



Foras na Gaeilge

Climate Action Plan

Climate Action Roadmap

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Organisational context

Foras na Gaeilge and the Ulster-Scots Agency together comprise the Language Body. The Language Body is one of the implementation bodies established under the British-Irish Agreement Act, 1999 and the North/South (Co-operation) (Northern Ireland) Order 1999. The following are the legislative functions that have been assigned to Foras na Gaeilge:

- Promoting the Irish language.
- Facilitating and encouraging the use of Irish in speech and writing in public and private life in the South and, in the context of Part III of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, in Northern Ireland where there is appropriate demand.
- Advising both administrations, public bodies and other groups in the private and voluntary sectors.
- Undertaking supportive projects, and grant-aiding bodies and groups as considered necessary.
- Undertaking research, promotional campaigns, and public and media relations.
- Developing terminology and dictionaries.
- Supporting Irish-medium education and the teaching of Irish.

Foras na Gaeilge is responsible to the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) and especially to the minister over the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (DTCAGSM) in the Republic of Ireland and the minister over the Department for Communities (DfC) in Northern Ireland.

Foras na Gaeilge has 5 offices throughout the country:

- Amiens Street, Dublin (head office)
- Belfast<sup>1</sup>
- Gaoth Dobhair, Co. Donegal
- Ráth Chairn, Co. Meath
- Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath

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<sup>1</sup> This Roadmap is concerned with the Irish Government jurisdiction only. The lease on the Foras na Gaeilge office in Belfast has expired and the organisation is seeking new accommodation in the city at present. The principles of this Roadmap will be drawn upon as part of that work to ensure that the new office will adhere to the requirements in place in the South.

The fulltime equivalent of the organisation in 2023 was 60.8. Foras na Gaeilge does not own any of the buildings in which it is based, which influences the measures of this action plan.

## 1.2 Background and approach

The Government's Climate Action Plan 2021 sets out several ambitious objectives, including reducing greenhouse gases emissions by 51% by 2030 and the improvement goal aimed at increasing energy efficiencies in the public sector from the aim of 33% by 2020, which existed before, to 50% by 2030.

The Climate Action Roadmap sets out the progress made to date in respect of projects already begun and efforts being made by Foras na Gaeilge to achieve the goals of the Climate Action Plan. Also focused on are future projects planned by Foras na Gaeilge to achieve the goals set out in the Irish Government's Climate Action Plan 2021.

The themes set out in the Climate Action Roadmap are guided by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) guidance document for the Climate Action Plan of which an updated version was published in 2024 (*Public Sector Bodies Climate Action Roadmaps Guidance 2024*).

These are:

- Our People – Leadership and Governance
- Our People - Engaging with our Staff
- Our Targets
- Our Way of Working
- Our Buildings and Vehicles.

## 1.3 The Irish language and climate change

As an organisation, Foras na Gaeilge recognises that there is a link between the promotion of awareness of the environment and the promotion of the Irish language itself as a valuable cultural resource which is vulnerable and under threat. This link is mentioned specifically in our Colmcille programme, which fosters a closer relationship between the Gaelic languages in Ireland, Scotland and the Isle of Man. The Colmcille Strategy illustrates the view that there is a close link between language, culture, heritage and nature. The following references are relevant:

‘...to raise awareness of the natural, physical and cultural environment in which they live, and to sustain the health and wellbeing of the Gaelic languages within that environment’ (page 5).

‘The native minority languages are rooted... in the natural heritage. In Scotland and Ireland, those communities are often based in areas which have special recognition or protection due to their natural heritage. They have a richness to

protect and to share with their own communities and with wider communities. It is sensible that nature is included as part of the cooperation on community and heritage’ (page 10).

The desired outcomes expected from the Colmcille Strategy include:

‘Encourage joint ventures and facilitate partnerships which contribute to relations and awareness of nature and natural heritage’...

‘Ventures which contribute to cooperation on visibility and awareness of the two Gaelic languages, and which contribute to the viability of the environment and the Irish language’ (page 12).

Irish is the working language of Foras na Gaeilge and therefore all of the preparation for this Roadmap was carried out in Irish only and the Green Team works through Irish only. There is no Irish language version available of any of the information documents provided by SEAI, however, or any support services available in Irish for public bodies engaged in this work. This has created considerable additional challenges for us in preparing this Roadmap and we have had to use our own limited internal resources to provide a translation of the main guidance document when SEAI was not willing to do so. As a result of this lack of Irish language support, the graphs used in this Roadmap are in English only.

In light of the statutory role of Foras na Gaeilge to promote the Irish language, and based on our stance that there is a link between the promotion of the language and climate action, this lack of support from the state in our working language, which is the first official language, is a major source of disappointment for us.

#### 1.4 Progress to date

This is a summary of the main climate measures taken by Foras na Gaeilge from the start of 2023. They are further discussed later in this Roadmap:

- Independent external audit of energy use in all offices of the organisation.
- Governance structure in respect of climate action established; Green Team is at work.
- Decision has been made to carry out a survey of staff awareness of climate change and modes of travel to work.
- Green Public Procurement Policy is in place and awareness of same to be further development.
- Work has begun on an application for the Smarter Travel award.

## 2. Our People – Leadership and Governance

It is a requirement in the Climate Action Roadmap that leadership and regulatory structures be established for climate action, that staff be engaged in climate action and that they be appropriately trained.

The Government's Climate Action Plan sets out as follows:

- Establish and resource Green Teams, reporting to senior management, to become integrated drivers of sustainability in every public sector body.
- Nominate a member of the Management Board as the Climate and Sustainability Champion with responsibility for implementing and reporting on the Roadmap.
- Appropriate climate action and sustainability training (technical and behavioural) to be part of staff learning and development strategies.
- Organise staff workshops (at least annually) to engage on climate issues, including decreasing the organisation's carbon footprint

### 2.1 Senior Management Commitment

The Foras na Gaeilge senior management team is committed to executing this Climate Roadmap and to tackling the climate crisis in our own way and to contribute to Ireland's transition to a low carbon sustainable economy.

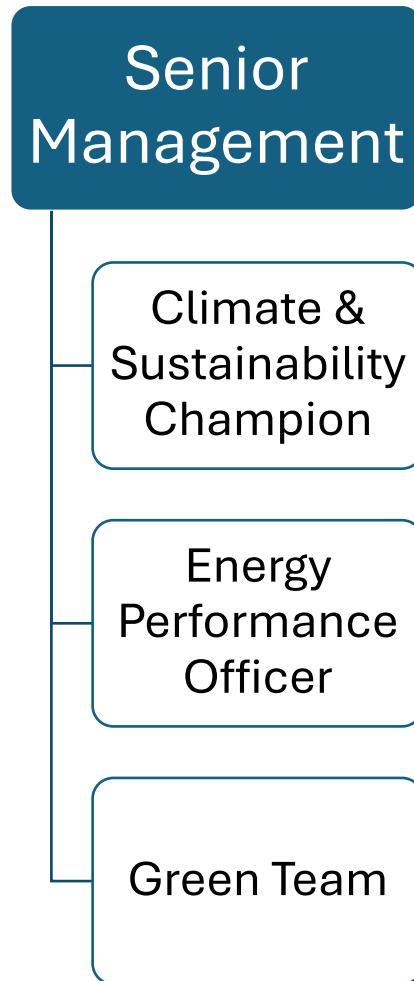
The urgency of climate action is clear, and we recognise our responsibility as an organisation operating in the public sector to align our policies with national and global targets, including the Irish Climate Action Plan and the European Union Green Deal. We aim to integrate climate action into all aspects of our operations, from energy efficiency and waste reduction to sustainable procurement and a fostering a culture of environmental protection among our staff.

We recognise that the climate question and the Irish language question lie naturally together, that our language has developed over centuries alongside our landscape and wildlife in which it exists and that it contains a richness that guides the way for us to spend a life in harmony with nature as our ancestors did.

### 2.2 Climate and Sustainability Champion

A governance structure is being put in place to comply with the requirements in this Roadmap. Shane Ó hEidhin, Director of Corporate Services, has been nominated as Climate and Sustainability Champion in Foras na Gaeilge. Kevin Johnston, Higher Executive Officer for Corporate Planning, has been nominated as Energy Performance Officer.

## 2.3 Governance structure



## 2.4 The Green Team

Although Foras na Gaeilge is a small organisation, we already have a Green Team to promote sustainability. The Green Team meets regularly to discuss the progress and implementation of the Climate Action Plan 2021.

The measures discussed by the Green Team at present include:

*Survey on staff awareness:*

- The Green Team is engaged in discussion on developing a survey to be distributed to the members of staff to assess the awareness of climate action in the organisation. The survey will be based on a model developed by the Department of Transport and will comprise general awareness of various aspects of climate action (e.g. energy use, green procurement, disposal of waste food, water conservation, paper use, one-off usage etc.) and information about travel to the office (e.g. driving versus public transport, facilities for cyclists etc.).

#### *Green Public Procurement:*

- Foras na Gaeilge is implementing a Green Public Procurement Policy (see 5 below) already so that external providers will have a responsibility to have regard to this Roadmap as part of the bidding process for services. That policy covers every aspect of the organisation's purchasing and the Green Team is engaged in discussion of the ways that could be strengthened. For example, a third party's catering bid may be refused if the use of plastic packaging is not reduced and if more food ingredients are not sourced locally. Such a provider may be asked to decrease the percentage of meat products when catering is being arranged for work meetings.

#### *Recycling:*

- The Green Team is to increase recycling practices by carrying out a review of rubbish screening in the offices. This will comprise three rubbish boxes in each office site (rather than two at present), clearer signage in each of the offices and through the Green Public Procurement policy, it will be ensured that sorted rubbish will be treated appropriately when collected from the offices.
- A review will be carried out of the printing of promotional material (leaflets, posters etc.) to try to reduce the use of paper and associated energy.
- An attempt will be made to prevent the use of single-use cups in the office.
- Recommendations will be made on the disposal of old equipment in a more sustainable way. For example, it will be investigated if old computers no longer in use could be gifted to charities.



## 3. Our People - Engaging with our staff

### 3.1 Staff training

Through the survey that the Green Team plans to carry out on awareness of climate action in the organisation, the other greatest training needs of Foras na Gaeilge staff will be identified. We support the acquisition of skills among colleagues in respect of climate action by:

- Recognising relevant training opportunities.
- Funding training if necessary (e.g. Green Public Procurement).

### 3.2 Awareness/workshops

- A special climate change item will be placed on staff meeting and management meeting agendas.
- Work of the Green Team will be reported on at staff days.
- Possibilities will be discussed for developing an electronic staff newsletter to disseminate information on climate change internally.
- Relevant workshops will be regularly organised.

### 3.3 Senior Management Training

- As a result of the duty in the Climate Action Mandate (paragraph 2.5) that organisation leaders be given high level training, the Public Affairs Ireland course *Climate Action Leadership Training* is being taken gradually by the senior management team in 2024. Arrangements are being made to provide the same training to Foras na Gaeilge board members as well.
- In 2024, training was also provided about the Mandate to staff members in the Corporate Planning Division who deal with this Roadmap.

## 4. Our targets

In the Climate Action Plan goals for emissions reduction and energy efficiencies from public bodies are set out:

- Reduce greenhouse gases emissions by 51% by 2030.
- Raise the improvement target aimed at energy efficiency in the public sector from the aim of 33% by 2020, which it previously was, to 50% by 2030.
- Develop a Climate Action Roadmap if none is in place and update it annually.

The average emissions baseline is the 2016-2018 period. The total target for each individual public body is derived as follows:

- 51% reduction in direct fossil fuel related to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (thermal and transport use); plus
- Direct emissions on the supply side in direct CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from electricity related to fossil fuel.

### 4.1 Analysis of carbon emissions

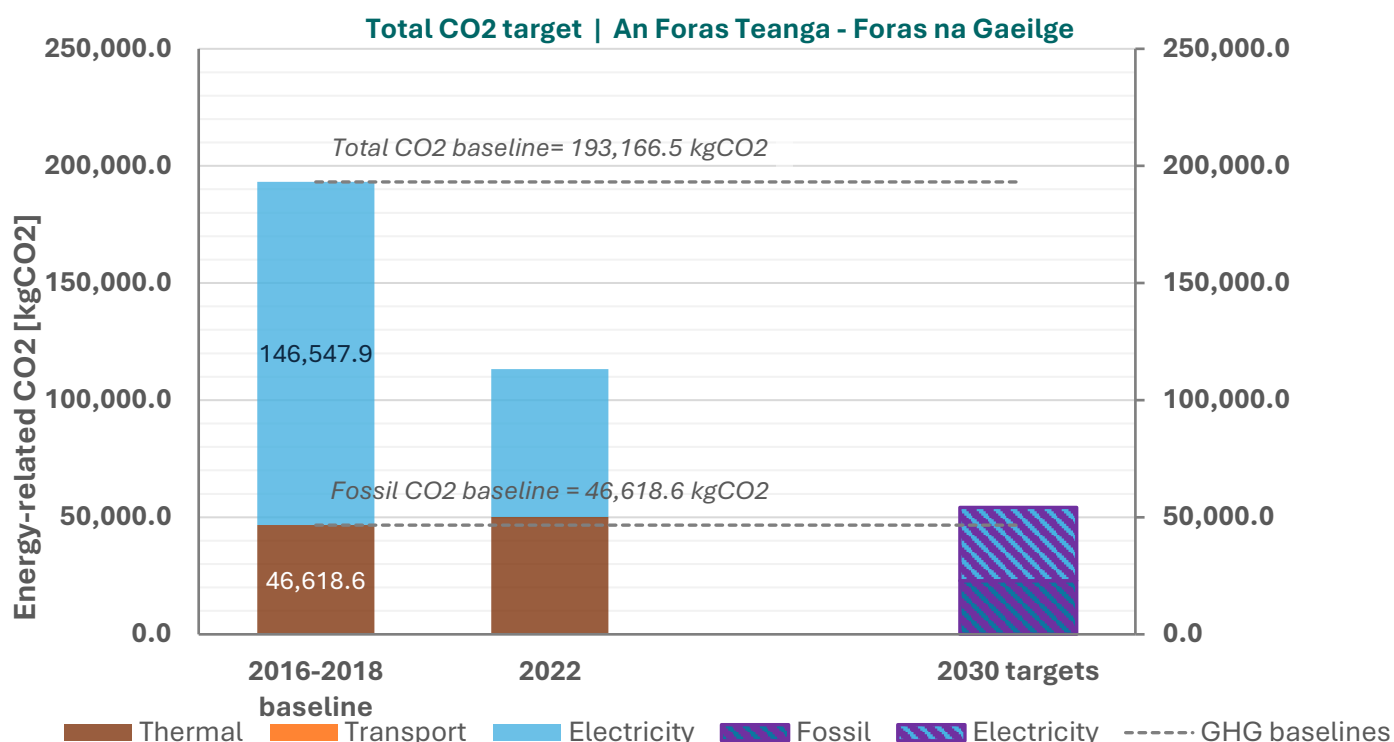
In the analysis carried out by Integrated Engineering Consultancy on 4 Foras na Gaeilge offices in the Republic of Ireland in 2023, it was confirmed that **211,487 kWh** or **44 tons of carbon** could be saved each year by putting in place a series of energy use measures. This equals an annual reduction of 35.9% in energy use (kWh) and an annual reduction of 28% in carbon tons.

## 4.2 Analysis baseline and 2030 projection without any extra actions

In the case of Foras na Gaeilge, our targets are as follows:

- Reduce the organisation's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to 54,238 kgCO<sub>2</sub> by 2030 (**2023 output: 97,839 kgCO<sub>2</sub>**)
- Reduce the organisation's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions related to fossil fuel to 22,843 kgCO<sub>2</sub> (**2023 output: 44,713 kgCO<sub>2</sub>**)

The graph below comes from the 'gap to target' tool from the SEAI monitoring and reporting system.



Foras na Gaeilge changed the location of its head office from Merrion Square to Amiens Street in October 2017. This change of site greatly increased the organisation's energy efficiency, since the Merrion Square office had a non-rating, whereas the new office has a rating of A3. However, the change of site, as well as staff changes in the area of climate in recent years, means that there are gaps in the reporting carried out on Foras na Gaeilge's use of energy during the baseline period 2016-2018. During the period of this Roadmap, we will work on getting more accurate details for the baseline years and the historic outputs will be adjusted or corrected as necessary.

As at the end of quarter 3 2024, the period in which this Roadmap was drafted, there are 69 posts in Foras na Gaeilge, and 59 employees. Although not all 69 posts are permanent, recruitment and retention issues are among the greatest challenges which are a matter of concern to the organisation in the last 5 years. As vacancies are filled, the activities of the organisation will increase, and it is envisaged that emissions will grow accordingly. It is to this end that we use the full-time equivalent as a basis for

comparison when assessing our energy efficiency. The target that the organisation’s energy efficiency will be increased by 50% in comparison with the year 2009 has been achieved by Foras na Gaeilge since 2022.

*This table comes from the SEAI Monitoring and Reporting portal. The line at the bottom of the table shows the progress made by Foras na Gaeilge in regard to the target. The bold type in the same line means that Foras na Gaeilge succeeded in reaching the target in that year.*

Energy	Unit	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total Energy	kWh	841,395	905,997	631,731	644,531	634,170	639,876	643,389	642,608	408,106	749,798	1,075,631	985,450	790,502	464,149	433,794
	<b>FTE</b>	52	52	64	67	63	57	52	58	58	57	56	60	56	61	61
EnPI (Energy Performance Indicator)		16,181	17,423	9,871	9,620	10,066	11,226	12,373	11,079	7,036	13,154	19,208	16,424	14,116	7,609	7,111
Normalised EnPI		100.00	107.68	61.00	59.45	62.21	69.38	76.47	68.47	43.49	81.30	118.71	101.50	87.24	47.03	43.95

Our head office on Amiens Street is the largest building in the organisation, and the greatest number of employees also work there (around two thirds of the full staff). This means that the head office is the most important building as regards fulfilling our energy targets. Gas is used to heat this building, and since we do not have the authority to fundamentally change the heating system without permission of our landlord, we will focus on efforts to put in place amendments to the use of the heating and air conditioning system in it. We will focus on the putting in place the same practices in our Dunshaughlin warehouse, another of our buildings that makes significant use of gas.

### 4.3 Actions and projects needed to reach goals

In 2023, Integrated Engineering Consulting made recommendations for improvement in energy use in Foras na Gaeilge offices. Below is given a summary of the main recommendations (apart from recommendations in connection with installing solar panels which cannot be actioned since Foras na Gaeilge does not own the building).

#### *Amiens Street (head office)*

- Improve energy awareness and repair the heat pump controls.
- The communications room – change the air conditioning unit temperature.
- The communications room – a plug fan to cool the room.
- Repair the light detector outside.
- Replace the boiler with a heat pump.
- Repair the solar thermal system.
- Improve the building’s heat management system.

#### *Ráth Chairn<sup>2</sup>*

- Install a seven day switch for storage heaters.

<sup>2</sup> Since this report was completed, the owner, Údarás na Gaeltachta, has carried out a refurbishment of the office in Ráth Chairn, and there are new possibilities which will contribute to improving our energy efficiency, e.g. linking our part of the office to a new solar panel which has been fitted in the building. These possibilities are being discussed with Údarás na Gaeltachta at present.

### *Dunshaughlin*

- Improve energy awareness – the water heater to be switched off each evening.
- Improve the schedule and temperature of the gas heaters.

### *Gaoth Dobhair*

- Install LED lights.
- Improve the heating system controls.

If these measures were put in place, Integrated Engineering Consultancy estimate that 195,215 kWh of energy and 37.8 tons of carbon would be saved annually.

Foras na Gaeilge does not own any of the offices in which the organisation is operating, therefore there are constraints on us as regards reducing the use of energy, for example by carrying out structural refurbishment, fitting solar panels etc. However, several possible measures are already being discussed by the Green Team:

- Carry out a review of the automatic level of the temperature in the heating and air conditioning system and of the daily schedule which controls the operation of the system. The automatic level is at 21 degrees at present, but 10% in the use of energy would be saved with each degree the temperature would be lowered, which would have major implications for the organisation's carbon emissions.
- Carry out a review of the policy on office equipment left on standby and the use of printers.
- Place a reminder beside lights in rooms not containing automatic lights.
- Develop a more sustainable practice as regards the use of dishwashers in the offices.
- Develop a practice as regards deleting old email messages to save energy on the organisation's servers (see 5.3 below).

## 5. Our Way of Working

The government's Climate Action Plan sets out as follows:

- Report on greenhouse gases emissions and sustainability activities in the organisation's annual report.
- Carry out a review of any paper-based process, and carry out an assessment of the possibilities regarding further digitisation.
- Achieve formal environmental accreditation for large public sector organisations.

### 5.1 Reporting

Foras na Gaeilge reports on greenhouse gases emissions in the organisation's Annual Report. As part of this Roadmap, the following will be reported on as well:

- Implementation of the Climate Action Mandate.
- Report on sustainability action which the organisation has undertaken in the last year.
- Foras na Gaeilge does not need to provide evidence of fulfilling Circular 1/2020 regarding emissions from official air travel.

### 5.2 Energy and environmental management systems

Foras na Gaeilge will develop an energy and environmental management system as part of this Roadmap. The appropriate staff will be trained in EnergyMAP (training and mentoring in energy management).

### 5.3 Digitisation of processes

Foras na Gaeilge will carry out a review of any paper-based processes and the possibility will be discussed of making digitalisation a default arrangement. Paper-based processes will be ended as much as possible. Recycled paper is the default already in place but if paper must be used, it will be ensured that employees are made aware that they should be sparing.

### 5.4 Green Procurement Policy

Foras na Gaeilge will develop the Green Procurement Policy (GPP) based on the directive published by the Environmental Protection Agency (*Green Procurement: Guidance for the Public Sector*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2024). The GPP encompasses all aspects of the organisation's purchasing, including the energy use in connection with information technology needs, for example maintenance of websites and information processing etc.

## 5.5 Remote working

Foras na Gaeilge has a remote working policy in place, and staff are obliged to attend the office at least two days per week. There has therefore been a significant decrease in travel in the case of most of the staff members, and a corresponding decrease in emissions in connection with such activities.

## 6. Our Buildings and Vehicles

The government's Climate Action Plan sets out as follows:

- Create buildings suitable for bicycles for employees and visitors, by putting parking for bicycles in place by 2022.
- Show an up-to-date Energy Efficiency Certificate in all buildings open to the public.
- The public sector will not install a heating system which uses fossil fuels after 2023 unless particular conditions apply.
- Only buy emissions free vehicles.

### 6.1 Vehicles

#### 6.1.1 Alternative car use

Parking spaces for bicycles and showers are available in the Foras na Gaeilge head office basement already, and they are well used. We intend to develop a Transport Plan for the Workplace to encourage employees to use other means of transport rather than individual driving when possible: walking, cycling, public transport, carpooling and reducing trips to the office by working smarter.

Many of the staff already use greener modes of transport but it will be more challenging to change the habit in rural offices as opposed to city offices under our care. As explained at 2.4 above, a comprehensive survey will be carried out among staff seeking information about modes of transport to work in use at present and general awareness of climate matters will be investigated.

Other possible recommendations in the Transport Plan include:

- A series of recommendations about greener travel options which will be continuously publicised through posters, in internal email communications and at staff days.
- Better coordination of our meetings outside of the office so that as many of them as possible will be organised on the same day to avoid extra unnecessary journeys.
- Instead of 3 staff days per year at present, one could be used for organising regional meetings at particular offices, which would reduce travel costs and emissions and enhance relations among staff in those offices.
- Carry out continuous publicity among the staff on the government's Cycle to Work Scheme. Ask Dublin Bikes if a staff membership rate might be available for Foras na Gaeilge employees since there is a bicycle stand near the head office.

As a result of this discussion, Foras na Gaeilge intends to apply for the National Roads Authority's Smarter Travel Mark, which would cover many of the above recommendations. That process was begun in 2024.



### 6.1.2 Gradually end parking

Since 3 out of the 4 offices of Foras na Gaeilge in the Republic of Ireland are based in rural areas, we recognise that it will be very challenging to gradually end parking at those facilities. Research will be carried out on staff parking practices in the 4 offices as part of the awareness survey planned by the Green Team. As a result, it will be possible to identify ways to encourage colleagues to use more sustainable modes of transport when possible, especially at head office where more options are available. The application process for the Smarter Travel Mark will help with that work.

### 6.1.3 Procurement of zero emission vehicles

Foras na Gaeilge owns one vehicle, a van used by Áis, the Book Distribution Agency. When that is to be renewed, it will be ensured that a new vehicle free from emissions will be bought, in accordance with paragraph 4.6 of the 2024 mandate.

## 6.2 Buildings

Display energy certificates must be displayed in buildings greater than 250 m<sup>2</sup> in which there is a public body and where the public visit often. As part of this Roadmap, the Green Team will ensure that there is a Display Energy Certificate (DEC) in each Foras na Gaeilge building that meets the requirement.

### 6.2.1 Fossil fuel heating systems

In line with the Action Plan, procurement and design procedures must be updated to fulfil the requirement that there will be no fossil fuel heating after 2023. As explained above, this involves great challenges since Foras na Gaeilge does not own its buildings but in line with our means and based on the expiry date of leases (see below), we will give precedence to certain offices which depend on a fossil fuel heating system, for example the Gaoth Dobhair office on which the lease is due to expire shortly.

### 6.2.2 Building stock plans

Foras na Gaeilge does not have an estate and property manager and therefore we do not at present have the means to provide a detailed building stock plan. We deal with our requirements in respect of estates gradually in line with our limited means. Climate action was considered already when the head office was transferred in 2017 and the same approach is used in respect of the Belfast office at present, on which our lease has expired. The Belfast office is not under the jurisdiction of this Roadmap but that approach is proof of Foras na Gaeilge's awareness of climate matters when office leases are to be renewed.

In all Foras na Gaeilge offices, we have long-term leases with different landlords in each case. These are the expiry dates of those leases:

- Amiens Street: 2047

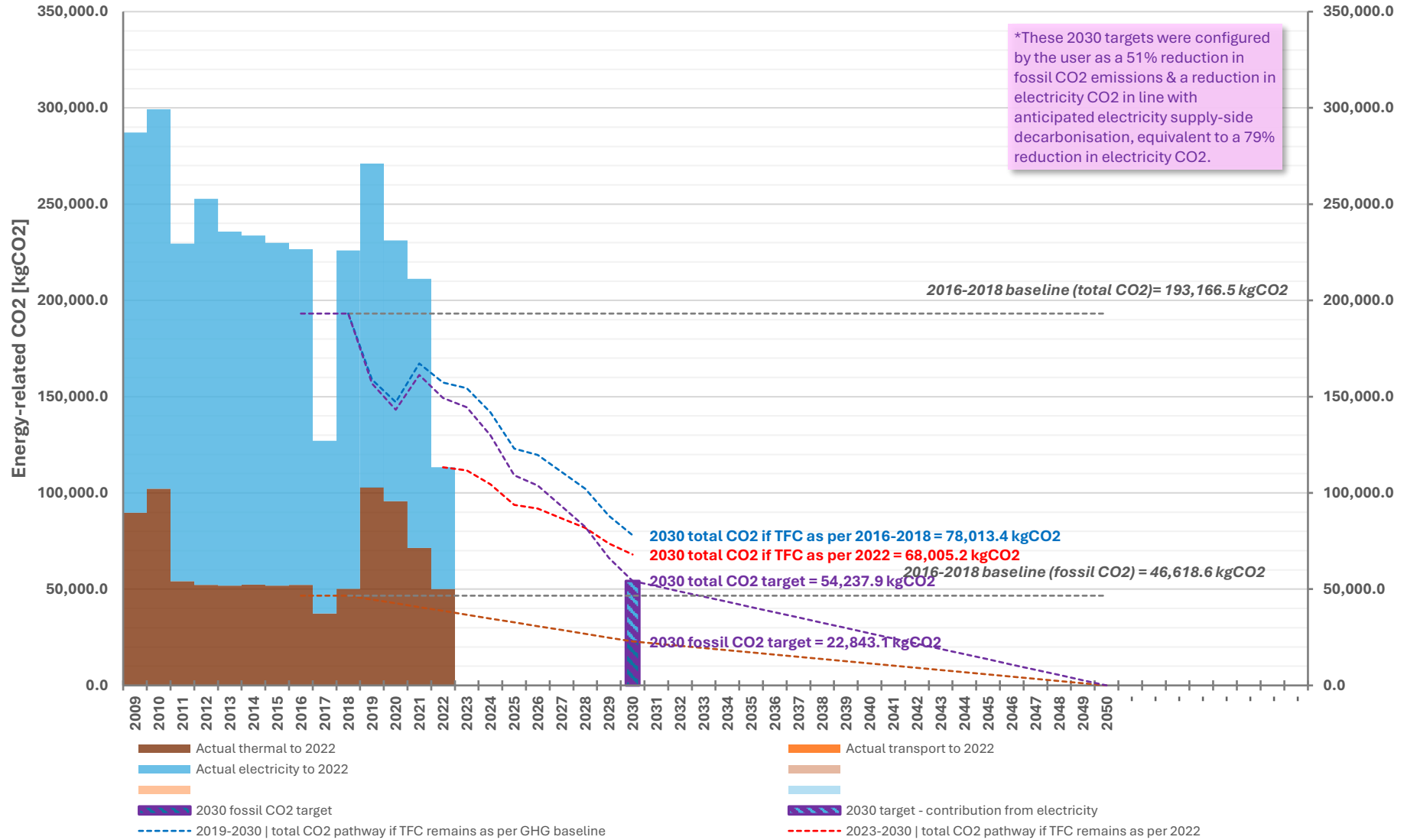
- Ráth Chairn: 2031
- Gaoth Dobhair: 2026
- Dunshaughlin: 2027

The requirements of this Roadmap will be dealt with in line with the means available and precedence will be given to the buildings on which the lease is to soon expire.

In 2024, in light of this Roadmap and based on the continuing maintenance and other requirements in the buildings in which we are based, Foras na Gaeilge has made a business case for an estates programme manager to the sponsoring departments in both governments. This senior role will be vitally important in the implementation of this Roadmap, especially in regard to reducing emissions from fossil fuels.

# Appendix 1: Foras na Gaeilge energy outputs and 2030-2050 projection

## Total CO2 pathways & targets | An Foras Teanga - Foras na Gaeilge



\*These 2030 targets were configured by the user as a 51% reduction in fossil CO2 emissions & a reduction in electricity CO2 in line with anticipated electricity supply-side decarbonisation, equivalent to a 79% reduction in electricity CO2.