice case studies to draw inspiration from.

Organised independently by Dublin's energy agency Codema, the Decarbonising Dublin Summit set out to foster engaging and insightful discussion on how Dublin can become a leading European capital on climate mitigation.





# Overview of audience exercises

To keep the day as interactive and engaging as possible for attendees, a number of audience exercises took place throughout the event, in Sessions 2, 3 and 4, respectively.

A recap of these exercises and their respective session can be found below.



## Session 2

- Postcards from Dublin 2050 visioning exercise



## Session 3

- Interesting and surprising takeaways from panel presentations



## Session 4

- Learnings and inspired actions from the summit



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# Session 2 Exercise: Postcards from Dublin 2050

## Session 2 recap

During Session 2 of the Decarbonising Dublin Summit, we explored the strategic vision for Dublin's future, focusing on what needs to happen by 2050 across various sectors. We began with a community-focused story from Bohemian Football Club, followed by a panel discussion where each speaker shared their vision for Dublin through images and key points. The session then ended with a visioning exercise for attendees to participate in, which is detailed in the following section.

### **Audience exercise**

This audience exercise involved attendees participating in a reflective and interactive audience exercise aimed at envisioning a decarbonised future for Dublin in 2050. The activity was introduced by the session moderator (Jeanne Moore, NESC) and a guiding video was shown for context and instructions. The structure of the exercise is detailed on the next page.





## Structure of audience visioning exercise

### Individual reflection:

- Attendees were asked to imagine life in Dublin in 2050 and write a postcard from the future. This task encouraged participants to creatively describe their vision of a sustainable, decarbonised county. Where needed, Codema staff were present to provide assistance and guidance to ensure attendees felt supported in their reflections.

### Personal reflection on key themes:

- Once the postcards were written, participants were prompted to reflect on their visions and identify what stood out to them. They were asked to consider what aspects of their postcard seemed most important or meaningful, allowing for a moment to consider their hopes and priorities for the future.

### Paired discussion:

- Participants then turned to the person next to them to briefly discuss their postcards. The discussion focused on identifying commonalities between their visions. They were encouraged to explore shared themes, hopes, or ideas, such as more connected communities, better public spaces, or enhanced sustainability measures.

### Collaborative thematic representation:

- Working in pairs, participants were provided with cloud-shaped and leaf-shaped paper. They were instructed to:
  - Choose at least **one shared theme from their visions** (e.g., community connectedness, accessibility, enewable energy, etc.) and write it on the cloud-shaped paper provided.
  - Select **two solutions or actions** they hoped to see implemented by 2050 (e.g., better public transport, safer streets, renewable energy infrastructure). Each solution was written on individual, leaf-shaped paper.

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## Summary of postcard visions for Dublin in 2050

The postcards written during the Decarbonising Dublin Summit envision a future Dublin that is transformed into a greener, more sustainable and community-focused county. The recurring themes and aspirations from these postcards highlight the following:

### Sustainable and green county



- Dublin is described as a county filled with greenery, with more trees, parks, rooftop gardens, and biodiversity. Urban areas are rewilded, and spaces once occupied by cars and roads are reclaimed by nature.
- Green roofs, district heating, and solar panels are common features of buildings, making them energy-efficient and sustainable.

### Car-free and accessible



- The city centre is largely car-free, with streets pedestrianised and cycling infrastructure prominent. Public transport, including underground trams, electric buses, etc. is free, efficient, and widely used.
- The absence of cars has made the city quieter, with cleaner air and safer streets for walking and cycling.

### Local and circular economy



- Communities thrive on locally-sourced food, energy, and resources. People engage with local markets, community gardens, and green spaces.
- Dublin embraces a circular economy with zero-waste practices, widespread recycling, and repurposing of materials.

### Community and liveability



- Dublin in 2050 is described as community-oriented, with inclusive, supportive neighbourhoods where people know and help one another. Social gatherings and festivals are a cornerstone of urban life.
- The county is liveable, offering a mix of relaxation, vibrant public spaces and opportunities for recreation.

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## Summary of postcard visions for Dublin in 2050

### Efficient and clean energy



- Energy comes exclusively from renewable sources like offshore and onshore wind and solar power. District heating schemes utilise waste heat from all available sources.
- Energy-efficient homes and manageable energy bills are standard across the capital.

### Democratic and inclusive systems



- Communities have autonomy, acting as both producers and consumers of local goods and energy. Housing is affordable and plentiful, with housing co-ops providing equitable access to quality homes.
- Dublin is inclusive, with spaces designed for everyone to live and thrive.

### Reduced work and consumerism



- A four-day work week and remote working opportunities allow residents to focus more on their communities, families and leisure activities. People embrace simpler, less consumer-driven lifestyles.

### Improved infrastructure



- Dublin has embraced the 15-minute city concept, with all essential services and amenities accessible within walking or cycling distance. Neighbourhoods are self-sufficient, reducing the need for long commutes.





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## Overall sentiment

The collective vision outlined at the Decarbonising Dublin Summit for Dublin in 2050 was one of optimism and hope. Attendees aspired to see our capital transformed into a liveable, green and vibrant place where sustainability and community are at the heart of everyday life. Attendees envisioned a future where progress is measured not just by technological advancements but by the quality of life, environmental health and the strength of our local communities.

Dear My Past Self, 2050 is great – why you ask? Well, for many reasons. We have dramatically reduced carbon emissions. There is no waste and everything is recycled or repurposed. The parks are great – there are no cars around parks anymore. Buildings are much more energy efficient. Transport is free and clean. You made great choices! Thanks for making these decisions. Life is better!



I wish you could see Dublin how it is now and how it has grown! Literally grown, there is nature everywhere. Dublin from above just looks green. We started working less, consuming less, and communities benefited so much from the extra time. Everything became so rich, so full of life and energy. As we did this, we took space back – more public space, streets for people walking, conversation, life, love, and fun.



## Overall sentiment

Dear In The Past People, We are still here, alive and well. You didn't mess it up. There are much fewer cars on the streets. We have way better public transport; we even have an underground system (fossil-free). The streets are also much cleaner. Mad how people's ideas and attitudes towards waste have changed. We also have much cheaper electricity from offshore wind farms. See you in the bar for a pint to celebrate.



Living in Dublin city now in 2050, it is amazing to walk, live, eat, drink, and socialise in a clean place where you can relax at every corner of the street without a traffic jam next to you.

My love,

Life is good here in Dublin. I have a home that is warm and cosy, and outside my door are neighbours I know and a park where I can walk [my dog]. I cycle to work in the mornings and my colleagues have become friends. I feel connected to a community, to nature, and to myself :)



AI-generated image of how attendees want Dublin to look in 2050

## Output: vision tree

After the audience exercise was complete, Codema staff members collected the common themes from each table (written on cloud cut-outs), along with the actions that attendees at the summit wanted to see produced, created or accomplished in Dublin by 2050 (written on leaf-shaped sticky notes).



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## Common themes

### Community:



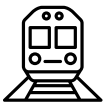
- Strong emphasis on community-building and togetherness.
- Ideas like "Community-friendly," "More connected communities," and "Togetherness" highlight the desire for closer, more cohesive neighbourhoods.

### Clean air



- "Improved air quality" and "Cleaner air for chronic illness" were recurring themes.
- Reflects the aspiration for a healthier urban environment.

### Transport



- "Free public transport," "No cars in city centre," and "Fast trains" underline the focus on sustainable and efficient public transport options.

### Green spaces



- "More green areas," "Green spaces," and "Cleaner streets" signify a desire for greener urban spaces.

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## Common themes (continued)

### Sustainability



- Concepts like "Circular economy," "Sustainable transport," and "Economic system change" reflect a vision of a sustainable and environmentally-conscious future.

### Inclusivity and accessibility



- "Disability-friendly" and "Inclusive city" highlight the need for a more accessible city that caters to diverse needs.

### Renewable energy



- "Solar" and "Renewable energy technologies" suggest a commitment to clean, renewable energy solutions.

### Health and well-being



- "Health and wellness" and "Cleaner environment" focus on improving the quality of life for residents.



## Actions attendees wanted to see created, achieved or accomplished by 2050

The green leaves from the vision tree highlighted actionable steps and aspirations for Dublin in 2050. The main actions identified included:

### **Sustainable transport solutions**

- "No cars in Dublin city" and "Improved public transport infrastructure."
- "Fast trains to every part of Ireland."
- "Shared space/shared infrastructure" and "Electrification of transport."
- "Dedicated cycling and walking lanes."

### **Renewable energy and energy efficiency**

- "District energy" and "Electrification and localisation."
- "Focus on renewable energy sources."
- "100% renewable energy by 2050."
- "Solar and wind energy implementation."

### **Urban greening and biodiversity**

- "Create Dublin as a lung space."
- "More green areas, urban gardens, and pocket forests."
- "Greening public and private spaces for biodiversity."
- "Rewilding projects."

### **Housing and community development**

- "Improved housing infrastructure."
- "Homes for all – affordable and sustainable housing."
- "Flexible shared housing models."
- "Community-led living spaces."



Actions continued...

### **Climate resilience**

- "Flood prevention and resilient infrastructure."
- "Focus on climate justice and equality."
- "Retaining character and sense of place while adapting to change."

### **Circular economy and waste reduction**

- "Waste reduction and circular economy principles."
- "Recycling and repurposing infrastructure improvements."

### **Local food systems**

- "Community-based urban food systems."
- "Encourage local food markets and sustainable agriculture."

### **Policy and governance**

- "Ramping up climate goals for 2030."
- "Legislative support for sustainability and localisation."

These actions reflect a comprehensive and forward-thinking approach to creating a sustainable, equitable, and vibrant Dublin by 2050. They focus on environmental conservation, community resilience, and technological advancements to improve our quality of life.



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# Session 3

## Audience Exercise

### Session 3 recap

Session 3 of the Decarbonising Dublin Summit looked at what is currently happening in Dublin and how we are working towards a vision of a low-carbon (and net-zero) capital across the various sectors. Through panel presentations and a community presentation from Connecting Cabra Sustainable Energy Community, this session invited both speakers and attendees to consider how we can accelerate progress so we can reach our targets, while identifying solutions to challenges currently faced on the ground.

### Audience exercise

During the presentations, attendees were invited to note down:

- What **surprised you the most** from the presentations
- What **interested you the most** from the presentations

Attendees were also invited to note any questions that they had for the session panellists and to put these into the Slido platform.



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## Summary of what most surprised attendees

During Session 3 of the Decarbonising Dublin Summit, participants shared a wide range of insights on the surprises they encountered during the panel presentations. These surprises highlighted various aspects of decarbonisation efforts, public engagement and policy challenges across Dublin.

### Key surprises - infrastructure and technology

- ▶ The Everest map/infographic and its implications for decarbonisation pathways were noted as impactful visual tools.
- ▶ The 90MW heat capacity from the Dublin Waste-to-Energy facility in the Docklands was considered significant for district heating potential.
- ▶ Initiatives like TU Dublin's geothermal project and the Broadmeadow Way initiative showcased innovative opportunities.
- ▶ Despite these advancements, technical and systemic burdens on building owners, such as slow progress in retrofitting and renovations, were deemed surprising and concerning.

### Key surprises - transport and cycling

- ▶ Several comments highlighted disconnects between transport policy and community needs. For instance, a school in Cabra reportedly discouraged cycling, citing safety concerns, and similar safety concerns led to the rejection of a bike library initiative.
- ▶ The slow progress of Bus Connects and local opposition to it was a recurring theme.
- ▶ Concerns were also raised about priorities in transport policy, with questions about whether delaying drivers by five minutes is valued more than pedestrian and cyclist safety.



## Key surprises - energy efficiency and retrofitting

- The challenge of retrofitting residential and commercial buildings was a recurring surprise. It was cited that only 3% of commercial properties are renovated annually, and the current renovation rate is just 1%, with only 0.2% being deep renovations.
- 50% of houses have a BER rating of D or lower, emphasising the scale of the challenge in improving energy efficiency in the residential sector.

## Key surprises - community and public engagement

- Many attendees highlighted the disconnect between policymakers and community needs, with examples like Cabra's flooding and lack of cycle lanes reflecting local frustrations.
- Surprises included the belief that Ireland is unlikely to meet its climate action transport target for 2030, reflecting scepticism and a lack of confidence in current progress.

## Key surprises - policy and governance

- Attendees noted the siloed nature of decarbonisation discussions, calling for more holistic, systemic approaches to climate action.
- The suggestion to amalgamate Dublin's four local authorities into one as a potential solution to improved governance.
- Examples from study visits to other European countries highlighted Dublin's missed opportunities to learn and adopt successful strategies.



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## Summary of what most interested attendees

During the Decarbonising Dublin Summit, attendees expressed significant interest in a variety of topics presented during the panel discussions. The points of interest revealed a focus on actionable strategies, innovative solutions and the importance of integrating decarbonisation into broader social and infrastructure contexts.

### Interests - district heating as a central theme

Attendees were deeply interested in district heating systems and their integration into Dublin's urban landscape:

- ▶ Dublin City Council's work on district heating was highlighted, including nodes and anchor partners identified for these systems.
- ▶ Projects like St James's Hospital redevelopment and local social housing were cited as ideal for district heating.
- ▶ The potential of combining district heating with heat pump strategies was seen as a promising path forward.
- ▶ Integration of district heating infrastructure during road works and construction projects by Dublin City Council was praised as a practical and forward-thinking approach.
- ▶ There was recognition of cultural resistance to district heating and the need to make it more attractive, with attendees emphasising the importance of moving beyond pilot projects to systematic implementation.



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## Interests - localised and community-based approaches

- Cabra was seen as a case study for energy efficiency, local decarbonisation and improving poor BER ratings.
- Attendees emphasised the importance of effective co-design at the local level, with bottom-up approaches being key to success.
- There was enthusiasm for integrating national and local efforts, such as Bus Connects, to ensure alignment with community priorities.

## Interests - policy and infrastructure

- Policies surrounding decarbonisation drew attention, including the Energy Efficiency Directive and the need for systemic approaches to implementation.
- The interaction between local authorities and national policy was seen as critical to success, with calls for regional cooperation.
- Attendees were interested in how to integrate energy projects with other infrastructure efforts, such as using road openings for laying district heating pipes.

## Interests - equity and awareness

- There was significant interest in addressing the lack of public awareness to help householders with home heating and energy efficiency improvements.
- Attendees discussed the need for a "carrot and stick" approach to incentivise energy efficiency measures.
- Attendees were interested in how to ensure decarbonisation benefits communities equitably and effectively.



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## Interests - broader benefits and framing of decarbonisation

- A shift from framing decarbonisation purely in terms of carbon reduction to emphasising health and wellbeing benefits was seen as an important perspective.
- Attendees highlighted the potential to align biodiversity and flood management with decarbonisation goals.

## Interests - active and shared travel

- Attendees supported cycling-focused initiatives and called for safer roads and better cycling infrastructure.
- Ideas like bike share and car share programmes were seen as crucial to reducing emissions, with questions about who would be responsible for their funding and operation.
- School Streets initiatives were also noted as promising for reducing traffic and encouraging active travel among children.

## Interests - challenges in building decarbonisation

- Attendees were struck by the disconnect between BER ratings and true decarbonisation, with less than 10% of homes having heat pumps.
- Interest was expressed in strategies to scale up renovations and retrofits.

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# Session 4 Audience Exercise

## Session 4 recap

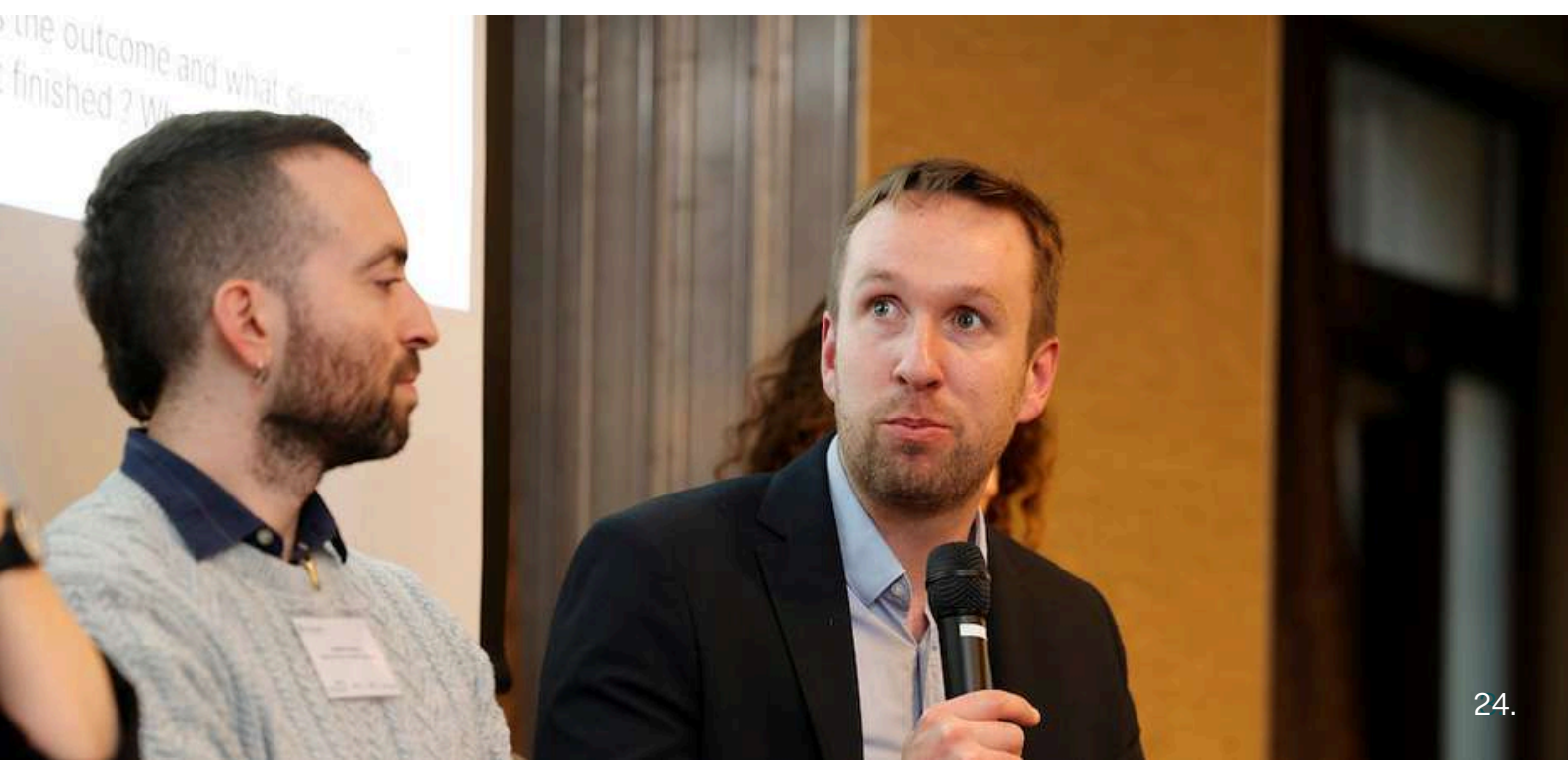
Session 4 highlighted inspirational projects from organisations, communities, and businesses to share knowledge and spark ideas for decarbonisation in Dublin.

### Audience exercise

After the presentations, attendees were asked to note down:

- **One key learning** from attending the Decarbonising Dublin Summit.
- **One main action** they were inspired to take, as a result of attending the summit.

Attendees were also invited to note any questions that they had for the session speakers and to put these into the Slido platform.





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## **Main Learnings from the Decarbonising Dublin Summit**

The points below summarise the main learnings that attendees took away from their experience of attending the Decarbonising Dublin Summit/

### **Community engagement is crucial**

- Decarbonisation depends heavily on community engagement and bottom-up approaches.
- Early, meaningful and participatory stakeholder collaboration is essential for success.
- Empowered communities can address complex issues and provide innovative solutions.
- Engagement needs to move beyond consultation to enable and activate communities.
- Non-technical people can understand technical issues when supported properly.
- Presentations on engagement strategies like the SONI model and Codema's insights on community involvement were inspiring examples.

### **Importance of collaboration and integration**

- Stakeholder engagement should be holistic and collaborative, fostering horizontal sharing and early involvement.
- Integration between energy transition and nature-positive solutions is critical.
- Collaboration needs to include businesses, local authorities and citizens to address challenges collectively.

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## Moving from pilots to systemic action

- Attendees emphasized the need to scale up projects and stop relying on pilots.
- There's no time to delay – rate of change must increase to meet goals.
- Projects like district heating are still in their infancy but must be expanded.

## Bridging technical and human perspectives

- A divide exists between technical solutions and participatory approaches – bridging this gap is essential.
- Decarbonisation needs to be framed as a quality of life conversation (e.g., health, wellbeing) rather than abstract goals like "net-zero."
- Environmental psychology and speaking in human terms can enhance community engagement.

## Governance and systemic change

- Lack of systems thinking and public involvement in decision-making processes was highlighted.
- Local-level engagement must begin at the pre-planning stage for large energy projects.
- Holistic approaches are needed for climate actions and policy co-creation.

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## Passion for action

- The summit highlighted passion and ideas among attendees — there's a need to harness this collective energy for impactful change.
- Everyone has a role to play in social and governance transitions, which are just as important as technical changes.

## Turning insights into action

- Decarbonisation is an opportunity to build sustainable communities.
- Efforts must balance urgency with systemic planning to avoid fragmented approaches.
- Sustainability conversations need to be accessible, connecting to human experiences and local priorities.

In summary, the main learnings that attendees seemed to take away from the summit include a renewed understanding of the critical role of community engagement, collaboration and systemic action in driving decarbonisation forward in Dublin. They emphasised the importance of scaling efforts, integrating diverse perspectives and framing sustainability in ways that resonate with people's lives.



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We don't have time for NOT doing citizen and stakeholder engagement. It's not only about engaging and consulting but making sure that they have the enabling conditions to be empowered and activated.



Decarbonisation is just as much about community engagement as it is about technical implementation.

There's no single solution, it's a combination of different approaches (e.g. district heating, heat pumps, better infrastructure). We're not on track to reach the 2030 goals. We need to act now!



People can handle really technical topics when supported to do so.



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## Actions Attendees Were Inspired to Take

Attendees highlighted the following actions that they were inspired to take, as a result of their attendance at the Decarbonising Dublin Summit.

### Community engagement and collaboration

- ▶▶ Engage early with communities for meaningful and empowering participation.
- ▶▶ Support community action and Sustainable Energy Communities (SECs).
- ▶▶ Collaborate with community groups and organisations to share knowledge, tools, and experiences.
- ▶▶ Facilitate discussions in "safe spaces" to encourage open collaboration.
- ▶▶ Develop and design better consultation processes to avoid stakeholder fatigue.

### District heating and energy solutions

- ▶▶ Actively follow and support district heating projects and their implementation.
- ▶▶ Explore the feasibility of district heating and geothermal solutions for rural areas and urban neighborhoods.
- ▶▶ Align with live district heating projects and collaborate with stakeholders.

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## Holistic and participatory approaches

- Treat stakeholder engagement as a two-way conversation, focusing on empowerment and tangible benefits.
- Connect decarbonisation efforts with quality-of-life improvements (e.g., air quality, economic competitiveness).
- Avoid viewing engagement as a "box-ticking exercise"; instead, co-create systems and projects with communities.

## Leveraging knowledge and networks

- Build capacity in the energy sector to enhance citizen participation.
- Collaborate with local authorities, universities, and organisations like Codema to scale up efforts.
- Study successful projects (e.g., Bohemians' climate justice work, SONI in Northern Ireland) for inspiration.

## Individual and organisational commitments

- Initiate or join local action groups focused on decarbonisation, biodiversity, and wellbeing.
- Research Climate Action Plans, decarbonising zones and similar frameworks to apply locally.
- Continue professional and personal engagement with decarbonisation efforts.

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## Scaling up and breaking silos

- Move from pilot projects to large-scale implementation to prove concepts.
- Break silos across sectors, fostering cross-disciplinary collaboration for systemic change.
- Ensure government accountability and momentum, particularly for district heating rollout.

## Leveraging knowledge and networks

- Explore Bohs' climate justice initiatives and other cooperative models.
- Reflect on community engagement strategies such as the SONI model and their applicability to Dublin.
- Connect with projects that merge energy and nature solutions.

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I have been inspired to reflect more on Sustainable Energy Communities and how they can connect with other community organisations and how there are volunteers who want to act as "links" to other volunteers. Reflect but take action to explore how my volunteering can connect.



I will create or join a local action group to help reduce carbon and increase biodiversity/environment/wellbeing in the community.

Keep working on my relationship-building skills - patience, listening, being present.



Speak about climate change and large-scale interventions in a more holistic way (i.e. economic competitiveness, quality of life, air quality, etc.)





# Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the session speakers and moderators who gave their time and effort to participate at the Decarbonising Dublin Summit.

Many thanks also to our main event sponsor EirGrid and our supporting sponsors TU Dublin, Dublin Waste to Energy and the DeliveREE project; without their support, this event would not have been possible. Similarly to the Codema team who put so much work into planning this event.

Finally, a big thank you to you - the attendee - for being part of the Decarbonising Dublin Summit and we hope to see you again next year!

## Session 1

Donna Gartland, Codema  
(Moderator and Speaker)  
Minister for the Environment,  
Climate and Communications,  
Eamon Ryan TD  
Ciarán Murphy, Codema

## Session 2

Jeanne Moore, NESC (Moderator)  
Katlyen Armstrong, Bohemian FC  
Dr Lorraine D'Arcy, TU Dublin  
Jim Scheer, SEAI  
Liam Ryan, EirGrid  
Marion Jammet, Irish Green  
Building Council  
Helen Shaw, Athena Media

## Session 3:

Daniel Murray, Business Post (Moderator)  
Stephen Cull, Dublin City Council  
David Storey, Fingal County Council  
Dr Ciaran Byrne, SEAI  
Joe Hayden, Codema  
Robert Corrigan, Statkraft Ireland Ltd

## Session 4

Helena Fitzgerald, TU Dublin  
(Moderator)  
Rebekah McCabe, Involve Norther  
Ireland  
Alejandro Gómez, Valencia Clima i  
Energia  
Cillian McMahon, Business in the  
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