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Cost of living challenges impact consumer appetite for sustainable action – AIB Sustainability Survey

- **Four in ten people feel sustainability is important to them, down from six in ten in 2019**
- **Using renewable electricity sources and reducing flights most popular high impact actions**

Cost of living challenges and the energy crisis are impacting consumers' appetite for taking greater sustainable action in their personal lives, yet people remain positive toward more sustainable living, particularly in relation to windfarms, electric vehicles, recycling, reducing food waste and plastic use according to the AIB Sustainability Survey, carried out by Amárach.

More than half (56 per cent) of those surveyed mentioned cost as the first barrier preventing people from making more sustainable changes in their personal lives. Only four in ten consumers feel sustainability is really important to them in their daily lives, the lowest level recorded since 2019*, when it was six in ten. Only three in ten say they take meaningful actions to live sustainably, with those over 55 most likely to do so. More than 40 per cent of those over 55 state they take meaningful action to live sustainably compared with 20 per cent in the 18-34 age group and 30 per cent in the 35 to 54 group.

Using renewable electricity sources and reducing flights are the most popular high impact actions taken to reduce CO2 emissions, with 39 per cent saying they are already using electricity produced from renewable energy and 33 per cent saying they are already taking one flight less a year.

Among the high impact sustainability changes, giving up meat or cars are the least considered actions with 60 per cent saying they would not consider switching to a vegan or vegetarian diet, and 60 per cent saying they would not consider living without a car.

However, just over half of those surveyed supported EU plans to stop the production of petrol and diesel cars by 2035. Separately, 46 per cent agreed that they would be driving less by 2030, while 41 per cent agreed they would be switching to electric vehicles by 2030. The research found that almost nine in ten have at least one car in their household. Among those who do, one fifth already have an electric or hybrid vehicle.

Seventy per cent are recycling or composting everything they can, 62 per cent are using more energy efficient appliances, while 61 per cent believe their homes would need a deep retrofit to significantly improve its energy efficiency, according to the research.

Going green can deliver substantial savings

AIB Chief Sustainability and Corporate Affairs Officer Mary Whitelaw said: “It is heartening to see that this new research shows that consumers still have a positive view of sustainability despite cost of living challenges, particularly the cost of energy. It is also positive to see that 15 per cent of consumers are planning to take out a loan related to a green product over the next 12 months. At AIB we support our personal customers by offering lower-cost green mortgages for customers buying energy efficient homes with a Building Energy Rating of B3 or higher. This helps them save on their energy bills and reduce their loan repayments, while also saving the planet. We also offer discounted green personal loans to fund green actions like the installation of solar panels, the provision of insulation, or the purchase of an electric vehicle.”

Amárach Chairman Gerard O’Neill said: “Consumers recognise the importance of environmentally conscious purchasing decisions and are knowledgeable about sustainability related terms. Many recognise that they have done the ‘easy stuff’ such as recycling and using energy efficient bulbs, but now have to consider the ‘harder stuff’ such as insulation, greener transport and solar panels. It is worth noting this research shows there is widespread belief among consumers about the need to retrofit to improve the energy efficiency of their home, but most are unaware of schemes available and only a minority of those have checked if they qualify.”

The survey also found the view on who has most responsibility for reducing the impact of climate change is evolving. 72 per cent of people included the government in their top three most responsible for driving behaviour change to tackle the environmental crisis, up 9 points on 2021, 57 per cent included individuals, down from 61 per cent, while 49 per cent included big business in their top three most responsible, unchanged on 2021.

Notes to Editors:

*The research findings are based on a nationally representative sample of 1,000 adults aged over 18 in May 2023. This is the fifth AIB Sustainability Survey carried out by Amárach for AIB. The previous waves of research were carried out in June 2021; December 2020; June 2020 and December 2019.

** Details of AIB’s discounted green loans are available [here](#), while details of AIB’s discounted green mortgage are available [here](#).