**The Leaders’ Group on Sustainability messages**

**Overarching message**

The Leaders Group on Sustainability is a coalition of Ireland’s leading organisations that is striving to improve the sustainability of the Irish business sector through sharing best practice and creating new ways of doing business. The Group was founded by sustainable business network Business in the Community Ireland.

The Group is represented by CEOs of Ireland’s top companies, from sectors including energy, telecoms, tech, finance, transport, professional services, pharma, retail and food.

All companies in the Group have the Business Working Responsibly Mark, the NSAI audited standard for CSR and Sustainability and based on ISO 26000. From reviewing the data from the Mark, a number of key sustainability challenges were identified with Transition to a Low Carbon Economy, Social Cohesion and Worker of the Future chosen as the initial three to focus on. UCD is the knowledge partner for the Group.

The Group recognises that to maintain and build Ireland’s reputation as a place to do business, attract top talent and inward investment it must come together to address the most pressing sustainability priorities for the Irish business sector, including:

* Ensuring businesses take the lead in Ireland’s transition to a low carbon economy
* Removing barriers to social inclusion in Irish industry
* Adapting to emerging work practices that will transform Irish industry

**Members of the Group**

Accenture, A&L Goodbody, Arup, Bank of Ireland, Boots, CRH, Dawn Meats, Deloitte, eir, EirGrid, ESB, Fujitsu, Gas Networks Ireland, Janssen, KBC, M&S, Musgrave, Northern Trust, PM Group, PwC, SSE, Sodexo, Transdev, Ulster Bank, Veolia and Vodafone.

**Low Carbon Pledge – key message**

The Leaders Group is supporting Ireland’s business sector in the transition to a low carbon economy by launching the Low Carbon Pledge – the first dedicated pledge generated by Irish business to set industry standards on sustainability and reduce carbon emissions. The Pledge is to reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions intensity by 50% by 2030.

Supporting messages

* Sustainability was identified by the business leaders as the most important issue facing their organisations now and into the future.
* Out of discussions amongst CEOs of Ireland’s leading businesses, the pledge was created to bring as many businesses together to tackle climate change, set standards in sustainability and play a vital role in Ireland’s transition to a low carbon economy.
* The pledge is a commitment for Irish business to invest time and resources into creating a more sustainable operation – by being more energy efficient and reducing carbon emissions.
* As business leaders, we have a responsibility to rise to the climate challenge and be accountable for our actions.
* The Leaders Group believes Irish industry will have a greater impact on sustainability by working together through sharing best practice in energy efficiency and in pooling resources and exchanging data to help us improve our energy usage and that of our clients, supply chain and the communities in which we operate.
* The Pledge commitments will be reviewed annually to ensure continuing relevance to the business sector and also to allow participating companies to learn from their experiences and those of other organisations.
* The Low Carbon Pledge is the first in a suite of actions the Group is examining to address the most pressing sustainability priorities for the Irish business sector.

**Call to action – what is it?**

The Leaders Group on Sustainability has launched a call to action to Irish businesses to promote sustainability in their organisations by incentivising energy efficiency, reducing carbon intensity, and actively collaborating with other businesses to drive improvements.

Supporting messages

* The call to action asks CEOs and senior executives to make sustainability a central priority of their leadership and ensure it is embedded in every business decision.
* The Group is developing a dedicated platform for participating companies to share data and best practice on energy management to drive tangible reductions in carbon emissions.
* The participating companies are hosting information workshops to learn from each other’s successes and challenges in sustainability.
* The Group is promoting a low carbon Ireland, beyond their offices, by working with local community energy schemes developed by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI).
* The Group is working to support the Government and its agencies in helping Ireland achieve the carbon reduction aims set out in The Paris Agreement on climate action.

**Social Cohesion – key message**

**The Leaders Group on Sustainability is working together to remove the barriers to social inclusion in Irish industry by examining how Irish businesses can improve their processes and cultures to attract and retain marginalised and vulnerable people.**

Supporting messages

The Leaders Group recognises its role in supporting individuals and groups in society which are vulnerable to social exclusion.

The Group is examining how businesses can improve their operations and cultures to attract and retain people from vulnerable groups e.g. socio-economic disadvantaged groups; those not in education, employment, or training; and people with disabilities.

Through sharing best practice amongst the group and examining leading research in the area, the group will set out key actions for Irish businesses to improve processes in recruitment, human resources activity, education outreach, employee education and training and community relations to foster a more inclusive work landscape in Ireland.

**Worker of the future – key message**

**The Leaders Group on Sustainability is helping Irish businesses to adapt to emerging work practices that will transform industry and to ensure those changes benefit both employer and employee.**

Supporting messages

Business leaders have a responsibility to ensure workers of the future are not negatively impacted by the evolving nature of the economy where there is a growing emphasis on more flexible and agile work practices like gig working, contract work and automation.

The Group will examine ways of ensuring flexible working arrangements synonymous with the growing gig economy will have balanced benefits for business and society.

The Group will explore opportunities for ensuring irregular part-time workers and temporary workers can stay engaged in a workplace culture and also remain up-skilled in their field.