

AICBRN launch

Release Date: *Tuesday, November 9, 2021*

Taoiseach Launches All-Island Climate and Biodiversity Research Network to support solutions to avert biodiversity and climate crises

Tuesday, 9 November 2021: Taoiseach Micheál Martin and deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neill, will today launch the All-Island Climate and Biodiversity Research Network (AICBRN) at a pivotal point, with the world having heard the true scale of the global crisis at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP-26) and the UN Biodiversity Conference last month (COP-15).

Following speeches by the Taoiseach and deputy First Minister, researchers from a wide range of disciplines will join in a panel discussion to emphasise the importance of tackling both the climate and biodiversity crises together to find the solutions we need to maintain a liveable planet.

The AICBRN is a researcher-led initiative, bringing together experts from multiple disciplines across the island of Ireland to undertake the research necessary to address the climate and biodiversity emergencies. Effective solutions require sustained collaborative and multidisciplinary research which will deliver a just transition for society which is needed if we are to achieve a sustainable future on the island of Ireland.

Speaking about the launch of AICBRN, Taoiseach Micheál Martin said: "Climate change and the loss of biodiversity is one of the biggest threats facing humanity. It is a crisis and challenge shared by all on this island; it will require collaboration, research and innovation across all sectors of public, private and civil society. We are stronger working on this together.

"The solution-based research of the All-Island Climate and Biodiversity Research Network has never been more critical and I have every confidence in the important work it will undertake."

Deputy First Minister Michelle O'Neill said: "The climate emergency is causing serious harm across the globe. The scale of the challenge is such that a truly international effort is required with ambitious targets. We are not immune to the effects of climate change - across the island, we are facing in to a biodiversity crisis. This is a shared challenge and it calls for shared action.

"For us in government, that means taking the action needed at policy level to implement the measures that will help to achieve our shared goals; and working in partnership with organisations and experts at an operational level to address these challenges and bring about positive change.

"I commend the leadership shown by all those involved in the all-island Network for their efforts to work in partnership to develop solutions that will help tackle this critical issue."

The launch of the Network is very timely given UN COP-26 is making headlines right now and the first part of the UN COP-15 Biodiversity Conference concluded recently

with the Kunming Declaration that “putting biodiversity on a path to recovery is a defining challenge of this decade”. It’s also very timely given that political ambition on climate and biodiversity action is very strong across the shared island, and research is urgently needed to deliver solutions for ambitious climate and biodiversity obligations.

Key aims

Members of the AICBRN are already working together on biodiversity rich renewable energy, low carbon biodiversity friendly agriculture, aspects of the blue economy, sustainable materials required for future infrastructure, nature-focussed solutions for resilient cities and nature-based solutions for climate action, amongst other projects. The network will significantly ramp up collaborative research activity, building on these successful projects, to develop fair and effective solutions to biodiversity and climate challenges across the economy and society.

Switching to a green economy based on biological resources rather than fossil fuels and a circular economy which uses resources efficiently, regenerates value from wastes, and invests in nature will provide significant employment and business opportunities as the world moves rapidly towards carbon neutrality.

The All Island Climate and Biodiversity Network aims to be fully inclusive of all talent across the island of Ireland. No single institution, discipline or project can solve these highly complex challenges alone. It is only by working together across institutions, disciplines and jurisdictions that we can collectively deliver the solutions required.

iCRAG Director Murray Hitzman, one of the co-founders of the group and currently serving on its Internal Steering Committee, said “Establishing the AICBRN is an important step forward for the island. As the Taoiseach said in his introductory remarks for today’s launch, “we are stronger together.” This is definitely true of Ireland’s incredibly diverse and talented research community. Ireland is the perfect place to focus on confronting the climate and biodiversity emergencies because the island is small enough to understand and confront the challenges but also large enough to provide a beacon of hope for the world.”

iCRAG is one of several Science Foundation Ireland Research Centres involved in the Network. The AICBRN is addressing one of iCRAG’s fundamental challenges that of earth system change, by helping to establish “[Observatory Ireland](#)” to document and understand the current state of the environment and its challenges. This will provide the evidence base for developing innovative solutions for climate-related mitigation and adaptation.

Prof Yvonne Buckley, Vice President for Biodiversity and Climate Action at Trinity College Dublin, said:

“The climate and biodiversity crises transcend national, disciplinary and sectoral boundaries. We all live on the same planet and urgently need to fulfil our international commitments to reducing greenhouse gases, while protecting and restoring the ecosystems that sustain our lives, livelihoods and wellbeing. Researchers from different disciplines across both jurisdictions on the island have grasped this challenge and are working together through the All Island Climate and Biodiversity Research Network to find those solutions.”

Prof Derek Jackson, a coastal geoscientist at Ulster University's School of Geography and Environmental Sciences and specialist on climate change impacts on coasts, said:

"There has never been a more important time to pool our expertise and resources to tackle a common problem. Our shared environment is facing unprecedented pressures and the only realistic way of addressing the resulting impacts is to assess issues through joint approaches and mitigation. This network is a sensible conduit through which we can achieve this.

Prof Jenny McKinley, Director of the Centre for GIS and Geomatics in the School of Natural and Built Environment, Queen's University Belfast, said: "Delivering excellence in research and training that brings substantial environmental, societal and economic benefits is at the centre of our ambitious interdisciplinary Network to deliver whole-system solutions. We bring together environmental research with the physical and social sciences, with experts from our committed partners in government, industry, regulators, NGOs and communities across the UK, Ireland and beyond. Together we will co-create, co-deliver and apply, real-world holistic integrated and systemic solutions that achieve results."

Prof Peter Thorne, Director of the ICARUS Climate Research Centre at Maynooth University, and a core writing team member for the upcoming Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Synthesis Report, said:

"My work on the synthesis report has starkly highlighted the real need for diverse expertise and perspectives to be brought together if we are to solve the wickedly complex challenges before us. Failure is not an option and I am excited to see colleagues from across the island stepping up to ensure Irish research plays its part and helps Ireland to respond."

Prof Brian Ó Gallachóir, Director of the SFI MaREI Centre, said: "The Oireachtas has legislated for one of the highest 10 year GHG emissions reduction ambitions in the world. The Northern Ireland Assembly is currently also enacting ambitious climate action legislation. Delivering on this political ambition requires a significant ramp up of research and science, as was the case in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. We are launching this research network to support the Governments in delivering on the shared All-Island ambitions to address climate change and to restore biodiversity."