



Carbon Budget is a 'cynical money-grab'

By **Scott Millar**

ENVIRONMENT Minister **John Gormley** yesterday unveiled his second 'Carbon Budget'.

Among the schemes are a €5million development of cycle lanes in Dublin as well as a €5million pilot project to improve the energy efficiency of homes.

He emphasised that the Government continued to be committed to the completion of public transport projects such as the Metro North and the DART interconnector despite cutbacks elsewhere.

'Key public transport projects are being continued, to ensure continued enhancement of rail services, particularly to support commuters, and giving increased priority to buses,' Mr Gormley said.

He also unveiled a plan to have

one in ten cars powered by electricity by 2020. He added that this would be particularly advantageous because these cars could be recharged at night by electricity generated by wind farms.

'The aim is that Ireland should be among the early movers in exploiting recent international advances in electric vehicle technologies, moving from advanced plug-in hybrid vehicles to full electric vehicles which have no direct CO2 emissions,' Mr Gormley said.

Mr Gormley also outlined a new tax break for employers who wish to purchase bicycles for their employees. This move complements the €3million to be spent on a new Sandycove to Sutton cycle lane on the south Dublin coast as well as €2million to upgrade existing cycle routes in Dublin.

Mr Gormley said he hoped this scheme, along with the new €200 urban parking tax, will see more people cycling to work.

The Minister also had good news on Ireland's **carbon emissions**, which decreased by one per cent during 2007. But Mr Gormley still committed Ireland to purchasing 4.6million tonnes of carbon credits per year, using scarce taxpayers' money, between 2008 and 2012.

The lack of details and initiatives in the Green leader's budget was mocked by opposition parties. Fine Gael environment spokesman **Phil Hogan** said: 'The so called Carbon Budget presented by Minister Gormley today is an opportunistic and damaging money-grab from the commuters of Ireland that will have little effect on Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions.'

He added; 'The levy of €200 for car parking spaces for all workers in urban areas will not change driving habits and represents another unavoidable charge on commuting.'

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Picture courtesy of RTE

So smug: Energy Minister Eamon Ryan and Environment Minister **John Gormley** in the Dáil on Budget day