

September 12th, 2025

NOTICE OF MEETING

You are requested to attend a meeting of the

Mid and East Antrim Environment and Economy Committee

to be held on **Monday, 15th September 2025 at 6:30 pm** in **Council Chamber, The Braid,
1-29 Bridge Street, Ballymena and via remote access.**

Yours sincerely



Valerie Watts
Interim Chief Executive, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

Agenda

1 NOTICE OF MEETING

2 APOLOGIES

3 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Members and Officers were invited to declare any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests, including gifts and hospitality, they may have in respect of items on this Agenda.

4 ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION / DECISION

4.1 DfC, DfI and DAERA Public Consultation on Shaping Sustainable Places - circulated

 *DfC, DfI and DAERA Public Consultation on Shaping Sustainable Places.pdf* *Page 1*

 *Appendix 1 DfC, DfI and DAERA Public Consultation on Shaping Sustainable Places.pdf* *Page 6*

 *Appendix 2 MEABC Draft Consultation Response.pdf* *Page 43*

4.2 DAERA Draft NI Climate Action Plan 2023-27 Consultation - circulated

 *DAERA (draft) NI Climate Action Plan 2023-27 Consultation Report - Sept 2025 (Final).pdf* *Page 55*

 *Appendix 1 - Draft Climate Action Plan 2023-2027.pdf* *Page 59*

 *Appendix 2 - Consultation Document.pdf* *Page 339*

 *Appendix 3 - Draft MEABC Consultation Response.pdf* *Page 393*

4.3 DAERA NI Plastic Pollution Plan Consultation – circulated

 *DAERA Plastic Pollution Plan - Consultation Report - Sept 2025 (Final).pdf* *Page 422*

 *Appendix 1 - Consultation on the Plastic Pollution Plan for Northern Ireland.pdf* *Page 426*

 *Appendix 2 - MEA draft response.pdf* *Page 455*

4.4 Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Update Report – circulated

 <i>Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Update Report - Sept 2025 (Final).pdf</i>	<i>Page 459</i>
 <i>Appendix 1 - Summary Overview of Plans action progress 2024_25.pdf</i>	<i>Page 470</i>
 <i>Appendix 2 - Climate and Sustainability Action Plan 2024-25 Update.pdf</i>	<i>Page 472</i>
 <i>Appendix 3 - MEA Adaptation Plan 2024-25 Update.pdf</i>	<i>Page 504</i>

4.5 Northern Ireland Local Authority Municipal Waste Management Statistics – circulated

 <i>NI Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste Mge Statistics Jan - Mar 2025 (Final).pdf</i>	<i>Page 514</i>
 <i>Appendix 1 Waste_Infographic Jan - Mar 2025.pdf</i>	<i>Page 518</i>

4.6 Reservoirs Act Consultation Response on Proposals for a Grant Scheme – circulated

 <i>DFI Reservoirs Grant Proposal Scheme - Consultation Report - Sept 2025 (Final).pdf</i>	<i>Page 519</i>
 <i>Appendix 1 Initial-supervision-and-inspection-requirements-of-reservoirs-act-consultation.pdf</i>	<i>Page 523</i>
 <i>Appendix 2 Equality-screening-form-proposed-grants-reservoirs-act.pdf</i>	<i>Page 543</i>
 <i>Appendix 3 Reservoirs Consultation response.pdf</i>	<i>Page 567</i>

4.7 Greenisland Recreational Track – circulated

 <i>Report Committee Greenisland Recreational Facility - outcome of consultaton September 2025 .pdf</i>	<i>Page 571</i>
 <i>Appendix 1 - Running Track Consultation Plan.pdf</i>	<i>Page 574</i>
 <i>Appendix 2 - Proposed Site Layout.pdf</i>	<i>Page 577</i>
 <i>Appendix 3 - Greenisland Recreational Track Consultation Report July 2025 draft.pdf</i>	<i>Page 578</i>

4.8 Operations Sub Committee Amendments to Terms of Reference – circulated

 <i>Operations Sub Committee.pdf</i>	<i>Page 595</i>
 <i>App 1 - Operations Sub-Committee ToR - amended - (Final).pdf</i>	<i>Page 597</i>

4.9 Economic Development Activity Report - circulated

📄 *Economic Development Activity Report - 15 September 2025.pdf*

Page 602

4.10 MEANZ Business Update - circulated

📄 *MEANZ Business Update.pdf*

Page 610

4.11 MTF Network Update - circulated

📄 *MTF Network Update.pdf*

Page 616

4.12 Hospitality World of Work Programme - circulated

📄 *Hospitality World of Work Programme.pdf*

Page 620

4.13 Retail Small Grants Programme - circulated

📄 *Retail Small Grants Programme.pdf*

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5 ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

6 TABLED QUESTIONS

Closed Committee - In accordance with Council policy, representatives of the Press will not be in attendance for this section of the Meeting.

7 ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION / DECISION – CLOSED COMMITTEE

7.1 Ballymena Showgrounds Main Arena - New 3G Provision - circulated (12.09.25)

📄 *Ballymena Showgrounds Main Arena New 3G Provision.pdf*

Not included

📄 *Appendix 1 - Letter to MEA re.Showgrounds 31.07.2025.pdf*

Not included

7.2 Carrickfergus Visitor Centre Feasibility Report - circulated

📄 *Visitor Centre Report.pdf*

Not included

📄 *Feasibility Report Carrickfergus Visitor Centre 100725.pdf*

Not included

7.3 LEP Update - circulated (12.09.25)

 *Local Economic Partnership.pdf*

Not included

 *lep appendix.pdf*

Not included

8 ITEMS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL – CLOSED COMMITTEE

Open Committee

9 FORWARD PLAN FOR ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY COMMITTEE - circulated (10.09.25)

 *EE Committee - Forward Plan Template v20.pdf*

Page 627

Council/Committee:	Environment and Economy
Date:	15 September 2025
Report Title:	DfC, DfI and DAERA Public Consultation on Shaping Sustainable Places.
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Eamon McMullan, Capital Regeneration Manager
Approver:	John McVeigh, Acting Director of Community

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This report is to update Elected Members on the DfC, DfI and DAERA Public Consultation on the new Shaping Sustainable Places Fund and to seek approval for the draft response to the Consultation.

2. Background

- 2.1. Shaping Sustainable Places is a joint initiative between the Department of Communities, (DfC), Department of Infrastructure (DfI) and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA). It aims to create a flagship programme of interventions to arrest the decline in villages, towns and city centres.
- 2.2. The Shaping Sustainable Places consultation documentation proposes the foundation for new ways of delivering regeneration outcomes. This includes the engagement of communities at the earliest stages of planning for change and developing solutions to specific place-based challenges through funding local physical and infrastructure interventions.
- 2.3. It is proposed that the three departments will co-fund the Programme over a 10-year period, contributing a minimum of £5m each per year for investment in capital projects.
- 2.4. A further minimum contribution of 10% (£15m) will be requested from Local Councils, creating an initial fund of £165m. The proposals include the potential for scalability to utilise additional funds for regeneration if they become available.
- 2.5. In June 2025, a consultation process was initiated jointly by the DfC, DfI and DAERA. The consultation document sets out draft proposals to test the new approach and to invite fresh insights and perspectives. The Departments aim to develop a final programme for Ministerial and Executive Committee consideration by the end of 2025.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

A. How Shaping Sustainable Places Contributes to the Programme for Government

- 3.1. The Programme for Government Framework outlines missions focused on People, Planet, and Prosperity, supported by key priorities such as planning policy, public finance, and local government reform.
- 3.2. Shaping Sustainable Places contributes to these goals by promoting economic growth, sustainable housing, safer communities, and public service transformation, while also supporting climate action. solutions.

B. What is the Vision Behind Shaping Sustainable Places?

- 3.3. The Shaping Sustainable Places consultation document sets out the vision of the proposed strategy as "To work with communities to address local challenges through funding interventions that deliver sustainable, people centered places providing economic, social and environmental outcomes". The accompanying overarching objectives proposed for the programme are:
 - To improve the places, we love by ensuring that they are sustainable into the future; to create places where people want to live, work, invest and visit.
 - To prioritise the safety, health and wellbeing of people through regeneration and creation of people-centred accessible and inclusive places.
 - Shaping places to become more resilient to the risks and impacts of climate change.
 - By working collaboratively across departments and through Local Councils, we will be able to deliver a programme that is greater than the sum of its parts.
- 3.4. It is proposed that Shaping Sustainable Places interventions could include, but not be limited to, those that:
 - Improve the quality and accessibility of footpaths and streetscapes.
 - Change streetscapes to create more room for pedestrians.
 - Improve streetlighting.
 - Improve signage.
 - Create or grow green spaces.
 - Provide shop front grants to local businesses.
 - Provide grants to bring buildings back into use.
 - Provide to create village, town or city-centre housing in mixed-use developments.

- Deliver public art.
- Provide grants which enable third party or private sector investment.
- Building infrastructure that is more resilient to the effects of climate change.
- Restore heritage assets.

C. What Feedback is being Sought?

- 3.5. A public consultation has been issued which seeks feedback on the proposed objectives, intervention types, and delivery methodology as set out, and the response format consists of a survey containing 37 questions utilizing a multiple-choice response format. This is attached at **Appendix 1**. This provides limited opportunity for substantive responses to the questions raised.
- 3.6. As a public consultation, not all questions are directly relevant to Council, and are aimed at gathering feedback from wider stakeholders including the public. Most questions require a response for a defined list of 5 options from Strongly Agree through to Strongly Disagree and some questions offering the opportunity for feedback.

D. Council's Suggested Response

- 3.7. Council's suggested response is set out in **Appendix 2** for Elected Members consideration.
- 3.8. Overall, Council officers are supportive of the vision, aims and objectives as set out in the Shaping Sustainable Places consultation document, in particular a move towards a longer-term funding settlement and the additional certainty that this could provide in identifying and developing projects in the knowledge that the necessary funding will be in place.
- 3.9. Officers have, however, identified an ongoing need to support short-term interventions, alongside the delivery of longer-term capital regeneration investments.
- 3.10. It is also welcome to note that the proposed programme will re-introduce "mainstream" support for regeneration in rural settlements with the same certainty as for our town centres.
- 3.11. We also welcome that a partnership approach and the development of Shaping Sustainable Places plans are identified as integral into the programme design but have advised that sufficient time and capacity



**Mid & East
Antrim**
Borough Council

building support should be provided to ensure meaningful stakeholder engagement and ownership of any plans created.

- 3.12. The document proposes using the "Living High Streets" methodology as a template for this process, but readily acknowledges the time, resourcing, and engagement challenges that such an approach presents. We have also advised that any plans currently in place should also be considered to inform people of the development of the programme.
- 3.13. In the draft response officers have endeavored to highlight the need to be mindful of the diversity and complexity of the communities, villages and towns that could potentially benefit from the programme.
- 3.14. In particular, when it comes to selecting preferential criteria to use when prioritising places for intervention through Shaping Sustainable Places, officers have recommended that the chosen criteria should be considered and selected for their relevance to the specific theme or intervention type, and not just on a one size fits all approach.

4. General Considerations / Implications

- 4.1. Financial Implications – The proposals and concepts outlined in the document support significant and focused capital investment in the Boroughs villages and towns, it also includes details on capital investment required from the MEABC, an investment of 10% match funding. Revenue investment would be required to support Councils engagement and administrative support.
- 4.2. Human Resources – The proposals align with programmes funded by DEARA and DfC currently supported by the Councils Town Centre Development and Capital Regeneration team but also have potential links and implications across other Council Departments such as Community Planning and Parks operations and Development.
- 4.3. Equality Screening & Rural Proofing and Environmental Impact – this consultation has been screened through a wide range of equality assessments (see page 6 of **Appendix 1**).
- 4.4. Alignment with Corporate Priorities and Link to Corporate Plan – supporting Shaping Sustainable Places, aligns with key outcomes in the 'People and Place' pillar of the Corporate Plan 2024-28.
- 4.5. Reputation - there is significant political and community interest in supporting the development of our villages and towns. Residents and other stakeholders will want to ensure any new programmes, plans and measures take account of all sectors in the community.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1. It is proposed to seek approval of the draft response at **Appendix 2** to this consultation and submit it to DfC, DfI and DAERA prior to the deadline of 21st September 2025.

6. Recommendation or Decision

- 6.1. It is recommended that Elected Members;
- (i) Approve the draft response to this consultation outlined in **Appendix 2**.

7. Appendices / Links

- | | |
|------------|--|
| Appendix 1 | DfC, DfI and DAERA Public Consultation on Shaping Sustainable Places |
| Appendix 2 | MEABC Draft Consultation Response. |



Consultation on Shaping Sustainable Places



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1. Joint Ministerial Foreword

In an era of uncertainty and change, the sustainability of our village, town and city centres has never mattered more. We understand the power of place, not just as a location, but as the living heart of our communities, giving us a sense of belonging, meeting local needs, and providing jobs and services.

Yet many places are under pressure from the rapid changes in retail, the rise of online commerce and the legacy of the Covid pandemic. The result has been an increase in vacancy, dereliction and neglected places that once thrived as centres of community life.

We cannot afford to let our village, town and city centres become symbols of decline. This is not just an economic issue; it is also about local identity, social cohesion and opportunity. When high streets are hollowed out, so too are the spaces where people connect, local businesses grow, and public life unfolds.

We are proposing Shaping Sustainable Places as a joined-up and strategic response to these trends. We want to put communities

at the centre of reimagining their place for living, learning, working, culture and play.

We want to tackle vacancy and dereliction head-on through interventions that promote adaptive reuse. We want to give places back to people by creating spaces where they can gather and spend time. We want to deliver practical solutions that make communities stronger, safer and better prepared for the future. Our departments have been working closely because we understand the scale of the challenges faced and we know that by working together, we can maximise the impact of our collective investment.

The future of our communities depends on how we nurture, shape and invest in our villages, towns and cities. This consultation document seeks your views on a community-focused approach to re-creating and sustaining vibrant and resilient villages, towns and cities.

We are committed to creating places that work for everyone – alive with purpose, pride of place and rooted in the communities they serve. We encourage you to play your part by completing this consultation to help us guide and shape the future.



Gordon Lyons

Gordon Lyons MLA
Minister for Communities



Liz Kimmins

Liz Kimmins MLA
Minister for Infrastructure



Andrew Muir

Andrew Muir MLA
Minister of Agriculture,
Environment and
Rural Affairs

2. Executive Summary

Whilst no two places are the same, many are dealing with similar problems, including lower occupancy rates and footfall due to economic headwinds and changing consumer preferences.¹ Longer term trends of development away from town centres have removed many village, town and city centre activities and reduced reasons to visit and dwell.²

Shaping Sustainable Places aims to create a flagship programme of interventions to arrest the decline in our valued village, town and city centres. Through more strategic interventions lead by communities we hope to stimulate places and catalyse private sector activity to further protect them.³

Shaping Sustainable Places lays the foundation for new ways of delivering regeneration outcomes. We aim to engage communities at the earliest stages of planning for change, developing solutions to specific place-based challenges through funding local physical and infrastructure interventions.

The Programme has been developed by the Department for Communities working in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, and the Department for Infrastructure.

We are building on the successes and

learning from our collaborative delivery of two recent regeneration programmes. The Capital Covid-19 Recovery Revitalisation Scheme⁴ funded Local Councils to deliver measures to help provide a safe environment for visitors, shoppers and workers within town and city centres. The Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme,⁵ supported projects in small settlements with a population of less than 5,000 people.

It is proposed that the three departments will co-fund the Programme over a 10-year period, contributing a minimum of £5m each per year for investment in capital projects. A further minimum contribution of 10% (£15m) will be requested from Local Councils, creating an initial fund of £165m. However, the Programme would be scalable, and able to utilise additional funds for regeneration if they became available.

The Northern Ireland Executive is operating in an acutely constrained financial environment; by pooling our limited resources, we hope to maximise the impact of the interventions that can be made, and demonstrate that by working in partnership, we can provide a mechanism to deliver for other funders and partners in future.

We will also seek over the life of the programme to drawdown alternative, non-Executive funding sources, through

¹ The Government Response to the House of Lords Built Environment Committee Report on High Streets: Life beyond retail? at pg. 1.

² A New Future for Scotland's Town Centres

³ The existential crisis of traditional shopping streets the sun model and the place attraction paradigm at pg. 30.

⁴ Capital Covid-19 Recovery Revitalisation Scheme | Department for Communities

⁵ Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme

leveraging private sector investment and working with other non-Executive funders on established and new approaches.

It is recognised that the available funding will fall far short of the need of all village, town and city centres. This means it will be important to focus interventions and prioritise places to achieve the transformative impact we wish to see. Whilst it is envisaged there will be core allocations made to each Local Council area, this consultation also explores the use of competitive funding streams for particular types of intervention. We hope to develop opportunities for funding to tackle defined themes or specific challenges and select those proposals that offer the greatest potential benefits.

Our first objective is to improve the places we love by ensuring they are sustainable into the future; to create places where people want to live, work, invest and visit.⁶ We recognise that for places to thrive, they also need strong local leadership and decision-making. This consultation will ask for your views on how to deliver participative, collaborative development of plans in which communities are at the heart of decisions made about their places.

Our second key objective is to prioritise the safety, health and wellbeing of people through regeneration and creation of people-centred accessible and inclusive places. We recognise

that addressing dereliction or vacancy to stimulate local economies cannot be just about retail consolidation.⁷ Creating economically sustainable places will depend on increasing the number of people for whom village, town and city centres are safe and attractive gathering points,⁸ as well as commercial centres.

Our third objective is to shape places to become more resilient to the risks and impacts of climate change. Across many built environments, there are well understood susceptibilities to extreme weather which can be mitigated and adapted through design and innovation, to protect people, businesses, homes and livelihoods, and to invest in long-term sustainable solutions for the future.

The final objective is that by working collaboratively across departments and through Local Councils, we will be able to deliver a programme that is greater than the sum of its parts. Through Shaping Sustainable Places, we aim to coordinate more strategic and transformative capital investments, focussed on delivering outcomes and positive change. We will deliver flexibly, learn from best practice and adapt to changes in the market and operating environment.

If we succeed, the interventions delivered through Shaping Sustainable Places should be key to sustaining places economically, socially and environmentally for people long into the future.

⁶ Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most – at pg. 7

⁷ High Street: How our town centres can bounce back from the retail crisis: Rudlin, Payne and Montague at pg 211.

⁸ Draft ISNI Strategy – 2050

3. Introduction

This document sets out draft proposals for Shaping Sustainable Places, a long-term programme of regeneration interventions that aims to reshape village, town and city centres. We are carrying out a public consultation on the draft proposals to test our new approach and to invite fresh insights and perspectives. We aim to develop a final programme for Ministerial and Executive Committee consideration by the end of 2025.

Impact assessments

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality between all Section 75 groups. Without prejudice to these obligations, the Department is also required, in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Equality screening of the proposed Shaping Sustainable Places Programme has identified no adverse impacts, and the screening documentation has been published alongside this consultation document. On this basis, the

decision is that the Programme should not be subject to a full equality impact assessment.

The Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 introduced a duty on Northern Ireland departments, Local Councils and other public authorities to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, or when designing and delivering public services. There is also a requirement to monitor and report on how the due regard duty has been exercised.

A Rural Needs Impact Assessment recording these considerations has been published alongside this consultation document.

In line with The Data Protection Act (DPA) and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR), the Department for Communities is committed to building trust and confidence in our ability to process your personal information and protect your privacy. Our Privacy Notice at Annex C of this document outlines how we process your data. A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) screening exercise was carried out, which determined that a full DPIA is not required for this consultation.

4. Strategic Context

Regeneration and Placemaking

The existing Department for Communities Urban Regeneration Policy Framework defines regeneration as “activities that reverse economic, social and physical decline in areas where market forces will not do this without the support of government.”⁹

Shaping Sustainable Places proposes to build on this framework to fund strategic interventions that deliver wider benefits.

Placemaking is impacted both directly and incidentally by many policies and actions across government, the private and the Voluntary and Community sector. Each place is different, has different characteristics, needs and strengths that are understood best by the people who live in and use that place.

Our approach in developing Shaping Sustainable Places has been to reflect and build on the three sponsoring Departments’ organisational goals, existing arrangements and business needs, and to combine this with emerging best practice around the role of communities in placemaking and regeneration.

The Department for Communities’ current programme of urban regeneration

interventions is delivered in the 41 urban towns and cities across Northern Ireland.¹⁰ Until 2020, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive, administered the European Union Rural Development Programme.

In leading the delivery of the Capital Covid-19 Recovery Revitalisation Scheme¹¹ and the Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme¹², the Department for Communities stepped outside of its core policy focus on urban settlements. This was enabled by working in partnership with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and the Department for Infrastructure.

An additional 24 intermediate settlements and 69 villages with populations of over 1000 people were eligible for funding through the two partnership programmes.¹³ The programmes also delivered active and sustainable travel interventions and enablers.

Spatial and Planning Policy Context

Shaping Sustainable Places will be delivered within the context of regional planning policy and Local Councils’ Local Development Plans. All Local Councils are preparing

⁹ Urban Regeneration and Community Development Policy Framework at pg.5.

¹⁰ An urban town or city is defined as one located within a settlement with a population of 5,000 or more The Northern Ireland Town Centre Database Background Paper

¹¹ Capital Covid-19 Recovery Revitalisation Scheme | Department for Communities

¹² Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme

¹³ An intermediate settlement has a population of 2,500 - 4,999 and a village has a population of 1,000 - 2,499. For the full list of NI villages, intermediate settlements, towns and cities see Review of the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency

Local Development Plans for their areas which set out a clear vision, typically over a 15-year period, for the type, scale and location of development that should be encouraged. It is within this context that initiatives that provide support to Local Councils can be considered to enable them to deliver local solutions to local issues.

The Strategic Planning Policy Statement¹⁴ sets out regional planning policies for Northern Ireland on town centres and retailing, economic development and development in rural areas, and the Programme for Government commits to the continued implementation of a planning improvement programme to make our planning system work for businesses, people, and the environment.¹⁵ Improving health and wellbeing is one of the five Core Planning Principles set out in the Strategic Planning Policy Statement.

Community Planning

Each Local Council also has a Community Planning Partnership which brings together a range of partners including public bodies, government departments, agencies, businesses and community and voluntary organisations.¹⁶

Community Planning Partnerships work together to identify long-term objectives to improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of the area. Each Partnership develops a Community Plan.

A Community Plan is a document telling people the outcome or shared vision of each Community Planning Partnership.

The Plan describes how the partners will work together to deliver interventions and actions locally. Community Planning involves all aspects of public services—from education, health, housing and the environment to arts, culture and heritage. The partners also work with residents and community groups directly.

The Shaping Sustainable Places interventions proposed by Local Councils should align with local Community Plans.

Revenue Generation

Regeneration, where it is successful in catalysing increased tenancy or commercial activity in the locality, can help to sustain the local rates taxbase. Revenue generated from the rates system comprises 78% of local government revenue¹⁷ and supplements around 4%¹⁸ of the Northern Ireland Executive's spending power. This demonstrates the direct link between the sustainability of places and the funding of local services.

Programme for Government Framework: Key Priorities

The Programme for Government Framework sets out three key missions related to People, the Planet and Prosperity.¹⁹ These missions are underpinned by a number of key priorities which Shaping Sustainable Places will support:

¹⁴ Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS)

¹⁵ Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most – at pg. 10

¹⁶ Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014

¹⁷ Local government facts and figures: Northern Ireland - LGIU – NILGA 2021

¹⁸ The Public Finance in Northern Ireland: a comprehensive guide – Northern Ireland Fiscal Council

¹⁹ Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most – at pg. 67.

Grow a Globally Competitive and Sustainable Economy

Shaping Sustainable Places aims to create the right interventions which will create the foundations for a more productive and prosperous economy; for better rural and urban communities; and for healthier and greener lives.²⁰

Provide More Social, Affordable and Sustainable Housing

Shaping Sustainable Places recognises the importance of housing as essential to health and wellbeing and the wider Programme for Government aim of enabling access to affordable, sustainable and quality housing.²¹ Through regeneration and placemaking we hope to create more attractive places both to live and invest in housing.

Safer Communities

Shaping Sustainable Places will ensure that safety is at the forefront of design consideration and all interventions will enable people to have the confidence they need to live productively and engage fully in society.²²

Reform and Transformation of Public Services

Shaping Sustainable Places offers opportunities for cross Departmental transformative approaches to deliver the public services people rely on.²³

Since 2021, Northern Ireland has set a new ambition to decarbonise our economy.

This included the adoption of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 which sets a legal requirement to reduce emissions by 48% by 2030, as well as 100% reduction in net emission by 2050.²⁴ Activities to achieve this are already underway, but huge challenges remain.²⁵

The Act also includes a Just Transition principle to ensure that the benefits of moving to a green economy are shared widely. We believe that Shaping Sustainable Places can help contribute to a Just Transition through having due regard to the desirability of using and supporting nature-based interventions.²⁶

High Street Taskforce Report and Recommendations

An independent High Street Task Force appointed by Executive Ministers in 2020 carried out a call for evidence²⁷ and delivered a report²⁸ and recommendations on the future of high streets in Northern Ireland. Although the report has not been formally adopted by the Executive Committee, Shaping Sustainable Places could deliver on elements of two of the 14 recommendations; Recommendations 2 and 5.

20 Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most – at pg. 15.

21 Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most – at pg. 42.

22 Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most – at pg. 46.

23 Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most – at pg. 55.

24 Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 at sections 2-4 and 7 (1).

25 Professor Dave Reay Skills and Net Zero at page 4.

26 Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 at section 30 (2) (b).

27 High Street Task Force Call for Evidence Report 2022

28 High Street task Force – Delivering a 21st Century High Street

Recommendation 2 endorses the Living High Streets Craft Kit²⁹ and recommends that it is rolled out with the necessary support for implementation in each high street, village, town and city centre that is prioritised for action by the relevant Local Council. The Department for Communities undertook to carry out pilots of the Living High Streets Craft Kit to test this Recommendation. The first pilot was conducted in Downpatrick and resulted in the launch of the Downpatrick Living High Streets Framework in September 2023.³⁰

The second pilot project, to create the Shankill Living High Streets Framework, commenced in September 2024. To date it has delivered an intense series of community 'Place' and 'Imagining' workshops; seeking to understand the positive and negative aspects of the Greater Shankill area and how it can be improved. It is expected that the process will conclude in June 2025, when all findings will shape a Physical Development Framework and Action Plan. These 'living' documents will be 'owned' by the community who will oversee the implementation of the recommendations in the years to come.

This consultation will ask for your views on using the Living High Streets Craft Kit through Shaping Sustainable Places, where possible and appropriate, to develop community-led plans. Initial pilots have reported that the approach requires an intensive period of engagement, resourcing to support the process and the willingness of effective community leaders equipped to encourage participation and take ownership.

There are further insights included on the Living High Streets Initiative **website**.

Recommendation 5 urges the Executive to prioritise the delivery of placemaking by developing and implementing an investment programme for blue-green infrastructure, cleaner and greener public realm and sustainable transport, and would require a significant capital budget to allow for implementation.

Whilst the Recommendations have not been adopted, or any budget allocated to this, Shaping Sustainable Places could go some way to delivering on Recommendation 5, and this consultation asks for your views on the proposals for a cross-departmental regeneration programme.

Types of Intervention

The Department for Communities has at its disposal a range of interventions which it deploys to improve the attractiveness and competitiveness of environments and to stimulate private sector investment.³¹

- Revitalisation Projects
- Public Realm Improvements
- Environmental Improvement Schemes
- Comprehensive Development Schemes
- Creation of Business Improvement Districts
- Urban Development Grants

29 MAG - Living High Streets initiative | Department for Communities.

30 Downpatrick Living High Streets Framework

31 Urban Regeneration and Community Development Policy Framework at pg.43.

It is proposed that Shaping Sustainable places interventions could include, but not be limited to, those that:

- Improve the quality and accessibility of footpaths and streetscapes
- Change streetscapes to create more room for pedestrians
- Improve streetlighting
- Improve signage
- Create or grow green spaces
- Provide shop front grants to local businesses
- Provide grants to bring buildings back into use
- Provide to create village, town or city-centre housing in mixed-use developments
- Deliver public art
- Provide grants which enable third party or private sector investment
- Building infrastructure that is more resilient to the effects of climate change
- Restore heritage assets

Further Strategic Context

Other government policies that have impacted on the development of Shaping Sustainable Places, include Vital and Viable,³² Living Places Urban Stewardship and Design Guide, the Regional Development Strategy,³³ Air Pollution in Northern Ireland 2022, the Housing Supply Strategy³⁴ and ³⁵ the Department for Infrastructure's Strategic Framework.³⁶

We have also sought to incorporate the Adapting to climate change – Progress in Northern Ireland,³⁷ the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategic Framework,³⁸ Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation,³⁹ the draft Green Growth Strategy for Northern Ireland,⁴⁰ the Sub-Regional Economic Plan 2024,⁴¹ Planning for the Future of Transport – Time for Change⁴² and Heritage Enabled Regeneration in Towns⁴³.

³² Vital and Viable

³³ Regional Development Strategy 2035

³⁴ Housing Supply Strategy – A Home for Everyone

³⁵ Air Pollution in Northern Ireland 2022

³⁶ DfI Strategic Framework

³⁷ Adapting to climate change – Progress in Northern Ireland – Climate Change Committee

³⁸ EVAWG Strategic Framework

³⁹ Tackling Rural Poverty & Social Isolation – A New Framework

⁴⁰ A Green Growth Strategy for Northern Ireland

⁴¹ Sub-Regional Economic Plan

⁴² Planning for the future of Transport

⁴³ Heritage Enabled Regeneration in Towns

5. Data Protection

Privacy, Confidentiality and Access to Consultation Responses

For this consultation, we may publish all responses except for those where the respondent indicates that they are an individual acting in a private capacity (e.g. a member of the public). All responses from organisations and individuals responding in a professional capacity may be published in full, however we will remove email addresses and telephone numbers.

For more information about what we do with personal data please see our consultation privacy notice. Your response, and all other responses to this consultation, may also be disclosed on request in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. However, all disclosures will be in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (UK) 2016/679.

If you wish your response to be treated as confidential it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential, so that this may be considered if the Department should receive a request for the information under

the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

No personal data is asked for or required during the survey. While we do not ask survey respondents to personally identify themselves; it may be possible, in a small number of cases, for individuals to be identifiable from a combination of responses. There is the potential that responders may in error disclose personal data in the free text boxes. For this reason, the Department for Communities will treat this data as personal data to be disregarded. The consultation will ask consultees if they are responding on behalf of an organisation and request the name of this organisation.

The answers submitted will be collated by Department for Communities employees to form a report which will be used to inform decisions on the shape and remit of the proposed Shaping Sustainable Places programme. It is intended that Consultation responses made will be published or made publicly available as part of a wider report unless a responder identifies themselves as responding as an individual acting in a private capacity.

6. Who are you?

Q1: Please tell us if you are responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation. If you are responding on behalf of a business or organisation, please tell us the name of the organisation.

- Individual
- Organisation

7. Vision and Principles

Vision

Shaping Sustainable Places will contribute to Executive commitments to grow a globally competitive and sustainable economy, provide more housing, create safer communities and reform and transform public services.

Our vision is:

To work with communities to address local challenges through funding interventions that deliver sustainable, people-centred places providing economic, social and environmental outcomes.

Q2: To what extent do you agree with the proposed vision for Shaping Sustainable Places?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q3: If you answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' at Q2 above, please tell us why and/ or what you would expect to see in the vision statement?

Principles

These principles will support our vision and guide the interventions that will help transform places.

Strategic	Ensure interventions delivered through Shaping Sustainable Places focus on long-term impact rather than short-term fixes.
Sustainable	Respond to the changing needs of places by delivering interventions that address the economic, social and environmental sustainability of a place.
Integrated	Building partnerships, collaboration across and outside government to deliver the best possible interventions.
Participative	Empowering people and communities to be part of the regeneration of their place.

Q4: To what extent do you agree with the proposed principles for Shaping Sustainable Places?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q5: If you answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' at Q4 above, please tell us why and/ or what principles you would expect to guide interventions to help transform places?

Timeframe

We believe that Shaping Sustainable Places needs to give a sufficiently long-

term commitment to enable partners, stakeholders and communities to engage, plan and invest in interventions to realise our vision. We have proposed an initial 10-year budget commitment to the Programme, with a midpoint review after 5 years.

Q6: Do you agree with the timeframe proposed for Shaping Sustainable Places?

- Yes
- No, it should be shorter
- No, it should be longer

Q7: If you did not select 'yes' above, please tell us why you think the timeframe should be shorter or longer?

8. Placemaking

Shaping Sustainable Places would require Local Councils, in partnership with local communities, to develop detailed plans for its prioritised places. These plans would be required to take a placemaking approach.

An effective placemaking process capitalises on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, and should result in the creation of quality public spaces that contribute to people's health, happiness, and well-being.⁴⁴

Q8: To what extent do you agree that Shaping Sustainable Places plans should be developed through a placemaking process?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q9: If you answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' at Q8 above, please tell us why and/ or how do you think plans should be developed?

The Ministerial Advisory Group for Architecture and the Built Environment for Northern Ireland has co-designed a community-led approach to placemaking. This participatory approach brings people together to consider their local high streets, tackle common issues and enable places and communities to thrive.

The **Living High Streets Craft Kit** has two

parts: Part 1 which sets out the approach and Part 2 which has the tools to use this community-led approach. There are different ways to tailor using the Craft Kit to address variables such as: what stage you are at in making a plan, local capacity, and the scale and complexity of the place. The Ministerial Advisory Group can provide guidance and training to those using the Craft Kit. There is also other guidance available on the **Living High Streets Initiative webpage**.

Q10: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Living High Streets Craft Kit would be a good approach to use to plan sustainable places?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q11: If you answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' at Q10 above, how do you think plans should be developed?

A Placemaking approach will try to involve the Local Council, residents, representatives of statutory bodies, elected representatives, local business organisation representatives, local charity representatives, business owners and residents, in developing the plan for a place. It will also try to engage with a wide range of people in terms of their age, level of interest and perspectives.

⁴⁴ What is Placemaking? – Project for Public Spaces

Most of this activity is done on a voluntary basis, and can take several months, or longer, to complete. Initial pilots have reported that the approach requires an intensive period of engagement, resourcing to support the process and the willingness of effective community leaders equipped to encourage participation and take ownership. There are further insights included on the Living High Streets Initiative **website**.

Q12: If your Local Council or community has already developed a plan for your place, to what extent do you agree or disagree that this existing plan should be used instead of developing a new plan using a placemaking approach?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q13: If your Local Council wanted to assess the level of community support for a plan or intervention for your local place, how would you expect them to engage with you? Pick as many options as apply.

- Leaflet campaign to invite survey response
- Townhall style meeting
- Focus group of residents
- Online consultation and promotion
- Newspaper advertisement and promotion
- Drop-in clinic
- I would not want to be consulted
- Other

9. Ambitions and Objectives

Shaping Sustainable Places is focussed on Place, People, Planet and Partnership.

Place

The Strategic Planning Policy Statement⁴⁵ sets out regional planning policies for Northern Ireland on town centres and retailing, economic development and development in rural areas.

Improving the places we love and ensuring they are sustainable into the future is the first and primary objective of the programme; to create places where people want to live, work, invest and visit.⁴⁶

Addressing dereliction or vacancy can help to stimulate local economies and regenerate places for other uses. We recognise that renewal cannot be just about retail consolidation.⁴⁷ Creating economically sustainable places will depend on increasing the number of people for whom village, town and city centres are safe and attractive gathering points,⁴⁸ as well as commercial centres and safe neighbourhoods.

Our ambition is to make places more attractive by working with local communities to create people-centred, shared spaces through sustainable development, refurbishment and reuse of underutilised or unused assets, creating places that people want to live, work visit and invest.

We hope to achieve our ambition for Place through:

- Investing in public realm in village, town and city centres
- Increasing occupancy levels by vacant buildings or derelict sites coming back into use
- Creating more productive local economies

Q14: To what extent do you agree or disagree with “Investing in public realm in village, town and city centres” as an objective when focussing on Place?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q15: To what extent do you agree or disagree with “Increasing occupancy levels by vacant buildings or derelict sites coming back into use” as an objective when focussing on Place?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

⁴⁵ Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPPS)

⁴⁶ Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most - at pg. 7

⁴⁷ High Street: How our town centres can bounce back from the retail crisis: Rudlin, Payne and Montague at pg 211.

⁴⁸ Draft ISNI Strategy - 2050

Q16: To what extent do you agree or disagree with “Creating more productive local economies” as an objective when focussing on Place?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q17: If you answered ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ to Questions 14-16 above, please tell us why and/ or what you would suggest as alternatives for objectives for Place?

People

Our second key objective is to prioritise the safety, health and wellbeing of people through regeneration and creation of people-centred accessible and inclusive places. Fundamentally we believe places are for people.

Our ambition is to shape places for human interaction making them accessible to more people, delivering safer streets, improving connections and enabling healthier habits and lives.

We hope to achieve our ambition for People through:

- Improving safety in village, town and city centres
- Creating more active and sustainable infrastructure and facilities
- Reducing car dominance

Q18: To what extent do you agree or disagree with “Improving safety in village, town and city centres” as an objective when focussing on People?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q19: To what extent do you agree or disagree with “Creating more active and sustainable infrastructure and facilities” as an objective when focussing on People?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q20: To what extent do you agree or disagree with “Reducing car dominance” as an objective when focussing on People?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q21: If you answered ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ to Questions 18-20 above, please tell us why and/ or what you would suggest as alternatives for objectives for People?

Planet

Our third objective is to shape places to become more resilient to the risks and impacts of climate change. Across many built environments, there are well understood susceptibilities to extreme weather which can be mitigated and adapted through design and innovation, to protect people, businesses, homes and livelihoods, and to invest in long-term sustainable solutions for the future.

Our ambition is to shape sustainable and secure village, town and city centres and communities by investing in regeneration projects that mitigate against and adapt places to the impacts of climate change.

We hope to achieve our ambition for Planet through:

- Creating or growing existing green spaces
- Building infrastructure that is more resilient to the effects of climate change
- Ensuring buildings brought back into use are more energy efficient

Q22: To what extent do you agree or disagree with “Creating or growing existing green spaces” as an objective when focussing on Planet?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q23: To what extent do you agree or disagree with “Building infrastructure that is more resilient to the effects of climate change” as an objective when focussing on Planet?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q24: To what extent do you agree or disagree with “Ensuring buildings brought back into use are more energy efficient” as an objective when focussing on Planet?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q25: If you answered ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ to Questions 22-24 above, please tell us why and/ or what you would suggest as alternatives for objectives for Planet?

Partnership

Our fourth objective is that by working collaboratively across departments and through Local Councils, we will be able deliver a programme that is greater than the sum of its parts.

The Department for Communities (DfC), the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) have worked collaboratively to develop Shaping Sustainable Places. Since 2020, these three departments have worked in partnership with Local Councils to deliver two other major regeneration programmes:

- Capital Covid-19 Recovery Revitalisation Scheme⁴⁹
- Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme⁵⁰

Q26: Do you feel the partnership working to deliver these previous regeneration schemes was successful?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

Q27: What, if any, are your views on how these three departments worked collaboratively in partnership with Local Councils to deliver the previous regeneration schemes outlined above?

Through Shaping Sustainable Places, we hope to coordinate more strategic and transformative capital investments, focussed on delivering outcomes and change. We hope to deliver flexibly, to learn from best practice and adapt to changes in the market and operating environment. If we succeed, the interventions delivered through Shaping Sustainable Places should be key to sustaining places economically, socially, environmentally and for people long into the future.

Our ambition is to work in partnership with Local Councils, other Departments, the voluntary and community sector, local communities and the private sector to deliver improved outcomes and share and benchmark best practices, funding, risks, responsibilities and opportunities.

Q28: Do you think other partners should be involved in delivering Shaping Sustainable Places?

- Yes
- No

Q29: If you answered yes to Q28 above, please tell us which other partners do you think should be involved in delivering Shaping Sustainable Places?

49 Capital Covid-19 Recovery Revitalisation Scheme | Department for Communities

50 Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme

10.Funding and Prioritisation

If approved, Shaping Sustainable Places would deliver a minimum of £150m of Executive funding over 10 years, £50m from each contributing department, i.e. DfC, DAERA and DfI. This would be allocated across all 11 Local Councils to deliver individual in partnership with the Department for Communities acting as the lead department. Local Councils will be asked to contribute a minimum of an additional 10% of the funding they receive.

Shaping Sustainable Places is intended to be scalable, so that if additional capital funding became available for regeneration, Local Councils could be asked to take forward additional plans to draw this funding down. We also hope to pursue opportunities to secure funding from non-Executive funders and will require match funding for some types of interventions from the private sector.

Feedback from Local Councils has indicated that more strategic regeneration interventions would be achievable if Executive departments could give security on indicative budget allocations in advance.

This contrasts with current arrangements, where it can be difficult to guarantee funding for specific projects into future years when annual budgets are uncertain.

Q30: To what extent do you agree that the regeneration of villages, towns and city centres should be a long-term strategic priority, with security of funding, for the Northern Ireland Executive and Local Councils?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q31: If you answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' at Q30 above, please tell us why and/ or what you would suggest as an alternative proposal for investing the limited funds available for regeneration?

In addition to the core funding provided to all Local Councils to deliver Shaping Sustainable Places interventions, it is also proposed that there could be separate, complementary funding opportunities developed to tackle specific regeneration issues.

Local Councils would then bid to a specific fund through an application process, and the applications would be assessed, with the highest scoring applications funded. The ambition for a competitive funding approach is that it would encourage the development of creative and innovative solutions to the challenges faced.

One example could be a competitive fund to support regeneration initiatives for built-heritage assets in town and city centres.

Q32: To what extent would you support the establishment of competitive funding opportunities to tackle specific regeneration issues?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q33: If you answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' at Q32 above, please tell us why and/ or what you would suggest as an alternative proposal to drive innovation in regeneration?

Q34: Are there any specific regeneration issues or themes in your local area you feel could be tackled most effectively by the establishment of a competitive funding opportunity?

It is recognised that the proposed funding for Shaping Sustainable Places will fall far short of the need of all villages, towns and city centres. It is proposed that Local Councils should be asked to consider the need across their areas in collaboration with local communities, and prioritise settlements for focused, strategic interventions in line with Shaping Sustainable Places ambitions and objectives.

Q35: Please select from the list below your top 5 preferences that you consider to be the most important criteria when prioritising places for intervention through Shaping Sustainable Places?

- Length of time since previous capital investment in public space
- Levels of vacancy
- Road safety
- Economic activity data
- Addressing economic market failure
- Access to services for residents of surrounding areas
- Potential to attract visitors and tourism
- Potential to leverage private sector investment
- Potential for people to meet and spend time
- Potential for increasing pedestrian areas
- Population size
- Air quality
- Impacts of extreme weather (eg flooding)
- Other

11. Centre First for Public Services

In relation to Town Centres and Retailing, the Strategic Planning Policy Statement notes its aim to support and sustain vibrant town centres across Northern Ireland through the promotion of established town centres as the appropriate first choice location of retailing and other complementary functions.⁵¹

Regeneration, where it is successful in catalysing increased tenancy or commercial activity in the locality, can help to sustain the local rates taxbase. Revenue generated from the rates system comprises 78% of local government revenue⁵² and supplements around 4%⁵³ of the Northern Ireland Executive's spending power. This demonstrates the direct link between the sustainability of places and the funding of local services.

The High Street Task Force⁵⁴ strongly supported proposals to put important public services and amenities on the high street which are accessible by sustainable forms of transport. Whether these are libraries, healthcare facilities, places for education and community use, or simply more and better housing, these investment choices could help to create vibrant, people-focused places.

It has been stated that the withdrawal of public sector organisations and businesses has contributed to the decline

of high streets and centres.⁵⁵ Changes in retail behaviours and the use of office accommodation require us to think about how to use our centres differently to support and sustain remaining occupiers.

The Northern Ireland Executive departments and their delivery bodies and partners have a significant footprint of buildings and facilities across Northern Ireland, where people travel to for employment, services and support. At present, there is no requirement to consider the potential regeneration impacts on a place when making decisions about where to (re)locate public services outside of normal planning requirements.

DfC is interested in promoting the adoption of a Centre First Policy for the location of public sector jobs and services. The strategic location of these in centres could generate increased footfall and economic activity, whilst also creating better access to public transport for commuting employees and customers. This in turn may support a more resilient retail sector as well as creating demand for other services and restarting cycles of inward investment to existing and new businesses.⁵⁶

The adoption of a Centre First for Public Service policy for the location of public services does not need to feature as an essential component of the Shaping

⁵¹ Strategic Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland (SPP5)

⁵² Local government facts and figures: Northern Ireland - LGIU - NILGA 2021

⁵³ The Public Finance in Northern Ireland: a comprehensive guide - Northern Ireland Fiscal Council

⁵⁴ High Street task Force - Delivering a 21st Century High Street

⁵⁵ Town centres: Position Statement, Welsh Government

⁵⁶ Town centres: Position Statement, Welsh Government

Sustainable Places proposals. The concept is being included as part of this consultation due to its potential to deliver significant complementary regeneration benefits alongside Shaping Sustainable Places.

Questions 36 and 37 relate to a policy in development which is not central to the Shaping Sustainable Places Programme.

Q36: To what extent would you support the adoption of a Centre First policy for the location of public sector jobs and services in Northern Ireland?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q37: If you answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' at Q36 above, please tell us why.

Annex A – Summary of questions

Q1: Please tell us if you are responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation. If you are responding on behalf of a business or organisation, please tell us the name of the organisation.

- Individual
- Organisation

Q2: To what extent do you agree with the proposed vision for Shaping Sustainable Places?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q3: If you answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' at Q2 above, please tell us why and/ or what you would expect to see in the vision statement?

Q4: To what extent do you agree with the proposed principles for Shaping Sustainable Places?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q5: If you answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' at Q4 above, please tell us why and/ or what principles you would expect to guide interventions to help transform places?

Q6: Do you agree with the timeframe proposed for Shaping Sustainable Places?

- Yes
- No, it should be shorter
- No, it should be longer

Q7: If you did not select 'yes' above, please tell us why you think the timeframe should be shorter or longer?

Q8: To what extent do you agree that Shaping Sustainable Places plans should be developed through a placemaking process?

Strongly Agree

- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q9: If you answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' at Q8 above, please tell us why and/ or how do you think plans should be developed?

Q10: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Living High Streets Craft Kit would be a good approach to use to plan sustainable places?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q11: If you answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' at Q10 above, how do you think plans should be developed?

Q12: If your Local Council or community has already developed a plan for your place, to what extent do you agree or disagree that this existing plan should be used instead of developing a new plan using a placemaking approach?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q13: If your Local Council wanted to assess the level of community support for a plan or a project for your local place, how would you expect them to engage with you? Pick as many options as apply.

- Leaflet campaign to invite survey response
- Townhall style meeting
- Focus group of residents
- Online consultation and promotion
- Newspaper advertisement and promotion
- Drop-in clinic
- I would not want to be consulted
- Other

Q14: To what extent do you agree or disagree with “Investing in public realm in village, town and city centres” as an objective when focussing on Place?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q15: To what extent do you agree or disagree with “Increasing occupancy levels by vacant buildings or derelict sites coming back into use” as an objective when focussing on Place?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q16: To what extent do you agree or disagree with “Creating more productive local economies” as an objective when focussing on Place?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q17: If you answered ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ to Questions 14-16 above, please tell us why and/ or what you would suggest as alternatives for objectives for Place?

Q18: To what extent do you agree or disagree with “Improving safety in village, town and city centres” as an objective when focussing on People?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q19: To what extent do you agree or disagree with “Creating more active and sustainable infrastructure and facilities” as an objective when focussing on People?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q20: To what extent do you agree or disagree with “Reducing car dominance” as an objective when focussing on People?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q21: If you answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' to Questions 18-20 above, please tell us why and/ or what you would suggest as alternatives for objectives for People?

Q22: To what extent do you agree or disagree with "Creating or growing existing green spaces" as an objective when focussing on Planet?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q23: To what extent do you agree or disagree with "Building infrastructure that is more resilient to the effects of climate change" as an objective when focussing on Planet?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q24: To what extent do you agree or disagree with "Ensuring buildings brought back into use are more energy efficient" as an objective when focussing on Planet?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q25: If you answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' to Questions 22-24 above, please tell us why and/ or what you would suggest as alternatives for objectives for Planet?

Q26: Do you feel the partnership working to deliver these previous regeneration schemes was successful?

- Yes
- No
- Don't Know

Q27: What, if any, are your views on how these three departments worked collaboratively in partnership with Local Councils to deliver the previous regeneration schemes outlined above?

Q28: Do you think other partners should be involved in delivering Shaping Sustainable Places?

- Yes
- No

Q29: If you answered yes to Q28 above, please tell us which other partners do you think should be involved in delivering Shaping Sustainable Places?

Q30: To what extent do you agree that the regeneration of villages, towns and city centres should be a long-term strategic priority, with security of funding, for the Northern Ireland Executive and Local Councils?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q31: If you answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' at Q30 above, please tell us why and/ or what you would suggest as an alternative proposal for investing the limited funds available for regeneration?

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- Strongly Agree
- Agree
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- Strongly Disagree

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Q35: Please select from the list below your top 5 preferences that you consider to be the most important criterion when prioritising places for intervention through Shaping Sustainable Places?

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- Levels of vacancy
- Road safety
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- Access to services for residents of surrounding areas
- Potential to attract visitors and tourism
- Potential to leverage private sector investment
- Potential for people to meet and spend time
- Potential for increasing pedestrian areas
- Population size
- Air quality
- Impacts of extreme weather (eg flooding)
- Other

Q36: To what extent would you support the adoption of a Centre First policy for the location of public sector jobs and services in Northern Ireland?

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree or Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Q37: If you answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' at Q36 above, please tell us why.

Annex B - Landing Page Text

How to respond

This consultation will be hosted online at the following website: **<https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/dfc/shaping-sustainable-places-public-consultation>**. The Citizen Space website has been specially designed to be as user-friendly and welcoming as possible for those who wish to complete the consultation. It also allows DfC to rapidly collate results. For this reason, we would encourage anyone who is interested in responding to this consultation to utilise Citizen Space as the method of their response.

If this is not possible, you can however respond to this consultation via email to **ssp@communities-ni.gov.uk** by completing the Word template on the Department's website or you can respond in writing to the following address:

Shaping Sustainable Places Programme Team

Regional Development Office

Department for Communities

8th Floor, Causeway Exchange

1-7 Bedford Street

Belfast

BT2 7EG

When responding via email or in writing, please state whether you are responding as an individual, or representing the views of an organisation (please state the name of the organisation). Please also quote the following reference in your response: "Shaping Sustainable Places Consultation".

Responses must be received by 23.59 on Sunday 24 August 2025.

Annex C – Privacy Notice

Data Controller Name: Department for Communities (DfC)

Address: Causeway Exchange, 1-7 Bedford Street, BELFAST, BT2 7EG

Email: prs@communities-ni.gov.uk

Telephone:

02890829129

Data Protection Officer Name: Karen McMullan

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Mid and East Antrim Borough Councils Response to “Consultation on Shaping Sustainable Places”

September 2025



1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The Shaping Sustainable Places programme is a proposed 10-year, £165m cross-departmental regeneration initiative for villages, towns, and cities in Northern Ireland. The purpose is creating interventions to arrest the decline in valued village, town and city centres. Through more strategic interventions lead by communities we hope to stimulate places and catalyse private sector activity to further protect them.

1.2 Core Vision

Work with communities to create sustainable, people-centred places that deliver economic, social, and environmental benefits.

1.3 Key Objectives

- **Place** – Improve public realm, bring vacant/derelict sites into use, create vibrant local economies.
- **People** – Prioritise safety, health, wellbeing; create accessible and inclusive spaces; reduce car dominance.
- **Planet** – Increase climate resilience, expand green spaces, improve energy efficiency.
- **Partnership** – Cross-departmental and local council collaboration with communities, private, and voluntary sectors.

1.4 Approach

- Local councils to lead community-led placemaking plans (Living High Streets Craft Kit suggested as method). "We aim to engage communities at the earliest stages of planning for change, developing solutions to specific place-based challenges through funding local physical and infrastructure interventions."
- Mix of core allocations and competitive funding for targeted themes.
- Match funding encouraged from councils and private sector.
- Focus on long-term transformation rather than short-term fixes.

1.5 Funding

Minimum £5m/year from each of three departments (DfC, DAERA, DfI) + 10% local council match funding. The total projected budget is £165million. There is the potential for scaling if more funds become available.

1.6 Vision and Principles (reference question 2)

Strategic	Ensure interventions delivered through Shaping Sustainable Places focus on long-term impact rather than short-term fixes.
Sustainable	Respond to the changing needs of places by delivering interventions that address the economic, social and environmental sustainability of a place.
Integrated	Building partnerships, collaboration across and outside government to deliver the best possible interventions.
Participative	Empowering people and communities to be part of the regeneration of their place.

2. Mid and East Antrim Borough Council Consultation Responses.

Questions	Proposed Response
Q1: Please tell us if you are responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation. If you are responding on behalf of a business or organisation, please tell us the name of the organisation.	• Organisation – Mid & East Antrim Borough Council
Q2: To what extent do you agree with the proposed vision for Shaping Sustainable Places? • Strongly Agree • Agree • Neither Agree or Disagree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree	Disagree.
Q3: If you answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' at Q2 above, please tell us why and/or what you would expect to see in the vision statement?	The Council welcomes the proposed vision and agrees that long-term strategic interventions are essential. However, we would further recommend that the framework also incorporates opportunities for short-term, visible “quick wins” which can help secure early community buy-in and maintain momentum. The Council also believes that local authorities should be explicitly recognised as key partners in shaping this vision, given our statutory role in regeneration and community planning. Finally, while capital investment is critical, the Council encourages the Department to consider complementary non-monetary support measures, such as capacity building, skills development and advisory resources, to ensure that communities are fully equipped to effectively engage to deliver sustainable change. We believe the level of funding outlined in the document may face challenges, particularly when considering the inclusion of villages and small towns facing significant challenges. It is important to note that infrastructure development—such as roads, car parks, and public realm improvements—incurs high costs. Additionally, many towns and villages suffer from a conservation deficit, where the cost of investment remains unviable even with grant support.
Q4: To what extent do you agree with the proposed principles for Shaping Sustainable Places? • Strongly Agree • Agree • Neither Agree or Disagree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree	Agree.

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council's Response to Shaping Sustainable Places

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Q5: If you answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' at Q4 above, please tell us why and/or what principles you would expect to guide interventions to help transform places?	No response required.
Q6: Do you agree with the timeframe proposed for Shaping Sustainable Places? • Yes • No, it should be shorter • No, it should be longer	Yes.
Q7: If you did not select 'yes' above, please tell us why you think the timeframe should be shorter or longer?	The Council supports the proposed 10-year timeframe as it provides sufficient scope for long-term planning, partnership working and meaningful delivery based on co-design practices. However, we would caution against overly protracted processes. It will be important that early milestones and a robust mid-term review are built in to ensure progress can be demonstrated and lessons incorporated without unnecessary delay. Our experience is that town centre decline has taken place within a relatively short space of time and initiatives must be implemented in the short term to preserve and support the remaining traders as they struggle with competition from online shopping and out of town shopping centres. Consideration must also be given to current challenges such as the resourcing of NI Water allowing for town centre development to take place.
Q8: To what extent do you agree that Shaping Sustainable Places plans should be developed through a placemaking process? • Strongly Agree • Agree • Neither Agree or Disagree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree	Agree.
Q9: If you answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' at Q8 above, please tell us why and/or how do you think plans should be developed?	No response required.

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Q10: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the Living High Streets Craft Kit would be a good approach to use to plan sustainable places? • Strongly Agree • Agree • Neither Agree or Disagree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree	Agree.
Q11: If you answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' at Q10 above, how do you think plans should be developed?	No response required.
Q12: If your Local Council or community has already developed a plan for your place, to what extent do you agree or disagree that this existing plan should be used instead of developing a new plan using a placemaking approach? • Strongly Agree • Agree • Neither Agree or Disagree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree	Agree. The Council strongly agrees that existing plans, such as our Town Centre Investment Plans and Village Plans should be recognised and utilised where they already provide a robust framework.. We would welcome clarification on how "place" boundaries will be defined within Shaping Sustainable Places, particularly where existing plans focus on town centre cores, but wider settlements may also be in scope.
Q13: If your Local Council wanted to assess the level of community support for a plan or a project for your local place, how would you expect them to engage with you? Pick as many options as apply. • Leaflet campaign to invite survey response • Townhall style meeting • Focus group of residents • Online consultation and promotion • Newspaper advertisement and promotion • Drop-in clinic • I would not want to be consulted	The Council would use the following • Leaflet campaign to invite survey response • Townhall style meeting • Focus group of residents • Online consultation and promotion • Newspaper advertisement and promotion • Drop-in clinics Other: • Review of feedback from elected members • Engagement with the public e.g. ASB complaints.

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council's Response to Shaping Sustainable Places

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Q14: To what extent do you agree or disagree with "Investing in public realm in village, town and city centres" as an objective when focussing on Place? • Strongly Agree • Agree • Neither Agree or Disagree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree:
Q15: To what extent do you agree or disagree with "Increasing occupancy levels by vacant buildings or derelict sites coming back into use" as an objective when focussing on Place? • Strongly Agree • Agree • Neither Agree or Disagree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree:
Q16: To what extent do you agree or disagree with "Creating more productive local economies" as an objective when focussing on Place? • Strongly Agree • Agree • Neither Agree or Disagree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree:
Q17: If you answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' to Questions 14-16 above, please tell us why and/ or what you would suggest as alternatives for objectives for Place?	No response required

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council's Response to Shaping Sustainable Places

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Q18: To what extent do you agree or disagree with "Improving safety in village, town and city centres" as an objective when focussing on People? • Strongly Agree • Agree • Neither Agree or Disagree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree	Strongly agree.
Q19: To what extent do you agree or disagree with "Creating more active and sustainable infrastructure and facilities" as an objective when focussing on People? • Strongly Agree • Agree • Neither Agree or Disagree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree	Strongly agree.
Q20: To what extent do you agree or disagree with "Reducing car dominance" as an objective when focussing on People? • Strongly Agree • Agree • Neither Agree or Disagree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree	Strongly agree.
Q21: If you answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' to Questions 18-20 above, please tell us why and/ or what you would suggest as alternatives for objectives for People?	No response required.

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Q22: To what extent do you agree or disagree with "Creating or growing existing green spaces" as an objective when focussing on Planet? • Strongly Agree • Agree • Neither Agree or Disagree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree.
Q23: To what extent do you agree or disagree with "Building infrastructure that is more resilient to the effects of climate change" as an objective when focussing on Planet? • Strongly Agree • Agree • Neither Agree or Disagree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree	Strongly agree.
Q24: To what extent do you agree or disagree with "Ensuring buildings brought back into use are more energy efficient" as an objective when focussing on Planet? • Strongly Agree • Agree • Neither Agree or Disagree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree.
Q25: If you answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' to Questions 22-24 above, please tell us why and/ or what you would suggest as alternatives for objectives for Planet?	No response required

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council's Response to Shaping Sustainable Places

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Q26: Do you feel the partnership working to deliver these previous regeneration schemes was successful? • Yes • No • Don't Know	Yes.
Q27: What, if any, are your views on how these three departments worked collaboratively in partnership with Local Councils to deliver the previous regeneration schemes outlined above?	While the Council acknowledges the benefits of past collaborative programmes, we believe there is scope for more active involvement from all participating bodies in both programme design and delivery. We therefore recommend stronger co-design mechanisms, with councils engaged as strategic partners from the outset.
Q28: Do you think other partners should be involved in delivering Shaping Sustainable Places? • Yes • No	Yes.
Q29: If you answered yes to Q28 above, please tell us which other partners do you think should be involved in delivering Shaping Sustainable Places?	NI Water A respected umbrella community body such as the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action - NICVA
Q30: To what extent do you agree that the regeneration of villages, towns and city centres should be a long-term strategic priority, with security of funding, for the Northern Ireland Executive and Local Councils? • Strongly Agree • Agree • Neither Agree or Disagree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree	Strongly agree.
Q31: If you answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' at Q30 above, please tell us why and/ or what you would suggest as an alternative proposal for investing the limited funds available for regeneration?	No response required.

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Q32: To what extent would you support the establishment of competitive funding opportunities to tackle specific regeneration issues? • Strongly Agree • Agree • Neither Agree or Disagree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree	Agree.
Q33: If you answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' at Q32 above, please tell us why and/ or what you would suggest as an alternative proposal to drive innovation in regeneration?	The Council welcomes the proposal for competitive funding opportunities to stimulate innovation but would emphasise the need for clarity and transparency in assessment processes. We recommend that assessment panels include representation from local government alongside departmental officials to ensure regional balance and local insight. Clear criteria for distinguishing between applications will be essential, with consideration given to proportionality so that smaller councils and rural communities are not disadvantaged.
Q34: Are there any specific regeneration issues or themes in your local area you feel could be tackled most effectively by the establishment of a competitive funding opportunity?	The establishment or use of competitive funding opportunities could provide a reasonable approach to respond to new issues that arise during the course of the strategy period, such as was the case with COVID, if there are any other such shocks or rapid transformational changes, or where new wider policies or legislation. e.g. adoption of new Local Development Plans, Dilapidation Bill, rates reform or further transfer of powers come into force that can change what interventions Councils can utilise. Secondly there may be occasions where a competitive funding process may be beneficial where new investment opportunities such as opportunity sites become available perhaps requiring a partnership approach with the public and private sectors.

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council's Response to Shaping Sustainable Places

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Q35: Please select from the list below your top 5 preferences that you consider to be the most important criteria when prioritising places for intervention through Shaping Sustainable Places? • Length of time since previous capital investment in public space • Levels of vacancy • Road safety • Economic activity data • Addressing economic market failure • Access to services for residents of surrounding areas • Potential to attract visitors and tourism • Potential to leverage private sector investment • Potential for people to meet and spend time • Potential for increasing pedestrian areas • Population size • Air quality • Impacts of extreme weather (eg flooding) • Other - Community Buy In/Engagement - Safety in Community	We would like to note that we believe that the criteria when prioritising places for intervention may change dependent upon the priority or theme. The Council welcomes the inclusion of prioritisation criteria to establish need and guide funding allocation. We recommend that the criteria be further refined to distinguish between villages, small settlements and towns, as their challenges and opportunities can differ significantly. We also strongly support the inclusion of community buy-in and local safety considerations as key criteria, alongside vacancy rates and economic activity. This would ensure that regeneration funds are targeted where they can deliver the most transformative impact: 1. Length of time since previous capital investment in public space . 2. Levels of vacancy . 3. Potential to attract visitors and tourism. 4. Community Buy In/Engagement. 5. Safety in Community.
Q36: To what extent would you support the adoption of a Centre First policy for the location of public sector jobs and services in Northern Ireland? • Strongly Agree • Agree • Neither Agree or Disagree • Disagree • Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree:

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council's Response to Shaping Sustainable Places

Q37: If you answered 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' at Q36 above, please tell us why	No response required
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Council/Committee:	Environment and Economy Committee
Date:	15 September 2025
Report Title:	DAERA Draft NI Climate Action Plan 2023-27 Consultation
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Catherine Hunter, Acting Climate & Sustainability Manager
Approver:	Shaun Morley, Director of Operations

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This report is to update Members on the DAERA-led draft NI Climate Action Plan consultation and to seek approval of the draft response at Appendix 3.

2. Background

- 2.1. The NI Executive passed the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (the Act), which sets an ambitious target to reduce Northern Ireland's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to net zero by 2050. The Act requires DAERA to prepare and publish a Climate Action Plan every five years. This draft plan sets out policies and proposals to achieve reductions in emissions and actions to enable this to be achieved.
- 2.2. The focus of this draft Plan is on meeting the first carbon budget. A carbon budget sets a limit on the maximum amount of greenhouse gas emissions that can be produced over a five-year period. Keeping emissions within the limit set for each carbon budget period is important as it will set us on the right emissions pathway to meet 2030, 2040 and 2050 targets, in line with the requirements of the legislation. The carbon budget for 2023-27 is to achieve 33% average annual reduction compared to the 1990 baseline.
- 2.3. DAERA has coordinated the publication of this first draft Climate Action Plan, with each Northern Ireland department identifying policies and proposals to reduce emissions to reduce emissions and ensure that the carbon budget is achieved. This consultation opened on 19 June and will close on 9 October 2025.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

- 3.1. Council would like further clarity and information on the following points:

- **Biodiversity** - Council would suggest it is an extremely ambitious target: *"By 2027, to have 65% of designated features in protected sites to be in or approaching favourable conservation condition, and at least 12% of all land, freshwater and marine environments effectively conserved, managed and well connected for nature"* to achieve over the proposed timeframe. The feasibility of delivering this is unclear – what is going to be put in place to make this happen? There are legislative issues that need to be tackled to protect and enhance biodiversity in NI.
- **Economic Development** - Providing Local Councils and Local Government with the tools, mechanisms and powers to enable and facilitate climate action locally across a wide range of sectors could be a key asset for central Government in accelerating the transition to net zero. Programmes like the Innovate UK Future Ready programme, including Fast Followers and Pathfinders projects delivered under the Innovate UK Net Zero Living Programme, have highlighted the positive impact which Local Authorities can have on climate action, taking a place-based and systems-change approach to a just transition and convening, facilitating or supporting various other sectors to accelerate towards net zero targets.
- **Transport** - The draft Plan rightly identifies that transport contributes approximately 18% of Northern Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. A key strategy for reducing these emissions is the transition from fossil fuels to low-carbon alternatives. We strongly recommend that the Northern Ireland Executive and DAERA explore mechanisms to reduce the cost of low carbon fuels. In addition, consideration should be given to incentivization of micro-generation & BESS as an integral component of EV charging infrastructure, to improve the overall EV infrastructure in NI.
- **Energy production and supply** – agreed that addressing the emissions from the energy production and supply sector through a range of renewable energy incentives and programmes would appear to be the most appropriate means of a just transition within this sector. Potentially more work required on the qualification and eligibility criteria for these schemes, including incentives for domestic micro-generation also presenting an opportunity but something that appears not to be fully incentivised currently, especially for the able to pay market.
- **Public buildings** – Council supports the underlying principles of the previously published DfE Energy Strategy and Action Plan and looks forward to the next iteration on this framework. While an uplift to Part F of the building regulations (NI) is appropriate and recognised as an instrumental component of the net zero journey the energy labelling framework (while necessary) may prove less impactful. A more rigorous building certification methodology may go further in satisfying requirements under the building performance regulations and take from and feed into the



**Mid & East
Antrim**
Borough Council

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ECDR piece in quality data informing performance and meaningful recommendations being produced from assessment.

In terms of support from the DfE 'Invest to Save' fund available to all departments and their arm's length bodies, non-departmental public bodies and academic institutions referred to as '*the Northern Ireland Central Government estate*' it should be noted that local government is excluded from accessing this support. Further to this exclusion restricting investment opportunity for local authorities, local authorities are also barred from accessing the CPD energy purchasing process, and by extension outside of the ECDR framework. It should therefore be recognised that a significant part of the public estate loses out on the opportunities presented.

- **Waste** - Council supports an increased diversion from landfill, improving recycling performance and bringing businesses and organisations into scope for recycling collections, however any form of new recycling collection service provided to the business/organisation sector will need to be properly considered. Should Councils be required to provide this service, realistic financing and resourcing will be required to meet this new service demand. In addition, central government cannot be prescriptive in allocating funding to NI Councils for their chosen recycling collection model. This limits Council's options, especially when analysis has been undertaken to demonstrate one particular model would yield higher recycling participation from residents and at a lower cost.
- **Finance** – Council supports the ambition of the Climate Action Plan 2023–2027 and agrees that a joined-up, cost-effective path to net zero is important. However, the current cost assessment is too uncertain to give Councils a reliable basis for planning, and the draft Plan does not clearly demonstrate that the full programme is financially affordable for local government or ratepayers. While the plan explains its quantification method, the cost estimates still have high uncertainty.

- 3.2 To conclude, Council is generally content with the draft NI Climate Action Plan 2023-27, notwithstanding the points raised above.

4. General Considerations / Implications

- 4.1. **Financial implications** – supporting the delivery of the draft Plan will enable Council to access financial support to decarbonise.
- 4.2. **Human Resources** – staff from all Council services will be impacted through the delivery of this draft Plan.
- 4.3. **Equality Screening / Rural Proofing and Environmental Impact** – the draft Plan has been screened through a wide range of frameworks including financial, social, economic (FSE), child protection, strategic

environmental assessment, habitats regulation assessment etc (see references below).

- 4.4. **Alignment with Corporate Priorities and Link to Corporate Plan** – supporting this draft Plan will help Council deliver on strategic priorities in all four pillars of the Corporate Plan.
- 4.5. **Reputation** – climate is of significant public interest – by supporting this draft Plan we are demonstrating our commitment to address the climate challenge.
- 4.6. **Legal** - The Climate Change (NI) Act 2022 places statutory requirement on central government to deliver climate change policy. Council supporting the draft Plan will help to fulfill this requirement.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1. To seek approval of the draft response at Appendix 3 and to submit to DAERA, prior to the deadline of 9 October 2025.

6. Recommendation or Decision

- 6.1. It is recommended that Elected Members approve the draft response (Appendix 3) to this consultation.

7. Appendices / Links

- Appendix 1 DAERA draft NI Climate Action Plan 2023-27
- Appendix 2 Consultation Document
- Appendix 3 MEA Draft Response

Link: Full consultation document portfolio:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/public-consultation-northern-irelands-draft-climate-action-plan-2023-2027>

DRAFT

NORTHERN IRELAND CLIMATE ACTION PLAN



Department of
Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs

An Roinn
Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe

Department o'
Fairmin, Environment
an' Kintra Matthers

www.daera-ni.gov.uk

**Draft Climate
Action Plan
2023-2027**

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Ministerial Foreword



DAERA Minister, on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive

Our climate is changing. Globally, temperatures continue to rise, and extreme weather events are experienced with increased frequency and intensity. In Northern Ireland we are indirectly affected by global food shortages, water scarcity and energy insecurity through the prices we pay for our food and fuel. We are also experiencing the impacts of climate change locally, through flash flooding, regional extreme weather events or seasonal upsurges in algal blooms. The consequences of occurrences such as Storm Éowyn and blue-green algal blooms in Lough Neagh demonstrate the devastating and costly impacts of climate change to our economy, businesses, communities, industries, infrastructure, housing, environment and health. At the same time, we are facing a biodiversity crisis. Maintaining a rich variety of animal and plant species is vital to addressing climate change and ensuring the provision of natural resources, clean air, habitats for wildlife and sites for recreation.

As Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, I am acutely aware of the scale and urgency of the challenge. But I also see the opportunity for Northern Ireland to be part of the solution. In 2020, the Northern Ireland Assembly declared a climate emergency, affirming our shared responsibility to act. We have committed to contributing to the Paris Agreement, the Glasgow Climate Pact, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) 30 x 30 targets and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The draft Green Growth Strategy sets a vision and framework for a future where Northern Ireland transitions from being a high to a net zero emissions society and enjoys the longer term economic, social, health and environmental benefits that this brings.

Action is no longer optional. In 2022, the Northern Ireland Assembly passed its first climate change legislation, the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, committing Northern Ireland to an ambitious 2050 net zero emissions target. In December 2024, a key requirement of this Act was fulfilled when I was able to garner Executive approval for the first three carbon budgets (2023-2037) and 2030 and 2040 interim emissions reduction targets to set us on a path to net zero. Steady progress is being made in implementing other requirements of the Act including establishing a Just Transition Commission and a Northern Ireland Climate Commissioner and introducing public body reporting arrangements.

I am pleased, on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive, to present this draft Climate Action Plan 2023-2027 which sets out policies and proposals put forward by Northern Ireland departments to achieve a 33% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from the 1990 baseline, consistent with our first carbon budget. Reaching this point has been challenging but has provided a valuable opportunity to collectively build knowledge and

understanding, expertise and skills. It has required working together, across government, in a uniquely collaborative way, harnessing the benefits of a partnership approach.

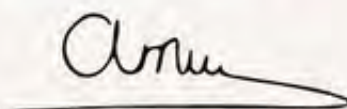
Bringing about the transformational change required will mean everyone doing things differently. I am committed to ensuring the Climate Action Plan can be implemented in a way that is fair to everyone through applying a 'just transition' approach, supporting those who are least able to deal with the consequences. We will all need to make positive and lasting behaviour changes to realise our vision for a more sustainable, efficient Northern Ireland that nurtures our environment. In doing so, we must embrace the exciting opportunities to build our economy and develop new skills, technology and innovation, bringing benefits to our wellbeing and securing the future for next generations.

The challenge may be significant, particularly considering our budgetary constraints. The cost of delivering ambitious climate targets will mean difficult decisions need to be made. However, what is clear is that the costs from delay will only grow – the cost of inaction will be far greater. Failure to change now means failure to protect people and the environment from the damaging impacts of climate change and we will risk missing out entirely on capturing the benefits for our economy arising from the transition. We must act now, decisively and with ambition.

I believe this approach brings incredible opportunities to learn new skills, create green jobs and to do things in a less harmful way for future generations. It is a positive step to help protect and safeguard our local environment.

I am more determined than ever to continue to reduce emissions. We might be a small participant in a wider global concern but that should not deter us from playing our part. It is my goal that the first Climate Action Plan is an important step on our journey to net zero. I will continue to work, together with my Executive colleagues, and show the leadership that is required to enable this change to happen. We have a long way to go but are prepared for the challenge. I urge you to join us on this journey.

Together, we can build a more sustainable, resilient, and thriving Northern Ireland for generations to come.



Andrew Muir MLA
Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Executive Summary

This is Northern Ireland's first draft Climate Action Plan 2023-2027. It is important because it is the first step on our journey to deliver our net zero ambition. Producing this plan is a statutory requirement under the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (the Act) and a clear commitment in our Programme for Government 2024-2027. In December 2024, the Northern Ireland Assembly legislated that, for the period of this plan (2023-2027), greenhouse gas emissions need to be reduced by 33% on average from the 1990 baseline¹, to set us on the right path to net zero and contribute to global climate targets.

This first draft Climate Action Plan sets out 52 policies and proposals designed to reduce emissions across nine sectors: energy production and supply; transport; business and industrial processes; residential buildings; public buildings; waste management; agriculture; land use, land-use change and forestry; and fisheries. Some sectors are expected to contribute more than others; some policies and proposals have a greater impact than others; some contribute to emissions savings across more than one sector. Together, these policies and proposals set a roadmap of action needed to reduce emissions and keep us on track for future targets.

Our analysis of the impact of this plan shows that the combination of quantified policies and proposals contained within this draft Climate Action Plan is expected to be sufficient for Northern Ireland to meet its first carbon budget. This analysis is based on a number of stretching assumptions. Testing the sensitivity of these assumptions demonstrates that without adequate, secured funding and political and public backing, achieving the carbon budget will be challenging. It will involve prioritising these actions and securing the levels of investments needed to deliver them. It will require investing in science and innovation, education and skills development and enabling physical and digital infrastructure. It will also mean re-evaluating plans to progress projects that increase our emissions.

Importantly, the Act places a specific legal duty on all Northern Ireland departments to exercise their functions, as far as possible, in a way that supports achieving targets and carbon budgets. This ensures a shared responsibility both to reduce emissions through policies and proposals included in this plan and to monitor any likely impact on emissions of emerging policies and proposals during this first carbon budget period, 2023-2027.

¹ compared to the base year (1990 for most gases)

Government has a leading role to play in putting in place the policy and regulatory levers and allocating the resources necessary to meet our targets, but government action alone will not be sufficient. Achieving the reductions in emissions will require a concerted effort from everyone and a genuine willingness to make changes to the way we live our lives. For example, giving up the convenience of travelling by private car on short journeys; choosing to use our resources efficiently; and, where we can, paying more upfront for efficient technologies that will reduce emissions and save money in the longer term. However, it will also create an opportunity for a cleaner, greener, safer, fairer and prosperous society.

Significant collaboration across departments has taken place to understand the Act's requirements, including roles and responsibilities, to determine the strategic direction, identify methodologies and agree the content of this pivotal plan. Against a background of complex circumstances, departments have managed priorities, reallocated staff resources and built internal knowledge and capacity to support the development process.

By necessity, the plan is extremely detailed, complex and technical. It has been informed by engagement with stakeholders with a shared goal to ensure that Northern Ireland meets the challenge of reducing emissions. It is well informed and based on a robust foundation of careful and considered analysis. It has involved development of knowledge, skills and tools across departments and this has taken time. Identifying policies and proposals which are sufficiently ambitious whilst remaining achievable has been challenging.

In addition, it is acknowledged that there are areas where information and data are not currently available. In collaboration with others, work will continue to build and improve an evidence and knowledge base and to refine methodologies and approaches for subsequent Climate Action Plans. However, it is essential that the plan is not delayed further and that rather than pursuing perfection, efforts are focused on delivering the action that is required.

Implementing the Climate Action Plan provides a significant opportunity to work together, across government, across sectors and across society, to address one of the most important challenges of our time. Ultimately, this plan shows that, if we are to be certain about achieving our targets now and in the future, we will need to be bolder, more ambitious and more innovative.

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview

In 2022, Northern Ireland passed its first climate legislation. The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (the Act)² sets an ambitious target to reduce Northern Ireland's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to net zero by 2050. This means that we must remove at least as many emissions from our atmosphere as we produce.

The Act requires us to prepare and publish a Climate Action Plan every five years.

This plan sets out policies and proposals to achieve reductions in emissions and the actions to enable this to happen. The focus of this Climate Action Plan is on meeting the first carbon budget. A carbon budget sets a limit on the maximum amount of GHG emissions that can be produced over a five-year period. Keeping emissions within the limit set for each carbon budget period is important as it will set us on the right pathway to meet 2030, 2040 and 2050 targets, in line with the requirements of the legislation.

What is a Carbon Budget?

A carbon budget provides a limit on the maximum total greenhouse gas emissions which should not be exceeded for a defined budgetary period, in order to help meet overall and longer-term emission reduction commitments.



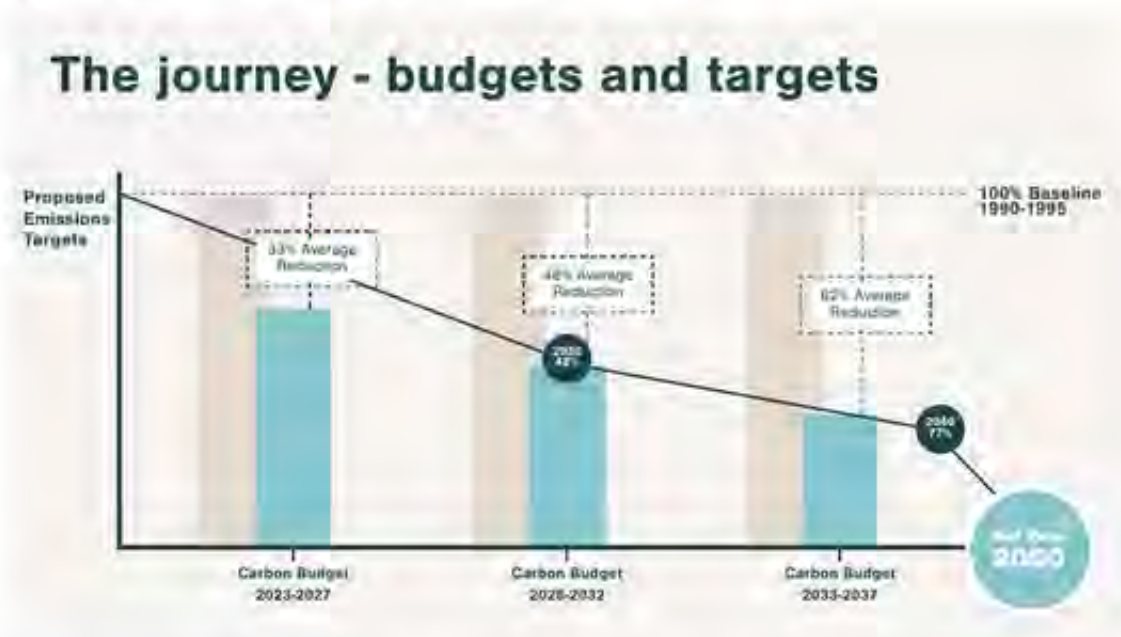
The Climate Change Committee (CCC), the UK's independent adviser on climate change, provided advice on Northern Ireland's first three carbon budget periods (2023-2027; 2028-2032; and 2033-2037). To achieve the emission reductions in line with CCC advice³ for the 2023-2027 budget, that is, the first carbon budget period, GHG emissions would need to reduce by an annual average of 33% from the 1990 baseline⁴ emission levels, across the five-year period.

² Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (legislation.gov.uk)

³ Advice report: The path to a Net Zero Northern Ireland - Climate Change Committee (theccc.org.uk)

⁴ 1990 baseline refers to 1990 for CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O, or 1995 for fluorinated gases (F-gases) as specified in the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 and the CCC's advice. The Greenhouse Gas Inventory refers to the 1990 base year, this has the same meaning as the 1990 baseline

Figure 1: The journey – budgets and targets



While we have obtained advice about the level of carbon budgets and 2030 and 2040 emissions levels, the Act requires that Northern Ireland sets its own targets in legislation. To inform this, a 16-week public consultation was held from June to October 2023. The outcome of the consultation demonstrated there was significant support for adopting the CCC's recommendations.

With the return of the Executive in February 2024, it became possible to finalise these budgets and targets; legislation⁵ to set and confirm these in law was passed by the Northern Ireland Assembly and came into operation on 12 December 2024.

A commitment to develop the first Climate Action Plan is included in the Executive's Programme for Government (PfG)⁶ which was agreed on 27 February 2025. The PfG also recognises the need for greater collaboration to tackle climate change through the development of a Northern Ireland Climate Action Plan across all government departments.

⁵ The Climate Change (Carbon Budgets 2023-2037) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024; and The Climate Change (2040 Emissions Target) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024

⁶ Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most

Doing What Matters Most: Programme for Government 2024-2027



The Programme for Government outlines the Executive's agreed priorities for its three-year mandate. It focuses on doing what matters most – transforming public services, supporting businesses and improving the lives of employees, families and communities. It is structured around three Missions: People, Planet and Prosperity; with Peace as a cross-cutting commitment.

As an action to tackle climate change, the Executive commits to consulting on Northern Ireland's first Climate Action Plan to reduce carbon emissions, adapt to changing weather patterns and work towards net zero, supporting households and businesses to achieve this in a fair and balanced way.

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has co-ordinated the publication of this draft Climate Action Plan, with each Northern Ireland department identifying policies and proposals to reduce emissions and ensure that the carbon budget is achieved.

These policies and proposals are arranged into sectors⁷:

- energy production and supply;
- transport;
- business and industrial processes;
- residential and public buildings*;
- waste management;
- agriculture;
- land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF);
- fisheries

Work to develop this draft plan commenced during a period of political uncertainty and a challenging budget environment which had implications for available resources and departments' ability to make decisions about new policies and proposals. Whilst significant progress was made, our ability to meet the timeframes set by the Act has

⁷ As defined in Section 33 of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022

been impacted.⁸ We are now into the third year of the carbon budget period this draft plan covers. Work to deliver policies and proposals which meet our climate ambitions has been progressing in parallel with the development of this draft plan.

Prioritising policies and proposals to meet emissions targets and allocating the necessary levels of investment will mean choices need to be made across the whole of society. These choices must be made in the context that we must live within our carbon budget, just as we must live within financial budgets. For government, it will involve difficult decisions about how to allocate limited resources to deliver our key public services including health, education and infrastructure. Significant investment in science and innovation, education and skills development and enabling of physical and digital infrastructure will be required.

This draft Climate Action Plan sets out the roadmap to deliver on Northern Ireland's climate ambition.

1.2 Structure of the Document

Section One describes the strategic context to this draft Climate Action Plan including the requirements of the Act, the first three carbon budgets and 2030 and 2040 targets. This section also outlines the process we have followed to develop policies and proposals to meet these targets and the status of current emissions in Northern Ireland.

Section Two describes the methodology we have used to quantify emissions and sets out the policies and proposals that we have identified across all sectors and departments. It details the estimated impacts of these measures in terms of quantified emissions reductions and wider financial, social, economic, rural and other impacts. This section identifies air, soil and biodiversity targets; and outlines examples of nature-based solutions which have been incorporated into policies and proposals for emissions reductions to ensure that we are simultaneously tackling our nature crisis.

Section Three outlines the approach we will take to deliver the first Climate Action Plan, including the governance arrangements and monitoring and reporting framework to chart progress. It also outlines actions the public sector is implementing to lead by example and identifies enablers and investment that will be required to successfully implement the plan. Finally, this section sets out the important programme of work that is being progressed alongside this draft Climate Action Plan, to support how we adapt to the impacts of a changing climate.

⁸ In this draft Climate Action Plan buildings are split into two separate sectors – Residential Buildings (Chapter 6.5) and Public Buildings (Chapter 6.6).

⁹ Within the Act, two different dates by which the first Climate Action Plan must be published are given: Section 29 requires publication by 31 December 2023 whereas Section 51(1) requires the plan to be published by 6 June 2024. As stated above, a number of factors have impacted the ability to meet these timeframes.



SECTION ONE

Climate Action Plan Development

1

2. Context to the Climate Action Plan

2.1 Introduction

Climate change is recognised as one of the most important challenges facing the world today. The United Nations (UN) defines climate change as the long-term shifts in temperature and average weather patterns across the world.¹⁰ These shifts can be natural but, since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels (like coal, oil and gas) which produces heat-trapping gases called greenhouse gases (GHGs). The impacts, which include changing weather patterns, rising sea levels and more frequent and extreme weather events, are affecting every country across the world.

Unavoidable changes have already been locked in. This increases the vulnerability of our economy, businesses, industries, infrastructure, housing, natural environment and health and increases the uncertainty of the future impacts we face. What is certain is that the scale of the change we experience in the future will depend on the level of emissions reductions we can achieve globally by 2050.

Countries across the world are embracing the technologies and solutions (such as renewable energy) needed to create cleaner, more resilient economies. Climate change is a global challenge, so cooperation and action are required internationally. Globally, efforts are now focused on limiting the rise in temperature to 1.5°C to help prevent extreme weather (like heatwaves, drought and storms) happening more often and becoming more severe.¹¹

Realising this target will set a clear course to achieving wider UN Sustainable Development Goals towards a better and more sustainable future for all and will provide a roadmap for climate action that will reduce emissions and build resilience to climate impacts.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals¹² (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries – developed and developing – in a global partnership. They recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and promote economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

¹⁰ What is Climate Change? | United Nations

¹¹ The Paris Agreement | UNFCCC 'The Paris Agreement' is a legally binding international treaty on climate change that was adopted by 196 countries in 2015. Its objective is to hold 'the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels'. More recently, world leaders have emphasised the need to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, by the end of this century.

¹² THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development (un.org)



The climate challenge must be considered in tandem with the ongoing efforts to halt and reverse biodiversity loss. Healthy biodiversity plays a key role in regulating climate, reducing GHG emissions, sequestering carbon, reducing flooding risk and building climate resilience. Climate change will in turn impact upon natural habitats and species composition. Nature-based Solutions (NbS) which contribute to net zero while addressing the drivers of biodiversity loss should be prioritised.

2.2 Climate Commitments in the UK

The UK was the first country in the world to introduce legislation to cut long-term emissions with the passing of the Climate Change Act 2008¹³ in November 2008. It sets out statutory emissions reduction targets for the whole of the UK. It also provides the legal basis to establish the CCC as an independent statutory advisory body to the UK Government and Devolved Administrations on matters relating to climate change. The Act initially committed the UK to reducing its emissions by 80% by 2050, compared to 1990 levels. However, this target was superseded in 2019 when the UK became the first major economy to commit to a net zero target by 2050, in line with its commitment to the Paris Agreement. Devolved Administrations contribute to achieving the targets set in UK climate legislation.

To inform a path to net zero, in December 2020, the CCC published comprehensive advice¹⁴ to the UK Government which contained its recommendations for the Sixth Carbon Budget and provided a blueprint for a fully decarbonised UK by 2050. It outlined necessary changes to policy and recommended a 78% reduction in UK emissions by 2035 relative to the 1990 baseline.

This path was updated in October 2021 with the publication of the UK Net Zero Strategy,¹⁵ which sets out plans to meet the net zero target across all sectors of the UK economy. Following a review¹⁶ into the UK Government's net zero approach, commissioned to reflect a change in the economic context with higher energy prices and inflationary pressures, the UK Government published a further report¹⁷ in March 2023 to set out how it would enhance actions to deliver energy security, seize economic opportunities arising from the transition and deliver on net zero commitments.

The UK's 2035 Nationally Determined Contributions target under international law, announced by the Prime Minister at COP29 in November 2024, is to reduce all greenhouse gas emissions by at least 81% on 1990 levels, excluding international aviation and shipping emissions.¹⁸

¹³ CCC-Insights-Briefing-1-The-UK-Climate-Change-Act.pdf (thccc.org.uk)

¹⁴ The-Sixth-Carbon-Budget-The-UKs-path-to-Net-Zero.pdf (thccc.org.uk)

¹⁵ net-zero-strategy- Build back greener beis.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)

¹⁶ Net Zero Review Final Report - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

¹⁷ Powering Up Britain - Joint Overview (publishing.service.gov.uk)

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uks-2035-nationally-determined-contribution-ndc-emissions-reduction-target-under-the-paris-agreement>

¹⁹ This commitment was included in New Decade, New Approach, the deal to restore devolved government 2020-01-08_a_new_decade__a_new_approach.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)

²⁰ 03 February 2020 (niassembly.gov.uk)

²¹ The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 - Key elements | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

2.3 Climate Commitments in Northern Ireland

In January 2020, the need for a coordinated and strategic approach to the challenge of climate change was recognised in New Decade, New Approach, the deal to restore devolved government in Northern Ireland.¹⁹ Following the UK, Scottish and Welsh governments, it committed to introducing legislation and targets for reducing carbon emissions in line with the Paris Agreement.

In February 2020, the Northern Ireland Assembly declared a climate emergency, recognising "the immediate impact of climate breakdown and a biodiversity crisis and their effect on all aspects of our lives in the coming years".²⁰ The Assembly called for the Executive's commitments to tackling climate change to be implemented urgently.

In March 2022, the Assembly passed the Climate Change Bill fulfilling the Executive's commitment to introduce its first climate legislation. Having received Royal Assent, the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 took effect in June 2022. The Act sets an ambitious emissions target of net zero by 2050, to achieve an overall balance in the emissions that we produce and those we remove from our atmosphere.

In addition to the net zero target, to set Northern Ireland on the right pathway, the Act also contains emissions reduction targets for 2030 and 2040 and includes requirements around the setting of carbon budgets. Like financial budgets which set financial limits, carbon budgets set limits on carbon emissions that cannot be exceeded. DAERA must publish five-yearly Climate Action Plans to outline policies and proposals to meet the carbon budget for that period and how interim emissions reduction targets and the net zero target will be achieved across specified sectors. A summary of the Act's key requirements can be found on the DAERA website.²¹ Key elements include establishing: an independent Northern Ireland Climate Commissioner (being led by The Executive Office); a Just Transition Commission; a Just Transition Fund for Agriculture; and public body reporting arrangements (all led by DAERA).

Climate Change Act NI 2022



Importantly, the Act places a specific legal duty²² on all Northern Ireland departments to exercise their functions, as far as possible, in a way that supports achieving targets and carbon budgets. This ensures a shared responsibility both to reduce emissions through policies and proposals included in this plan and to monitor any likely impact on emissions of emerging policies and proposals during this carbon budget period and beyond.

2.4 Carbon Budget 2023-2027

After the Act was passed, DAERA sought advice from the CCC on what a path to net zero might be on appropriate emissions reduction targets for 2030 and 2040 and on appropriate levels for Northern Ireland’s first three carbon budgets. This advice was provided by the CCC in its Advice Report²³ which was published in March 2023.

DAERA subsequently carried out a consultation exercise from June to October 2023 on the carbon budgets and emissions targets recommended by the CCC. Following completion of the consultation exercise and consideration of the responses provided (a summary of the responses is available on DAERA’s website²⁴), regulations reflecting the CCC’s recommendations were approved by the DAERA Minister and ultimately passed by the Assembly in December 2024. As a result, Northern Ireland’s first three carbon budgets have been set in law and a new target for 2040 has been set through an amendment made to the Act. The current emissions reduction targets in the Act and carbon budgets which have been set for Northern Ireland under the Act are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Northern Ireland’s 2030, 2040 and 2050 targets and first three carbon budgets

Target/Budget Proposal	Emissions reductions required
2030 Target	A 48% emissions reduction by 2030 against the 1990 baseline ²⁵
2040 Target	A 77% emissions reduction by 2040 against the 1990 baseline
2050 Target	A 100% reduction by 2050 against the1990 baseline
Carbon Budget 1 (2023-2027)	33% average annual reduction compared to the 1990 baseline
Carbon Budget 2 (2028-2032)	48% average annual reduction compared to the 1990 baseline
Carbon Budget 3 (2033-2037)	62% average annual reduction compared to the 1990 baseline



²⁵ The net Northern Ireland emissions account should be at least 48% lower than the 1990 baseline in 2030 and at least 77% lower than the 1990 baseline in 2040, while for carbon budgets, the recommended average annual reduction relates to reductions in the net Northern Ireland emissions account across the period compared to the 1990 baseline. The net Northern Ireland emissions account for a year means the aggregate amount of net emissions of each greenhouse gas in Northern Ireland (emissions and removals of a gas plus/minus any carbon units debited or credited to the account). The baseline is the aggregate amount of net Northern Ireland emissions of each greenhouse gas in the year specified in relation to that gas (1990 for Carbon dioxide, Methane and Nitrous oxide; 1995 for Hydrofluorocarbons, Perfluorocarbons, Sulphur hexafluoride and Nitrogen trifluoride).

2.5 CCC Advice Report – a Path to Net Zero Northern Ireland

In addition to providing advice on the first three carbon budgets and 2030 and 2040, i.e. interim, emissions reduction targets, the CCC's report²⁶ also set out recommendations on the best pathway for Northern Ireland to achieve its net zero emissions reduction targets. This report illustrates the types of actions required to achieve the outcomes that policies must drive to decarbonise at the pace required. Its advice on delivering net zero incorporated the combined impact of three different pathways: the Updated Balanced Pathway; the Stretch Ambition Pathway; and the Speculative Options Pathway. The Stretch Ambition Pathway comprises actions from the Updated Balanced Pathway plus additional actions; and the Speculative Options Pathway comprises actions from the Balanced and Stretch pathways plus additional actions to achieve further emissions reductions.

Figure 2: CCC pathways to net zero by 2050



1. Updated Balanced Pathway – this updated CCC's previous advice for Northern Ireland and identified actions that would reach an 83% reduction in emissions compared to the 1990 baseline by 2050.
2. Stretch Ambition Pathway – this would mean further increases in the amount of carbon stored in land and removed from the atmosphere using engineering solutions to offset emissions from sectors where it is difficult to eliminate emissions completely. With these additional actions, Northern Ireland would achieve a 93% reduction in emissions compared to the 1990 baseline by 2050.
3. Speculative Options Pathway – to address the shortfall in emissions reductions, examples of measures are: directly capturing CO₂ from the atmosphere and storing it elsewhere²⁷; enhanced weathering technologies; or making significant changes to the agriculture sector.

²⁶ Advice report: The path to a Net Zero Northern Ireland - Climate Change Committee (theccc.org.uk)

To achieve net zero based on the CCC's pathways, elements of the Speculative Options Pathway would need to be implemented. The report also indicated examples of near-term actions that could be required to reach the 2030 emissions target across each of the sectors as illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3: CCC near-term actions (by 2030)



The CCC also provided assumed annual pathways for each sector to achieve the first carbon budget. To account for updates to the Northern Ireland Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Inventory, the CCC's pathways were adjusted. The adjusted CCC pathway represents the annual emission levels assumed by the CCC for each sector with differing rates of assumed emission reduction across each sector.

The CCC's advice illustrates the scale and pace of action that will be required to meet net zero and the 2030 targets across all sectors. Delivering the changes necessary will be highly challenging but will also create significant environmental, societal and economic opportunities. It is our collective responsibility to set a pathway to maximise these opportunities so that we can contribute to addressing the global, national and local impacts of a changing climate.

Alongside the formal consultation on proposed carbon budgets and interim emission targets, we invited views from members of the public on the CCC's suggested pathway.

²⁷ Direct Air Carbon Capture and Storage, (DACCS)

Most respondents indicated strong support for the Executive to consider, follow or align with the CCC's sectoral recommendations, with the exception of the agriculture sector where 42% of respondents supported an alternative sectoral approach. The buildings sector pathway was supported by 84% of respondents, in favour of improving energy efficiency and promoting low carbon heating. Public sector leading by example through the government estate received 82% support, and the waste sector pathway similarly had 80% of respondents in favour of the recommended actions. A total of 79% of respondents were in favour of the Executive following the business and industrial processes sector advice; and across energy, transport, fisheries and LULUCF there was over 70% in favour of the advice provided by the CCC. Many consultees supplied information on measures they felt would improve and enable Northern Ireland to achieve the CCC's recommendations. A full analysis of responses is available on the DAERA website.²⁸

The consultation provided departments with detailed views, concerns and suggestions to help inform current and future policies and proposals to reduce emissions.

2.6 Annual Greenhouse Gas Emissions

In addition to setting carbon budgets and interim emissions reduction targets, the Act requires that this Climate Action Plan must also include annual targets for GHG emissions.²⁹ Whilst these targets are non-binding, they should help ensure that we are on track to meet the carbon budget.

In addition to providing advice on carbon budgets, the CCC also provided DAERA with assumptions on what annual emissions levels in Northern Ireland would be if the CCC's Updated Balanced Pathway for Northern Ireland is followed. Meeting the carbon budget does not depend on meeting each of these annual emission levels. However, the CCC's assumptions represent the best available evidence on which to base annual GHG targets that are in line with the first carbon budget, the 2030 targets and ultimately the pathway to net zero. It is, therefore, proposed that the latest version of the CCC's assumed annual emission levels for the remaining full years of the carbon budget are adopted as the annual GHG targets for the purposes of the Act. The CCC's assumptions are consistent with delivery of the advised carbon budget of a 33% average annual reduction from the 1990 baseline over the course of the first carbon budget period, 2023 to 2027. The annual GHG targets are shown in Table 2.

²⁸ Summary of Responses: Consultation on Northern Ireland's 2030 & 2040 Emissions Reduction Targets & First Three Carbon Budgets & Seeking views on Climate Change Committee (CCC) Advice Report: The path to a Net Zero Northern Ireland | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (daera-ni.gov.uk)

²⁹ Section 32(3)(a) of the Act

Table 2: CCC's assumed annual emission levels for the remaining full years of the carbon budget

Year	% Reduction from 1990 baseline
2025	33.0%
2026	35.5%
2027	38.4%

³⁰ Section 29 of the Act

3. Developing the Climate Action Plan

3.1 Introduction

Developing this draft Climate Action Plan has provided a significant opportunity to work together, across government, across sectors and across society, to address the most important challenge of our time. Significant collaboration has taken place across departments to understand the Act’s requirements (including roles and responsibilities), determine the strategic direction, identify methodologies and agree the content of this pivotal plan. Against a background of complex circumstances, departments have managed priorities, reallocated staff resources and built internal knowledge and capacity to support the development process as far as possible. In wider engagement with stakeholders, the shared goal has been to ensure that Northern Ireland is well placed to meet the challenge of reducing emissions.

3.2 DAERA Responsibilities

DAERA is responsible for leading the preparation and publication of this draft Climate Action Plan. DAERA is required to carry out a 16-week public consultation on the draft plan, lay the results of the public consultation before the Assembly, and lay a final Climate Action Plan. In fulfilling these responsibilities, DAERA is required to collaborate with all departments and other stakeholders.³⁰

3.3 Departments’ Responsibilities

Whilst all departments have informed the development of this Climate Action Plan, Table 3 identifies the lead department assigned to eight sectors.

Table 3: Climate Action Plan sectors and associated lead departments

Climate Action Plan Sector	Lead Department(s)
Energy production and supply (including for residential, public and district heating and cooling purposes)	Department for the Economy (DfE)
Transport (including shipping and aviation)	Department for Infrastructure (DfI)
Business and industrial processes	Department for the Economy (DfE)
Residential and public buildings ³¹	Residential buildings – Department for Communities (DfC) Public buildings – Department for the Economy (DfE)
Waste management	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)
Agriculture	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)
Land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF)	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)
Fisheries	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)

These sectors reflect eight of the ten sectors specified in Section 33 of the Act. For the remaining two sectors identified in the legislation, i.e. infrastructure and the provision of financial assistance, attributed emissions are not easily derived from the Northern Ireland GHG Inventory. Analysis conducted within DAERA confirmed that emissions associated with these sectors are covered by the other eight sectors in the inventory. Therefore, if policies and proposals were also identified and quantified for these sectors, it could lead to double counting of emissions.

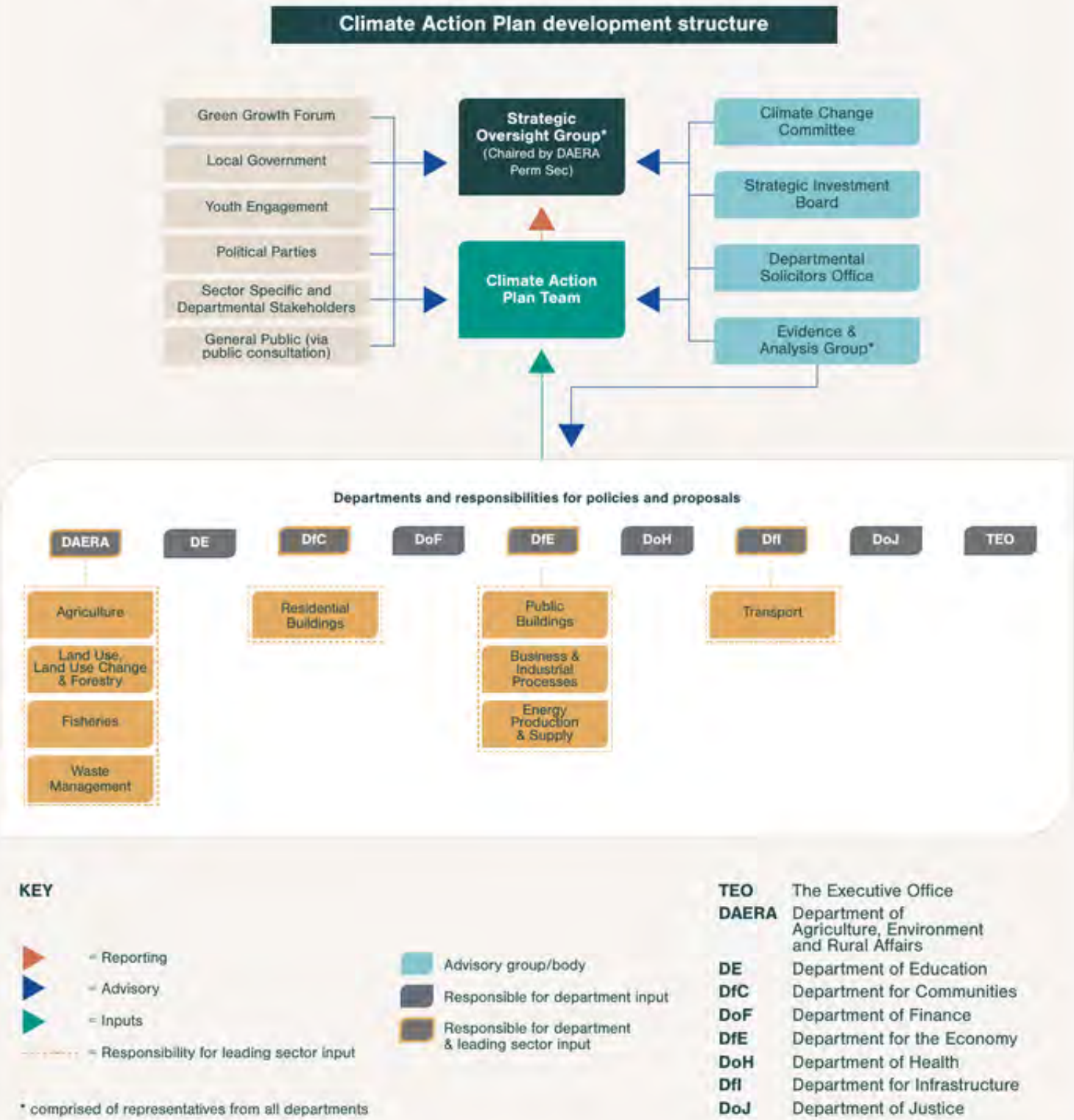
However, as these sectors have been identified in the Act, consideration has been given to the role they play in facilitating the transition to net zero. In respect of financial assistance, we will introduce a test to ensure that impacts on climate, the environment (including its natural capital assets) and green jobs are taken into account in the appraisal of all policies, programmes and projects for which there are public funding implications. Further information is provided in Chapter 11.4 (Government Spending and Procurement). In respect of infrastructure, departments identified how infrastructure will play a key enabling role in facilitating the delivery of policies and proposals. This information is set out in Chapter 12.4 (Infrastructure). Given the cross-cutting nature of these sectors, lead departments were not assigned.

³¹ For the purposes of this plan, the two components of the buildings sector are considered separately.

3.4 Governance Arrangements for Climate Action Plan Development

Figure 4 outlines the cross-departmental organisational arrangements in place to facilitate development of the draft Climate Action Plan. It identifies the range of departments, advisory bodies and other organisations that have been involved in supporting this work alongside some of the key stakeholder groups involved in discussions to inform the draft plan.

Figure 4: Climate Action Plan development structure



Within DAERA, development of the Climate Action Plan was overseen at deputy secretary level. Reflecting the cross-cutting nature of the Climate Action Plan and need for collaboration, oversight was carried out by a Strategic Oversight Group, chaired by the DAERA Permanent Secretary and comprising senior representatives at deputy secretary level from all departments. This was supported by a working group comprising senior officials at director level, acting as sector and departmental leads across all departments, and was chaired by the DAERA Director of Climate Action. Within individual departments, new governance procedures were put in place to oversee departmental input or existing governance procedures were used. These structures provided essential oversight and facilitated the significant level of communication and collaboration that was required across all departments to capture policies and proposals and wider inputs to the Climate Action Plan.

3.5 Climate Action Plan Development Process

In developing this first draft Climate Action Plan for Northern Ireland, we have made significant progress in laying a firm base for its delivery and for developing successive Climate Action Plans. We have been building capacity and have furthered our understanding by undertaking an intensive programme of preparatory work to understand the complex requirements of the legislation and to agree a methodology to co-produce the Climate Action Plan with departments. We have defined sectors, aligning them with data sources and identified links and dependencies with other sectors; and have reviewed science, evidence and best practice in other countries and jurisdictions. We have consulted on carbon budgets and CCC advice and held extensive engagement with stakeholders. Collectively these tasks have shaped this draft plan, but they have also provided an essential building block from which we can proceed in the second and third carbon budget periods.

Having laid these foundations, each department prepared policies and proposals relating to their areas of responsibility. Once received, their impact on emissions reduction was quantified and allocated to the relevant sector, where possible. In addition, any policies and proposals not allocated to a sector nor quantified, but which demonstrated an important contribution to supporting the transition to net zero, have been captured in this document.

As work to identify policies and proposals was being progressed, a dedicated cross-departmental group (Evidence and Analysis Group) was established to agree the methodologies that would be used to quantify emissions reductions for each sector. This group subsequently supported a modelling exercise to assess the emissions reductions potential of each of the policies and proposals. The process is described in the Quantification Summary chapter and more detail is provided in the Quantification Report (Annex A).

The process of identifying suitable policies and proposals to meet the 2023-2027 carbon budget has been iterative. As lead department, DAERA has supported all departments through the provision of written guidance; providing support through regular bilateral and cross-departmental meetings and workshops; commissioning and sharing independent external advice; setting timeframes; and coordinating and compiling information provided by departments. DAERA has challenged departments to meet statutory requirements, to address evidence gaps as far as possible, to detail and justify assumptions and provide explanation where further work is necessary to ensure transparency.

The key draft Climate Action Plan development milestones and activities are summarised in Annex B.

A series of engagements with external stakeholders and inputs from a range of advisory groups and organisations to inform our work included:

- **The Green Growth Forum** – this is comprised of representatives from academia, environmental groups and the public, voluntary, community and private sectors.
- **Local government** – workshops with councils were jointly organised and hosted by DAERA and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) to provide councils with information on the requirements of the Act, particularly those which directly impact on councils, such as public body reporting regulations; updates on development of the plan; and details of the process of setting carbon budgets and interim targets.
- **Young people** – the Education Authority Youth Service (EAYS) facilitated discussions with young people to explore their understanding and interest in climate action, attitudes towards behaviour changes required for climate action and thoughts and ideas on short- and long-term climate goals and actions.³²

The voices of young people:

"We need to look back to look forward. Northern Ireland used to have lots of water wheels on rivers powering local industry. It was a source of reliable, clean energy and could be used in agriculture."

"I would like to learn more about the climate at school and what we can do to help make a difference including what future career opportunities there might be for young people."

- **Citizens** – the public consultation on carbon budgets and the interim targets offered further opportunities to engage with the public.

³² Education Authority Youth Services Consultation Report CYPS Delivery Plan 2021-2024 | Department of Education (education-ni.gov.uk)

3.6 Key Considerations in Developing the Climate Action Plan

The Act requires that the Climate Action Plan identifies policies and proposals to meet the carbon budget across sectors. However, it is not sufficient to think about reducing carbon emissions in isolation. The Act identifies a number of other key requirements that must be taken into consideration to ensure a balanced and just approach to achieving net zero. In addition, we need to be sure that the policies and proposals identified in this plan are consistent with wider environmental, social and economic principles contained in key strategies that support the Executive's commitment to reduce carbon emissions.

Other Requirements of the Act

When deciding on the proposals and policies to be included in the Climate Action Plan, departments must also take a number of other requirements into consideration.

A key requirement of the Act³³ is that Northern Ireland departments must have regard to the just transition principle when deciding their proposals and policies for inclusion within a Climate Action Plan. This principle covers a broad spectrum of 11 just transition objectives including: creating decent, fair and environmentally sustainable jobs; developing consensus through engagement; and supporting those most affected by, but least equipped to adapt to, climate change through the transition.

Individual actions of people will be central to the successful delivery of this Climate Action Plan. However, not everyone is in a position to make the changes necessary without support. The just transition principle seeks to ensure the transition to net zero is fair and just. With a just transition, it is important that the opportunities and benefits that positive climate action will bring are available to all communities and to all sections of society.

A description of how the just transition principle has been taken into consideration in respect of each sector's policies and proposals is included in the Sector Policies and Proposals chapter.

Other considerations required by the Act include:

- Departments must consult with relevant sector-specific advisory groups³⁴, consider the benefit of coordination with corresponding UK and Republic of Ireland policies and proposals³⁵ and consult other appropriate people/bodies, including climate advisory bodies in other jurisdictions.³⁶ Details of engagement undertaken in respect of sector policies and proposals is outlined in Annex C.
- Departments must commission a financial, social, economic and rural impact assessment.³⁷ A summary of findings and mitigating actions arising from the suite of impact assessments, including financial, social, economic and rural impacts, is provided in the Impact Assessments chapter.

³³ Section 30(2)(a)

- Departments must consider the special economic and social role of agriculture in Northern Ireland including the distinct characteristics of biogenic methane.³⁸ Details are provided in Annex D.
- Each Climate Action Plan must consider the effect on the workforce, employers and communities (including small businesses) and how they will be supported.³⁹ Details of how this has been taken into account are outlined in Annex E.
- Departments must consider the benefit of using and supporting nature-based projects that enhance biodiversity, protect and restore our environment or support climate resilience.⁴⁰ Details are outlined in Annex F.
- Departments must consider the risk of carbon leakage and the desirability of eliminating or minimising that risk.⁴¹ Details are outlined in Annex G.

Other Strategic Considerations

Green Growth: Adopting a green growth approach is concerned with using the move from a high to a net zero emissions economy to improve people's quality of life through green jobs and clean environment. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD⁴²) and others have been leading the way on this approach for some time.

On behalf of the Executive, DAERA has developed a draft Green Growth Strategy⁴³ as an overarching multi-decade framework for balancing the three pillars of green growth: climate, the environment and our economy. By applying green growth principles to all that we do across central or local government, private enterprise or the voluntary and community sector, we can support a changed and improved society that both addresses our moral imperative and embraces the new economic opportunities that moving to a low carbon economy creates. The draft strategy contains cross-cutting commitments (such as supporting and promoting behaviour change to inform and encourage low carbon choices; using robust and timely evidence and science as the basis for decision making; maximising funding and investment opportunities; and working collaboratively across departments and with the wider public sector) which will help to underpin and drive the delivery of the policies and proposals within this plan.

Environmental Improvement Plan: Northern Ireland's first Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) was published by DAERA on 27 September 2024. Publication of an EIP is a statutory requirement of the Environment Act 2021.⁴⁴ The EIP provides the basis for a coherent and effective set of interventions that can collectively deliver real improvements in the quality of the environment. It outlines six strategic objectives: excellent air, water and land quality; a healthy and accessible environment and landscapes everyone can connect with and enjoy; thriving, resilient and connected nature and wildlife; sustainable production and consumption on land and at sea; zero waste and a highly developed circular economy, and net zero greenhouse gas emissions; and improved climate resilience and adaptability. In developing policies and proposals for inclusion in this draft Climate Action Plan, consideration has also been given to the strategic objectives and actions and targets included in the EIP.

Circular Economy: Adopting a circular mindset throughout government, society and business will be integral to a successful net zero transition. Resource efficiency and transforming how we produce and consume things will contribute to emissions reductions across all sectors. Products are full of embodied carbon,⁴⁵ therefore, producing them differently with fewer raw materials and designing them to be consumed for longer will make significant reductions.

The circular economy offers an alternative to our current linear take-make-use-dispose approach to using resources. In a circular economy we:

- rethink and reduce our use of Earth's resources;
- switch to regenerative resources;
- minimise waste; and
- maintain the value of products and materials for as long as possible by reducing, reusing and recycling.

DfE has published a draft Circular Economy Strategy⁴⁶ which provides a vision to create an innovative, inclusive and competitive economy with responsible production and consumption at its core. In developing policies and proposals for inclusion in the Climate Action Plan, we have sought to take the circular economy approach into account where possible.

Climate Adaptation: Even if all emissions could be stopped today, unavoidable changes to our climate have already been locked in.⁴⁷ Climate change increases our exposure to existing risks, therefore, preparing for the impacts of climate change (climate change adaptation) at the same time as cutting emissions (climate change mitigation) is essential. It is also important that policies and proposals that seek to reduce emissions are future proofed through being designed to be climate resilient.

Climate adaptation means taking action to prepare for and adjust to the current and projected impacts of climate change. This can include measures to reduce risks such as increased vulnerability to flooding, frequency of severe weather events, over-heating of buildings resulting in health risks, periods of drought resulting in pressures on water demand and food production and an increased risk of more frequent and longer lasting wildfires.

⁴⁴ Section 29(5) of the Act

⁴⁵ Section 30(1)(a) of the Act

⁴⁶ Section 30(1)(b) of the Act

⁴⁷ Section 30(1)(c) of the Act

⁴⁸ Section 30(1)(d) of the Act

³⁹ Section 35 of the Act

⁴⁰ Section 30(2)(b) and Section 34 of the Act

⁴¹ Section 36 of the Act

In developing the policies and proposals included in this draft Climate Action Plan, we have taken climate adaptation into account where appropriate. However, it is recognised that much greater focus needs to be placed on planning for climate impacts and on ensuring our sectors and policies are integrating both mitigation and adaptation measures. Working across departments, we will progress this important programme of work integrating it with delivery of this plan. Further information on adaptation work is detailed in the Climate Adaptation chapter and in the draft Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme (NICCAP) 3.⁴⁶

⁴² Towards Green Growth | OECD

⁴³ A Green Growth Strategy for Northern Ireland - Balancing our climate, environment and economy | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (daera-ni.gov.uk)

⁴⁴ Environment Act 2021 (legislation.gov.uk)

⁴⁵ Embodied carbon refers to the amount of GHGs associated with the extraction, production, transport and manufacturing of a product.

⁴⁶ Draft Circular Economy Strategy for Northern Ireland (economy-ni.gov.uk)

⁴⁷ Further detail is provided in the Climate Adaptation chapter

4. Carbon Emissions

4.1 Introduction

The Act requires that Northern Ireland emissions are net zero by 2050. But what levels of emissions do we currently produce? The Northern Ireland GHG Inventory contains official estimates of GHG emissions in Northern Ireland⁴⁸ and is used to fulfil our emissions reporting requirements under the Kyoto Protocol.⁴⁹ This chapter describes our current emissions levels and how they are distributed across sectors, showing the progress we have made since 1990 and how individual sectors have performed. It also explains the role of the GHG Inventory in measuring change over time so that we can understand the impact of our policies and proposals in reducing emissions.

4.2 Measuring Greenhouse Gases

Greenhouse Gas Inventories are compiled by following detailed guidance produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – the UN body for assessing the science related to climate change. Inventories report on seven direct GHGs:

- Carbon dioxide (CO₂);
 - Methane (CH₄);
 - Nitrous oxide (N₂O);
 - Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs);
 - Perfluorocarbons (PFCs);
 - Sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆); and
 - Nitrogen trifluoride (NF₃).
- 
- known as Fluorinated gases
or F-gases

Each of these gases has been assigned a global warming potential (GWP) which defines how potent it is compared with CO₂ over a 100-year cycle (where CO₂ has a GWP of 1). Once the emissions of GHGs are converted into their GWP equivalents, the emissions are presented as CO₂ equivalent emissions, i.e. CO₂e.⁵¹ This approach, known as GWP100, is the internationally accepted reporting standard required by the UN.

4.3 Current Total Emissions for Northern Ireland

In 2022, Northern Ireland's net annual GHG emissions were estimated to be 21.3 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (MtCO₂e). This was a decrease of 7.7 MtCO₂e, (26.4%) compared with the 1990 base year⁵² as shown in Figure 5.

⁴⁸ Public consultation on draft NICCAP3 | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (daera-ni.gov.uk)

⁴⁹ Northern Ireland greenhouse gas inventory | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (daera-ni.gov.uk)

⁵⁰ Countries that have ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) are committed to developing and regularly updating national emission inventories of GHGs.

Figure 5: Net GHG emissions 1990 base year to 2022



Figure 5 also shows the proposed 2030 target (15.1 MtCO₂e) and the net zero 2050 target. A further reduction of 6.2 MtCO₂e from 2022 GHG levels is required by 2030 to meet the 48% reduction target set out in the Act.

⁵¹ Emissions are based on 100-year GWPs (without climate feedback) that are set out in the IPCC's Fifth Assessment report (AR5). As such, data contained in this document is reported on an 'AR5' basis.

⁵² The UK's reduction in emissions is set against a baseline of emissions in 1990 (for carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide) and 1995 (for the F-gases). The sum of these emissions in 1990 and 1995 is called the '1990 Base Year' emissions.

4.4 Current Emissions by Sector

The Act requires that plans are made to reduce emissions by sectors. Therefore, a profile of GHGs emitted within each of the sectors is detailed in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Net GHG emissions by sector (%), 2022⁵¹

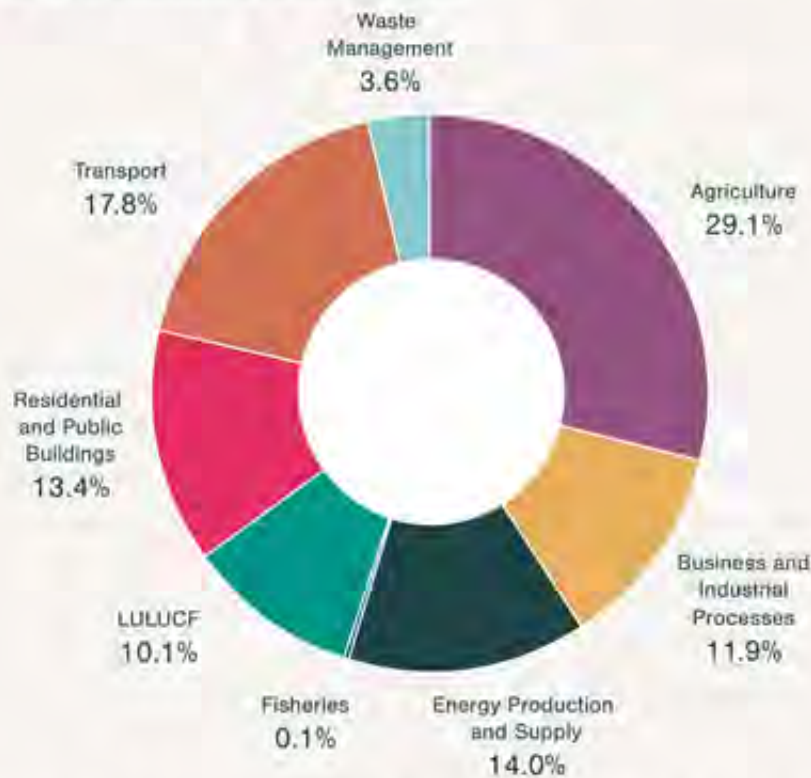


Table 4 shows that in terms of changes in GHG emissions, most sectors showed a decreasing trend between the 1990 base year and 2022. The largest decreases in emissions were experienced in the business and industrial processes sector and the energy production and supply sector. The fall in emissions of 2.3 MtCO₂e in the energy production and supply sector is due to fuel switching away from coal and oil for power generation. The drop in emissions from the business and industrial processes sector (3.1 MtCO₂e) reflects reductions in emissions from the food and drink industries, as well as a reduction in emissions from fossil fuels combusted for heat and power production in industry.

Agriculture and transport sectors showed higher emissions in 2022 than in the base 1990 year. In agriculture, this reflects an increase in livestock numbers, which is partly offset by lower nitrogen fertiliser applications. Emissions from transport have increased due to the growth in vehicle demand despite improved vehicle efficiency.

Northern Ireland's GHG emissions profile is different to other parts of the UK given the relative importance of agriculture to our economy (29% of Northern Ireland emissions in 2022⁵² versus 12% in the UK as a whole)⁵³. This means that the emissions contributions by each sector in Northern Ireland are different to those in the UK as a whole. The share of Northern Ireland emissions across sectors in comparison to UK emissions is shown in Figures 7 and 8.

Table 4: Change in net GHG emissions by sector, 1990 base year to 2022

Sector	Base year (MtCO ₂ e)	2022 (MtCO ₂ e)	Change from base year to 2022	
			MtCO ₂ e	% ⁵⁴
Agriculture	5.4	6.2	+0.8	+15%
Business and industrial processes	5.6	2.5	-3.1	-55%
Energy production and supply	5.3	3.0	-2.3	-44%
Fisheries ⁵⁵	0.0	0.0	+0.0	0%
LULUCF	2.7	2.2	-0.5	-20%
Residential and public buildings	4.3	2.9	-1.4	-34%
Transport	3.6	3.8	+0.2	+6%
Waste Management	2.0	0.8	-1.2	-62%
Total	29.0	21.3	-7.7	-26.4%

⁵³ From 2022, there have been changes to emissions reporting in the UK GHG Inventory, with NC sectors being replaced by Territorial Emissions Statistics (TES) sectors to better meet users' needs. These changes have been reflected in the Northern Ireland GHG Inventory statistical bulletins. For the Northern Ireland draft Climate Action Plan and Quantification Report, inventory lines within the TES sectors have been mapped back to the NC sectors to maintain alignment to the sectors detailed in the Act. The data used to inform this chart is available at: Greenhouse Gas Inventories for England, Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland: 1990-2022 | National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory

⁵⁴ Percentages are based on numbers before rounding

⁵⁵ Emissions for Fisheries amount to 0.021 and 0.021 MtCO₂e, in 1990 base year and 2022 respectively

⁵⁶ Northern Ireland Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2022

⁵⁷ 2022 UK Greenhouse Gas emissions: one page summary

Figure 7:
UK GHG emissions 2022



Figure 8:
Northern Ireland GHG emissions 2022



4.5 Current Emissions by Gas Type

As each GHG has a different capacity to contribute to global warming as reflected in its GWP value, it is useful to consider the contribution to Northern Ireland emissions by gas type. The three main gases which contribute to emissions in Northern Ireland are carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O). Carbon dioxide accounted for 66.1% of all GHG emissions in Northern Ireland (14.1 MtCO₂e) in 2022. The proportion of GHGs from methane was 26.0% (5.6 MtCO₂e) and nitrous oxide (1.4 MtCO₂e) was 6.7%. A profile of GHG emissions broken down by each of these three gases is illustrated in Figure 9.

⁵⁸ There are zero amounts of PFCs and NF3 and a minimal amount of SF6 recorded in Northern Ireland and, as such, these gases are not included in the chart and table above

⁵⁹ A (-) denotes no emissions of that gas. A zero value (0) denotes a small level of emissions rounded, but to no decimal places.

Figure 9: Net emissions (CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O) 1990 base year to 2022⁵⁸



Table 5 provides further insight to the contribution by these main gas types across sectors. In 2022, carbon dioxide was the most abundant gas emitted across all sectors except for agriculture and waste management. For the agriculture sector, methane from livestock and nitrous oxide from soils were more significant GHGs than carbon dioxide. Methane from landfill was the main GHG from the waste management sector.

Table 5: GHGs by gas within sector, 2022 (KtCO₂e)⁵⁹

Sector	CO ₂	CH ₄	N ₂ O	HFCs	PFCs	SF ₆	NF ₃
Agriculture	733	4316	1,159	-	-	-	-
Business and industrial processes	2,314	16	38	161	-	8	-
Energy production and supply	2,968	7	8	-	-	-	-
Fishing	20	0	0	-	-	-	-
LULUCF	1,552	472	136	-	-	-	-
Residential and public buildings	2,744	68	16	23	-	-	-
Transport	3,771	3	32	-	-	-	-
Waste management	2.0	718	43	-	-	-	-
Total	14,104	5,599	1,433	184	-	8	-

4.6 Publication of the Greenhouse Gas Inventory

The GHG Inventory for Northern Ireland is published on an annual basis, usually in June. The data is produced by a consortium led by Ricardo Energy and Environment, on behalf of the UK Government and Devolved Administrations. The inventory operates with an approximately 18-month lag, with the most recent inventory estimates of GHGs in 2022 published in June 2024. The inventory estimates are 'official statistics' and are subject to quality assurance reviews. The inventory uses the GWP100 metric in its estimates as this is the required metric for assessment of GHG emission levels under international and national legal obligations such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the UK's Climate Change Act 2008. As 'official statistics' the data, published by DAERA and sourced from the UK GHG Inventory, adhere to the Code of Practice for Statistics.⁶⁰ The code ensures that official statistics serve the public by being trustworthy, good quality, and are valuable.

The GHG Inventory reports emissions on a 'by source basis', in accordance with IPCC guidelines. The emission levels published within the inventory will be used to assess Northern Ireland's compliance with carbon budgets, interim targets and to track progress to net zero. Emission levels as published in the inventory for the years 2023-2027 will be used to judge compliance with the first carbon budget i.e. the inventory estimates for 2023-2027 must show an average annual reduction from the 1990 base year of 33% if Northern Ireland is to meet the first carbon budget.

4.7 Other Metrics for Greenhouse Gas Reporting

The scientific conversation around how best to compare and report the impacts of different GHGs continues to develop and expand. While GWP100 is the globally accepted measure under the UNFCCC, as well as UK and Northern Ireland legislation, other metrics have been developed. These metrics compare temperature impacts over different time-periods.

GWP* is a relatively new metric developed to link emission pathways to relative temperature change contribution. The approach entails handling longer- and shorter-lived gases separately, in contrast to the GWP100 (and other similar approaches) where each gas has a single weighting value comparing it to CO₂. The IPCC's 6th Assessment Report⁶¹ highlights that GWP* and other similar approaches can usefully translate reported emissions to global surface air temperature and therefore better account for the distinct physical behaviours of different gases.

⁶⁰ Code of Practice for Statistics (statisticsauthority.gov.uk)

⁶¹ IPCC AR6 WG1 Chapter 7: Forster, P., T. Storelvmo, K. Armour, W. Collins, J.-L. Dufresne, D. Frame, D.J. Lunt, T. Mauritsen, M.D. Palmer, M. Watanabe, M. Wild, and H. Zhang, 2021: The Earth's Energy Budget, Climate Feedbacks, and Climate Sensitivity. In *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis. Contribution of Working Group I to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [Masson-Delmotte, V., P. Zhai, A. Pirani, S.L. Connors, C. Péan, S. Berger, N. Caud, Y. Chen, L. Goldfarb, M.I. Gomis, M. Huang, K. Keitzel, E. Lonnoy, J.B.R. Matthews, T.K. Maycock, T. Waterfield, O. Yelekçi, R. Yu, and B. Zhou (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA, pp. 923–1054, doi:10.1017/9781009157896.009.

Biogenic methane (i.e. methane from plants and animals rather than fossil sources) lasts an average of 12 years in the atmosphere. It is particularly important in Northern Ireland's GHG profile, given our relative economic dependence on the agriculture and food industries. The new 'warming-equivalent' approaches highlight that the gas's shorter lifespan means that if biogenic methane emissions are on a downward trend, there will be a net cooling – relative to the temperature increase already caused. This will be effective within a relatively short period of time, as the historical higher methane levels come to the end of their lifetime and the lower levels of biogenic methane which follow fail to raise temperature to the same degree. For long-lived GHGs, and especially CO₂, relative declines in temperature only occur if there is active removal of the gas from the atmosphere.

While use of the GWP* metric highlights the potential for a reducing trend of biogenic methane to create a relative cooling effect, it also emphasises the scale of near-term warming that could be avoided by not emitting these agricultural methane emissions (irrespective of past warming contribution). This will be much greater if assessed using GWP* than GWP100. The short-lived nature of biogenic methane means that particularly quick gains in mitigating global warming could be made by eliminating those emissions. GWP* therefore continues to support the clear scientific consensus that methane emission reductions should be supported through climate policy.

Recognising the importance of developments in climate science and the requirement in Section 30(d) of the Act to take account of the distinct characteristics of biogenic methane, DAERA commissioned an assessment of the agricultural and LULUCF policies and proposals using the GWP* metric⁸². While the IPCC illustrates the potential value of GWP* as a physical reporting tool⁸³, DAERA is specifically required under the UNFCCC, as well as UK and Northern Ireland legislation, to report GHG levels using the GWP100 emission metric. This position is highly unlikely to change, at least in the short to medium term.

⁸² <https://www.cabidigitallibrary.org/doi/10.31220/agriRxiv.2025.00321>

⁸³ M. Pathak, R. Slade, P.R. Shukla, J. Skea, R. Pichs-Madruga, D. Ürge-Vorsatz, 2022: Technical Summary. In: Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [P.R. Shukla, J. Skea, R. Slade, A. Al Khourdaji, R. van Diemen, D. McCollum, M. Pathak, S. Some, P. Vyas, R. Fradera, M. Belkacemi, A. Hasija, G. Lisboa, S. Luz, J. Malley, (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA. doi: 10.1017/9781009157926.002



SECTION TWO

Carbon Budget Pathway

2

5. Quantification Summary

5.1 Introduction

The policies and proposals set out across the nine sectors in the Sector Policies and Proposals chapter represent Northern Ireland's approach to delivering the emissions reductions required during the first carbon budget period (2023-2027). To assess the impact the suite of policies and proposals will have on emissions levels, an Evidence and Analysis Group, representing each department and led by the DAERA Chief Scientific Adviser, oversaw the estimation of emissions savings arising from the policies and proposals in each sector. Details of the exercise to quantify each policy and proposal, including the methodologies used and assumptions for each sector, are set out in the Quantification Report (Annex A). This chapter summarises the results of the Climate Action Plan quantification exercise for the first carbon budget period (2023-2027).

5.2 Quantification Methodology

The quantification modelling used allows a sector-specific approach to assessing emissions reductions. The methodologies used to estimate the impact of each policy or proposal on emissions levels for each sector were informed by the best available information on GHG savings. The defining principles of the sector-based quantification approach were:

- Maximum possible compatibility with the Northern Ireland GHG Inventory, given that its emissions estimates are the defining metric for achieving carbon budgets under the Act;
- Use of the best available modelling capacity, including external modelling where required;
- Compatibility with the DAERA GHG Emissions Projection Tool (EPT) as a means of combining sectoral analyses into an estimate of total emissions for Northern Ireland;
- Minimising the risk of double counting by apportioning savings from policies and proposals across sectors where possible and taking a conservative approach (i.e. excluding policies or proposals from quantification where there is an unacceptable risk of double counting);
- Alignment with the list of policies and proposals in this plan;
- UK policies which apply to Northern Ireland had sector-specific Northern Ireland/UK scaling ratios applied to quantify their contributions to Northern Ireland. These Northern Ireland/UK scaling ratios were determined using the proportion of total UK emissions in each sector which were emitted in Northern Ireland in the most recent inventory year. The scaling factor used for business and industrial processes was 5.1% as 5.1% of UK emissions in that sector came from Northern Ireland in 2022. The equivalent figure for residential buildings was 4.5% and public buildings had a 2.9% scaling factor. Further detail on Northern Ireland policy and proposal deployment assumptions and UK scaling factors for policies applying to Northern Ireland is set out in detail in the Quantification Report (Annex A).

5.3 Quantification of Policies and Proposals

Each policy and proposal within the plan was assessed for its projected impact on GHG levels and the findings were combined into sectoral and overall analyses. Emissions projections to 2027, based on the draft Climate Action Plan policies and proposals, are outlined in Table 6. These projections align with the Central Scenario for all policies and proposals and therefore represent the expected outcome of the draft Climate Action Plan. Deployment levels, i.e. the assumed pace and/or scale of policy implementation, assumed within these projections are set out in the Sector Policies and Proposals chapter and in greater detail in the Quantification Report (Annex A).

Table 6: Annual emissions levels for period 2020 to 2027 (actual and projected)⁴⁴

Year	Historic Emissions	Central Projected Emissions (MtCO ₂ e)	Reduction in emissions from 1990 Base Year (Actual to 2022, Projected from 2023 to 2027)
1990 Base Year*	29.0**	-	-
2020	21.2**	-	27.0%
2021	22.0**	-	24.1%
2022	21.3**	-	26.4%
2023	-	20.5	29.1%
2024	-	19.6	32.3%
2025	-	19.4	33.1%
2026	-	19.0	34.3%
2027	-	18.4	36.6 %
Total (2023-2027)	-	97.0	33.1% Average Annual Reduction

⁴⁴1990 base year refers to 1990 for CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O, or 1995 for fluorinated gases (F-gases⁴⁵).
⁴⁵published GHG Inventory data.

⁴⁴ Figures are rounded to one decimal place
⁴⁵ F-gases are fluorine containing compounds which are potent greenhouse gases, including: Sulphur Hexafluoride (SF₆), Nitrogen Trifluoride (NF₃), Perfluorocarbons (PFCs) and Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs)

Achieving these emissions projections would represent an annual average reduction of 33.1% over the years 2023 to 2027 and therefore the combination of quantified policies and proposals contained within this draft Climate Action Plan is expected to be sufficient for Northern Ireland to meet its first carbon budget.

For Northern Ireland to meet future carbon budgets and the 2030 target of a 48% reduction from the 1990 baseline, additional measures will be required for the years following 2027. This is not surprising and highlights the importance of a sustained focus on climate action as the Climate Action Plan is developed for the second carbon budget period (2028-2032).

5.4 Risk Sensitivity Analysis

When carrying out policy modelling, it is important to take account of uncertainty associated with these projections. The GHG Inventory itself has an inherent uncertainty in its historical emissions estimates. Uncertainty in UK GHG emissions estimates is around 3%, based on uncertainty analysis of the 2022 emissions estimates which were published in February 2024.⁶⁶ Overall data quality and sector allocations are improving, but for some source sectors, significant uncertainties remain, even at UK level.

There is greater uncertainty associated with the measurement of emissions of the non-CO₂ GHGs (e.g. methane, nitrous oxide) which occur in greater proportions in Northern Ireland than in the rest of the UK. At Northern Ireland level, uncertainties are generally greater than at national level. For the latest GHG Inventory, uncertainty in the emissions estimate for the 1990 base year is assessed as $\pm 8\%$ and uncertainty in the emissions estimate for the 2022 year was assessed as $\pm 6\%$.⁶⁷

There are additional uncertainties associated with projecting future emissions, relating both to the nature of the methodologies used to assess the emissions savings assumed, as well as the risks associated with delivery of the policies and proposals outlined in the draft Climate Action Plan.

To account for this uncertainty in delivery across many policies and proposals, sensitivity analyses were carried out. Three scenarios were developed to reflect the fact that the outcome of some policies and proposals may be different to that anticipated during the quantification exercise. The three scenarios were as follows:

⁶⁶ 2022 UK greenhouse gas emissions, final figures with energy supply on an end user basis and uncertainty estimates

⁶⁷ Northern Ireland Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2022

1. **Central Scenario** (expected outcome): This is the most likely outcome of policy or proposal adoption, considering actual circumstances.
2. **Tailwinds Scenario** (optimistic outcome): This scenario accounts for the outcome if the policy or proposal is adopted quickly and works first time with full effect. The scenario requires new technologies and innovation to exceed expectations. It assumes that public uptake or support for the new policies or proposals is high and sustained.
3. **Headwinds Scenario** (least optimistic outcome): This scenario accounts for the outcome if delivery proceeds less well than expected, for example if new policies or proposals are delayed due to unanticipated lack of funding and/or approvals or if public uptake or support is less than expected.

More detail on each of these scenarios is included in the Quantification Report (Annex A).

Where policies and proposals were considered to have the potential to achieve a broad range of outcomes, an assessment was made of the likely emissions savings under each of the scenarios above. In some cases, it was only appropriate or possible to categorise policies and proposals in the Central Scenario. Other policies and proposals were only included in the Tailwinds Scenario as circumstances would need to evolve as per the optimistic outcome for that policy or proposal to achieve emissions savings in the first carbon budget. Where a policy or proposal was quantified in the Central Scenario only, those assumptions are considered to be as robust as possible and therefore the associated emission savings are included in all three scenarios.

The emissions projections associated with each of the three scenarios over the course of the carbon budget are outlined in Table 7.

Table 7: Emissions projections for each scenario over the 2023-2027 carbon budget

Scenario	Average Annual Reduction (AAR) achieved 2023-2027
Carbon Budget 1	33.0%
Central Scenario	33.1%
Tailwinds Scenario	34.0%
Headwinds Scenario	32.3%

This analysis highlights that, based on currently available information, the policies and proposals in the draft Climate Action Plan are projected to be sufficient to meet the carbon budget under the Central and Tailwinds Scenarios, but not the Headwinds Scenario. These figures illustrate the need for high ambition and early action on the full suite of policies and proposals set out in the draft Climate Action Plan.

The Central Scenario is considered the most appropriate scenario for use in judging whether the carbon budget will be met as it is the combination of the expected outcomes of each policy and proposal. The Central Scenario sits between the more optimistic and pessimistic approaches to emissions projections represented in the Tailwinds and Headwinds Scenarios. The deployment assumptions on which the Central Scenario relies are set out in the sector chapters and represent the expected and most likely set of practical real-life outcomes for each policy and proposal. It is therefore the scenario around which there is the greatest confidence.

Table 8 sets out the annual and total emissions projections under each of the three scenarios highlighted above. The projections are compared to the assumptions of annual emissions levels within the CCC pathway, as adjusted following the publication of the 2022 GHG Inventory. Further detail on the emissions breakdown by sector under each scenario is included in the Quantification Report (Annex A).

Table 8: Projected annual emissions for the first carbon budget period 2023-2027 and CCC adjusted pathway

Year	Total NI GHGs (MtCO ₂ e)	Projected emissions - Central Scenario (MtCO ₂ e)	Projected emissions - Tailwinds Scenario (MtCO ₂ e)	Projected emissions - Headwinds Scenario (MtCO ₂ e)	Adjusted CCC Pathway (MtCO ₂ e)
1990/95 (*Base Year)	29.0**	-	-	-	-
2020**	21.2**	-	-	-	-
2021**	22.0**	-	-	-	-
2022	21.3**	-	-	-	-
2023	-	20.6	20.6	20.5	21.0
2024	-	19.6	19.6	19.6	20.1
2025	-	19.4	19.3	19.5	19.4
2026	-	19.0	18.5	19.3	18.7
2027	-	18.4	17.6	19.2	17.8
2023-2027 First Carbon Budget Total (MtCO ₂ e)	-	97.0	95.6	98.1	97.1
Average Annual Reduction %	-	33.1%	34.0%	32.3%	33.0%

*Base year refers to 1990 for CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O, or 1995 for fluorinated gases (F-gases).⁶⁶

** Published GHG Inventory data

⁶⁶ F-gases are fluorine containing compounds which are potent greenhouse gases, including: Sulphur Hexafluoride (SF₆), Nitrogen Trifluoride (NF₃), Perfluorocarbons (PFCs) and Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs).

As shown in Table 6, the projections for emissions levels under the Central Scenario in 2027 show a 36.6% reduction from 1990 base year (18.4 MtCO₂e) compared to the 38.4% reduction assumed by the adjusted CCC pathway for 2027 (17.8 MtCO₂e). Therefore, additional effort will be required in the second Climate Action Plan to make up this difference to meet the 2030 targets and the second carbon budget of a 48% average annual reduction from 2028 to 2032. A strong focus on the enablers for climate action, such as science and innovation, behaviour change, and skills and education, will be required to scale up delivery of emissions reductions.

6. Sector Policies and Proposals

6.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the policies and proposals required to achieve the first carbon budget for Northern Ireland.⁶⁰

Policies and Proposals

A policy is a committed course of action to which a policy outcome can be attributed with a reasonable level of confidence.

A proposal is a suggested course of action or exploratory action, the details of which might change as this course of action is explored further. Proposals are generally at an earlier stage of development than policies and more work will be needed to determine what they entail, how they might be delivered and how they could be funded.

Collectively, the policies and proposals included in this plan describe the approach to meeting Northern Ireland's emissions reduction targets.

The policies and proposals outlined in this chapter of the draft Climate Action Plan represent those which departments consider are achievable and deliverable as part of a credible approach to meeting our proposed 2023-2027 carbon budget.

Each sector chapter outlines policies and proposals which have been quantified in terms of their contribution to deliver the emissions savings necessary to achieve the overall carbon budget. As part of this quantification process, the impact of the intervention on future GHG emission levels was assessed and incorporated within sector and Northern Ireland level annual emissions projections. Achievement of the carbon budget is assessed at the Northern Ireland level. Some sectors are expected to contribute more than others; some policies and proposals have a greater impact than others; some contribute to emissions savings across more than one sector.

Some of these policies and proposals are specific to Northern Ireland (as a function of our devolved powers) whereas others apply across the UK. Other policies apply to Northern Ireland by virtue of the Windsor Framework. In some sectors it has been difficult to apportion the Northern Ireland element of emissions savings from a UK-wide policy or proposal and we will continue to refine this work going forward, working

⁶⁰ The sectors in this chapter are ordered to align with section 23 of the Act.

with UK departments. Where we have been able to identify specific Northern Ireland emissions savings associated with a UK-wide policy, they have been included in the overall quantification and reported in each sector chapter. Our analysis shows that UK-wide policies will play a significant part in our ability to meet our first carbon budget.

The approach to quantification differed across sectors; for some sectors, external modellers were commissioned to complete the assessment while for other sectors quantification was conducted internally by policy analysts. The underpinning assumptions and emissions projections for policies and proposals for each sector were categorised into Central (expected outcome), Tailwinds (optimistic outcome) and Headwinds (least optimistic outcome) Scenarios. In some cases, due to the policy area or prevailing circumstances, only a Central Scenario was possible or appropriate. The assumptions and projections detailed in the sector chapters reflect the Central Scenario which is a credible and robust basis for projecting the expected GHG emissions for the carbon budget period.

For some of the policies or proposals, the emissions savings cannot be quantified at this time (referred to as unquantified in subsequent sections in this plan). The reasons for some policies and proposals lacking quantification included (1) that they are at an early stage of development and/or (2) the ongoing assessment of the available evidence was limited or not available and/or (3) the risks of double counting emissions savings with related quantified policies and proposals. While they are not included in overall emissions projections, we recognise they are fundamentally important to achieving the carbon budget.

The CCC provided advice on the assumed annual emissions savings for each sector that would be needed to achieve a 33% Average Annual Reduction (AAR) from 1990 base year. This pathway has been adjusted to take account of the most recent GHG Inventory data for 2022 and represents the CCC's view of how the overall carbon budgets and targets can be met across each sector. For each sector, we have presented the CCC's assumed emissions alongside our projected emissions and a summary of the 'deployment assumptions' i.e. the assumed pace and/or scale of policy implementation on which this is based.

There are levels of uncertainty associated with the projected emissions for each policy and proposal which have been factored into the quantification and have been outlined in more detail in the Quantification Summary chapter and accompanying Quantification Report (Annex A).

6.2 Energy Production and Supply

Sector Summary	
Energy Production and Supply Emissions Summary	• Energy production and supply emissions are almost exclusively from burning fossil fuels for electricity generation at power stations. • Energy production and supply emissions have made the biggest contribution to the overall decrease in Northern Ireland emissions from 1990 to 2022, with a 43.8% decrease in this sector. • Renewable sources produced 45.4% of Northern Ireland's electricity from April 2023 to March 2024.⁷⁰ • The Act sets a target of at least 80% of electricity consumption to come from renewable sources by 2030.
Policy Approach	Further emissions reductions will be achieved through increasing renewable energy production. This requires continued management of the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation (NIRO) Support Scheme and a new Renewable Electricity Support Scheme which both protects consumers and provides incentives to invest in new renewable electricity projects.
Emissions Projections	Following the implementation of the policies and proposals set out in this chapter, the energy production and supply sector is projected to emit 12.33 MtCO ₂ e over the course of the first carbon budget period. This compares to total assumed emissions of 12.85 MtCO ₂ e in the sector during the first carbon budget period within the CCC adjusted pathway.

⁷⁰ Electricity Consumption and Renewable Generation in Northern Ireland (nirsra.gov.uk)

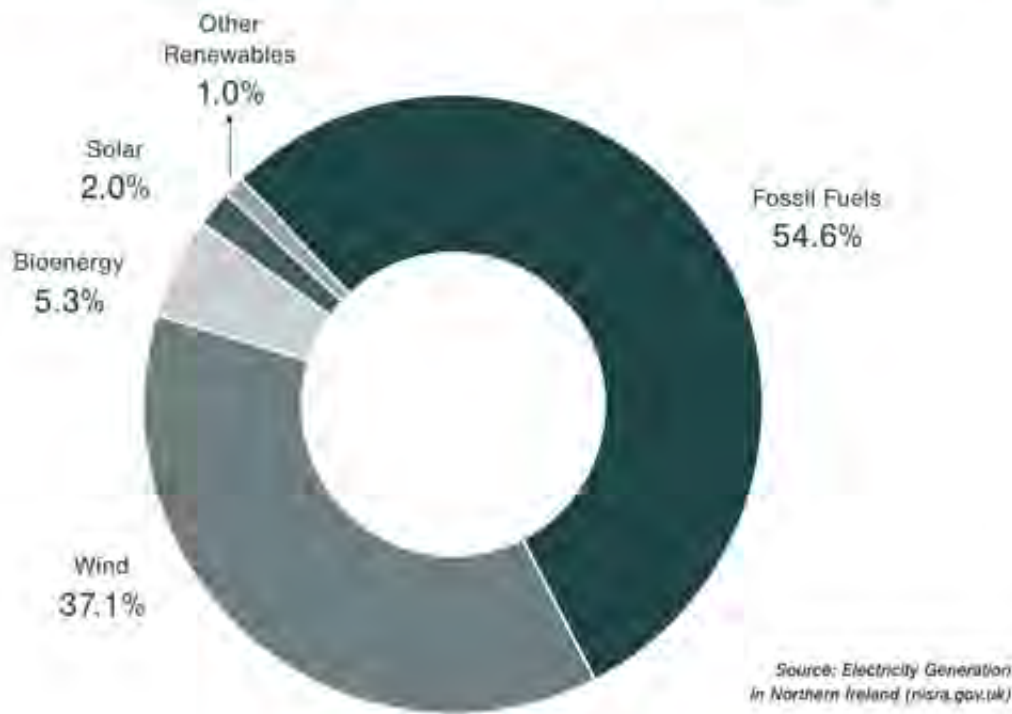
Sector Overview

Emissions in the energy production and supply sector are predominantly from power stations, but also from losses in the distribution of natural gas. Emissions are almost entirely carbon dioxide. The level of emissions produced is highly dependent on the type of fuel being used at power stations and is significantly affected by the abatement technology in use. Renewable sources have on average produced 46.8% of Northern Ireland's electricity between 2020 and 2023, with the latest report from April 2023 to March 2024 stating that 45.4% of Northern Ireland's electricity comes from renewable sources.⁷¹ However, from January to December 2022 the proportion of electricity produced from renewable sources was as high as 51%.⁷²

Since 2021, there have been significant increases in global energy prices, resulting in increased costs to heat homes, power businesses and deliver public services. Global geopolitical instability has caused global price shocks, reinforcing the importance of security of supply and the economic and social consequences of relying on external sources of energy.

The main driver in the decarbonisation of the energy production and supply sector to date has been the increase in the proportion of our energy produced from renewable sources (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Northern Ireland electricity generation sources April 2023 to March 2024

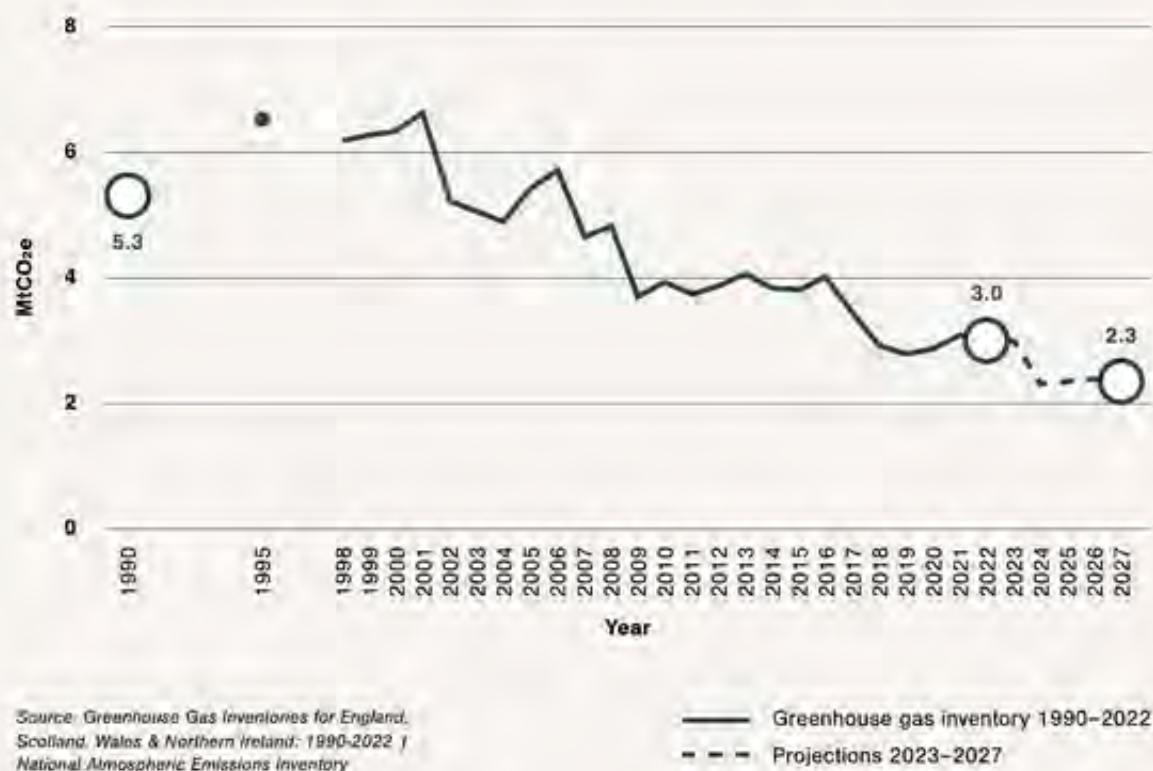


⁷¹ Electricity Consumption and Renewable Generation in Northern Ireland (nirsa.gov.uk)

⁷² Electricity Consumption and Renewable Generation in Northern Ireland: Year Ending December 2022 (Department for the Economy (economy-ni.gov.uk))

The sector is the third largest emitter in Northern Ireland, responsible for 3.0 MtCO₂e in 2022. This represents a decrease in emissions of 43.8% since the 1990 base year⁷³ (Figure 11). The decrease in emissions is mainly due to the conversion of Ballylumford and Coolkeeragh power stations from oil to gas, the construction of the Moyle electricity interconnector, and most notably, the significant growth in renewables. The recent end to coal-fired generation at Kilroot power station has also further reduced emissions.

Figure 11: Change in energy production and supply emissions 1990-2022



Note: Base year is 1990 for CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O, or 1995 for fluorinated gases

⁷³ Report: Greenhouse Gas Inventories for England, Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland: 1990-2022 - NAEI, UK (beis.gov.uk)

During the 2023-2027 carbon budget period, we will reduce emissions and our reliance on fossil fuels by increasing electricity generation through renewables. We have already seen greater than 50% of annual total electricity consumption in Northern Ireland generated from renewable sources⁷⁴ and, in the month of February 2022,⁷⁵ a record 76.5% of all electricity consumption in Northern Ireland was generated from renewables, largely wind power. Our power system was the first in the world to accommodate this level of intermittent renewable generation on the system, and the System Operator for Northern Ireland (SONI) is now working towards achieving up to 95% renewable electricity penetration on the system by 2030.⁷⁶ To achieve current levels of renewables penetration by integrating wind farms, solar farms and interconnectors, it was necessary to overcome major technical and market challenges.

Despite the overall success of the sector, there have been very few new renewable connections and therefore emissions savings have plateaued in recent years. This is mainly due to the closure of Northern Ireland's main support scheme, the NIRO, in 2017. To encourage new connections, DfE is currently designing a replacement support scheme to help drive growth in renewable energy production.

In 2021, DfE published The Energy Strategy – Path to Net Zero Energy (the Energy Strategy), which was signed off by the Northern Ireland Executive. This strategy sets a path to net zero energy and ensuring energy is secure, affordable and clean.⁷⁷ Delivering this strategy will result in higher levels of renewable electricity and greater energy efficiency in our homes and businesses, thus reducing the amount of energy we need. The Energy Strategy proposed two targets to drive these changes:

- Greater use of renewables – Meet at least 70% of electricity consumption from a diverse mix of renewable sources by 2030. The Act increased this target to 80% by 2030,⁷⁸ and
- Energy Efficiency – Deliver energy savings of 25% from buildings and industry by 2030.

DfE, in collaboration with other departments and key stakeholders, has also developed an Offshore Renewable Energy Action Plan (OREAP) to enable offshore renewable energy development in Northern Ireland's marine area from 2030. The OREAP is a live document and the action plan will be updated as policy development progresses and new evidence becomes available. Although delivery will be outside the current carbon budget, it will be a key contributor to meeting long-term emissions reduction targets.

⁷⁴ Electricity Consumption and Renewable Generation in Northern Ireland: Year Ending December 2022 | Department for the Economy

⁷⁵ Electricity Consumption and Renewable Generation in Northern Ireland: Year Ending December 2022 | Department for the Economy (economy-ni.gov.uk)

⁷⁶ Shaping Our Electricity Future Roadmap.pdf

⁷⁷ The Northern Ireland Energy Strategy, A Path to Net Zero Energy, December 2021 (economy-ni.gov.uk)

⁷⁸ Section 15 of the Act

Policies to support new renewable generation that incorporates flexibility and the ability for consumers to manage their demand based on price signals will be necessary. These will be needed to manage our system efficiently, minimise cost to consumers and ensure security of supply. These policies will also provide clear direction for investment.

Policies and Proposals

This section lists policies and proposals required to reduce emissions in the energy production and supply sector during this carbon budget period, building on work already initiated by the Energy Strategy. These aim to increase the levels of renewable electricity generation to achieve the challenging target of 80% of electricity consumption from renewable sources by 2030. DfE has engaged with stakeholders and relevant sector-specific advisory groups in relation to existing policies and in the development of new proposals to reduce emissions in the energy production and supply sector, including taking the advice and recommendations of the Single Electricity Market (SEM) Committee.

POLICY

The Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation (NIRO) Support Scheme (jointly quantified in the 80% of electricity consumption from renewable energy by 2030 target)

Although a legacy policy, the NIRO support scheme has been the main support mechanism for encouraging renewable electricity generation in Northern Ireland since 2005. Managed in conjunction with the Utility Regulator and the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem), the scheme has been instrumental in increasing renewable electricity in Northern Ireland from 3% in 2005 to 46% in 2020,⁷⁹ exceeding the established 2020 target of 40%.⁸⁰ For the year to December 2022, this further increased to 51%. Although the NIRO support scheme has been closed to new projects since March 2017, it will continue to support accredited renewables projects, and associated emissions reductions, for 20 years from their accreditation date or until 31 March 2037, whichever is earlier.

In terms of scheme management, there is currently a NIRO Assurance and Risk Management Steering Group which meets bi-monthly and includes representatives from DfE, the Utility Regulator and Ofgem. Alongside this, DfE has regular engagement with colleagues in the UK Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), the Scottish Government and Ofgem in relation to the current and future management of the NIRO support scheme.

⁷⁹ 40% electricity consumption from renewable sources by 2020 achieved ahead of schedule | Department for the Economy (economy-ni.gov.uk)

⁸⁰ Strategic Energy Framework

PROPOSAL

A new Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (jointly quantified in the 80% of electricity consumption from renewable energy by 2030 target)

The development and delivery of a new support scheme will be an important driver to achieve the legislative target to increase renewable energy. In the rest of the UK, Contracts for Difference⁸¹ has become the main mechanism for supporting low carbon electricity generation. The price support provided by Contracts for Difference in Great Britain has meant that many renewable generation projects have continued to be developed, whereas in Northern Ireland only 70 megawatts (MW) have connected since the NIRO support scheme⁸² closed.

Following the recent consultation on design considerations, DfE officials have been working with consultants to define the optimal scheme structure. The high-level design for the scheme was published with the government response to the consultation in April 2024.⁸³

The current phase of development involves technical modelling and a financial impact assessment, alongside the establishment of the legislative pathway, state aid approval and institutional roles and responsibilities necessary for delivery.

To support the development of this proposal the following actions will be progressed:

- Publish the Smart Systems Flexibility Plan (SSFP) – A consultation on the SSFP was published in January 2024.⁸⁴ DfE intends to publish the SSFP decision paper by December 2025. A smarter, more flexible grid will give consumers more control to save money through better data and more regularly updated prices for peak and off-peak demand. It will also enable smart devices that draw energy from the grid at cheaper rates when demand is low, supporting the roll-out of low carbon technologies like electric vehicles. The SSFP will maximise the use of renewable energy and reduce the need for traditional fossil fuel-based generation. It will also reduce the extent of new and upgraded electricity networks and therefore lower the cost of energy to Northern Ireland consumers.

⁸¹ A Contract for Difference (CfD) is a private law contract between a low carbon electricity generator and the Low Carbon Contracts Company (LCCC), a government-owned company. - Contracts for Difference - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

⁸² RNI-Report-Abolishing-renewables-in-Northern-Ireland-online-version.pdf (renewableni.com)

⁸³ Design considerations for a renewable electricity support scheme for Northern Ireland: response | Department for the Economy (economy-ni.gov.uk)

⁸⁴ Transitioning to a net zero energy system - Consultation on design considerations for a Northern Ireland Smart Systems and Flexibility Plan (economy-ni.gov.uk)

- DfE will develop legislative changes to facilitate greater connection of energy storage facilities to the network.
- DfE will work to facilitate the participation of aggregators⁸⁵ in the electricity market, with the aim to reduce peak demand, increase the utilisation of intermittent renewable energy, and lower the cost of energy to consumers. It is expected policy development will commence in the first quarter of 2026.
- DfE will work with the Utility Regulator, Northern Ireland Electricity Networks and SONI to promote the digitalisation of the electricity network to reduce the need for grid reinforcement, increase the effectiveness of network management, increase the use of renewable electricity, and lower the cost to energy consumers. This will be led by the Utility Regulator.
- DfE will lead on assessing the need for further interconnection, which will be critical as this will establish the optimal level for security of supply, how to create/ access new routes to market for renewable energy and thus ensure cost-effective utilisation of any new interconnection assets. It can also lower the generation cost of electricity to consumers by accessing markets with cheaper electricity.
- DfI will ensure that strategic planning policy on renewable and low carbon energy development remains fit for purpose and up to date to inform decision making in relation to development plan making and development proposals for renewables projects. The publication of a call for evidence⁸⁶ on planning policy and climate change will help inform any future-focused review of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement.
- DfE and the Utility Regulator will continue to collaborate to review the legislative and regulatory framework for electricity connections charging. In July 2023 they published a joint call for evidence. The non-confidential responses to this call for evidence have been published, and the final decision paper is due to be published in the first quarter of 2025.
- DfE intends to build on the existing Northern Ireland Electricity Networks smart meters pilot and develop a plan for the deployment of electricity smart meters in Northern Ireland. DfE consulted on a Design Plan for smart electricity meters in autumn 2024.
- DfE aims to publish the final design of a Renewable Electricity Support Scheme for Northern Ireland in the second quarter of 2025. Support will be provided in two phases, with the first auction anticipated in early 2026.

⁸⁵ Aggregators bundle distributed energy resources to engage as a single entity in power or services markets. In effect aggregators operate as a virtual power plant.

⁸⁶ Call for Evidence on A Future Focused Review of the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) on the issue of Climate Change | Department for Infrastructure (infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)

POLICY

The Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases (F-Gases) Regulations (2015) (UK-wide policy, but with separate Regulations for Great Britain and Northern Ireland), and new EU Regulation on F-gases in 2024 (Unquantified)

Several cross-cutting UK-wide policies also indirectly apply to the energy production and supply sector. These policies aim to reduce emissions through a reduction in electricity demand and some, such as policy around Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases (F-gases) Regulations, require the sector to replace high GWP F-gases with lower GWP alternatives. Demand reduction and emissions reductions from these policies are incorporated into the data sources used in the sector's emissions modelling, with the proportion of emissions savings attributed to the energy production and supply sector subtracted from the savings for other sectors, to ensure these savings are not overestimated. Most of these cross-cutting policies indirectly reduce emissions via demand reduction, affecting energy production and supply along with other sectors. Future modelling will refine the proportion of emissions savings to reflect a more accurate impact on the energy production and supply sector. This is a cross-cutting policy that also affects the residential buildings and business and industrial processes sectors. Further information is provided in the Residential Buildings chapter.

Deployment Assumptions for Delivery of Energy Production and Supply Policies and Proposals

Table 9 presents the level of expected deployment associated with draft Climate Action Plan policies and proposals in the energy production and supply sector to align with the projected emissions over the first carbon budget period, based on the Accelerating Renewables in Northern Ireland Report.⁶⁷

Table 9: Deployment assumptions by 2027 to achieve the Central Scenario with energy production and supply sector Northern Ireland policies

Policy target	Mitigation	By 2027	
		Wind (GWh)	Solar (GWh)
80% of electricity consumption from renewable energy	Increased ability to provide renewable energy to provide for 80% of energy demand	1,280	320

To note: non-supported generators contribute an additional 600 gigawatt hours (GWhs) on top of the 1000 GWhs supported by the renewable energy support scheme by 2027.

⁶⁷ Accelerating Renewables in Northern Ireland - high level design of a support scheme (economy-ni.gov.uk)

Emissions Projections

Table 10 presents the projected emissions for the energy production and supply sector across the first carbon budget period. Energy production and supply sector emissions are projected to be 0.52 MtCO₂e less than the emission levels assumed for this sector within the CCC adjusted pathway.

Table 10: Energy production and supply sector projected emissions in the Central Scenario compared with the adjusted CCC sectoral pathway

 Sector	Projected Emissions (MtCO ₂ e)						Difference in CCC adjusted pathway and Northern Ireland Projections
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total	
Energy Production and Supply	2.98	2.29	2.35	2.39	2.33	12.33	
Energy Production and Supply CCC*	2.76	2.63	2.58	2.5	2.37	12.85	-0.52 MtCO ₂ e

*These figures are based on the CCC advisory pathway but have been adjusted to take account of the 2022 inventory publication.

Further detail on the quantification of the energy production and supply sector policies is available in Chapter 3.1 of the Quantification Report (Annex A).⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Chapter 3.1, p. 17-23

Just Transition Considerations

As the energy sector transitions to a net zero carbon system, we must consider the impact of the transition on consumers, especially the most vulnerable. Access to energy infrastructure is critical to our economy and sustains safe and healthy homes. It is essential that as we move to more renewable forms of energy that all our citizens, regardless of age or geography, get an equal opportunity to embrace this transition and we know this will require support. We also know this will be difficult as many of us rely on simple fuel sources to heat our homes and some may find the use of smart technology challenging. A shift in personal behaviours and investment will be needed to enable emissions reductions in the energy sector.

The Energy Strategy recognises this. A key principle is to place domestic consumers, businesses and communities at the heart of our energy future; and develop policies that enable and protect consumers through the energy transition, focusing on affordability and fairness.

The Energy Strategy 2022 Action Plan included an action for DfE to carry out an Energy Skills Audit for energy decarbonisation, undertaking economic research to better understand the skills required by new and existing workers to support a successful transition to an advanced zero emission, indigenous, secure, diverse energy system and circular economy in Northern Ireland. The findings of this research were published on the DfE website in June 2023.⁸⁹ The study found the need for an expansion: in numbers with green skills but also general business and IT skills; and the ability of the workforce to upskill as technologies evolve. It recommended that young people should be informed of available learning opportunities and career pathways and access to learning should be widened.

As the NIRO Support Scheme is a closed scheme, it is not anticipated that it will deliver new jobs. It will, however, support maintaining roles in operation and maintenance of the generating stations. A new Renewable Electricity Support Scheme in Northern Ireland is aimed at encouraging investment in local renewable electricity projects whilst also protecting consumers from global price shocks. Such a scheme would also support trade and investment in Northern Ireland, driving improvements in wealth, prosperity and living standards across the country. Establishing the main mechanism for encouraging investment in renewable electricity in Northern Ireland, a new support scheme would be the catalyst to lower carbon emissions and grow the green economy, including growth of jobs that are climate resilient.

⁸⁹ Transitioning to a greener economy – a skills perspective

In addition, a programme of skills and workforce development policy will be initiated via the Offshore Renewable Energy Action Plan, led by the DfE Skills team and in partnership with the DfE Energy Group and Invest Northern Ireland. The action plan is expected to expand the local onshore and offshore renewables energy sector with the potential of increasing employment, economic growth and skills. DfE will continue to work on ensuring that people in Northern Ireland can avail of opportunities arising from energy transition.

The Utility Regulator has published its Corporate Strategy 2024-2029 Protecting Consumers on the Way to Net Zero⁹⁰ which focuses on the key strategic drivers for delivering on decarbonisation and ensuring a just transition by addressing affordability concerns for consumers.

⁹⁰ Utility Regulator (UR) Corporate Strategy 2024-2029

6.3 Transport

Sector Summary



Transport Sector Emissions Summary

- Tackling transport sector emissions will require a clear, strategic, focused approach. Interventions linked to switching fuels will be crucial in decarbonising the transport sector. Whilst other interventions, such as a focus on shifting modes of travel and reducing travel journeys, will not deliver the same level of reductions to overall emissions, they will have an important role to play in contributing to the decarbonisation agenda and the wider strategic goals of DfI.
- The transport sector includes emissions from surface road transport, domestic shipping and aviation, and aircraft support vehicles. It is the second largest contributor to emissions in Northern Ireland.
- Tailpipe emissions from road transport – cars, buses, light duty trucks, heavy duty trucks and motorcycles – are responsible for 88.7% of the sector's emissions in 2022, with the passenger car being the largest contributor to transportation emissions.
- The Northern Ireland GHG Inventory highlights that the transport sector emissions in 2022 (3.8 MtCO₂e) are greater than 1990 emissions (3.6 MtCO₂e).
- This increasing road transport emissions trend is a global issue. Although there have been improvements in vehicle and fuel efficiency, this benefit has been offset by increasing numbers of registered private vehicles, increased journeys and the increasing size and weight of vehicles.

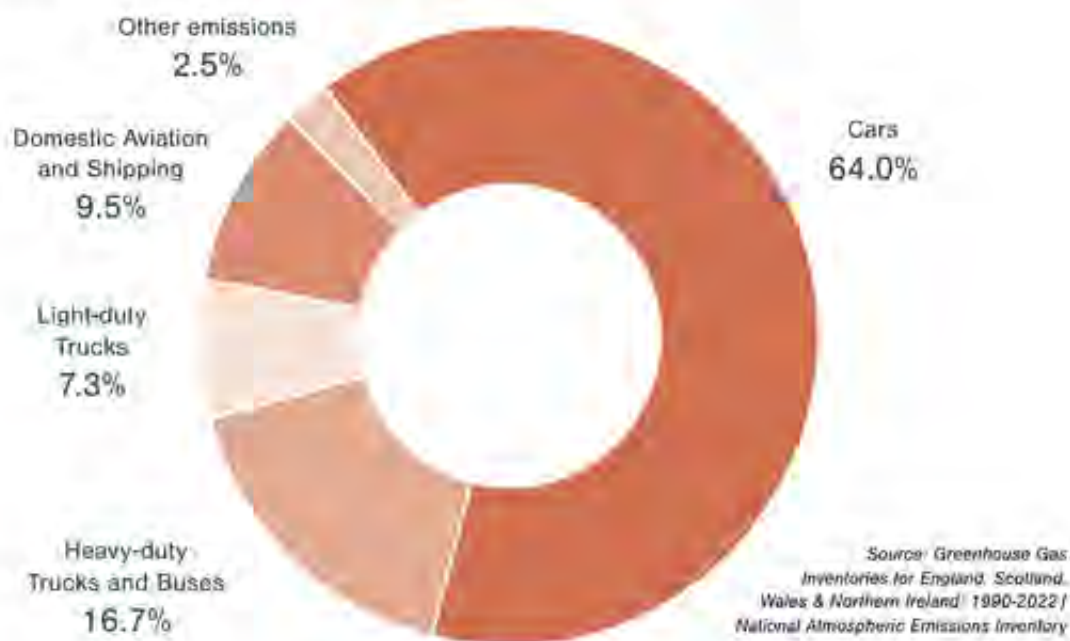
Sector Summary	
	
Policy Approach	Tackling transport sector emissions will require a clear, strategic, focused approach. DfI will prioritise and deliver against three policies over the first carbon budget period to reduce vehicle emissions: 1. Reducing vehicle emissions by switching fuels to zero and low emission alternatives 2. Shifting modes of transport away from private car journeys to sustainable travel alternatives. 3. Reducing the need and length of vehicle journeys. • Interventions linked to switching fuels will be crucial in decarbonising the transport sector. Shifting modes of transport or reducing journeys will not, of themselves, deliver the same level of reductions to overall emissions but are important elements of our overall approach and the wider strategic goals of DfI on transport emissions. We will use a precautionary approach to sustaining or developing other forms of transport and travel options. • DfI will develop a strategic approach to communications to support the three high-level policies. This will be informed by behavioural science to increase awareness and encourage behaviour change. • DfI's bespoke Transport Emissions Model (TEM) will assist in scenario testing to identify options for future policy development.
Emissions Projections	Following the implementation of the policies and proposals set out in this chapter, the transport sector is projected to emit 18.53 MtCO₂e over the course of the first carbon budget period. This compares to total assumed emissions of 17.41 MtCO₂e in the sector during the first carbon budget period within the CCC adjusted pathway.

Sector Overview

Transport is the second largest emitting sector in Northern Ireland, accounting for 17.8% (3.8 MtCO₂e) of all emissions in 2022. The transport sector includes emissions from surface road transport, railways, domestic shipping and aviation, and other mobile support vehicles. Overall, tailpipe emissions from cars, buses, light duty trucks, heavy duty trucks and motorcycles are responsible for 88.7% of the total transport emissions, with passenger cars accounting for 64.0% of the sector's emissions (2.4 MtCO₂e) as shown in Figure 12.

Given that passenger cars, light trucks and heavy-duty trucks are responsible for the majority of all transport emissions in Northern Ireland, addressing the emissions from these sources is critical to wider transport decarbonisation efforts.

Figure 12: Transport sector emissions 2022



The latest GHG Inventory highlights that transport sector emissions have been in decline since they peaked in 2017 at 4.4 MtCO₂e. However, they have increased by 6.0% from 3.6 MtCO₂e in 1990 to 3.8 MtCO₂e in 2022 as illustrated in Figure 13. It is important to note that the sector's emissions were artificially depressed in 2020 and 2021 as a result of COVID-19 public health restrictions. The latest transport sector inventory report shows that emissions then increased by 13.9% between 2020 and 2022 due to returning pre-COVID-19 travel habits.

This increasing emissions trend is predicted to continue into the next inventory reporting years as a result of changing travel habits and trip purposes. Key factors influencing this increase in emissions since 1990 include: an increasing vehicle stock, high volume of diesel and petrol vehicles being retained in this stock, increasing distances travelled by private vehicles, and increasing size of vehicles (SUVs etc). Commuting habits have changed post-COVID-19 with more individuals now working different patterns and a higher proportion of individuals working from home. However, these commuting habits have been offset by the increasing number and frequency of leisure trips.

Figure 13: Change in transport emissions 1990-2022



Source: Greenhouse Gas Inventories for England, Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland 1990-2022 / National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory

— Greenhouse gas inventory 1990–2022
- - - Projections 2023–2027

Note: Base year is 1990 for CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O, or 1995 for fluorinated gases

Transport Emissions Model – Development and Next Steps

In response to the Act and the legal obligation as transport sector lead, DfI developed its own bespoke Transport Emissions Model (TEM). The development of the TEM provides a means to better understand Northern Ireland's baseline transport emissions and how the transport fleet functions and differs depending on its locality and different travel habits. This bespoke model also provides a tool that will inform future outcomes in terms of emissions and transport decarbonisation pathways for Northern Ireland. More detail on the TEM and its modelled projections is provided in the Quantification Report (Annex A).

Transport emissions projections highlight that transport emissions in Northern Ireland (2022) are continuing to rise and in excess of the 1990 baseline (approximately 106%). The modelling forecasts in the TEM reflect the current trend position of the transport sector and the Northern Ireland fleet and therefore its detailed analysis has calculated that any transport emissions savings achieved over the first carbon budget period will be minimal. A core function of the development of the TEM is to inform future outcomes in terms of emissions. To achieve this, a series of scenarios were developed to represent the projected changes in the vehicle stock from different levels of policy ambition. UK policies are factored into the TEM including the rates of adoption of Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs) and the intermediate technologies, such as hybridised-internal combustion engines (Internal Combustion Engines [ICE], including both Hybrid Electric Vehicle [HEV] and Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicle [PHEV]) that are all subject to legislated new sales bans in the future.

Whilst the development of the TEM has been crucial in understanding Northern Ireland transport emissions and fleet functions, the following ongoing improvements and updates will be required to ensure the tool remains robust and up to date:

- Through the development of a Northern Ireland stock model, on a local level DfI will determine the existing transport GHG emissions and their location.
- Using and continuously improving the local detailed baseline data in the bespoke TEM will allow DfI to better test and validate the CCC's advice and transport projections against local data and provide a more accurate picture for this region.
- The TEM provides the ability to model different scenarios (reflecting current conditions and constraints) to see how emissions savings reductions (scale and location) can be achieved for the transport sector and to assist with informing priorities and decision making for the Northern Ireland decarbonisation pathway(s).
- The scale of the model development and its build functionality provides the ability to test, model, validate and understand the management of carbon emissions for all transport policy and schemes. The TEM will provide a consistent and credible approach to carry out pathway analysis and carbon emissions calculations and projections.

Policies

This section lists the policies required to reduce emissions in the transport sector. The high-level policies adopted by DfI have previously been consulted on as part of the Northern Ireland Energy Strategy engagement and form an important element of the forthcoming Transport Strategy. DfI continues to engage with officials across the UK and Republic of Ireland in relation to the actions linked to these policies.

DfI's approach will focus on three key policies to reduce vehicle emissions:

1. Switching fuels to zero and low emission alternatives.
2. Shifting modes of transport away from private car journeys to sustainable travel alternatives.
3. Reducing the need and length of vehicle journeys.

Tackling transport sector emissions will require a clear, strategic, focused approach. Interventions linked to switching fuels will be crucial in decarbonising the transport sector. Whilst other interventions, such as shifting modes of travel and reducing travel journeys, will deliver relatively lower transport emissions reductions, they will have an important role to play in contributing to the decarbonisation agenda and the wider strategic goals of the DfI.

To provide a focused approach over the next three carbon budget periods, DfI will develop and publish for public consultation a Transport Strategy that will form an overarching framework to inform the planning and delivery of transport infrastructure and services across Northern Ireland up to 2035. This strategy will outline a number of measures required to best meet the emerging climate change challenges. DfI will also develop a strategic communication approach to transport decarbonisation to encourage behaviour change, using communication tools to capture and highlight the power of individuals and communities to collectively make a difference to reducing emissions.

DfI will also establish a new Data Evidence Group to oversee the establishment of a new integrated project to support and standardise DfI's approach to data collection, presenting and reporting. Linked to the transport tools and other departments, this Data Evidence Group will be critical to support monitoring and reporting requirements.

DfI will also continue to develop and invest in a suite of strategic transport models and tools that will provide the supporting evidence to inform decisions and prioritisation relating to interventions and policies. A department modelling protocol outlining the management and control of these tools will also be developed to inform their use.

Figure 14: Emissions reduction policy levers



Switching Fuels

POLICY

'Switch'- Reducing vehicle emissions by switching fuels to zero and low emission alternatives (Quantified)

The Travel Survey for Northern Ireland reported that 69% of all journeys were made by private car, accounting for 84% of total distance travelled in 2021.⁹¹ Emissions from passenger cars constituted 64.0% (2.4 MtCO₂e) of Northern Ireland's transport sector emissions in 2022.

The TEM and associated transport models have shown that removing car emissions through the transition to zero emission vehicles (ZEVs) will have the most significant impact on reducing carbon emissions from the transport sector.

⁹¹ Travel Survey for Northern Ireland In-depth Report 2021 (infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)

In addition, further actions to switch other vehicles such as light trucks, heavy trucks, buses and coaches to zero emission fuels, together with electrifying the railways, will form the basis of a wide-ranging and impactful approach to the decarbonisation of surface transport. This approach will form DfI's foundational pathway to transport decarbonisation.

DfI will therefore focus on encouraging ownership of lower emission cars and vehicles, engaging closely with partners including the UK Government and Devolved Administration colleagues on UK-wide commitments such as: the ban on new internal combustion engines (ICE) cars; the ban on new ICE light goods vehicles; and the ban on new ICE heavy goods vehicles. Engagement at a local level will continue to ensure that the infrastructure needed in support of these changes is in place, building on the actions outlined within DfI's Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Action Plan.⁹² DfI will continue to support the ongoing decarbonisation of Translink's bus fleet and the public sector fleet and will also undertake feasibility studies in support of the All-Island Strategic Rail Review and Union Connectivity Review.

At present, much of DfI's focus relates to increasing the number of electric vehicles on our roads through the introduction of the zero emission vehicles mandate⁹³ and Vehicle Emissions Trading Schemes (VETS) (Amendment) Order 2024⁹⁴, together with supporting the commercial development of appropriate electric vehicles charging infrastructure. The Vehicle Emissions Trading Schemes (VETS) (Amendment) Order 2024 was approved by the Assembly in October 2024. Following approval in England, Scotland and Wales the Order came into force in Northern Ireland in January 2025. The mandate sets annual minimum targets for the proportion of new zero emission cars and vans sold in the UK, starting at 22% for cars and 10% for vans in 2024 and rising steadily to reach 80% of cars and 70% of vans by 2030, on a pathway to 100% by 2035. In addition, and subject to funding, by 2027 DfI and public sector partners will increase the percentage of net zero public sector fleet such as cars and vans in line with the commitment made at COP26.

The transport foundational pathway focuses on the switch policy and it forms a credible and impactful approach to transport decarbonisation. DfI, through the TEM, has undertaken modelling to better understand the role that actions to encourage people to 'shift' to public transport and active travel and reduce journey length make to help Northern Ireland reach net zero by 2050.

⁹² Action Plan for Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure

⁹³ The ZEV mandate sets annual sales quotas of new cars and vans for manufacturers across the UK and came into force in GB from January 2024

⁹⁴ The Vehicle Emissions Trading Schemes (Amendment) Order 2024 (legislation.gov.uk)

Shifting Modes

POLICY

'Shift' – Reducing vehicle emissions by shifting modes of transport away from private car journeys to sustainable travel alternatives (Unquantified)

The TEM has shown that modal shift will have a relatively lower impact than the switch policy on transport decarbonisation. However, it will have an impact on reducing congestion within our urban areas, supporting clean, green vibrant city and town centres, improving social inclusion for all members of society and improving health benefits by encouraging more active travel.

Significant changes in how road space is allocated, especially within our cities, are required to improve the attractiveness of public transport options with a view to encouraging more people to shift modes of transport away from private car journeys to sustainable travel alternatives. This includes prioritising bus and active travel options especially within urban areas and to join up the different modes of transport across Northern Ireland. For example, a suite of Local Transport Plans will support councils' Local Development Plans by considering the location of priority bus corridors, park and ride sites, and active travel routes. Once Local Transport Plans are developed, DfI will seek to deliver schemes and measures identified that will contribute to a change in travel mode behaviours and patterns across our towns and cities. Continued support for behaviour change programmes will also need to be used to maximise return on investment and encourage change in mode of travel.

A range of actions focused on encouraging people to switch from private cars to more sustainable modes of transport such as walking, wheeling and cycling and, if needed, public transport will be undertaken during the period. These actions include the following:

- By 2027, DfI will seek to deliver the active travel infrastructure by increasing supply chain capacity and the implementation of the Active Travel Delivery Plan. Public consultation on the draft Active Travel Delivery Plan closed on 28 February 2025. Responses are now being reviewed with a view to presenting a final plan to the DfI Minister for consideration in autumn 2025. Within the first ten years of the implementation of this plan, over 200 kilometres of high-quality active travel infrastructure will be delivered. Alongside this, the Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan, the Strategic Plan for Greenways and a complementary behaviour change strategy will further encourage modal shift to active travel and maximise the infrastructure investment benefits.
- By 2027, DfI will work with Translink to seek to deliver improved facilities, services and initiatives aimed at encouraging increased usage of Public Transport. This includes account-based integrated ticketing, improvements to timetabling, the availability of real-time information for customers and upgrades to bus shelters, stations and halts.

- By 2027, DfI will continue to deliver Belfast Rapid Transit 2 subject to business case approval and availability of funding.⁹⁵
- By 2027, DfI will seek to encourage the utilisation of existing Park and Ride/Share sites and increase the provision of Park and Ride/Share Sites and priority bus lanes serving key transport corridors in line with emerging transport plans and connectivity needs.
- DfI has also commenced a review of the current Transport Assessment Guidelines, which was last updated in 2006 and Parking Standards last updated in 2005. As emerging transport policies seek to prioritise sustainable transport options, it is considered timely to review these documents against current applicable policies to define new guidance and standards going forward.

Reducing Journeys

POLICY

'Reduce' - Reducing vehicle emissions by reducing the need and length of journeys (Unquantified)

The movement of people and goods is critical for the economy and for social needs across the region. However, some private car journeys could be reduced in length and frequency leading to a decrease in the amount we travel by car and an associated reduction in cars on the road and congestion.

The planning system can help to develop the policies and places that bring homes and key services closer together. The need for journeys could be reduced further by the digitisation of services as well as hybrid working. The planning system has a key supporting role to play in reducing the amount we travel by car through integrating transport and land use to improve connectivity and promote sustainable patterns of transport and travel. This will be reflected in the emerging Local Development Plans which will be supported by a suite of transport plans. Behaviour change will continue to be a key driver in this transition.

⁹⁵ Belfast Rapid Transit 2 (BRT2) will extend the existing Glider network to north and south Belfast to provide a modern, safe, accessible, efficient, and high-quality public transport service which encourages more people to travel by public transport.

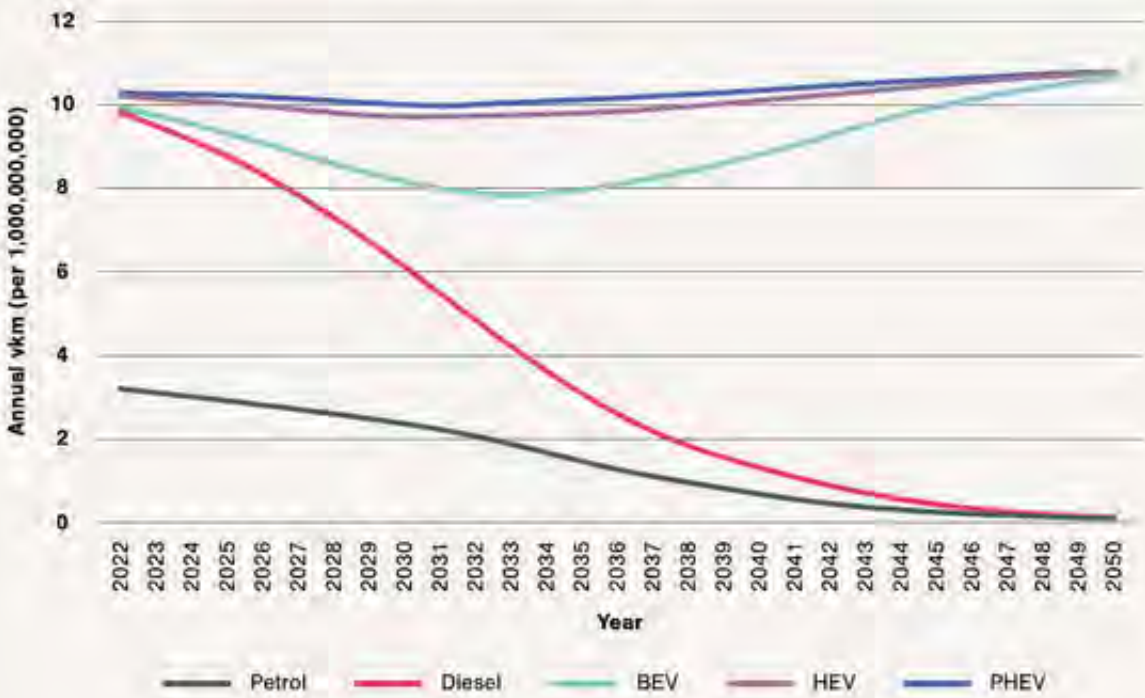
Deployment Assumptions for Delivery of Transport Policies

Figures 15 and 16 present the level of expected deployment associated with draft Climate Action Plan policies and proposals in the transport sector to align with the projected emissions over the first carbon budget period.

Car

The policies assumed for this carbon budget period predict that the car stock will shift towards BEVs in the future in all scenarios (Figure 15). Currently, none of the TEM projections achieve 100% ZEVs as there is a small residual number of ICE vehicles predicted to still be in the Northern Ireland fleet beyond 2050.

Figure 15: Expected impact of 'switch' policy for cars

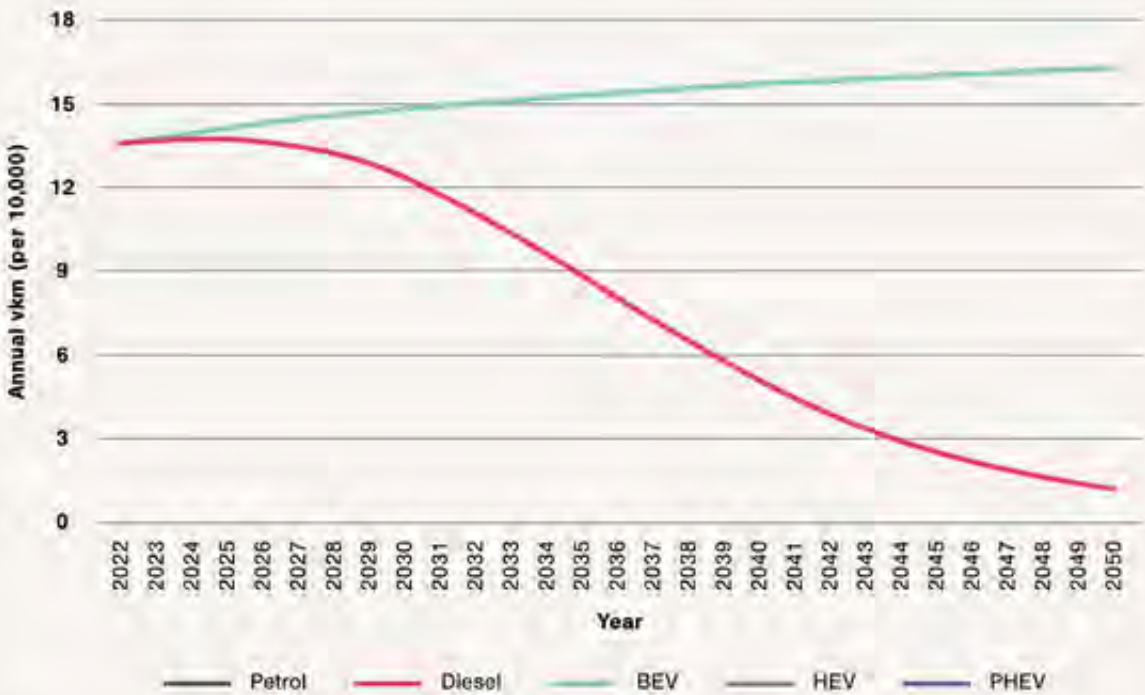


*BEV – Battery electric vehicle; HEV – Hybrid electric vehicle; PHEV – Plug-in hybrid electric vehicle

Light Goods Vehicles

The policy levers assumed for this carbon budget period result in projections that the Light Goods Vehicle (LGV) stock will predominantly shift from diesel to BEVs in line with the rate of new registrations in the future in all scenarios (Figure 16). Currently, none of the TEM projections achieve 100% ZEV as there is a residual number of diesel vehicles still predicted to be in the fleet beyond 2050.

Figure 16: Expected impact of 'switch' policy for LGVs



*BEV – Battery electric vehicle; HEV – Hybrid electric vehicle; PHEV – Plug-in hybrid electric vehicle

Emissions Projections

Table 11 presents the projected emissions for the transport sector across the first carbon budgetary period. Transport sector emissions are projected to be 1.12 MtCO_{2e} more than the emissions levels assumed for this sector within the CCC adjusted pathway.

Table 11: Transport sector projected emissions in the Central Scenario compared with the adjusted CCC sectoral pathway

 Sector	Projected Emissions (MtCO _{2e})						Difference in CCC adjusted pathway and Northern Ireland Projections
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total	
Transport	3.83	3.78	3.72	3.65	3.55	18.53	1.12 MtCO _{2e}
Transport CCC*	3.87	3.69	3.47	3.29	3.1	17.41	

*These figures are based on the CCC advisory pathway but have been adjusted to take account of the 2022 inventory publication.

Further detail on the quantification of the transport sector policies is available in Chapter 3.2 of the Quantification Report (Annex A).⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Chapter 3.2, p.24-33

Just Transition Considerations

A just transition for the consumption and accessibility of transport in Northern Ireland must address rural isolation and regional imbalance, and embrace healthier, more efficient, and more equitable transport systems.

Research undertaken by the Northern Ireland Consumer Council highlights that while consumers recognise the need to decarbonise transport and aspire to being greener in their transport choices, they are not willing to pay for new ways of travelling or sacrifice the convenience and practicalities of the private car.⁹⁷ While this will have a significant impact on achieving emissions reductions it also highlights that affordability is a key concern for people. As we work towards achieving a net zero transport system, we need to recognise that cost is an issue for citizens – the cost of public transport, the cost of fuels, the cost of vehicles. Age, geography and socio-economic status will have a bearing on our ability to access net zero transport choices and as policy makers we need to ensure that all citizens are supported in making these choices. During the transport mobilisation phase, and building upon DfI's transport foundational pathway, measures to address the barriers listed above will be explored to inform future phases in support of transport decarbonisation.

We recognise that finding a way through this will require strong leadership, positive engagement and political acceptance. It will also require investment in our infrastructure and in developing interventions to influence behaviours. Engagement with stakeholders, including the public, will be integral to the development of the policies outlined within this chapter. Appropriate impact assessments will be conducted prior to any new policy or scheme being implemented to establish if mitigations exist for any potential detrimental impacts.

⁹⁷ Decarbonisation of Transport in Northern Ireland - Summary Report | Consumer Council

6.4 Business and Industrial Processes

Sector Summary



Business and Industrial Processes Sector Emissions Summary

- The business and industrial processes sector includes:
 - Business emissions from stationary combustion in industrial and commercial sectors including industrial off-road machinery, refrigeration and air conditioning, and the use of fluorinated gases for other applications. These account for the majority of emissions in the sector at 91.9%.
 - Industrial processes sector contains all emissions from industry, except for those associated with fuel combustion, accounting for the remaining 8.1% in the sector.
- Emissions have decreased by 54.9% since 1990.
- This is the fifth largest emitting sector, accounting for 11.9% of Northern Ireland greenhouse gas emissions.

Policy Approach

Unlike other sectors, business and industrial processes relies predominantly on UK-wide policies. The UK policies are complemented by Northern Ireland specific policies that are intended to address our small and medium sized economy. There are also some EU policies that have an influence on the sector in Northern Ireland as a result of the Windsor Framework.

UK and EU-led regulation, compliance and reporting has an important role to play. Key policies include assessing **combined heat and power** schemes on the basis of their energy efficiency and environmental performance, thus ensuring that the associated tax benefits are in line with environmental performance and **ensuring that harmful fluorinated gases are ultimately eliminated**. Other policies relate to improving the **energy performance of buildings, emissions trading, product design and labelling, the reporting of emissions** and **funding** to support the transition.

Sector Summary	
	
Emissions Projections	Northern Ireland led regulation, compliance and reporting also has a role. This will be through two policies and two proposals. The policies are Fuel Switching to Natural Gas, (it is recognised that fuel switching to natural gas is not a long-term solution to emissions reduction, but gas has a role to play in the short to medium term as a transition fuel) and Uplifts to Building Regulations in Northern Ireland. This will potentially have a significant role in reducing emissions from new buildings and from existing buildings that are being upgraded. The two proposals under Northern Ireland led regulation relate to biomethane and further uplifts to building regulations.
	There are a number of other initiatives which are being delivered by Investing in Northern Ireland's Businesses, through Invest Northern Ireland, especially in relation to capital grants, resource matching and technical consultancy. Invest Northern Ireland also lead the Industrial Decarbonisation for Northern Ireland project. The aim of the project is to identify effective ways for organisations to make environmental and economic improvements by reducing energy consumption.

Sector Overview

The business and industrial processes sector is listed as a single sector in the Climate Change Act but is listed as two sectors in the Northern Ireland GHG Inventory.⁹⁶ It is the fifth largest emitting sector, accounting for 11.9% of Northern Ireland greenhouse gas emissions (2022).

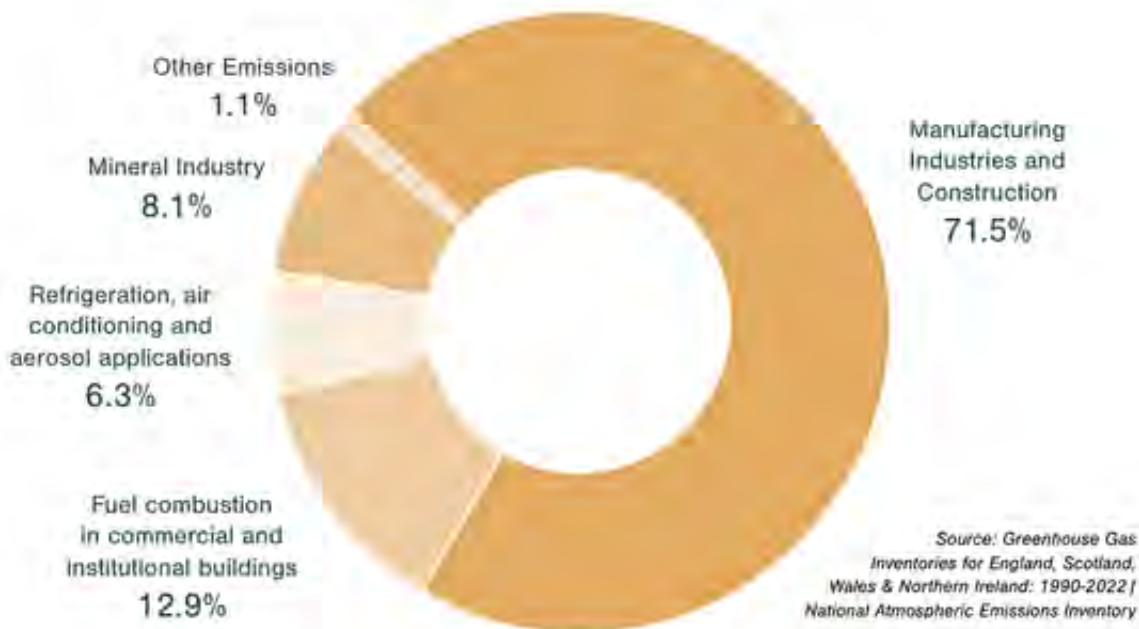
In terms of the activities that generate emissions, manufacturing industries and construction represent 71.5% of emissions from this sector. Manufacturing industries and construction consist of emissions from fuel combustion in industry, including for the generation of electricity and heat for own use in these industries. However, a significant proportion, 50.5% of business and industrial processes emissions, come from industrial use of fuel which cannot be allocated to a specific industry as data is not available. Where data is not available to allocate emissions to the specific industry where they occur, they are grouped as 'other manufacturing industries and construction' in the GHG Inventory and are included in manufacturing industries and construction within this Climate Action Plan.

Further understanding of the source activities contributing to these emissions is required. We believe these are related to combustion, and whilst this lack of clarity is a UK-wide issue, the development of this Climate Action Plan has highlighted potential issues over the proportionality and assumed fuel use in determining the emissions attributed to Northern Ireland relating to business and industrial processes.

Work is ongoing with the UK Government to strengthen our understanding of these source emissions and clarify how they are attributed to Northern Ireland. This will better inform and facilitate the determination on how policies and proposals can be both targeted at the resulting emissions and the impacts quantified (Figure 17).

⁹⁶ Northern Ireland Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2022 ([dema-ni.gov.uk/](https://www.dema-ni.gov.uk/))

Figure 17: Business and industrial processes sector emission sources 2022



Emissions from the business and industrial processes sector have fallen from 5.6 MtCO₂e in 1990 to 2.5 MtCO₂e in 2022, representing a 54.9% reduction (Figure 18). This decrease in emissions has been driven by a reduction in emissions from the food and drink industries, as well as a reduction in emissions from fossil fuels combusted for heat and power production in industry.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Northern Ireland Greenhouse Gas Emissions 1990 - 2021 (data-ni.gov.uk)

Figure 18: Change in business and industrial processes emissions 1990-2022



Source: Greenhouse Gas Inventories for England, Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland, 1990-2022 / National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory

Greenhouse gas inventory 1990-2022
Projections 2023-2027

Note: Base year is 1990 for CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O, or 1995 for fluorinated gases

The sector in Northern Ireland is dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises with almost 80,000 registered businesses in operation, dispersed geographically.¹⁰⁰ This is significantly different from the rest of the UK, where large industrial clusters exist that in many cases have been the focus of direct policy interventions. Therefore, we need a different approach to the decarbonisation of the business and industrial process sector in Northern Ireland. This will be achieved by identifying commonalities within economic sectors and accelerating cross-sectoral collaboration.

We also need to support businesses and carbon intensive industries as we deliver economic development in a way that is consistent to achieving net zero. By implementing energy and resource efficiency measures at scale and promoting fuel switching away from carbon intensive fuels used for heating, Northern Ireland businesses can become active in the delivery of a flexible and integrated energy system of the future while at the same time contributing to economic sustainability and to climate action.

¹⁰⁰ Inter Departmental Business Register | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (nisra.gov.uk)

Policies and Proposals

This section lists policies and proposals required to reduce emissions in the business and industrial processes sector. These policy levers can be attributed to the following interventions:

- UK and EU-led regulation, compliance and reporting
- Northern Ireland-led regulation, compliance and reporting
- Investing in Northern Ireland's businesses

UK and EU-led Regulation, Compliance and Reporting

The UK Government's Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy¹⁰¹ is a key driver for decarbonisation within the sector. It aims to address different market failures and barriers to entry that prevent industry from securing the investment needed for a low carbon transition. Key strategic policies outline support to switch away from fossil fuel combustion to low carbon alternatives, such as hydrogen and electrification, supporting innovation like carbon capture usage and storage, while supporting industrial sites to maximise their energy and resource efficiency.

In addition to frameworks across carbon pricing and carbon leakage, the Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy sets out a pathway with levers across competitiveness and market support, demonstration funding to accelerate innovation, and low-regret deployment of technologies and building infrastructure.¹⁰² In areas such as carbon capture usage and storage, in Northern Ireland we will develop our own policies and proposals for the second and third carbon budget periods. In this sector, the scaling factors used to apportion the impact of the UK-wide policies is the NI/UK ratio of industrial emissions.

POLICY

The Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases (F-Gases) Regulations (2015) (UK-wide policy, but with separate Regulations for GB and NI), and new EU Regulation on F-gases in 2024 (Quantified)

Regulations were implemented to limit Northern Ireland's emissions through restriction and monitoring, and a new ban on fluorinated greenhouse gases (F-gases) with a high Global Warming Potential in foams came into operation in January 2023. Proposals for future policies relevant to limiting F-gas emissions contained within EU proposed regulations, came into operation on 11 March 2024. This is a cross-

¹⁰¹ Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy (publishing.service.gov.uk)

¹⁰² Since September 2021, NI government has collated funding opportunities through a regular publication for stakeholders Funding innovation for net zero e-zine (Department for the Economy (economy-ni.gov.uk))

cutting policy affecting the business and industrial processes sector along with the energy production and supply and residential buildings sectors. Further information is provided in the Residential Buildings chapter.

POLICY

The EU Ecodesign Directive and Energy Labelling Framework Regulation¹⁰² (Quantified)

The EU Ecodesign Directive¹⁰⁴ and the Energy Labelling Framework Regulation¹⁰⁵ operate by setting minimum performance and information requirements (respectively) for energy-using products. They aim to take the least efficient products off the market and to give consumers clear energy-use information to guide their purchasing decisions. This policy applies to Northern Ireland, through The Ecodesign for Energy-Related Products and Energy Information (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) (EU Exit) Regulations 2021. This is a cross-cutting policy which also impacts the residential buildings and public buildings sectors.

POLICY

Industrial Non-Road Mobile Machinery Decarbonisation (Quantified)

Non-road mobile machinery covers a wide variety of machinery, for example excavators, bulldozers, loaders and mobile generators. To support the decarbonisation of high-impact sectors affected by these emissions the UK Government has made support available through schemes such as the Red Diesel Replacement competition, the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund and the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation. UK Government aims to publish an Industrial Non-Road Mobile Machinery Strategy that will set out how the sector can decarbonise while maintaining competitiveness, attracting investment, and supporting growth. To inform this, UK Government published a call for evidence on Non-Road Mobile Machinery Decarbonisation in December 2023. DfE will liaise with UK Government as policy develops in this area to ensure the views of Northern Ireland industry are taken into consideration.

¹⁰² Both the Eco-design Directive and Labelling Framework fall under the Windsor Framework with continued implementation through product-specific EU regulations, replicated in UK law

¹⁰⁴ Directive - 2009/125 - EN - EUR-Lex

¹⁰⁵ Regulation (EU) 2017/1369 of the European Parliament and of the Council

POLICY

Energy Performance of Buildings (Certificates and Inspections) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 (as amended) (Quantified)

The Energy Performance of Buildings (Certificates and Inspections) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 (as amended) set requirements for energy assessment certification of buildings and inspection of certain air conditioning installations.

Energy Performance Certificates are required when any building is sold, rented out or constructed. They give information on a building's energy efficiency on a sliding scale from 'A' (very efficient) to 'G' (least efficient), and, for the non-domestic sector, are based on emissions, to allow the buyer or tenant to make an informed choice.

POLICY

Industrial Energy Transformation Fund (Quantified)

Current UK Government support such as the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund (IETF),¹⁰⁶ is aimed at businesses in Northern Ireland, England and Wales with high energy use to invest in energy efficiency and low carbon technologies. Representatives for the Northern Ireland Executive and Welsh government have been members of the IETF Operations Board since 2019 and are involved in the Grant Award Panels at the stage in the process when prospective projects are assessed.

The IETF Operations Board continues to meet regularly to provide project oversight and governance on the delivery of the projects across all of the IETF phases. To date at least four Northern Ireland businesses have been successful in drawing down grant funding (>£4 million) from the IETF across previous phases allocated through a competitive process, with more grantees expected to be announced after the due diligence process has been completed.

POLICY

Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (Quantified)

¹⁰⁶ Future of the Industrial Energy Transformation Fund (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting legislation requires all large UK companies and large Limited Liability Partnerships, as well as all quoted companies, to report on their annual energy use, greenhouse gas emissions and energy efficiency actions they have taken. The objectives of Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting legislation are to promote transparency for stakeholders and investors in applicable companies by tracking environmental key performance indicators year on year, whilst encouraging cost savings and emission reductions. This is a cross-cutting policy that also impacts the public buildings sector.

POLICY

Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme (Quantified)

Although small and medium-sized enterprises dominate the Northern Ireland business landscape, there are currently a range of emissions reporting requirements which only large organisations in Northern Ireland must meet, most notably through compliance with the UK Emissions Trading Scheme (discussed earlier) and the Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting. As of April 2022, Climate-Related Financial Disclosures reporting is mandatory for large businesses.¹⁰⁷ Further compliance which applies in Northern Ireland and is aimed at improving energy efficiency and reducing energy consumption, is driven by the Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme.

The Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme is in its third phase. The UK Government carried out an evaluation of previous phases of the Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme and consulted on plans to strengthen the scheme in 2021. Following consultation, the previous UK Government announced in July 2022 that it intended to strengthen the Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme by implementing new measures. Measures include standardising reporting requirements, including a net zero element to audits and requiring public disclosure of high-level recommendations by participants. The UK Government implemented a number of these measures through legislation in 2023 using powers under the Energy Act 2023. The Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme (Amendment) Regulations 2023 was introduced and applied to business UK-wide from November 2023.

DfE has worked with, and will continue to work with, UK counterparts and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, who administer the Energy Saving Opportunity Scheme in Northern Ireland, on implementing the regulations and ensuring compliance amongst qualifying businesses.

¹⁰⁷ Mandatory climate-related financial disclosures by publicly quoted companies, large private companies and LLPs (publishing.service.gov.uk)

POLICY

Combined Heat and Power Quality Assurance Programme (Quantified)

The Combined Heat and Power Quality Assurance Programme¹⁰⁸ is a UK Government initiative to assess all types and sizes of Combined Heat and Power deployment across the UK. Combined Heat and Power, the simultaneous generation of heat and power in a single process, provides one of the most cost-effective approaches for making carbon savings due to the efficiency of the process.

Whilst participation is voluntary, successful Combined Heat and Power Quality Assurance certification provides eligibility to a range of benefits, including Renewable Obligation Certificates, Renewable Heat Incentive, Carbon Price Floor (heat) relief, Climate Change Levy exemption (in respect of electricity directly supplied) and Business Rate exemptions for over 80 sites in Northern Ireland, the majority of which are sports/leisure facilities.

Combined Heat and Power technology and the Combined Heat and Power Quality Assurance scheme have the potential to support the required transition to low carbon fuels. We will continue to engage with DESNZ over the carbon budget period to fully understand the methodology behind the quantification of this policy.

POLICY

UK Emissions Trading Scheme (Unquantified)¹⁰⁹

Emissions Trading Schemes in the UK and EU are strong policy levers driving down greenhouse gas emissions in energy intensive industries, aviation, and the power sector. The savings achieved by the Emissions Trading Scheme are delivered by and attributed to other policies. The effect of the Emissions Trading Scheme can be seen as underlying the projections for the applicable sectors, and are considered under territorial trading, therefore no emissions savings are specifically attributable to the Emissions Trading Scheme itself. Northern Ireland participates in both the UK and EU Emissions Trading Scheme. The EU Emissions Trading Scheme applies solely to electricity generation, to preserve the operation of the Single Electricity Market.

¹⁰⁸ Combined Heat and Power Quality Assurance Programme - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

¹⁰⁹ The UK Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) sets a cost of carbon to encourage the uptake of renewables, cleaner fuels and abatement technologies. The emission savings are linked to other policies and regulations, therefore, to avoid 'double counting' ETS is classed as 'unquantified'.

For industrial businesses, out of scope of the UK Emissions Trading Scheme, there are further schemes such as Climate Change Agreements that are in place until March 2025.¹¹⁰ Climate Change Agreements are voluntary agreements made between UK industry and the UK Environment Agency to reduce energy use and carbon dioxide emissions. In return, operators that meet their targets receive a discount on the Climate Change Levy, a tax added to electricity and fuel bills.¹¹¹ Further information on UK Emissions Trading Scheme and Carbon Leakage is provided in the Investing in Climate Action chapter.

Northern Ireland-led Regulation, Compliance and Reporting

Fuel switching to natural gas, although not a long-term solution will have a key role to play in emissions reductions as will Uplifts to Building Regulations in Northern Ireland. Policies and proposals relating to a phased uplift to Building Regulations and the introduction of biomethane to the Northern Ireland gas network are also expected to provide emissions savings for the sector.

POLICY

Gas Network Connections General Determinations 2023-2028 (Quantified)

There are three gas network areas in Northern Ireland with the most recent expansion known as Gas to the West. Just over one third of Northern Ireland households are currently connected to the gas network, however the majority of households are still using oil as their main fuel source for heating and hot water purposes. The Utility Regulator's Final Determination for the Gas Distribution Price Control 2023-2028 was published in October 2022 following extensive consultation with stakeholders. This included policy direction from DfE and consultation with Gas Network Operators, the Consumer Council and other consumer groups.

Whilst it is recognised that fuel switching to natural gas is not a long-term solution to emissions reduction, the current natural gas price control period 2023-2028 has allowances for fuel switching to continue.¹¹² DfE will work with the Utility Regulator on the next gas price control period and policy relating to the decarbonisation of the gas network. Policy work will address the supporting legislation and regulatory framework.

¹¹⁰ Climate change agreements - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

¹¹¹ Business tax: Climate Change Levy - detailed information - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

¹¹² GD23 | Utility Regulator ([utilityregulator.gov.uk](https://www.utilityregulator.gov.uk))

Over time, if the gas network is decarbonised through the removal of natural gas and replaced with biomethane and potentially hydrogen, homes connected to the gas network will avail of low carbon heating and hot water solutions. This policy will positively affect small and large businesses by enabling them to transition to a lower carbon fuel. By switching to gas businesses can also make a major reduction in their emissions and therefore become more competitive as they move to decarbonisation. Assumptions around this policy are based on the number of newly connected commercial sites and that gas will replace oil, however, the actual numbers may be lower or higher than the target (see Table 12). This is a cross-cutting policy which also affects the residential buildings sector.

POLICY

2012¹¹³ and 2022¹¹⁴ Uplifts to Part F (Conservation of Fuel and Power) of the Building Regulations in Northern Ireland (Quantified)

DoF has policy and legislation responsibility for Building Regulations in Northern Ireland. Part F (Conservation of fuel and power) of the Building Regulations sets minimum standards with respect to carbon emissions and energy efficiency when building work is being carried out or certain cases of a material change of use occur. A 2012 uplift to Part F improved the emissions requirements for new builds by 25%, alongside modest improvements to efficiency standards applicable when work is done to existing buildings. A subsequent uplift came into operation from June 2022 which tightened technical guidance on minimum fabric standards. This guidance was developed with an expectation that renewable technologies should be included on most new buildings. The measures are expected to reduce emissions from new dwellings by a further 15% (approximately), with most of this due to anticipated, additional renewables provision.¹¹⁵ This represented Phase 1 of an ongoing programme of uplifts published in the Energy Strategy. The further phased uplifts to Part F are expected to implement a standard equivalent to England's Future Buildings Standards proposals. Engagement will continue with the UK Government on their work to improve the Energy Performance Certificate regime and any further development of administrations' Building Regulations. This is a cross-cutting policy that also affects the residential buildings and public buildings sectors.

¹¹³ The Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 and amendments

¹¹⁴ Technical Booklet F2 - Conservation of fuel and power in buildings other than dwellings – June 2022 | Department of Finance

¹¹⁵ Emissions assessment is based on assumptions consistent with Final Stage Impact Assessment ref: The Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 Final Stage Regulatory Impact Assessment for amendment of Technical Booklet Guidance to Part F (Conservation of fuel and power) document C.8 (finance-ni.gov.uk)

PROPOSAL

Further Building Regulations Uplifts in Northern Ireland (Unquantified)

A phased programme for building regulations uplifts has been published in the Energy Strategy, with a Phase 2 discussion document consultation issued in July 2023. It offers a comprehensive outline of considerations for subsequent uplifts, ideally taking place 18-24 months after uplifts take place in England and other administrations. This should allow learning from implementation elsewhere prior to adoption here, although local conditions (e.g. high reliance on home heating oil, grid infrastructure and rural conditions), can make direct replication from other administrations challenging.

PROPOSAL

Biomethane¹¹⁶ (Quantified)

In Northern Ireland the current nutrient surplus can be addressed by producing biomethane using agricultural feedstocks such as slurries and silage and diverting these products to anaerobic digestion. The use of anaerobic digestion with waste feedstocks can be utilised to lower emissions on a cross-sectoral basis.¹¹⁷ This offers a potential short-term approach to optimise the use of biomethane to displace fossil fuel gas in the gas network. The development of a biomethane industry could seek to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support climate resilience. There must, however, be careful consideration in decision making with regards to negative and unintended consequences.

The optimal use of biomethane may be outside of the gas network and focused on emission removals for the region. Future government policy on biomethane will consider all options for its usage, not only grid injection. In May 2024, DfE published a call for evidence on biomethane. A response report to this call for evidence was published in April 2025 and presents the findings, which will help inform the development of the biomethane policy for Northern Ireland.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ DAERA chairs the interdepartmental Biomethane Group which meets monthly with representatives from DfE's Energy Group, DfI's Transport Policy Division, College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE), DAERA's Natural Environment Policy Division, Utility Regulator (Gas), Agri-Food Biosciences Institute (AFBI), Northern Ireland Water and the Strategic Investment Board

¹¹⁷ For example, to help address the issue of excess nutrients from livestock slurry, DAERA is delivering a Sustainable Utilisation of Livestock Slurry (SULS) Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI). Through using AD to produce biomethane, this project can contribute to the decarbonisation of hard to decarbonise sectors – energy, heavy transport and agriculture. Converting biogas to biomethane can provide further benefits by way of carbon capture. This aspect is of particular relevance as NICS seeks to plan and deliver against targets to reduce carbon emissions required under the CCA. 4. A second Phase, launched in October 2024, is making up to £12 million available over three years to fund these successful suppliers to develop demonstration facilities.

¹¹⁸ Developing Biomethane Production in Northern Ireland - Call for Evidence response report | Department for the Economy

DfE also has plans to develop its hydrogen strategy. In 2025, DfE will publish consultations on biomethane and hydrogen strategies to develop policy and legislative requirements on both these renewable gases for Northern Ireland.

Volumes of biomethane being injected into the grid and the number of sites injecting have been estimated using industry data and informed by DfE engagement with the wider gas industry and biomethane producers. However, it is currently unknown how many planned projects will be completed within the carbon budget period. This is a cross-cutting proposal that also impacts the residential buildings sector.

Investing in Northern Ireland's Businesses

Invest Northern Ireland is the regional economic development agency for Northern Ireland. The primary role of Invest Northern Ireland is to grow the local economy by strategically supporting new and existing businesses to compete internationally. The Agency also has legislative authority in areas such as carrying out research and providing information, advice, and financial assistance for energy efficiency. Invest Northern Ireland is viewed as the primary delivery agency for Northern Ireland government in delivering the solutions necessary to support businesses on the transition to net zero.

POLICY

Invest Northern Ireland Energy and Resource Efficiency Programme for Northern Ireland Businesses (Quantified)

This multi-year Energy and Resource Efficiency Programme, launched in May 2024, provides financial support to businesses to implement resource efficiency, energy efficiency and decarbonisation measures within their business operations post 2024. The program expands and enhances existing Invest Northern Ireland business support schemes such as Technical Consultancy, Resource Matching through Industrial Symbiosis and Resource Efficiency Capital Grant, as well as introducing new elements such as the Energy Efficiency Capital Grant. The policy aims to build upon the success of the previous Invest Northern Ireland schemes but to achieve further resource and energy efficiency gains for Northern Ireland businesses at a greater scale. Quantification assumes a range of technologies will be implemented to save emissions within the sector.

PROPOSAL

Invest Northern Ireland Industrial Decarbonisation for Northern Ireland Project (Quantified)

The Industrial Decarbonisation for Northern Ireland (IDNI) is a project led by Invest Northern Ireland to bring together key business and industry stakeholders from across Northern Ireland to develop and implement a plan for industrial decarbonisation. The aim of the project is to identify effective ways for organisations to make environmental and economic improvements by reducing energy consumption. The project is taking an innovative dual approach to explore how productivity improvements can also positively affect carbon reductions.

Invest Northern Ireland, together with a consortium of Northern Ireland and GB partners, have engaged with over 200 businesses through a series of workshops across all council areas to promote the IDNI project in 2024. The project team has identified nine industrial clusters and one sectoral cluster across six regional council areas in Northern Ireland. Businesses within the identified clusters will undergo an assessment by energy and productivity specialists to identify resource, production and energy efficiency measures that companies can then adopt that will subsequently lead to a reduction in energy costs and carbon emissions.

It is also worth noting that companies attending the IDNI workshops indicated that their primary reason for seeking energy efficiency and productivity improvements was to reduce energy costs. Reducing energy costs and ensuring that businesses could demonstrate green credentials when competing for contracts were cited as the primary drivers for companies wanting to reduce their carbon emissions. Businesses are seeking to decarbonise their supply chains to demonstrate to end consumers that their product or service is low carbon/net zero or is working towards that goal. From 2024, Invest Northern Ireland will identify industrial decarbonisation cluster sites and link knowledge on productivity improvements and carbon reduction.

This effect of market forces led by consumer demands has not been quantified, however, it is expected to be a strong driver of decarbonisation within the business and industrial processes sector over the coming years. The IDNI project will collect data on the type of technologies deployed by specific businesses and provide information on related carbon emission savings that will inform our knowledge on the decarbonisation of the sector.

Deployment Assumptions for Delivery of Business and Industrial Processes Policies and Proposals

Table 12 presents the level of expected deployment associated with draft Climate Action Plan policies and proposals in the business and industrial processes sector to align with the projected emissions over the first carbon budget period.

Table 12: Deployment assumptions by 2027 to achieve the Central Scenario with business and industrial processes sector Northern Ireland policies

Policy	Mitigation	By 2027
		Uptake
Gas Network Connections General Determinations 2023-2028 (GD23).	Emission savings assume businesses shift from oil to gas. Forecasted new commercial gas volumes (kWh) are taken from GD23 Final Determination published by the Utility Regulator Northern Ireland. Comparative energy from oil and gas consumption are then calculated using emission factors from DESNZ consumption calculated (kWh). The difference in emissions for oil versus gas are the calculated emission savings. The calculation also accounts for efficiency of the oil and gas boilers.	1,800 new commercial connections. Emission savings examples: • Large commercial site (200 GWh): 21.9 ktCO₂e • Medium commercial site (40 GWh): 4.4 ktCO₂e • Small commercial site (2 GWh): 0.2 ktCO₂e
Biomethane	Emission savings assume a switch from natural gas to biomethane through injection of biomethane into the gas grid to replace natural gas. Forecasted biomethane volumes have been provided by the Gas Network Operators. The comparative emissions from the same volume of natural gas and biomethane have been calculated in kWh using emission factors from DESNZ. The difference in emissions for natural gas versus biomethane are the calculated emission savings.	3% of gas demand. Emission savings examples: • Large commercial site (200 GWh): 32.4 ktCO₂e • Medium commercial site (40 GWh): 6.5 ktCO₂e • Small commercial site (2 GWh): 0.3 ktCO₂e

Policy	Mitigation	By 2027
		Uptake
Invest Northern Ireland Energy and Resource Efficiency Programme (EREp) for Northern Ireland businesses.	Emission savings are based on data from previous Invest Northern Ireland Programme (Energy Efficiency Finance/Energy Efficiency Capital Grant scheme) and scaled to the forecasted uptake of the EREp. Using data from the previous programmes allowed emission savings to be calculated by determining average energy savings per project multiplied by the forecasted number of projects. Examples of relevant technologies include more efficient heating systems, building management systems, variable speed compressors and building insulation. The assumed energy savings per project data was captured over a wide range of technologies but only technology types relating to heating or controls (20% of interventions) were attributed to the Business and Industry processes sector due to risk of double counting with other sectors.	20% of interventions attributed to heating or controls.
Invest Northern Ireland Industrial Decarbonisation for Northern Ireland Project (IDNI).	Emissions savings are based on data from a previous government scheme – Carbon Reduction Commitment Energy Efficiency Scheme and scaled to the predicted number of participants within the IDNI project. Additionally, the IDNI targets larger energy users in a clustered approach which may provide higher emissions savings. Carbon emission savings are assumed to commence in 2026 following funding approval.	Approx. 90 businesses to take part in project.

Policy	Mitigation	By 2027
		Uptake
Combined Heat and Power Quality Assurance (CHPQA).	Emission savings quantified from generating CHP through co-generation compared to the counterfactual, i.e. grid electricity and gas-powered heat. No emission savings attributed to coal or petroleum product fuelled CHP sites. No emission savings attributed to renewable fuels, i.e. biogas to avoid double counting with the Energy Supply and Production sector. Emission savings calculated by determining an NI percentage of the UK emission savings calculated by the Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics (DUKES), using the electrical capacity of NI CHPQA sites as a percentage of the overall UK electrical capacity of CHPQA sites.	Approx. 80 CHPQA sites used for analysis.
2012 Uplift to Part F (Conservation of fuel and power) of the Building Regulations in Northern Ireland.	Uplift to Part F standards for new builds and work to existing buildings. England's 'Implementation Stage Impact Assessment of Revisions to Parts F and L of the Building Regulations from 2010'¹¹⁹ provides deployment assumptions.	Approximate comparative deployment figures could be estimated via pro rata calculations at of England's deployment assumptions on the basis of population, albeit the local fuel and build mix will be different. This is accounted for in the 5.1% scaling factor applied to emissions.

¹¹⁹ Implementation Stage Impact Assessment of Revisions to Parts F and L of the Building Regulations from 2010 Appendix 3 and Table 3, in particular, provides more detail. It is presumed the assumptions within this document would be applied consistently across assessments for policy development and carbon reduction assessments

Policy	Mitigation	By 2027 Uptake
2022 Uplift to Part F (Conservation of fuel and power) of the Building Regulations in Northern Ireland.	For Part F 2022 policy impact assessment, three years of EPC data were reviewed, filtering out what was estimated not to be new-build (the policy only impacts new-build standards) and attributing 62.6% of this space to Business and Industrial Processes sector. Reference RIA Part F Building Regulations 2022. ¹²⁰	102,492m ² /yr of new-build attributable to the BIP sector.

Further detail on the quantification of the business and industrial processes sector policies is available in Chapter 3.3 of the Quantification Report (Annex A)¹²¹

Emissions Projections

Table 13 presents the projected emissions for the business and industrial processes sector across the first carbon budgetary period. Business and industrial processes sector emissions are projected to be 0.89 MtCO_{2e} less than the emissions levels assumed for this sector within the CCC adjusted pathway.

¹²⁰ paragraphs 5.29-5.31 of the final stage Impact Assessment

¹²¹ Chapter 3.3, p.34-51

Table 13: Business and industrial processes sector projected emissions in the Central Scenario compared with the adjusted CCC sectoral pathway

 Sector	Projected Emissions (MtCO ₂ e)						Difference in CCC adjusted pathway and Northern Ireland Projections
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total	
Business	2.02	1.92	1.86	1.71	1.57	9.07	-0.89 MtCO ₂ e
Industrial Processes	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	1.03	
Business and Industrial Processes total	2.23	2.12	2.06	1.91	1.77	10.10	
Business and Industrial Processes CCC*	2.43	2.3	2.2	2.09	1.97	10.99	

*These figures are based on the CCC advisory pathway but have been adjusted to take account of the 2022 inventory publication.

Just Transition Considerations

Decarbonisation is an opportunity to transform Northern Ireland's dispersed industry and centralised business regions, attracting inward investment and Foreign Direct Investment to future proof the sector and secure the long-term viability of high value jobs across the region. Latest statistics show, between 1990 and 2022, the UK has reduced emissions by 50%¹²² while growing the economy by 80%.¹²³

This trend can continue with a low carbon business and industrial processes sector driving the decoupling of emissions from economic development. In producing a diverse range of opportunities from new and emerging markets, the decarbonisation of the economy can meet the needs of the people of Northern Ireland for now and into future generations as the region transitions to a leading net zero small, advanced economy.

The business and industrial processes sector is seen as a major benefactor of a shift to a more sustainable economy. Transitioning to a low carbon sector will involve application of resource efficiency circular economy principles. It will create new research and development opportunities, more resilient and diversified supply chains, and create new business opportunities in retrofitting, disassembly, material handling, reprocessing, bioengineering, and digital systems for material tracking.

Through the measures listed previously, Northern Ireland businesses will benefit from the pathway to decarbonisation in a number of ways. Firstly, by becoming more efficient in their use of resources, businesses will reduce their carbon footprint and expenditure on raw materials. Resource efficiency measures will ensure businesses spend less on materials, thereby increasing profit margin while resource matching will decrease emissions and expenditure on waste management. Secondly, implementing energy efficiency measures will ensure businesses use less energy, thereby reducing their expenditure and giving them a competitive advantage as the demand for decarbonised products, services and supply chains grow.

Thirdly, by switching to low carbon fuel sources or electrifying processes that currently use fossil fuels, Northern Ireland businesses will lower carbon emissions and produce products and services that are part of a low carbon economy.

All these measures will enable Northern Ireland businesses to take full advantage and benefit from the opportunities that the pathway to decarbonisation offers. Fuel switching, resource efficiency and energy efficiency measures will give the sector a competitive edge as the demand for low carbon supply chains, goods and services grow.

The opportunities presented by the transition to a green economy will build on and support the expertise, skills and knowledge already in the sector. Employment opportunities will grow as businesses harness the competitive advantage that decarbonisation will

¹²² UK Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2022: summary (publishing.service.gov.uk)

¹²³ Gross Domestic Product: chained volume measures: Seasonally adjusted £m - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

offer. We will future proof our economy by ensuring that our businesses are not left behind as competitors in other jurisdictions drive towards net zero.

Decarbonisation of the sector will also contribute to DfE's key economic priorities, of Good Jobs, Regional Balance, Increasing Productivity and Reducing Carbon Emissions. As businesses decarbonise, they can take advantage of the improved competitiveness that green products and services offer to the all-Ireland economy, thereby increasing turnover, employment opportunities and productivity. Northern Ireland will benefit from the drive towards a green economy.

By developing the skills, expertise and technologies in this decade, we will be ready to lead future innovations and specialisms in the next, and support people into secure, well-paid jobs.

The low carbon and renewable energy sector already generates approximately £1.6 billion in turnover annually and provides 5,200 full-time equivalent jobs.¹²⁴ We aim to at least double the size of this sector by generating local market opportunities, in place of importing fossil fuels, and by ensuring our companies can compete for the substantial UK and global opportunities in low carbon energy and technologies that are already becoming available.

6.5 Residential Buildings

Sector Summary



Residential Buildings Sector Emissions Summary

- The buildings sector is covered in two sections within this draft Climate Action Plan: a residential buildings sector, and a public buildings sector.
- Together they account for 13.4% of Northern Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions.
- Residential buildings sector emissions have fallen by 31.4% between 1990 and 2022 and account for 89.6% of emissions from the overall buildings sector. This represents 12.0% of Northern Ireland's emissions in 2022.
- Residential building emissions are primarily affected by fuel combustion for heating and the production of hot water.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Low carbon and renewable energy economy, UK - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

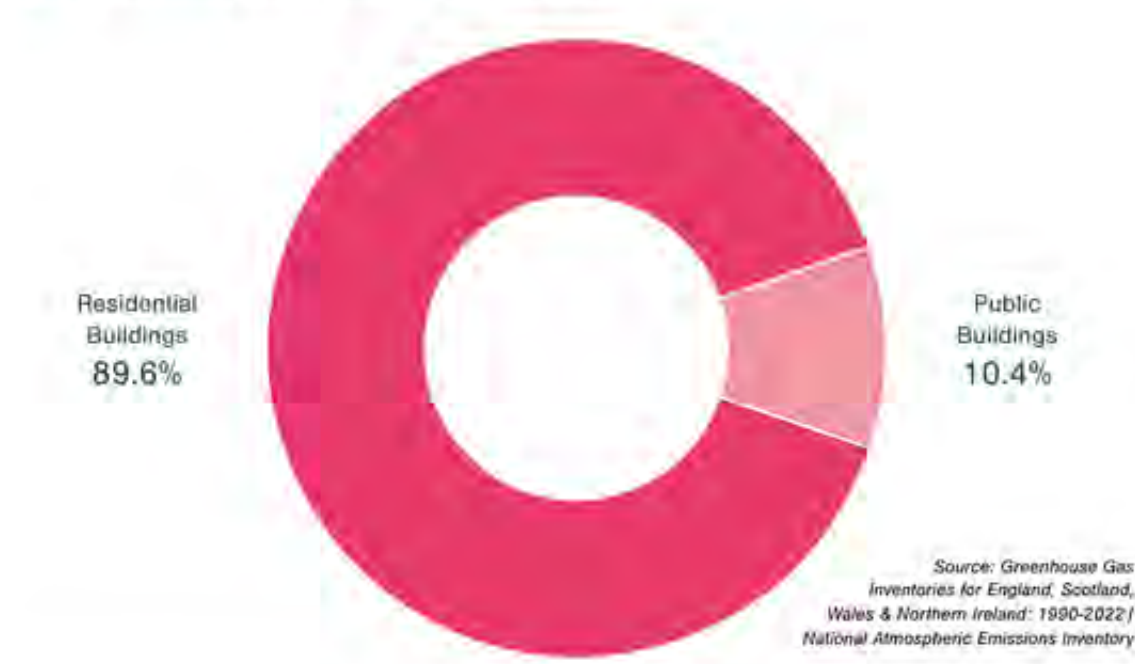
¹²⁵ 'Includes fuel combustion for heating, cooking, garden machinery, gases released from aerosols and inhalers, and emissions released from the breakdown of products such as detergents.' Emissions are affected by energy efficiency, heating and hot water demands, and the fuel type for domestic combustion

Sector Summary	
	
Policy Approach	Policies and proposals for retrofitting existing dwellings to reduce energy consumption through energy efficiency are important to reducing emissions in residential buildings and in preparing homes for the adoption of decarbonised heating systems. These will be delivered through existing schemes and delivery partners, including the Utility Regulator and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive with the delivery model for proposals for a new energy efficiency programme and a future Warm Healthy Homes Scheme aimed at addressing fuel poverty, subject to necessary procurement and funding. Reducing emissions will also rely on the adoption and use of low carbon options for heating. This will be delivered through a policy of fuel switching to natural gas which includes exploring the potential use of biomethane to displace fossil fuel gas in the gas network, and a proposal to provide support to low carbon heating technologies delivered through electrification. The current estimates of impacts from policies which raise standards mean they play an important part in overall emissions reduction. Savings will be delivered through current and proposed Uplifts to Building Regulations in Northern Ireland, more energy efficient product designs and improved labelling.
Emissions Projections	Following the implementation of the policies and proposals set out in this chapter, the buildings sector is projected to emit 12.76 MtCO₂e over the course of the first carbon budget period. This compares to total assumed emissions of 14.07 MtCO₂e in the sector during the first carbon budget period within the CCC adjusted pathway.

Sector Overview

In this Climate Action Plan buildings are split into two separate sectors – residential buildings and public buildings. The buildings sector reports on emissions from fuel uses other than electricity, which are instead reported via the energy production and supply sector. In 2022, emissions from buildings accounted for 13.4% of Northern Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. Residential building emissions account for 89.6%¹²⁶ of building emissions (Figure 19) and public buildings for 10.4%.¹²⁷

Figure 19: Building sector emission sources 2022



Despite an increase in the number of homes, residential buildings emissions have fallen by 31.4% from 3.7MtCO₂e in 1990 to 2.6MtCO₂e in 2022 (Figure 20).

¹²⁶ Approximately 1.2% of the emissions attributed to residential buildings include other emissions sources such as aerosols and metered dose inhalers

¹²⁷ Greenhouse Gas Inventories for England, Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland: 1990-2022 | National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory

Figure 20: Change in residential buildings emissions 1990-2022



Source: Greenhouse Gas Inventories for England, Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland, 1990-2022 / National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory

— Greenhouse gas inventory 1990-2022
- - - Projections 2023-2027

Note: Base year is 1990 for CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O, or 1995 for fluorinated gases

There are several factors leading to a reduction in the residential buildings sector emissions, including fuel switching from solid fuels and oil to natural gas, thereby displacing more carbon intensive fuels. The uplifts to Building Regulations in Northern Ireland have also shown a significant impact on emission projections, due to the fact that they apply to both new builds and when work is done to existing buildings and because of a modelling assumption of continued savings from previous years' building work.

It is recognised that fuel switching to natural gas is not a sustainable long-term approach, however, it is currently delivering significant emissions reductions towards the first carbon budget.

A more progressive plan to increase energy efficiency and reduce reliance on fossil fuels to heat our homes is needed in order to meet medium and longer-term carbon reduction targets. This must also go hand in hand with a focus on reducing the health risks associated with living in a cold home and burning fossil fuels, such as circulatory, respiratory and mental health problems, and will ensure households have access to essential and affordable energy to enable a decent standard of living and health.

There are also many interdependencies and other factors which need to be addressed to decarbonise the residential buildings sector, such as, managing innovation, upskilling the workforce to deliver on retrofitting or installing renewable technologies, managing grid impacts, developing deep supply chains, consistent standards, rebalancing of fuel costs to support low carbon heating, consumer protection and behaviour change.

DfE's Energy Strategy¹²⁶ supports reducing emissions in the residential sector. A key principle of the strategy is to 'do more with less' to drive improvements in energy efficiency, provide support to invest in improvements to buildings and help consumers make changes that reduce their energy use.

The Housing Supply Strategy 2024-2039¹²⁹ recognises the key role that both the construction of new housing and the retrofitting of existing homes will play in helping to reduce emissions. One of its key objectives is 'a fair path to low carbon housing' ensuring that people can afford to heat their homes as well as meeting greenhouse gas emissions targets.

Policies and Proposals

This section highlights policies and proposals required to reduce emissions in the residential sector between 2023 and 2027 as included within the Central Scenario. The deployment assumptions and emissions projections below are the expected outcomes of these policies and proposals, taking into account the need for Executive agreement, significant investment and their dependence on budget availability (including multi-year budgets).

Emissions in this sector will be reduced through both UK and Northern Ireland policies and proposals. The scaling factors used to apportion the impact of the UK-wide policies to the Northern Ireland residential buildings sector is the NI/UK ratio of domestic emissions.

The policies and proposals are attributed to the following categories:

- Reduce energy consumption.
- Use of low carbon options for heating.
- Raise standards.

Reduce Energy Consumption

Given that most of the homes that will be in place in 2050 have already been built, the following policies and proposals, designed to reduce energy consumption and emissions through energy efficiency retrofit interventions, will have a key role in reducing emissions by 2050.

¹²⁶ The Path to Net Zero Energy: Safe, Affordable, Clean. (economy-ni.gov.uk)
<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/Energy-Strategy-for-Northern-Ireland-path-to-net-zero.pdf>

¹²⁹ Housing Supply Strategy - A Home for Everyone

POLICY

Affordable Warmth Scheme (Quantified)

Schemes to reduce 'fuel poverty' have been in place in various forms since 2001. The Affordable Warmth Scheme¹³⁰ commenced in 2015 and is available to low-income owner-occupiers and households in the private rented sector with a total annual household income of less than £23,000 to target those most at risk of fuel poverty. From its introduction up until June 2024, the scheme has supported 29,086 low-income homes, with 55,552 measures being installed.

This policy enables homes to receive multiple energy efficiency measures such as cavity wall and roof insulation and replacement windows. It also includes the installation of lower carbon heating such as replacing older inefficient oil boilers with more efficient oil and gas boilers. This scheme aimed at alleviating fuel poverty is a government funded policy which will contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in approximately 2,400 homes in the residential sector per annum based on an average annual budget of £12 million.

POLICY

Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme (including uplifts) (Quantified)

The Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme¹³¹ is an £8 million annual fund administered by the Energy Savings Trust on behalf of the Utility Regulator. Unlike the government funded Affordable Warmth Scheme, funding for the Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme is collected from both domestic and commercial electricity customers through a Public Service Obligation charge on their electricity bills. The programme of schemes, which between 2015 and 2023 has installed measures in approximately 40,000 properties, is decided through a competitive call for schemes which contractors can apply to deliver. Households across Northern Ireland can benefit from the programme through a range of energy schemes which have a broader focus on sustainable energy solutions than the Affordable Warmth Scheme. These include, cavity wall and loft insulation, heating systems, boiler upgrade, draught proofing, remote smart heating controls, heat pumps and energy efficient bulbs. Priority schemes, for both whole house and individual measures, are aimed at low-income households. Eligibility can vary depending on the specific initiative within the Northern Ireland Sustainable

¹³⁰ The Housing Executive - Affordable Warmth Scheme ([nine.gov.uk](https://www.nine.gov.uk))

¹³¹ Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme - Energy Saving Trust

Energy Programme. In general, Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme schemes are targeted at those households which cannot avail of the Affordable Warmth Scheme and each of the priority schemes has its own set of financial vulnerability criteria/income thresholds, which differ from the Affordable Warmth Scheme, to identify qualifying households.¹³² DfE has provided additional financial support to the Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme uplifts (Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme + Departmental Expenditure Limit) through the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years and discussions are ongoing with the Utility Regulator regarding adding to and scaling funding during 2025 and beyond, while we develop a domestic Energy Efficiency Programme.

POLICY

Northern Ireland Housing Executive Stock Investment Programme – Including Thermal Improvements (Quantified)

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Investment Programme¹³³ for its housing stock delivers energy efficiency and decarbonisation benefits through its thermal improvement workstreams. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) has set a target of a 6% reduction in carbon emissions from its stock by the end of 2025/2026, based on the currently anticipated level of funding (£372 million) that can be directed to the work during this period. The works include heating system replacements, upgraded loft insulation, new double glazing, a minor cavity wall insulation programme and the completion of an external wall insulation programme (that has been part funded by the European Regional Development Fund).

Also, as part of the NIHE's sustainable development strategy, a 400 Unit Low Carbon Programme has been progressed. This programme includes collaboration with industry, academia, government, regulator and householders to deliver a £14 million thermal improvement programme. Work is expected to be completed in 2026. The 400 dwellings are located across all three NIHE regions and focus is on improved energy efficiency measures, low carbon heating, adopting renewable technologies, electric tariff changes and improved household education. Taking account of learning from this programme, the NIHE will carry out an internal review of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive Landlord's Heating Policy.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive operates a residential energy efficiency advice service, which provides free and impartial energy advice and signposting to all Northern Ireland householders. Since its inception in 2020 this service has received over 40,000 queries. This service will continue and is helping drive behaviour changes to reduce energy use and take up of energy efficiency measures.

¹³² The income threshold for this programme is set £5,000 higher than the affordable warmth scheme. Further information on the eligibility matrix is available at: 2023-2025-NISEP-Framework-Document.pdf

¹³³ Corporate Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2027)

PROPOSAL

Warm Healthy Homes Scheme (Quantified)

To ensure those most at risk of fuel poverty continue to have access to energy efficiency measures and to deliver against carbon reduction targets, DfC is designing the scope and delivery of a new intervention which would take effect as soon as possible after the existing Affordable Warmth Scheme closes. This new Warm Healthy Homes Scheme will require the installation of energy efficiency measures and consequently will support local economies and communities by making the installation work available to approved local contractors. DfC is undertaking the appropriate policy development processes including evidence gathering, public consultation, and engagement with political representatives and amendment of the existing domestic energy efficiency regulations. The new Fuel Poverty Strategy wider public consultation was launched on 12 December 2024 and ran until 06 March 2025.¹³⁴ The consultation is being used to consult on key aspects of the new scheme including eligibility criterion, income thresholds and energy efficiency measures such as insulation, home heating systems, low carbon heat and other renewable technologies. DfC will undertake further consultation on the scheme and legislation as and when required. In order to meet our emissions targets in the longer term, investment in the new scheme will need to rise significantly by the next carbon budget.

PROPOSAL

Scale and Launch Energy Efficiency Programmes (Quantified)

As per the commitment in the Northern Ireland Executive's Energy Strategy, government will continue with the ongoing development of a multi-year energy efficiency programme, to be launched in pilot format from 2027. A cross-departmental policy development process is underway to gather evidence on the sustainable funding and delivery models adopted elsewhere with a series of stakeholder engagement meetings conducted since autumn 2023. DfE is now in the process of preparing a public consultation on evidence-based options for domestic energy efficiency support which will help to inform the design, rules, and guidance of future support. In the interim, DfE is committed to working with partners such as the Utility Regulator to scale existing support and has provided a funding to upscale Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme in each of the last two fiscal cycles.

¹³⁴ Consultation on a new Fuel Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland | Department for Communities.

To support this proposal, the following actions will be progressed:

- Government will launch a policy options consultation relating to the future financing and delivery of Energy Efficiency in Northern Ireland.
- DfE has committed to establish a One Stop Shop. Collaboration across government and our partners will be necessary to ensure those likely to experience fuel poverty are supported to access specialist energy advice and grants.

Use of Low Carbon Options for Heating

With 88.5% of the building emissions coming from residential fuel combustion, there needs to be a strong focus on decarbonising home heating and the policies and proposals set out below are designed to achieve this.

POLICY

Clean Heat Market Mechanism (Quantified)

The Clean Heat Market Mechanism¹³⁶ will, from 2025, place an obligation on the manufacturers of heating appliances to meet targets for the proportion of low carbon heat pumps they sell each year, relative to fossil fuel boilers. Greater use of clean heat technologies may result in lower customer bills, increased energy security and a reduction in UK carbon emissions. These targets will steadily increase year-on-year, providing firms with the certainty to invest in building the heat pump market proposals for the introduction of a market-based mechanism to support the development of the UK market for low carbon electric heat pumps.

POLICY

Gas Network Connections General Determinations 2023-2028 (Quantified)

There are three gas network areas in Northern Ireland with the most recent expansion known as Gas to the West. Just over one third of Northern Ireland households are currently connected to the gas network, however the majority (62.5%)¹³⁸ of households are still using oil as their main fuel source for heating and hot water purposes. Whilst it is recognised that fuel switching to natural gas is not a long-term solution to emissions reduction, the current natural gas price control period 2023-2028 (referred to as the

¹³⁶ Clean Heat Market Mechanism (publishing.service.gov.uk)

¹³⁸ Census 2021 main statistics for Northern Ireland phase 2 - Briefing

Gas Network Connections General Determinations)¹³⁷ has allowances for fuel switching to continue setting a target of 70,048 new domestic gas connections across the three gas networks. Over time if the gas network is decarbonised through the removal of natural gas and replaced with biomethane (discussed in the Business and Industrial Processes chapter) and potentially hydrogen, homes connected to the gas network will avail of low carbon heating and hot water solutions. Government will work with the Utility Regulator on the next gas price control period and policy relating to the decarbonisation of the gas network. Policy work will address the supporting legislation and regulatory framework. This is a cross-cutting policy that also affects the business and industrial processes sector.

PROPOSAL

Low Carbon Heat Support Programme (Quantified)

While fuel switching from solid fuels and oil to natural gas for home heating has delivered significant reductions in emissions since gas was first introduced in Northern Ireland in 1996, a support programme to replace fossil fuel heat with low carbon heating technologies will be taken forward. Heat pumps will form an important part of this, but we will also explore heat networks and district heating in appropriate areas. The deployment of low carbon heat technologies is essential to delivery on our emission reduction targets however the sector is nascent and emerging. To drive growth in the sector and allow for more consumer access to heat pump technologies, government will deliver a support programme to help upskill industry, bring down capital costs of deployment of the technology and explore options for support through electricity tariffs.

When replacing and decarbonising heating systems, government will encourage the disposal of existing systems in a way that supports resource recycling or recovery. This will also be considered in relation to the repair and replacement of new low carbon heating systems.

The government consultation on a Future Low Carbon Heating Support Programme closed on 10 January 2025.¹³⁸ The outcome of this consultation will help to inform the funding mechanisms, rules and guidance of the support programme, with the aim of enabling households to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, including oil and gas.

¹³⁷ GD23 | Utility Regulator ([uregni.gov.uk](https://www.uregni.gov.uk))

¹³⁸ Consultation on support for low carbon heating in residential buildings

PROPOSAL

Biomethane (Quantified)

In Northern Ireland, the use of anaerobic digestion with waste feedstocks can be utilised to lower emissions on a cross-sectoral basis. This offers a potential short-term approach to optimise the use of biomethane to displace fossil fuel gas in the gas network. There must, however, be careful consideration in decision making with regards to outcomes. The optimal use of biomethane may be outside of the gas network and focused on emissions removals for the region. Future government policy on biomethane will consider all options for its usage, not only grid injection. The DfE call for evidence on biomethane closed on August 2024. A response report to this call for evidence was published in April 2025 and presents the findings, which will help inform the development of the biomethane policy for Northern Ireland.¹³⁹ This is a cross-cutting proposal which also impacts the business and industrial processes sector.

To support the development of this proposal, the following actions will be progressed:

- In 2025, DfE will publish consultations on biomethane and hydrogen strategies to develop policy and legislative requirements on both these renewable gases for Northern Ireland.

Raise Standards

It is estimated that 70% of buildings in use in 2010 will still exist in 2050¹⁴⁰ and each year we are adding around 1% to the housing stock, therefore addressing energy consumption and efficiency in both new and existing homes is essential.

It is important to have a regulatory framework to improve how homes are built and retrofitted, to ensure Northern Ireland's housing stock meets the long-term goal of net zero. Social and affordable homes built using government funding will be encouraged to exceed minimum standards set in Building Regulations, leading the way, and driving market change. It will also be important to encourage, where possible, the reuse of existing buildings for these homes. These sites tend to be within walking distance of shops, schools, parks and other infrastructure and developing them will help to reduce waste, maximise existing connections to services and reduce construction carbon emissions. DfC will take forward a collaborative research project to investigate the barriers to reusing existing buildings for homes and other potential solutions.

When building work is being carried out, Building Regulations, together with product and other efficiency standards, help improve emissions performance, while ensuring that consequential impacts on the building are also considered. Uplifts in requirements take cost-effectiveness and affordability into account.

¹³⁹ Developing Biomethane Production in Northern Ireland - Call for Evidence response report | Department for the Economy

¹⁴⁰ The Path to Net Zero Energy: Safe, Affordable, Clean. (economy-ni.gov.uk)

POLICY

The EU Ecodesign Directive and the Energy Labelling Framework Regulation (Quantified)

The EU Ecodesign Directive¹⁴¹ and the Energy Labelling Framework Regulation¹⁴² operate by setting minimum performance and information requirements (respectively) for energy-using products. They aim to take the least efficient products off the market and to give consumers clear energy-use information to guide their purchasing decisions. This policy applies to Northern Ireland, through The Ecodesign for Energy-Related Products and Energy Information (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) (EU Exit) Regulations 2021. This is a cross-cutting policy which also impacts the business and industrial processes and public buildings sector.

POLICY

The Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases (F-Gases) Regulations (2015) (UK-wide policy, but with separate Regulations for GB and NI), and new EU Regulation on F-gases in 2024 (Quantified)

F-gases are amongst the most potent greenhouse gases with the highest Global Warming Potential (GWP). Regulations were originally brought into operation in 2015 to limit Northern Ireland's F-gas emissions through restriction and monitoring, as was required by EU Regulation No 517/2014. A new ban on F-gases with a high GWP in foams, used in building insulation and fire equipment, also came into operation in January 2023.

The aforementioned EU 2014 Regulation on F-gases was under review from April 2022 until March 2024. Following on from this, future policies to limit F-gas emissions are now contained within a new Regulation (EU) 2024/573, which came into operation on 11 March 2024.

The new EU 2024 Regulation intends to build on the success of its predecessor by attempting to reduce emissions of F-gases in the EU. For example, it does this by increasing the speed of the phasedown of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs, i.e. a type of F-gas), establishing new F-gas certification requirements and expanding the HFC quota system to new sectors such as Metered Dose Inhalers (MDIs). New prohibitions on products containing F-gases will also come into operation in the coming years. This is a cross-cutting policy which also impacts the energy production and supply as well as the business and industrial processes sectors.

¹⁴¹ Directive - 2009/125 - EN - EUR-Lex

¹⁴² Regulation (EU) 2017/1369 of the European Parliament and of the Council

POLICY

2012 and 2022 Uplifts to Part F (Conservation of Fuel and Power) of the Building Regulations in Northern Ireland (Quantified)

DoF has policy and legislation responsibility for Building Regulations in Northern Ireland. Assessment of operational emissions is embedded in Part F (Conservation of fuel and power) of the Building Regulations¹⁴³ requirements for new dwellings and in Energy Performance Certificate assessments. This provides a basis for emissions assessment, and some means of measuring improved standards. The 2012 uplift to Part F improved the emissions requirements for new builds by 25%, alongside modest improvements to efficiency standards applicable when work is done to existing dwellings. Phase 1 of Department of Finance's programme of Part F uplifts applies to new build applications from June 2022.¹⁴⁴ It improved fabric standards and focused on an expectation that renewable technologies should be included on most new buildings. The measures are expected to reduce emissions from new dwellings by a further 15% (approximately), with most of this due to anticipated, additional renewables provision.¹⁴⁵ The further phased uplifts to Part F standards are expected to implement a standard equivalent to England's Future Homes and Future Buildings Standards¹⁴⁶ proposals. Engagement will continue with the UK Government on their work to improve the Energy Performance Certificate regime and any further development of administrations' Building Regulations. This is a cross-cutting policy affecting residential buildings, public buildings and business and industrial processes sectors. A proposal for further uplifts to Building Regulations is discussed below.

PROPOSAL

Further Building Regulations Uplifts in Northern Ireland (Unquantified)

A phased programme for building regulations uplifts has been published in the Energy Strategy, with a Phase 2 discussion document consultation issued in July 2023.¹⁴⁷ It offers a comprehensive outline of considerations for subsequent uplifts, intended some 18-24 months after uplifts take place in England and other administrations. This should allow learning from implementation elsewhere prior to adoption here, although local conditions (e.g. high reliance on home heating oil, grid infrastructure and more rural situations), can make direct replication from other administrations challenging.

¹⁴³ The Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 (legislation.gov.uk)

¹⁴⁴ Consultation Proposals for amendment of Technical Booklet Guidance to Part F (Conservation of fuel and power)

¹⁴⁵ Emissions assessment is based on assumptions consistent with Final Stage Impact Assessment ref: The Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 Final Stage Regulatory Impact Assessment for amendment of Technical Booklet Guidance to Part F (Conservation of fuel and power) document C.8 (finance-ni.gov.uk)

¹⁴⁶ The Future Homes and Building Standards: 2023 consultation - gov.uk

¹⁴⁷ Review of energy efficiency requirements and related areas of Building Regulations - NI Direct - Citizen Space

Deployment Assumptions for Delivery of Residential Policies and Proposals

Table 14 presents the level of expected deployment associated with draft Climate Action Plan policies and proposals in the residential buildings sector to align with the projected emissions over the first carbon budget period.

Table 14: Deployment assumptions by 2027 to achieve the Central Scenario with residential buildings sector Northern Ireland policies

Policy	Mitigation	By 2027
		Uptake
Affordable Warmth Scheme.	Implemented scheme to support households most at risk of fuel poverty. Assumes: • Availability of annual budget • Energy efficiency interventions include cavity and loft insulation, heating systems and glazing and will be based on individual dwelling requirements Average saving per house based on 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 Affordable Warmth Scheme: 2.17 tCO₂.¹⁴⁸ 2023-2024 – £14 million funding made available: 2,746 homes supported: 5,959 tCO₂ saved. 2024-2025 – £8 million funding made available: 1,400 homes supported: 3,038 tCO₂ saved. 2025-2026 – (estimate) £14 million funding made available: 2,602 homes supported: 5,646 tCO₂ saved. 2026-2027 – (estimate) £15 million funding made available: 2,788 homes supported: 6,050 tCO₂ saved. Estimated emissions savings 2023-2027 = 20,693 tCO₂.	By 2027 9,536 households supported.

¹⁴⁸ Affordable Warmth Scheme and Boiler Replacement Scheme Evaluation 2020-2022

Policy	Mitigation	By 2027
		Uptake
Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme including uplifts.	Scheme based on funding through Public Service Obligation. Additional financial uplift assumes: • Availability of government funding estimated at £14.25 million 2024-2027. • Average intervention costs of £2,000 per dwelling. • Energy efficiency measures (cavity wall and loft insulation) equally split across funding. • CO₂ savings of 960kg (cavity) and 425kg (loft). 2023-2027 overall estimated emissions savings = 25,172 tCO₂.	NISEP 3,250 homes supported Uplift 7,125 homes supported.
NIHE Stock Investment Programme – Including Thermal Improvements (subject to funding).	Northern Ireland Housing Executive Sustainable Development Strategy assumes: • Annual budget availability. • Progress on NIHE revitalisation programme to assist borrowing. • Alignment with NIHE Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2027). • Interventions aligned with needs of property to include gas conversions, fabric an air source heat pump measures, and solar PV. 2023-2027 overall estimated emissions savings = 38,820 tCO₂.	20,672 homes improved.
Warm Healthy Homes Scheme.	Proposed scheme aimed at households most at risk of fuel poverty, and commencing in 2027. Assumes: • Availability of £15 million capital. • Average intervention costs of £2,052 per dwelling. • Energy efficiency measures (cavity wall and loft insulation) equally split across funding. • CO₂ savings of 836 kg (cavity) and 610 kg (loft). • Supply chain and contractor availability and skills. 2027 overall estimated emissions savings = 10,560 tCO₂.	7,300 households supported.

Policy	Mitigation	By 2027
		Uptake
Scale and Launch Energy Efficiency Programmes.	Proposed scheme which assumes: • Launch in 2027. • Budget availability of £5 million in 2027. • Average intervention costs of £2,052 per dwelling. • Energy efficiency measures (cavity wall and loft insulation) equally split across funding. • CO₂ savings of 836 kg (cavity) and 610 kg (loft). • Assumed 50% grant. Estimated emissions savings = 7,040 tCO₂	4,869 homes supported.
Gas Network Connections General Determinations.	Emissions savings assume residential properties shift from oil to gas. Forecasted new residential gas volumes (kWh) are taken from GD23 Final Determination published by UREG. Comparative energy from oil consumption calculated (kWh). Using calculated kWh figures, the emissions from oil and gas consumption are then calculated using emissions factors from DESNZ. The difference in emissions for oil versus gas are the calculated emissions savings. The calculation also accounts for efficiency of the oil and gas boilers. 2023-2027 total emissions savings = 73,332 tCO₂.	41,206 new residential connections.
Low Carbon Heat Support Programme.	Proposed scheme which assumes: • Launch in 2027. • Budget availability of £1.875 million in 2027. • Average capital grant of £7,500. • Emissions savings of 3.3 tCO₂ per household. Estimated overall emissions savings 2027 = 825 tCO₂.	250 homes supported.

Policy	Mitigation	By 2027
		Uptake
Biomethane	Increase in energy demand provided by biomethane injected into grid. Emissions savings assume a switch from natural gas to biomethane. Forecasted biomethane volumes have been provided by the Gas Network Operators. The comparative emissions from the same volume of natural gas and biomethane have been calculated in kWh using emissions factors from DESNZ. The difference in emissions for natural gas versus biomethane are the calculated emissions savings. Estimated overall emissions savings 2023-2027 = 0.5 tCO₂.	Volume of gas injection into distribution and transmission networks is currently unknown.
2012 Uplift to Part F (Conservation of fuel and power) of the Building Regulations in Northern Ireland.	Uplift to Part F standards for new builds and work to existing buildings. England's 'Implementation Stage Impact Assessment of Revisions to Parts F and L of the Building Regulations from 2010'¹⁴⁹ provides deployment assumptions.	Approximate comparative deployment figures could be estimated via pro rata calculations at of England's deployment assumptions on the basis of population, albeit the local fuel and build mix will be different. This is accounted for in the 4.5% scaling factor applied to emissions.

¹⁴⁹ Implementation Stage Impact Assessment of Revisions to Parts F and L of the Building Regulations from 2010 Appendix 3 and Table 3, in particular, provides more detail. It is presumed the assumptions within this document would be applied consistently across assessments for policy development and carbon reduction assessments

Policy	Mitigation	By 2027
		Uptake
2022 Uplift to Part F (Conservation of fuel and power) of the Building Regulations in Northern Ireland.	Deployment assumptions of 7,985 new builds per year as outlined in Final Stage RIA for amendment of Technical Booklet Guidance to Part F. ¹⁵⁰	7,985 new builds per year.

Further detail on the quantification of the residential buildings sector policies is available in Chapter 3.4 of Quantification Report (Annex A).¹⁶¹

Emissions Projections

Table 15 presents the projected emissions for the residential buildings sector across the first carbon budgetary period. Buildings sector emissions are projected to be 1.31 MtCO₂e less than the emissions levels assumed for this sector within the CCC adjusted pathway.

¹⁵⁰ C.2 Draft Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) – Part F 2021

¹⁶¹ Chapter 3.4, p.52-68

Table 15: Buildings sector (including residential and public buildings) projected emissions in the Central Scenario compared with the adjusted CCC sectoral pathway

 Sector	Projected Emissions (MtCO ₂ e)						Difference in CCC adjusted pathway and Northern Ireland Projections
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total	
Residential Buildings	2.27	2.24	2.24	2.3	2.3	11.36	-1.31 MtCO ₂ e
Public Buildings	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	1.40	
Buildings total	2.55	2.52	2.52	2.58	2.58	12.76	
Buildings CCC*	3.02	2.94	2.83	2.71	2.57	14.07	

*These figures are based on the CCC advisory pathway but have been adjusted to take account of the 2022 inventory publication.

Just Transition Considerations

In the residential sector any current or proposed intervention will be underpinned by the just transition principle which is a key consideration for government in policy decisions. For example, current policy such as the Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme (including uplifts) and the Affordable Warmth Scheme policies support the just transition principle by supporting low-income households to install energy efficiency measures in their homes, thereby helping to lower energy bills.

DiC is in the process of developing a Fuel Poverty Strategy. This will play an important role in delivering a just transition for the residential sector. The Fuel Poverty Strategy proposes a vision of 'A Warm, Healthy Home for Everyone' underpinned by guiding principles of long-term sustainable solutions, needs-based approach, collaborative and participative working. There are three key objectives to help achieve this vision:

- Make homes more energy efficient
- Collaborate and build capacity
- Protect consumers

The Strategy is an opportunity to ensure the health and social impacts of decarbonising homes can be accessed by all homes, particularly those most vulnerable to the effects of living in a cold, damp home. Proposed actions include raising housing standards, increased investment in energy efficiency schemes for vulnerable households, and working in partnership to identify and support people in fuel poverty. The strategy also proposes a new approach to measuring and reporting on fuel poverty and focusing interventions and mitigations on those who require additional or targeted support.

It is anticipated that the proposed Warm Healthy Homes Scheme will also support the just transition principle by supporting those most at risk. Improving the energy efficiency of homes or installing renewable generating technologies can mitigate against potentially higher costs where low carbon heating systems may be more expensive to run than fossil fuel systems. Making sure those in need have access to these improvements will be an important but equally challenging part of future policy design.

Reducing emissions in our homes will take investment in the building fabric, heating systems, heating appliances and control systems. Making sure everyone has access to this will be an important but equally challenging part of future policy design. This will include support to enable all of us to understand, use and maximise the benefits of the sometimes unfamiliar technologies, standards and products that will be introduced to our homes. The NIHE will continue to operate a residential energy efficiency advice service, which will provide information, advice and support to Northern Ireland households during the energy transition and development of an energy One Stop Shop.

Registered Housing Associations will continue a programme of maintenance and/or retrofitting which deliver a range of energy efficiency measures across its housing stock. These include, fitting of new heating systems, the installation of more effective insulation and the utilisation of renewable technologies. DfC will work with the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations to explore innovative funding models to support retrofitting and examine the role of additional energy efficiency measures such as heat pumps and solar panels to reduce emissions while also ensuring a just transition in social housing.

Behaviour change at a personal level is essential to deliver emissions reduction, but citizens need to be informed and supported so that they are in a position to consider the options and take the right decisions.

Having the right skills to deliver emissions reductions will also require investment in people, through training and apprenticeships to strengthen supply chains, and we will work cohesively with industry and across the education system to address skills imbalances, driving increased participation in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects that will underpin economic success in the residential buildings sector. The Green Skills Delivery Group is in the process of delivering an action plan which is due to be published in the first quarter of 2025. This action plan is accompanied with funding this financial year to support the development and delivery of a pilot domestic low carbon and energy efficiency course. Indeed, some initiatives to improve skills are already underway, for example, South Eastern Regional College and Southern Regional College offer a number of green skills courses which focus on low carbon heating technology.¹⁶²

¹⁶² Consultation on support for low carbon heating in residential buildings

6.6 Public Buildings

Sector Summary	
Public Buildings Sector Emission Trends	• The buildings sector is covered in two sections within this draft Climate Action Plan: a residential buildings sector, and a public buildings sector. • Together they account for 13.4% of Northern Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. • Public building emissions account for 10.4% of the overall buildings sector emissions with a 49.8% reduction in public building emissions from the 1990 base year. This represents 1.4% of Northern Ireland's emissions in 2022. • Sector emissions primarily result from fuel combustion in public buildings for heating, cooling and hot water.
Policy Approach	Reducing emissions in this sector will be through two key Northern Ireland policies and two UK-wide policies. Within Northern Ireland, the Energy Management Strategy & Action Plan to 2030¹⁵³ seeks to reduce sector emissions and manage financial exposures. It will be delivered by access to better data and analytics to inform investment decisions through an Energy Invest to Save Fund. Behaviour change, building performance standards and procurement also have key roles to play in delivery. Emissions will also be reduced through uplifts to Building Regulations in Northern Ireland which will provide a basis for emissions assessment and measuring improved standards. UK-wide policies include reporting on annual energy use, greenhouse gas emissions and energy efficiency actions thereby encouraging cost savings and emission reductions. Also included are policies to improve the design and labelling of products aiming to take the least efficient products off the market and to give consumers clear energy use information to guide their purchasing decisions.

¹⁵³ Energy-Management-Strategy-March-2019.pdf (sibni.org)

Sector Summary

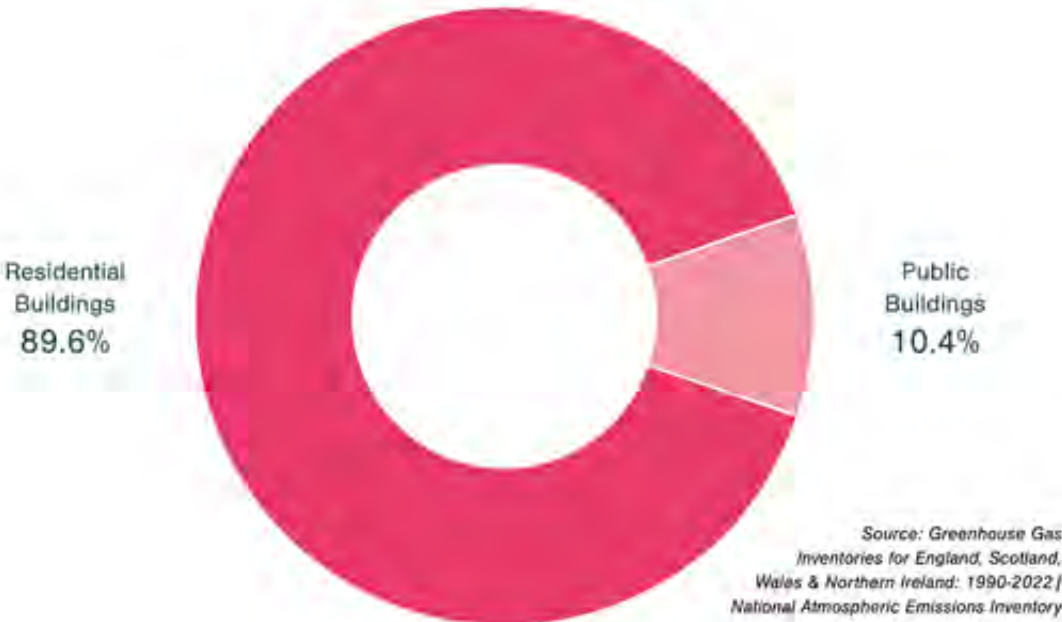
Emissions Projections

Following the implementation of the policies and proposals set out in this chapter, the buildings sector is projected to emit 12.76 MtCO₂e over the course of the first carbon budget period. This compares to total assumed emissions of 14.07 MtCO₂e in the sector during the first carbon budget period within the CCC adjusted pathway.

Sector Overview

In 2022, emissions from the overall buildings sector accounted for 13.4% of Northern Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. Public buildings sector accounted for 10.4% of buildings emissions, with residential building emissions accounting for 89.6%¹⁵⁴ of emissions (Figure 21).

Figure 21: Buildings sector emission sources 2022



¹⁵⁴ Approximately 1.2% of the emissions attributed to residential buildings include other emissions sources such as aerosols and metered dose inhalers

The public buildings sector in Northern Ireland consists of buildings owned and occupied by both central and local government. The majority of public buildings within Northern Ireland are schools and healthcare premises and the remainder comprises of leisure facilities, law and order establishments, community buildings, libraries, museums, historic monuments, civic buildings and other public services. It is estimated that there are between 4,000-5,000 public buildings in Northern Ireland with just over 3,800 central government assets currently being monitored and reported on in terms of energy use and associated emissions.¹⁵⁶

Whilst the public buildings sector accounts for a small proportion of overall emissions in Northern Ireland, government can play a key role in demonstrating how public buildings can reduce their energy use whilst maintaining public services. Delivering quality public sector buildings is also a way to demonstrate a leadership role in developing new skills and supply chains thus demonstrating effective change.

Public buildings sector emissions result from fuel combustion in publicly owned institutional buildings. Emissions are predominantly affected by the quantity and type of fuel used in heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems and hot water production. The 2022 position reflects a 49.8% reduction in emissions in the sector whilst compared against the 1990 baseline as shown in Figure 22. Assumed factors leading to this level of reduction include significant downsizing of the built estate, improved building standards, investment in energy efficiency and fuel switching through the introduction of natural gas to Northern Ireland in 1996.

¹⁵⁶ Energy-Management-Strategy-March-2019.pdf (sibn.org)

Figure 22: Change in public buildings emissions 1990-2022



Source: Greenhouse Gas Inventories for England, Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland: 1990-2022 / National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory

Greenhouse gas inventory 1990-2022
Projections 2023-2027

Note: Base year is 1990 for CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O, or 1995 for fluorinated gases

Policies and Proposals

This section lists policies and proposals required to reduce emissions in the public buildings sector. To facilitate bringing forward new policies and to ensure existing policies are aligned with the requirements of the Act, a sector specific working group has been established. Work is ongoing with the UK Government and Republic of Ireland to ensure alignment of policy. Emissions in this sector will be reduced through both UK and Northern Ireland policies and proposals. The scaling factors used to apportion the impact of the UK-wide policies to the Northern Ireland public buildings sector is the NI/UK ratio of commercial/industrial emissions.

POLICY

The Energy Management Strategy and Action Plan to 2030 (Quantified)

In January 2019, the NICS Board approved the Energy Management Strategy and Action Plan to 2030 for Central Government which sets out key objectives in establishing effective energy management processes to unlock value. This aims to reduce net energy consumption by 30% by 2030 against a 2016/17 baseline.¹⁵⁶ The strategy covers all departments and their arm's length bodies (ALBs) and non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs); this is collectively referred to as 'the Northern Ireland Central Government estate'.

The Energy Management Strategy public sector¹⁵⁷ target, to reduce its net energy consumption by 30% by 2030, represents a public buildings emissions reduction target of 61% by 2030. Whilst the Energy Management Strategy approach and targets to energy management processes were about driving downward pressure on costs and mitigating against energy price fluctuations, these remain of significant value in particular at a time of energy price escalation.

Progress has been positive since the strategy was published in 2019, and the emphasis has shifted significantly towards decarbonisation. A reduction in net energy consumption of 12% has been achieved by 2022 against the strategy's own 2016 baseline, however, externalities exist in terms of assessing whether this rate of progress will continue. The emission savings to date are predominantly resulting from ensuring an estate of the correct size to suit our needs, investing in energy efficiency measures and from adopting lower carbon forms of heating.

To ascertain whether this rate of progress has continued, and as laid out in the strategy, DfE will take forward a midterm strategic review of the Energy Management Strategy and Action Plan for central government in 2025. This review will allow DfE to measure and publish progress against the 30% reduction in net energy consumption target. The output of this review will be a position statement and a new action plan for the period between 2025 to 2030 which will set out the direction of travel for delivering on the strategy's objectives and to align policy decisions with the statutory responsibilities under the Act.

¹⁵⁶ Energy Management Strategy and Action Plan to 2030 - Strategic Investment Board (sibni.org)

¹⁵⁷ The public sector definition contained within the Energy Management Strategy differs from that of the Public Buildings Sector in the Climate Action Plan. The strategy not only includes emissions resulting from electricity use but also excludes local authorities. We will work with local authorities to develop a local authority Climate Action Plan contribution plan by 2025 to fit with the strategic review of the Energy Management Strategy

A range of actions focused on encouraging a reduction in energy consumption in the public sector will be undertaken during the first carbon budget period. These actions include the following:

Building Evidence and Capacity

Energy and emission data is currently held for over 3,000 publicly occupied assets, however, data has been collected manually to date. The procurement of an updated, automated Energy and Carbon Data Repository has been completed. Through 2024, DfE has worked to complete the implementation phase of the software solution on behalf of government and has worked to expand land and property data coverage across the central government public building sector. In the medium term, government will explore expanding data collection to the local government estate to support better decision making and to enable consistent public body reporting in line with the Climate Change (Reporting Bodies) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024.^{15b}

DfE will work across government to strengthen the energy data within the Government Land and Property Register (GLPR) to support evidence-based decision making on public building investment. In 2025, DfE will provide cross-government access to research, including data relating to low carbon building studies, to help aid understanding and enhance strategic decision-making processes relating to public building decarbonisation.

Energy Invest to Save

One of the recommendations of the Energy Management Strategy and Action Plan to 2030 was to create an Energy Invest to Save Fund to ensure there is sufficient funding to deliver on consumption reduction targets. Since 2021, an Energy Invest to Save Fund has delivered £73 million worth of capital energy projects that otherwise would not have been taken forward. We will seek to build upon the success of the fund and to address delivery constraints in government particularly relating to the adoption of low carbon heating solutions which will be a priority going forward.

Procurement

It is recognised that green procurement will play a pivotal role in transforming the construction industry in Northern Ireland. Government contracts and frameworks can influence change by increasing the provision, quality, and accessibility of secondary and regenerative materials aimed at bringing a greater circularity to one of our most material intensive sectors. Through this approach, government can also use leverage through contractual provisions to reduce operational emissions in the construction process. To progress procurement, the following actions will be taken forward:

^{15b} The Climate Change (Reporting Bodies) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024

- New policy will be developed to mandate a higher standard in new buildings, and in the necessary retrofits to ensure energy efficiency and decarbonisation of the public buildings sector happens at the required pace.
- Government will utilise business cases, public procurement policy and provisions in contracts that ensure that suppliers mitigate and minimise climate change impacts resulting from the construction of and retrofit of public buildings.
- Government will explore green finance models, value demonstrator projects, and review Energy Performance Contract opportunities to efficiently procure and deliver interventions. Alternative funding mechanisms and delivery approaches will be required to deliver against our climate change targets given the fiscal challenges to value for money faced in the built environment.

POLICY

2012 and 2022 Uplifts to Part F (Conservation of Fuel and Power) of the Building Regulations in Northern Ireland (Quantified)

A 2012 uplift to Part F improved the emissions requirements for new builds by 25%, alongside modest improvements to efficiency standards applicable when work is done to existing buildings. Subsequently, Phase 1 of Department of Finance's programme of Part F uplifts was applied to new build applications from June 2022.¹⁵⁰ It improved fabric standards and was focused on an expectation that renewable technologies should be included on most new buildings. This is a cross-cutting policy affecting the public buildings sector that also impacts the residential buildings and business and industrial processes sectors.

POLICY

The EU Ecodesign Directive and the Energy Labelling Framework Regulation (Quantified)

The EU Ecodesign Directive¹⁵⁰ and the Energy Labelling Framework Regulation¹⁵¹ operate by setting minimum performance and information requirements (respectively) for energy-using products. They aim to remove the least efficient products from the market and to give consumers clear energy-use information to guide their purchasing decisions. This policy applies to Northern Ireland, through The Ecodesign for Energy-Related Products and Energy Information (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) (EU Exit) Regulations 2021. This is a cross-cutting policy that also impacts the residential buildings and business and industrial processes sectors.

¹⁵⁰ Consultation Proposals for amendment of Technical Booklet Guidance to Part F (Conservation of fuel and power)

¹⁵¹ Directive - 2005/125 - EN - EUR-Lex

¹⁵² Regulation (Eu) 2017/1369 Of The European Parliament And Of The Council

POLICY

Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (Quantified)

Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting legislation requires all large UK companies and large Limited Liability Partnerships, as well as all quoted companies, to report on their annual energy use, greenhouse gas emissions and energy efficiency actions they have taken. The objective of Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting legislation is to promote transparency for stakeholders and investors in applicable companies by tracking environmental Key Performance Indicators year on year, whilst encouraging cost savings and emission reductions. This is a cross-cutting policy affecting the public buildings sector that also impacts the business and industrial processes sector.

Deployment Assumptions for Delivery of Public Buildings Policies and Proposals

Deployment of policy relating to public buildings is determined by the Energy Management Strategy and Action Plan to 2030 for Central Government and activity taken forward to address its key recommendations. The strategy commits to making significant reductions in overall net energy consumption across the central government estate (most of the public building estate). With a 30% reduction target by 2030 set against a 2016 baseline year and a reduction of 12% having been achieved by 2022, progress has been significant. There are, however, external factors that will impact whether this rate of progress will continue.

To mitigate against unknown factors in energy data and how it correlates to emissions savings, a new data repository has been procured to ensure more accuracy in strategic decision underpinning further investment to achieve energy and emission savings. To complement this pathway an Energy Invest to Save fund has been consistently scaled up since 2021. The Northern Ireland Executive's Programme for Government commits a further £75 million of investment through this fund in the first carbon budget period. Assumptions for emissions reduction have been modelled, linearly based on a more stable investment plan following the initial period of scaling.

Table 16 presents the level of expected deployment associated with draft Climate Action Plan policies and proposals in the public buildings sector to align with the projected emissions over the first carbon budget period.

Table 16: Deployment assumptions by 2027 to achieve the Central Scenario with public buildings sector Northern Ireland policies

Policy	Mitigation	By 2027
		Uptake
The Energy Management Strategy and Action Plan to 2030.	This strategy for the central government estate seeks to deliver a significant reduction in energy demand by 2030. The strategy covers central government only which constitutes between 80-90% of public buildings emissions.	23% Reduction in Energy Demand on the strategy baseline. 17,000 tCO ₂ reduction between 2023-2027.
2012 Uplift to Part F (Conservation of Fuel and Power) of the Building Regulations in Northern Ireland.	Uplift to Part F standards for new builds and work to existing buildings. England's 'Implementation Stage Impact Assessment of Revisions to Parts F and L of the Building Regulations from 2010' ¹⁶² provides deployment assumptions.	Approximate comparative deployment figures could be estimated via pro rata calculations of England's deployment assumptions on the basis of population, albeit the local fuel and build mix will be different. This is accounted for in the 2.9% scaling factor applied to emissions.
2022 Uplift to Part F (Conservation of Fuel and Power) of the Building Regulations in Northern Ireland.	For Part F 2022 policy impact assessment, three years of EPC data were reviewed, filtering out what was estimated not to be new-build (the policy only impacts new-build standards) and attributing 37.4% of this space to public buildings sector. Reference, RIA Part F Building Regulations 2022 RIA. ¹⁶³	61,283 m ² /yr of new-build attributable to the public buildings sector.

¹⁶² Implementation Stage Impact Assessment of Revisions to Parts F and L of the Building Regulations from 2010 Appendix 3 and Table 3, in particular, provides more detail. It is presumed the assumptions within this document would be applied consistently across assessments for policy development and carbon reduction assessments

¹⁶³ Paragraphs 5.29-5.31 of the final stage Impact Assessment

Emissions Projections

Table 17 presents the projected emissions for the public buildings sector across the first carbon budgetary period. Buildings sector emissions are projected to be 1.31 MtCO₂e less than the emissions levels assumed for this sector within the CCC adjusted pathway.

Table 17: Buildings sector (including residential and public buildings) projected emissions in the Central Scenario compared with the adjusted CCC sectoral pathway

 Sector	Projected Emissions (MtCO ₂ e)						Difference in CCC adjusted pathway and Northern Ireland Projections
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total	
Residential Buildings	2.27	2.24	2.24	2.3	2.3	11.36	-1.31 MtCO ₂ e
Public Buildings	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	1.40	
Buildings total	2.55	2.52	2.52	2.58	2.58	12.76	
Buildings CCC*	3.02	2.94	2.83	2.71	2.57	14.07	

*These figures are based on the CCC advisory pathway but have been adjusted to take account of the 2022 inventory publication.

Further detail on the quantification of the public buildings sector policies is available in Chapter 3.5 of the Quantification Report (Annex A).¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ Chapter 3.5, p.69-76

Just Transition Considerations

Delivering a just transition in the built environment will require investment in people and skills. Realising the value of this transformation will mean working cohesively across the education system to address skills imbalances, driving increased participation in the Science Technology Engineering and Maths subjects (STEM) that will underpin economic success. The Green Skills Delivery Group is in the process of delivering an action plan which is due to be published in early 2025. This action plan is to be accompanied with funding which is likely to focus on built environment skills such as insulation, energy efficiency and low carbon heat.

Through the design and delivery of exemplar public buildings and the widespread adoption of retrofit and energy management practices that unlock value, government can lead by example. This will add benefit for Northern Ireland by helping build a skilled and diverse workforce that is well placed to take advantage of new opportunities to deliver a net zero economy and be resilient to changes in employment trends. Support to upskill and reskill our citizens will also be required to drive innovation and the development of the solutions which will be required to deliver a resilient and sustainable decarbonised public buildings sector. Work is already underway at upscaling training provisions in low carbon heating, renewable technologies and in the installation of energy efficiency measures. For example, a number of Regional Colleges offer green skills courses which focus on low carbon heating technology.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ Consultation on support for low carbon heating in residential buildings

6.7 Waste Management

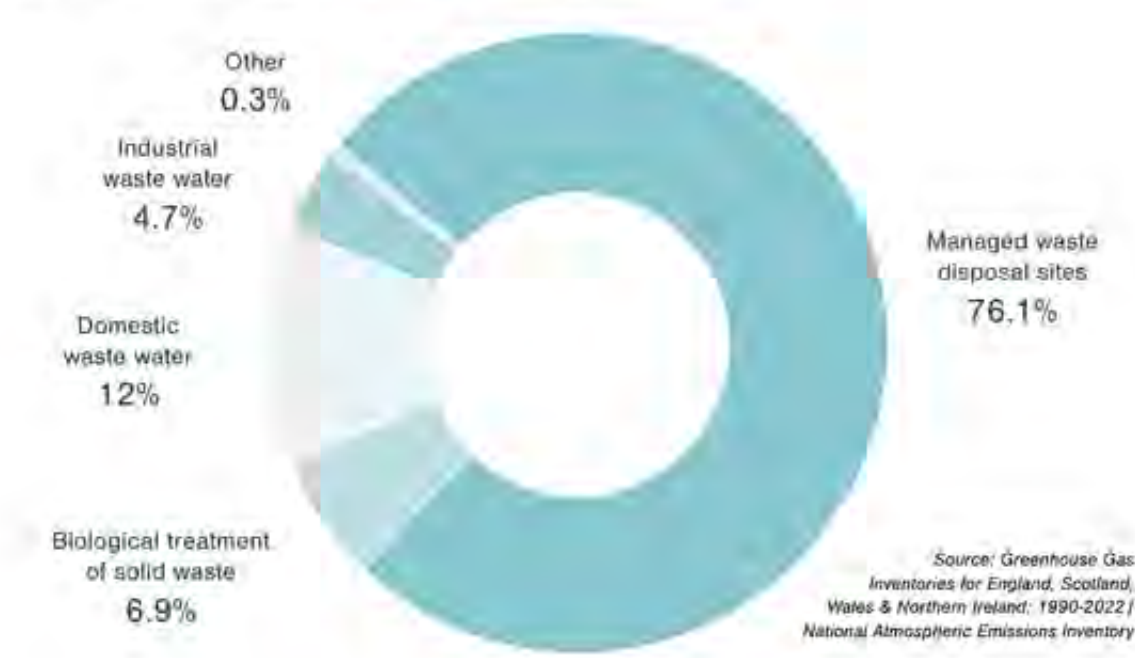
Sector Summary	
Waste Management Sector Emissions Summary	- Emissions in the waste management sector include those released from waste disposal at landfill sites, wastewater treatment and waste incineration. - The sector is responsible for 3.6% of total Northern Ireland greenhouse gas emissions. - Waste Management Sector emissions have fallen by 62.1% between 1990 and 2022. - Household recycling rates have increased from 10% in 2010 to just over 51% in 2023/2024. The Act includes a requirement to recycle at least 70% of waste by 2030.
Policy Approach	Reducing emissions in the waste management sector will be achieved through two key interventions. The first is to reduce landfill emissions, through improvements to the separate collection of food waste from households and a new proposal to divert biodegradable waste from landfill. The other is to increase recycling rates and improve quality of the material that is collected for recycling. To drive this, a target is in place to achieve a 65% local authority collected waste recycling rate whilst reducing waste to landfill to no more than 10% by 2035. This is supported by two proposals to increase household recycling and the introduction of mandatory recycling for the commercial and industrial sector.
Emissions Projections	Following the implementation of the policies and proposals set out in this chapter, the waste management sector is projected to emit 3.39 MtCO_{2e} over the course of the first carbon budget period. This compares to total assumed emissions of 3.54 MtCO_{2e} in the sector during the first carbon budget period within the CCC adjusted pathway.

Sector Overview

Emissions in the waste management sector include those released from waste disposal at landfills, wastewater treatment and waste incineration. Significant progress has been made in this sector demonstrating that with the correct policies and behaviour change, it is possible to make rapid progress.

The largest proportion of emissions in the waste management sector comes from managed waste disposal (landfill) sites, responsible for 76.1% (0.58 MtCO₂e) of sector emissions. This is followed by domestic and industrial wastewater treatment, which combined equate to 16.7% (0.13 MtCO₂e) (Figure 23).

Figure 23: Waste management sector emission sources 2022



The sector was responsible for 0.8 MICO₂e, 3.6% of total Northern Ireland greenhouse gas emissions in 2022 (Figure 6). This represents a 62.1% decrease in emissions from the 1990 baseline year (Figure 24) brought about by legislative and policy changes to reduce waste and increase recycling, coupled with widespread behaviour change campaigns. Household recycling rates have increased from 10% in 2010 to just over 50% in 2022/2023.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Northern Ireland local authority collected municipal waste management statistics released | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (daera-ni.gov.uk)

Figure 24: Change in waste management emissions 1990-2022



Source: Greenhouse Gas Inventories for England, Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland: 1990-2022 / National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory

— Greenhouse gas inventory 1990–2022
- - - Projections 2023–2027

Note: Base year is 1990 for CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O, or 1995 for fluorinated gases

The focus over the 2023-2027 carbon budget period is on actions to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill sites by appropriate legislation, regulation and increasing recycling. Northern Ireland has two statutory requirements for recycling:

1. To recycle at least 70% of waste by 2030.
2. To recycle 65% of municipal waste by 2035 (interim targets of 55% by 2025 and 60% by 2030).

The 70% recycling requirement is contained in the Act, however this does not include a definition of 'waste'.¹⁶⁷ For the purposes of modelling the impact of the policies and proposals in this sector the following waste types are included:

- municipal waste using the new definition from the EU revised Waste Framework Directive.¹⁶⁸
- all commercial and industrial waste.

¹⁶⁷ Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (legislation.gov.uk)

¹⁶⁸ Waste Framework Directive - European Commission (europa.eu)

The 65% target is also derived from the EU revised Waste Framework Directive and focuses solely on waste generated from municipal sources.

The Food Waste (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2015¹⁶⁹ require councils to collect food and garden waste from households. Additionally, the regulations require food businesses that produce 5kg or more food waste per week to present this for separate collection. This helps to limit the amount of biodegradable food waste sent to landfill.

Policies and Proposals

This section lists policies and proposals required to reduce emissions in the waste management sector. The waste sector has engaged with stakeholders and relevant sector-specific advisory groups in relation to existing policies and in the development of new proposals to reduce emissions in the waste sector. Waste is a devolved responsibility, however, due consideration is given to other parts of the UK and Ireland when developing and implementing policy. These policy levers can be attributed to the following categories:

- Reducing Landfill Emissions
- Increase Recycling Rates and Improving Quality of Materials.

Northern Ireland is in a unique position by having in legislation a test for comparable quality of materials. To achieve high-quality recycling, recyclable waste streams should be collected separately from each other as far as possible, except where this is not technically feasible, would entail disproportionate economic costs or does not deliver the best environmental outcome (commonly referred to as Technically, Environmentally and Economically Practical [TEEP]).

Reducing Landfill Emissions

The diversion of biodegradable waste from entering landfill sites is key to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and provides maximum impact. Biodegradable waste entering landfill sites today will produce methane for several decades, therefore, near-term action is essential.

POLICY

Separate Collection of Food Waste from Households - The Food Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (Quantified)

¹⁶⁹ The Food Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (legislation.gov.uk)

The introduction of the Food Waste Regulations was the first step in reducing this methane source by introducing mandatory separate collection of food waste from households in 2015. This has been facilitated by councils, who play a central role in the provision of waste services in Northern Ireland. All councils in Northern Ireland provide food waste collection services, with the majority collecting a mixture of food and garden waste fortnightly in a brown bin which is recycled through composting or anaerobic digestion.

Behaviour change has been a key driver in increasing the amount of biodegradable waste diverted from landfill. Since the inception of these regulations, over 1.7 million tonnes of biodegradable waste have been diverted from landfill.¹⁷⁰ Through an ongoing programme of behaviour change, DAERA and councils will continue to encourage the separate collection of biodegradable waste from households to drive yields as high as possible.

PROPOSAL

Diverting Biodegradable Waste from Landfill (Quantified)

Significant reductions in emissions could be made by diverting biodegradable waste from household residual waste streams that is currently going to landfill.¹⁷¹ Further emissions reductions could be achieved if all businesses were required to present biodegradable waste for separate collection. UK Government official figures for 2022 identify 204 kt of biowaste to landfill, however not all of this may be suitable for recycling.¹⁷² Throughout autumn/winter 2023/2024, DAERA, in collaboration with key stakeholders and Waste & Resources Action Programme, conducted a feasibility study on the potential for diverting biodegradable waste from landfill. As part of this feasibility study DAERA explored ways to support councils to maximise reduction of biodegradable waste going to landfill.

To assist in the development of this proposal the following actions will be taken forward:

- ✦ DAERA will consult on options for diverting biodegradable waste from landfill by end of 2025.
- ✦ DAERA continues to engage with key stakeholders and is in the process of drafting a consultation to be launched in autumn 2025.

¹⁷⁰ Based on food and garden waste recycled between April 2015 and March 2023.

¹⁷¹ Residual waste is the general waste that is currently sent to landfill.

¹⁷² UK statistics on waste - GOV.UK

Increase Recycling Rates and Improving Quality of Materials

Over the past two decades, household recycling rates have increased from 10% in 2010 to around 50% in 2021/2022¹⁷³ due in large part to the widespread behaviour change campaigns run by the Northern Ireland Executive, as well as the Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy "Delivering Resource Efficiency" (2013).¹⁷⁴ This has resulted in increased household waste recycling targets.

POLICY

Achieve a 65% municipal waste recycling rate whilst reducing waste to landfill to no more than 10% by 2035 (Quantified)

Household recycling rates during this carbon budget must increase to 57% by 2027 to help meet the statutory targets. Steps to achieve this have been initiated through the challenging targets set out in the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997.¹⁷⁵ A key target of 65% recycling of municipal waste by 2035 was stipulated with interim targets of 55% by 2025 and 60% by 2030. Behaviour change is key to addressing these targets and DAERA will continue to roll out behaviour change campaigns throughout the first carbon budget period to help householders to understand the benefits of recycling. Work will continue with councils to increase recycling from households through the Strategic Waste Partnership and the Government Waste Working Group. To support the achievement of these targets local councils will provide better recycling infrastructure in all council areas through availing of financial support for capital works under the Household Waste Recycling Collaborative Change Programme.

¹⁷³ Northern Ireland local authority collected municipal waste management statistics released | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (daera-ni.gov.uk)

¹⁷⁴ Delivering Resource Efficiency - Northern Ireland Waste Management Strategy

¹⁷⁵ The Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 (legislation.gov.uk)

PROPOSAL

Introduction of Mandatory Recycling for the Commercial and Industrial Sector (Quantified)

Previously there has been no obligation for recycling reporting from the commercial and industrial sector. However, whilst the Act's requirement of at least 70% waste recycled by 2030 has yet to be formally defined, it could include all recycling collected by councils and recycling produced by the commercial and industrial sector. Extending mandatory recycling into the commercial and industrial sector has the potential to more than double the current estimated recycling rate for the sector of 40%, according to industry experts.¹⁷⁶ It is proposed that businesses achieve a 70% recycling rate by 2030 (in line with the requirement in the Act) with action beginning in 2025. This would mean an increase of 5% per year. It is DAERA's intention to consult on the scope of the 70% recycling rate target in the upcoming waste management strategy consultation. This will help define which waste streams should be captured under the Act's target.

This could be further enhanced by an extension of the Food Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015¹⁷⁷ to bring all businesses into scope for the recycling of food waste, which would also advance the delivery of the 'Diverting Biodegradable Waste from Landfill' proposal outlined above.

Recent stakeholder feedback on the introduction of mandatory recycling for the commercial and industrial sector has been largely positive. This would require most businesses in Northern Ireland to present recyclable material and potentially biodegradable waste for separate collection. This would help achieve the '70% by 2030' recycling requirement and reduce the amount of recyclable material entering landfill sites and the associated greenhouse gas emissions. In autumn 2024, DAERA, in collaboration with Waste & Resources Action Programme, introduced an online business support toolkit to encourage businesses to increase recycling in advance of the legislation being implemented.¹⁷⁸

To assist in the development of this proposal the following actions will be taken forward:

- By March 2026, DAERA will have undertaken a waste data review project to address data gaps and improve reporting, particularly for the business sector.
- DAERA will publish a report on the consultation on the introduction of mandatory business recycling by March 2025.

¹⁷⁶ Municipal recycling potential in Northern Ireland

¹⁷⁷ The Food Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (legislation.gov.uk)

¹⁷⁸ Business of Recycling

- By 2027, DAERA will develop new or amend existing legislation to require businesses to present recycling separately, including biodegradable waste.
- By 2026, DAERA will develop guidance to support waste collectors and businesses to increase recycling.
- By 2026, DAERA, in collaboration with Waste and Resources Action Programme, will improve data collection on business waste and recycling to maximise the amount of recyclable material collected and reduce or eliminate the amount sent to landfill.

PROPOSAL

Increasing Household Recycling (Quantified)

Further increases in household recycling rates are required to reduce emissions and meet the Act's (70%) and Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 requirements (65%). The associated reduction of residual waste collected from households would lower the amount going to landfill sites, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

A key recycling proposal is to ensure all councils and collectors are compliant with amendments to legislation which promote enhancements in the quality and quantity of material to enable more local reprocessing. Modelling has shown that a greater volume of recycle and better-quality materials can be collected through this approach. Material quality would be at standard that local reprocessors would accept more readily.¹⁷⁹

To assist in the development of this proposal the following will be taken forward:

- By 2025, subject to the outcome of the consultation on proposals to introduce a minimum service standard for household collections to increase recycling rates, meet statutory targets and improve quality, DAERA will implement amendments to existing legislation.
- By 2025, DAERA will produce guidance for councils and householders which will outline best practice models.
- DAERA will ensure funding is available to support councils to transition to the new collection systems as soon as practicable.

Deployment Assumptions for Delivery of Waste Management Policies and Proposals

Table 18 presents the level of expected deployment associated with draft Climate Action Plan policies and proposals in the waste management sector to align with the projected emissions over the first carbon budget period.

¹⁷⁹ Municipal Recycling Potential in NI 2020 (WRAP Report).PDF (daera-ni.gov.uk)

Table 18: Deployment assumptions by 2027 to achieve the Central Scenario with waste management sector Northern Ireland policies

Policy	Mitigation	By 2027
		Details
Separate Collection of Food Waste from Households - The Food Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015	For this policy to effectively contribute to meeting Waste and Contaminated Land Order (NI) 1997, as amended (WCLO), recycling targets, the recycling rate is assumed to increase by 1.28% per year from 2022 until 2025 (the year this policy is modelled to be superseded by the proposal: Diverting Biodegradable Waste from Landfill). This is based on the rolling twelve-month household recycling rate for the whole of 2022. Robust and verified data from Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste Statistics (LACMW) was used to calculate the activity data. Using this method of calculation is expected to produce an extra 8,960 tonnes of recycling between the years of 2023 to 2026.	8,960 tonnes Emissions savings = activity data x emissions factor 5.9 ktCO₂e = 8,960 (tonnes recycled) x 0.655987
Diverting Biodegradable Waste from Landfill	For this policy the emissions reductions rely on measures to divert biodegradable waste from landfill to be implemented by 2027. Reductions until then fall under the policy: Separate Collection of Food Waste from Household (Food Waste (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2015) before transferring to this proposal. The overall volume of biodegradable waste entering Northern Ireland landfill sites is determined by multiplying the tonnage of landfilled waste, from those wastes with a biodegradable component attributed to them, by the relevant current Northern Ireland biodegradability factors to give a total volume of biodegradable waste landfilled.	208,326 tonnes Emissions savings = activity data x emissions factor 137 ktCO₂e = 208,326 (Biowaste tonnes avoided) x 0.655987

Policy	Mitigation	By 2027
		Uptake
<i>Diverting Biodegradable Waste from Landfill (continued)</i>	The tonnage and biodegradability factors are collated by Northern Ireland Environment Agency and the 2022 data (unpublished but verified) is used as the baseline in this instance. Using current Northern Ireland biodegradability factors, 208,326 tonnes is deemed biodegradable, however there are knowledge gaps around the composition and biodegradability of EWC 191212 which creates an element of risk in the quantifications. Data on biodegradable waste from households is verified and published on the DAERA website quarterly.	
Achieve a 65% municipal waste recycling rate whilst reducing waste to landfill to no more than 10% by 2035	For this policy to effectively contribute to meeting WCLO recycling targets, the recycling rate is assumed to increase by 1.28% per year from 2022 until 2027. This is based on the rolling 12-month household recycling rate for the whole of 2022. Robust and verified data from LACMW was used to calculate the activity data.	28,009 tonnes Emissions savings = activity data x emissions factor 13.9 ktCO₂e = 28,009 (tonnes recycled) x 0.497045
Introduction of mandatory recycling for the Commercial and Industrial sector	For this policy, it is assumed that the current recycling rate for commercial and industrial is around 40%, therefore, this proposal assumes an increase of 5% per year. However, it is entirely possible that upon completion of the waste compositional analysis, the commercial and industrial sector's recycling rate could be higher, requiring less of an increase each year. The calculations in the current analysis for the commercial and industrial sector are based on 2009 data from data gathering exercise for this sector and some newer estimations provided by WRAP.	64,248 tonnes Emissions savings = activity data x emissions factor 34 ktCO₂e = 64,248 (tonnes recycled) x 0.520335

Policy	Mitigation	By 2027
		Undtake
Increasing Household Recycling (to assist with achieving 70% by 2030)	The savings made here occur due to the reduction of residual waste capacity by diverting 25% of residual waste from landfill into recycling. Robust and verified data from LACMW was used to calculate the activity data. Using this method of calculation is expected to produce an extra 48,275 tonnes of recycling the year of implementation. The scenario modelled is the most likely because the 25% reduction in residual bin capacity has been subject to a consultation, and we are awaiting a Ministerial decision. However, stakeholder engagement to this point has suggested that this proposal is the expected outcome.	48,275 tonnes Emissions savings = activity data x emissions factor 24 ktCO₂e = 48,275 (tonnes recycled) x 0.497045

Further detail on the quantification of the waste management sector policies is available in Chapter 3.6 of the Quantification Report (Annex A).¹⁸⁰

Emissions Projections

Table 19 presents the projected emissions for the waste management sector across the first carbon budgetary period. Waste management sector emissions are projected to be 0.15 MtCO₂e less than the emissions levels assumed for this sector within the CCC adjusted pathway.

¹⁸⁰ Chapter 3.6, p.77-88

Table 19: Waste management sector projected emissions in the Central Scenario compared with the adjusted CCC sectoral pathway

 Sector	Projected Emissions (MtCO ₂ e)						Difference in CCC adjusted pathway and Northern Ireland Projections
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total	
Waste Management	0.74	0.73	0.68	0.68	0.56	3.39	
Waste Management CCC*	0.79	0.75	0.71	0.67	0.61	3.54	-0.15 MtCO ₂ e

*These figures are based on the CCC advisory pathway but have been adjusted to take account of the 2022 inventory publication.

Just Transition Considerations

The policies and proposals outlined here will have a positive impact on both the environment and the economy in the medium to long term. The waste management sector in Northern Ireland had a turnover of £1.1 billion in 2019, a gross value added of £0.8 billion, and 7,000 employee jobs.¹⁶¹ It not only adds significant value to the economy, but it is vital for protecting the environment and public health.

Undoubtedly, significant investment will be required to enable the transition to decarbonisation. Using a collaborative approach, DAERA has committed to making £23 million of financial assistance available to local councils here to assist them to transform kerbside recycling and household recycling centre infrastructure. This will increase both the quantity and quality of recycling and in doing so will realise the economic potential. However, further investment from both the public and private sectors will be needed to successfully implement these policies and ensure a just transition.

Larger yields of food waste sent for recycling within Northern Ireland will mean that local food reprocessing businesses can expand their operations. It will also increase the value of goods and services produced by expanding Anaerobic Digestion (AD) and In-Vessel Composting (IVC) treatment. AD has the added benefit of producing valuable products such as biogas that can replace fossil fuels and a digestate that can be used as a fertiliser

¹⁶¹ Green economy | Invest Northern Ireland (investni.com)

which can help support the agriculture sector. As a result, there will be a reduction in the amount of residual and biodegradable waste going to landfill, leading to a decreased cost to waste operators while reducing the associated greenhouse gas emissions.

There will be benefits to water management companies who bear the cost of food waste disposal into the public sewer network. There is a massively decreased risk of sewer blockages, flooding, pollution, odours and infestations occurring with a ban on disposing food waste this way.

Strengthening current requirements and targets around recycling, landfill, waste prevention, recovery etc., will lead to long-term benefits for Northern Ireland and assist a transition to a more resource efficient, sustainable and circular economy. This will lead to increased quality and quantity of material being processed within Northern Ireland, allowing more opportunity for local reproducers to expand their workforce with better, high-quality, green jobs or to open opportunities to reskill/upskill staff. This direction of travel will lead to a better future with a greener more sustainable economy that becomes less reliant on sending Northern Ireland resources abroad.

Although displacement of jobs is not anticipated as a result of these proposals, it must be recognised that there may be some short-term impacts on the current workforce if there is a move away from a model of waste and recycling export and creation or fuels derived from waste for export. This will impact all demographics and areas equally. Adding value to the Northern Ireland economy and reducing greenhouse gas emissions for reasons identified in the financial, social and economic impact assessments, will ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

It is clear that significant effort is required to produce a multi-skilled and greener workforce that will be suitable for the future, as there are many knowledge and skills gaps that need to be filled. More must be done to incorporate topics related to sustainability, climate change, and green growth into the lives of our school children and young people, building the knowledge, understanding, skills, and values necessary to contribute actively to a greener future. Greater opportunities need to be developed to upskill the current workforce throughout Northern Ireland to ensure a successful and just transition to a more circular way of working and living.

Businesses and organisations operating within the resource and waste sector will need to forge more collaborative, interconnected working relationships with specialists in other industries in order to complement the expanded skills set. From material and chemical engineers, product designers, producers and manufacturers, to data and IT consultants, working cross-industry will help the resource and waste sector to maximise its potential and successfully deliver on the major resource capture and decarbonisation plans being implemented at a policy level.

6.8 Agriculture

Sector Summary	
Agriculture Sector Emissions Trends	
	• In agriculture the two main greenhouse gases are methane and nitrous oxide rather than carbon dioxide. Livestock emissions dominate GHGs in the agriculture sector. Other key sources are from manure management, soils and emissions from off-road vehicles and machinery. • The agriculture sector is the largest emitter and accounts for 29.1% of Northern Ireland GHG emissions in 2022. • There has been a 14.9% increase in agriculture emissions from the baseline of 1990. • While the Act requires overall net emissions for 2050 to be 100% lower than the 1990 baseline, it does not require methane emissions to be more than 46% lower than the 1990 baseline.
Policy Approach	Reducing emissions in the agriculture sector will be achieved through the delivery of DAERA's new Sustainable Agriculture Programme. This Programme and associated policies and proposals will support the sector's decarbonisation, focusing on improving the productivity of the agriculture sector, delivering improvements in environmental sustainability and resilience and supply chain integration. The CCC's Path to Net Zero for Northern Ireland assumes a significant reduction in livestock numbers and an associated transition to bioenergy cropping and increased forestry on agricultural land. The reduction in livestock numbers is based on the assumption that the consumption of livestock products in the UK will fall and that this will lead to an equal reduction in Northern Ireland livestock numbers.

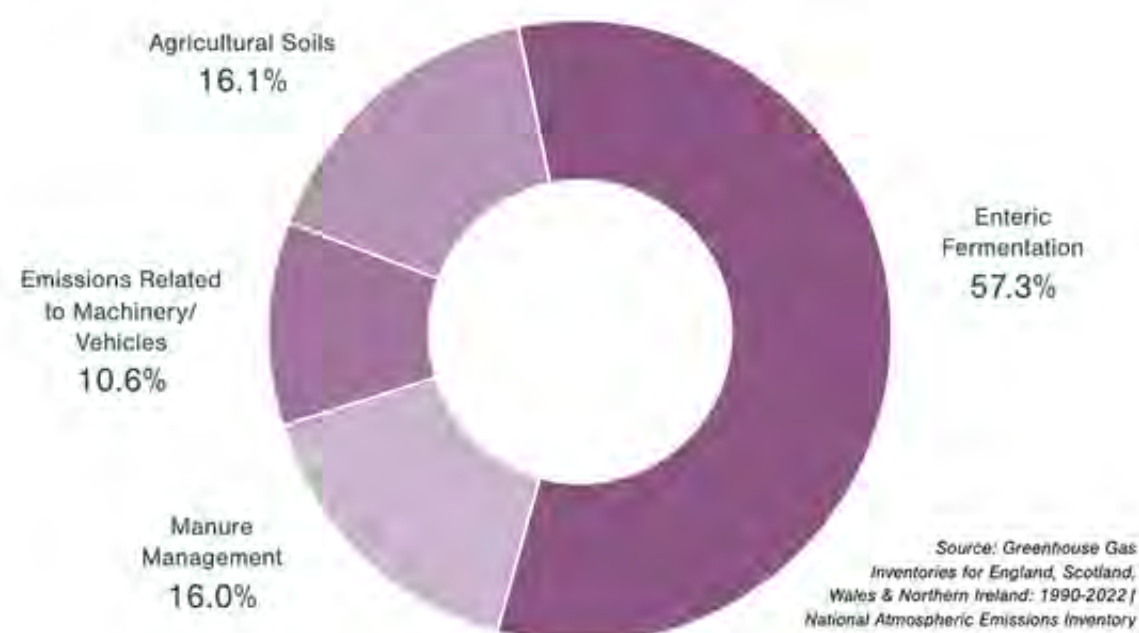
Sector Summary	
	The Sustainable Agriculture Programme encourages a rapid transition to low carbon farming practices, as advised by the CCC, but also provides an alternative approach for reducing emissions from the agriculture sector to that advised by the CCC through more targeted (but still significant) reductions in livestock numbers, delivered through improved livestock productivity while allowing the agriculture sector to maintain output, avoid carbon leakage, and contribute to the growing global demand for livestock food products projected by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).
Emissions Projections	Following the implementation of the policies and proposals set out in this chapter, the agriculture sector is projected to emit 28.99 MtCO₂e over the course of the first carbon budget period. This compares to total assumed emissions of 28.06 MtCO₂e in the sector during the first carbon budget period within the CCC adjusted pathway.

Sector Overview

Northern Ireland agriculture accounts for 29.1% of all GHG emissions, compared with 11.7% in the UK as a whole. This reflects the different composition of the Northern Ireland economy and emitting sectors and the fact that agriculture in Northern Ireland is much more focused towards livestock production.

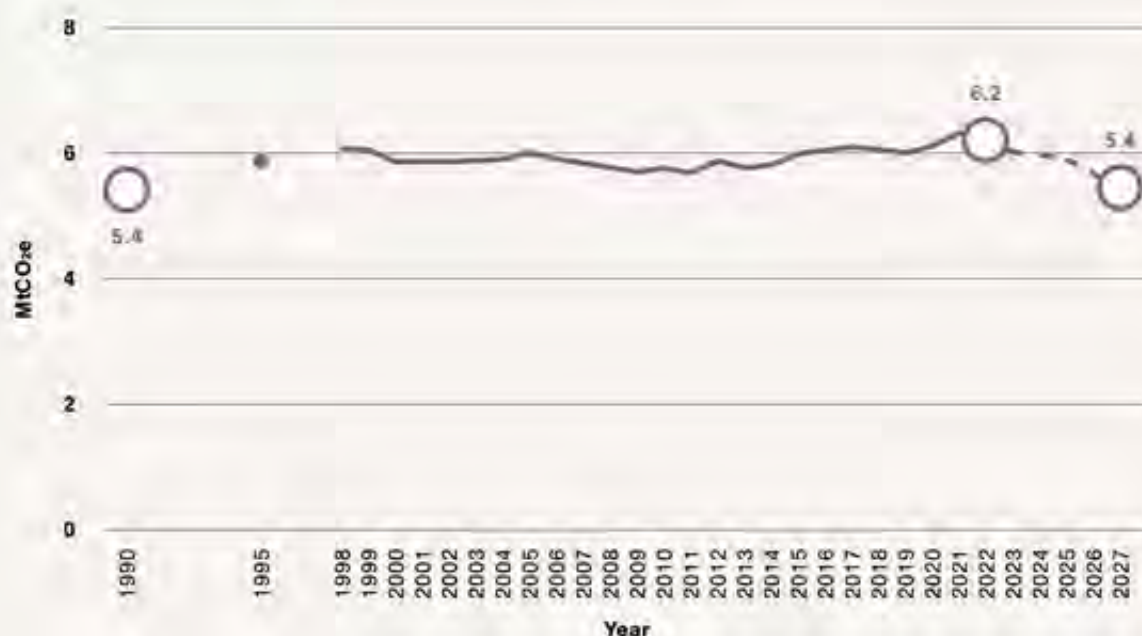
Agricultural GHGs are very different from other sector emissions. For most sectors, the main gas emitted is carbon dioxide from fossil fuel combustion, whilst for agriculture the two main gases are methane and nitrous oxide. The emissions from agriculture are from a combination of fertiliser practices, and natural processes within livestock production, in particular, enteric fermentation in the digestive systems of ruminant animals (cattle and sheep). In 2022, 57.3% of agriculture sector emissions were associated with enteric emissions related to livestock, other key emissions were from manure management, soils and emissions from off-road vehicles and machinery as displayed in Figure 25.

Figure 25: Agriculture sector emissions 2022



Agriculture emissions have increased by 14.9% from 5.4 MtCO₂e in 1990 to 6.2 MtCO₂e in 2022 (Figure 26). This reflects an increase in livestock numbers over this period, however, is partly offset by lower nitrogen fertiliser applications.

Figure 26: Change in agriculture emissions 1990-2022



Source: Greenhouse Gas Inventories for England, Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland, 1990-2022 / National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory

— Greenhouse gas inventory 1990-2022
- - - Projections 2023-2027

Note: Base year is 1990 for CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O, or 1995 for fluorinated gases

The Act does not require the net Northern Ireland emissions for methane for the year 2050 to be more than 46% lower than the 1990 baseline for methane. Agriculture still needs to play its fair part in meeting the 2050 net zero obligation and significant reductions in emissions are required. Since most other sectors will need to be completely decarbonised by 2050, delivering net zero in Northern Ireland will require residual 2050 emissions from agriculture to be as low as possible.

DAERA's Sustainable Agriculture Programme

DAERA's Sustainable Agriculture Programme is the overarching programme through which emissions reduction in the agriculture sector will be delivered over this carbon budget period.

In August 2021, DAERA published the Future Agricultural Policy Framework Portfolio for Northern Ireland which set out a way forward for an agricultural policy that better meets the needs of Northern Ireland. A public consultation followed on the detailed

policy proposals and in March 2022, 54 decisions on future agricultural policy for Northern Ireland were announced. These decisions are being delivered through a number of policies and proposals within the Sustainable Agriculture Programme. Work has progressed at pace to develop these policies with some already introduced and others planned to be introduced from 2025.

An Agricultural Policy Stakeholder Group has been established, bringing together representatives across food, farming and the environment. This forum provides a valuable source of industry input and expertise as DAERA continues to develop the Sustainable Agriculture Programme to deliver carbon reduction in the agriculture sector.

The Sustainable Agriculture Programme¹⁸² seeks to support the agriculture sector to reduce its carbon emissions and develop an industry with increased productivity, improved environmental sustainability, long-term resilience and better supply chain functionality. Achieving these outcomes will help to secure the sustainability of farm businesses, the majority of which are small and medium-sized enterprises. This in turn will support rural communities, providing opportunities in rural areas. The aim is to reduce emissions by improving efficiencies and changing practices on farms whilst ensuring the continued production of high-quality food and delivering for our economy. This will ensure we meet high environmental, animal welfare and food safety and integrity standards, with an increased focus on transparency, traceability and provenance along the food chain.

The Programme will provide farm businesses with the best possible tools and support, enabling adaptation to take advantage of present and future opportunities. It will embrace a greater transfer of knowledge; increased investment in science and technology; and it will encourage the uptake of research and development that can deliver sustainable benefits to the industry and the people of Northern Ireland.

Policies and Proposals

The Sustainable Agriculture Programme includes a number of policies and proposals, to deliver reductions in GHG emissions from the agriculture sector. These include:

POLICY

Beef Sustainability Package

This Package has two schemes and a maximum annual budget of £50 million:

¹⁸² Future Agricultural Policy Decisions for Northern Ireland (Final) (002).pdf (daera-ni.gov.uk)

POLICY / SCHEME 1

Beef Sustainability Package

The Beef Carbon Reduction Scheme (Quantified)

This scheme commenced on 1 January 2024 and is aimed at reducing the number of older non-breeding cattle on farms by incentivising farmers to meet set targets for age at slaughter for finished beef animals over a four-year phased implementation period. The maximum age at slaughter for year one of the Scheme is 30 months reducing to 26 months in year four. Farm businesses slaughtering animals which have not been used for breeding and are entering the food chain will receive a payment for each animal that meets the maximum age at slaughter target. However, to discourage any increase in production, a quantitative limit of 352,000 animals per year has been set at a Northern Ireland level on the number of animals that can qualify for the payment.¹⁸³

POLICY / SCHEME 2

Beef Sustainability Package

The Suckler Cow Scheme (Quantified)

This scheme aims to reduce, over a four-year phased implementation period, the number of 'non-productive' days in beef breeding herds by incentivising farmers. A payment on individual replacement breeding animals coming into the herd which meet set targets for reduced age at first calving and for the reduction of calving interval of breeding cows will be made. For the 'Age at First Calving' element, the targets set are a maximum age of 34 months in year one, reducing to 29 months in year four. Targets for the 'calving interval' element include a maximum calving interval in year one of 415 days, reducing to 385 days in year four. Replacement animals that first calve at an earlier age are more efficient over their lifetime and reduce the number of young cattle required on farms to maintain herd size. The Suckler Cow Scheme will include a quantitative limit of 222,000 per year at a Northern Ireland level to discourage any increase in production. Development of the Suckler Cow Scheme is ongoing and is planned for launch in 2025.

¹⁸³ The quantitative limit has been calculated using published data on the number of clean beef animals slaughtered in the years 2019-2021. The payment rate of €75 was set on the basis of the available annual budget for the Beef Carbon Reduction scheme of €26.4 million and the quantitative limit of 352,000.

POLICY

Knowledge and Innovation (Elements Quantified as detailed below)

The Knowledge and Innovation policy will help and support farm businesses to make the necessary changes to reduce GHG emissions.

Training courses, group-based peer learning, innovation visits and innovation partnerships will seek to reach all farm businesses and land managers and will form a central pillar to help deliver the outcomes and the behaviour change required.

In addition, an Agri-food Influencers Programme for those professionals interacting with farm businesses will be established to help ensure consistency of messaging and deliver the scale of change required. This is a professional development programme for people who work on a professional basis with farmers, for example, those in the feed sector, agricultural banking and environmental and processing sectors. The programme will be designed to inform these professionals of emerging policy so that they can take account of these issues when they engage with farmers.

Knowledge and innovation will be the key policy used to support uptake by the sector in delivering the following:

POLICY

Knowledge and Innovation

Reducing the age at first calving of dairy herd replacements (Quantified)

Reducing the age at first calving of dairy heifer replacements from the average of 30.9 months to 24 months or less will reduce the numbers of older non-breeding cattle on dairy farms in Northern Ireland. Many well-managed dairy herds already significantly exceed this target, with evidence from Northern Ireland milk recording databases suggesting the average age at first calving on milk recorded herds in Northern Ireland is 24.6 months. DAERA has projected an average age at first calving for dairy herd replacements by 2027 of 25 months. This reduction will be encouraged through knowledge transfer and innovation programmes provided by the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE).

POLICY

Knowledge and Innovation

Reducing the average calving interval in dairy herds by 15 days (Quantified)

The average calving interval of milk recorded dairy cows in Northern Ireland is approximately 403 days. Reducing the calving interval of dairy cows improves their productivity, increasing the annual average milk yield per cow and increasing the number of calves born per dairy cow per year. Reducing the calving interval leads to lower carbon emissions through reducing the number of dairy cows required to produce the same level of milk output. The action modelled is based on reducing the number of dairy cows in herds in Northern Ireland. DAERA will encourage the reduction in dairy cow calving interval through applied research and knowledge transfer initiatives.

POLICY

Knowledge and Innovation

Increasing the proportion of beef cattle finished as young bulls from 12% to 24% (Quantified)

This proposal, similar to the Beef Carbon Reduction Scheme, is aimed at reducing the number of older non-breeding cattle on farms. Most male cattle in Northern Ireland destined for slaughter for meat production are castrated from a health and safety and management perspective. However, young male cattle that are not castrated have faster growth rates leading to earlier slaughter ages (typical target of 16 months) compared with castrated male cattle. Approximately 12% of clean cattle^{18a} slaughtered in 2023 were classified as young bulls. The Central Scenario assumes the proportion of young bulls increases to 18%. DAERA will support farm businesses finishing cattle as young bulls through applied research and knowledge transfer initiatives.

^{18a} Clean cattle refer to animals which have not been used for breeding and are entering the food chain

The implementation of the livestock productivity actions through the Beef Sustainability Package and Knowledge and Innovation policy is projected to reduce cattle numbers in Northern Ireland by approximately 116,000 or 7% of the total cattle population by 2027, while maintaining the current level of livestock product output in terms of milk and beef and avoiding carbon leakage outside of Northern Ireland.

POLICY

Knowledge and Innovation

Reducing emissions by using alternative fertilisers (Quantified)

Urea¹⁵⁸ fertiliser treated with a urease inhibitor significantly reduces nitrous oxide emissions compared with calcium ammonium nitrate (the most commonly used fertiliser in Northern Ireland). Importantly, urease inhibitor treated urea significantly reduces ammonia emissions compared with untreated urea. As a minimum, DAERA will encourage the use of treated urea on Northern Ireland farms through applied research and knowledge transfer. A proposal to consult on the introduction of a prohibition on the use of urea fertiliser without a urea inhibitor is being progressed as part of the Nutrients Action Programme Review.

POLICY

Knowledge and Innovation

Reducing emissions by a reduction in the use of nitrogen fertilisers by including Legumes in grass swards (Quantified)

Legumes such as clovers can naturally fix nitrogen from the atmosphere, making it available as a plant nutrient. Therefore, including legumes in mixed species grass swards can lower nitrous oxide emissions through reductions in requirements for inorganic nitrogen fertiliser. This also brings a significant economic benefit.

¹⁵⁸ Urea is a highly concentrated chemical nitrogen fertiliser which has an NPK (nitrogen phosphorus-potassium) ratio of 46-0-0. Protected (or stabilised) urea is urea which is treated with an active ingredient called a urease inhibitor. Urease is the enzyme which catalyses the conversion of urea to ammonium. It is during this conversion that ammonia gas is lost from untreated urea. A urease inhibitor blocks the active site of the urease enzyme, and this slows the rate at which urea is converted to ammonium, thus stabilising it.

DAERA will encourage the establishment of grassland swards with legumes and herbs through applied research and knowledge transfer initiatives and has projected a 30% reduction (based on Central Scenario) in the use of inorganic nitrogen fertiliser by 2027, which will be monitored via DAERA statistics on nitrogen fertiliser use.

The 30% reduction assumption relates to total fertiliser use across Northern Ireland. This assumption has been applied at industry level and is independent of, and not additional to, any upper fertiliser limits applied at farm level in current or future iterations of the Nutrients Action Programme.

The ongoing pilot Protein Crops Scheme also incentivises farmers to grow crops such as peas and beans which also naturally fix nitrogen from the atmosphere, reducing nitrogen fertiliser use compared with alternative crops such as cereals.

POLICY

Reducing emissions by including methane suppressing feed products in Livestock Diets and reducing the Protein and Phosphorous content of Livestock Diets (Quantified)

DAERA is progressing the development of a Livestock Dietary Emissions Challenge Fund to test livestock diets in an on-farm situation, which reduces GHG and ammonia emissions and phosphorous losses. For the dairy sector in Northern Ireland, the Livestock Dietary Emissions Challenge Fund has been incorporated into a Defra-led Dairy Demonstrator Project. This project was launched for applications by Defra in November 2023 and incorporates a living labs approach involving stakeholders along with government policy makers. A key aspect of the living labs approach is the co-development of policy measures to assist the roll-out of the technology.

While the Dairy Demonstrator Project is focused on the dairy sector, DAERA plans to deliver the Livestock Dietary Emissions Challenge Fund for other livestock sectors from 2025 onwards. Funding of £4 million is required for this latter challenge fund over a four-year period to test these dietary formulations and/or feed products under Northern Ireland farm conditions. The findings from the Dairy Demonstrator Project and Livestock Dietary Emissions Challenge Fund will directly inform the development of future DAERA policy on farm animal dietary changes and the incorporation of enteric methane suppressing feed products into ruminant diets.

The operating expenses for the most effective methane suppressing feed products currently available for dairy cows could be as much as £25 million per annum. However, no decisions have been taken on the provision of funding for these feed products in the long term and this may require some incentivisation from government to ensure adoption in the short term.

Research and development into methane suppressing feed products is ongoing worldwide and it is anticipated that more products will become available in the next number of years. The manufacture of methane suppressing feed products and the need for professional livestock diet formulation also have the potential to generate sustainable jobs within the agri-food sector.

POLICY

Ruminant Genetics Programme (Quantified)

Ongoing research by Teagasc in Ireland and by Wageningen University in the Netherlands suggests that animal breeding, specifically for reduced enteric methane production, has the potential to directly reduce cattle enteric methane emissions intensity by up to 24% by 2050.¹⁶⁰ Genetic improvement programmes can also be used to reduce susceptibility to animal disease, to improve feed conversion efficiency, to reduce the incidence of physiological disorders such as lameness and to increase rates of growth, all of which will reduce GHG emissions per unit of output.

Improving the genetic merit of the Northern Ireland cattle population can have a positive impact on reducing nitrogen and phosphorus excretion to the environment therefore having a positive impact on farm ecosystems. DAERA is progressing the development of a Ruminant Genetics Programme which will be delivered in partnership with the agri-food sector through Sustainable Ruminant Genetics Ltd. This not-for-profit organisation was established in 2023 and represents the entirety of the agri-food supply chain.

The initial stage of the programme is a Bovine Genetics Project which commenced in 2024 and has a Capital Cost of £55.6 million and a resource cost of £1.6 million over 10 years. Industry is also contributing £66 million to the project.

¹⁶⁰ Selective breeding as a mitigation tool for methane emissions from dairy cattle - PubMed (nii.gov)

POLICY

Capital Investment Scheme (Unquantified)

A new Capital Investment Scheme is being developed to help farm businesses improve both their environmental performance and business efficiency. It is proposed that support will focus on assisting the industry to meet net zero targets and to help improve air and water quality. This will be achieved by the adoption of precision technology and equipment to reduce ammonia emissions, carbon emissions, and nutrient loss. It will build on information provided to farm businesses through the Soil Nutrient Health Scheme and the Carbon Footprinting Project.

PROPOSAL

Increased slurry aeration and novel slurry treatment systems (Includes pig, beef and dairy slurry aeration) (Quantified)

The majority of cattle and pig manure is stored as liquid slurry in Northern Ireland. Manure stored as liquid slurry results in anaerobic conditions within the storage vessel. The anaerobic conditions facilitate the growth of methanogenic microorganisms releasing methane gas from the slurry store. Aerating slurry by bubbling air from a compressor through the slurry via a system of pipes on the base of the slurry store maintains the slurry in a homogeneous 'mixed' state. This reduces the health and safety risk to animals and people from slurry gases released during intensive mechanical mixing prior to slurry spreading. The aerobic conditions created by the slurry aeration reduce methane emissions from the slurry store or tank by approximately 40%. However, depending on the aeration system design, aeration may increase ammonia emissions from the slurry store or tank by approximately 20%. It will be important to understand the 'trade-offs' that exist in such systems and ensure that by increasing the use of slurry aeration, DAERA does not increase ammonia levels to an unacceptable level. A significant number of farmers have already invested in slurry aeration systems from a health and safety perspective. This proposed action could increase the uptake of slurry aeration by 50% by 2027. DAERA will encourage the increase in slurry aeration through applied research and knowledge transfer initiatives.

Research trials by AFBI, Teagasc, University of Galway and industry stakeholders on novel slurry treatment systems are ongoing and indicate the potential to alter the slurry microbial environment to reduce emissions of ammonia, methane and nitrous oxide from stored slurry.

PROPOSAL

Anaerobic Digestion (Quantified)

There is growing interest in the potential to use anaerobic digestion to generate biomethane for injection into the Northern Ireland gas grid. This includes using a combination of manures from livestock farms, waste streams from food processing and crops grown on land that would otherwise be used for conventional agricultural uses. These developments have the potential to contribute to the decarbonisation of the agriculture, business and industrial processes, domestic heating and road transport sectors.

Adding additional technologies to anaerobic digestion plants to capture and recycle nutrients from the digestate that would otherwise be land spread would also help address nutrient loading and water quality problems.

Work is ongoing with industry stakeholders and research organisations to explore the potential development of these circular economy initiatives through the DfE call for evidence and response report on Biomethane and the DAERA Sustainable Utilisation of Livestock Slurry Small Business Research Initiative.

Support Policies for the Agriculture Sector

The Sustainable Agriculture Programme represents a major agenda of change for the agriculture industry in Northern Ireland over the next number of years.

Alongside the above policies and proposals, DAERA is developing a suite of Decision-Support Policies to provide new evidence and innovations to help inform, monitor, and deliver on the actions within this first Climate Action Plan and subsequent plans on the pathway to net zero and support the industry to deliver the change required. Policies providing financial support to deliver environmental improvements and to support the adoption of climate related innovations and technologies will also be available. These include the following policies:

POLICY

The Carbon Footprinting Project (Unquantified)

DAERA is investing £15 million in the first carbon budget period for the delivery of an industry-led Carbon Footprinting Project for Northern Ireland, which includes the use of a farm carbon calculator to measure a farm's carbon footprint. Every farm business in Northern Ireland will be offered a carbon footprint over a four-year period commencing in 2025/26 and participation will be a condition of receipt of the new Farm Sustainability Payment.

The receipt of a carbon footprint in conjunction with training provided by CAFRE, will indicate to farm businesses how they can reduce their carbon footprint against each of the DAERA carbon reduction actions. The Carbon Footprinting Project will also produce important data to increase the granularity and robustness of the GHG Inventory for agriculture.

Under the Act, this Project enables DAERA to meet its legislative requirement to develop sectoral plans for agriculture¹⁸⁷ which contain proposals for carrying out fully funded carbon audits of farms to assess where performance improvements and savings can be made. Also, as part of the carbon auditing process, carbon sequestration measures already being conducted by the sector should be calculated.

¹⁸⁷ Section 19 of the Act

POLICY

The Soil Nutrient Health Scheme (Unquantified)

DAERA's Soil Nutrient Health Scheme is a £37.6 million four-year initiative aimed at measuring and improving the nutrient health status of soil and estimating the soil carbon stocks across Northern Ireland, through the sampling of 24,500 farms by the end of 2026. Following receipt of their results, farm businesses are being offered training by CAFRE, which will assist them to interpret results and develop nutrient management plans to more accurately match nutrient applications to crop need. This should result in more effective, nutrient management on farms, nutrient applications to soils in line with crop requirements, reduced run-off to watercourses and improved economic and environmental sustainability.

Participation in the Soil Nutrient Health Scheme will be a conditionality for receipt of future farm support from DAERA including the Farm Sustainability Payment. This requirement has to date encouraged an excellent uptake of the scheme with almost 95% of farmers participating in those areas of Northern Ireland where the scheme is currently being offered. The Soil Nutrient Health Scheme will also produce important data to increase the granularity and robustness of the GHG Inventory for Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) by estimating baseline data on carbon stored in agricultural soils and above ground biomass. Further information on this aspect can be found in the LULUCF chapter.

The appropriate application of the data from this scheme will contribute to emissions savings in future carbon budgetary periods in both the agriculture and LULUCF sectors.

POLICY

The Farming with Nature Package (Unquantified)

The Farming with Nature Package is aimed at supporting farmers and land managers to make substantial contributions to environmental improvements and sustainability. The Package will include schemes that focus on increasing the extent, quality and connectivity of habitats on the farmed land across Northern Ireland. It will also include Landscape Projects involving multiple farm businesses working in partnership to deliver better environmental outcomes at a landscape scale.

It is planned that scheme(s) will be introduced with the aim of increasing the extent, quality, and connectivity of habitats in the farmed land within and outside of designated sites and priority habitat areas. Landscape Projects will stimulate collaboration between multiple stakeholders like landowners, farmers, conservation organisations, and local communities, leading to more coordinated and impactful efforts. While these activities are delivered by farmers and land managers operating in the agriculture sector, all emissions savings associated with these are recorded in the LULUCF sector.

Deployment Assumptions for Delivery of Agriculture Policies and Proposals

Table 20 presents the level of expected deployment associated with draft Climate Action Plan policies and proposals in the agriculture sector to align with the projected emissions over the first carbon budget period.

Table 20: Deployment assumptions by 2027 to achieve the Central Scenario with agriculture sector Northern Ireland policies

Policy/Proposal	Assumption	By 2027	
		Reduction	Uptake (%)
Beef Sustainability Package Scheme 1 The Beef Carbon Reduction Scheme	Reducing the average age at slaughter of 'clean' beef cattle.	26.2 to 23.6 months.	90

Policy/Proposal	Assumption	By 2027	
		Reduction	Uptake (%)
<i>*Beef Sustainability Package Scheme 2</i> The Suckler Cow Scheme	Reducing the average age at first calving of beef heifer replacements.	31.9 to 30.0 months (-4 months over 30 months).	—
<i>*Beef Sustainability Package Scheme 2</i> The Suckler Cow Scheme	Reduction of days for beef cow calving interval.	Average reduction of 15 days.	—
<i>Knowledge and Innovation</i> Reducing the age at first calving of dairy herd replacements	Average age reduction at first calving of dairy herd replacements.	30.9 to 25 months.	50
<i>Knowledge and Innovation</i> Reducing the average calving interval in dairy herds by 15 days	Average of 15-day reduction in calving interval.	15 days.	50
<i>Knowledge and Innovation</i> Increasing the proportion of beef cattle finished as young bulls (from 12% to 24%)	Increased proportion of 'clean' male beef finished as young bulls.	12% to 18%.	18
<i>Knowledge and Innovation</i> Reducing emissions by using alternative fertilisers	Switch from Calcium Ammonium Nitrate (CAN) to Protected Urea Fertiliser.	18% (2024) to 75% (by 2027).	75
<i>Knowledge and Innovation</i> Reducing emissions by a reduction in the use of nitrogen fertilisers by including Legumes in grass swards	Reduction in nitrogen fertiliser use through legume incorporation in grass swards.	30%	—

Policy/Proposal	Assumption	By 2027	
		Reduction	Uptake (%)
Reducing emissions by including methane suppressing feed additives in dairy cattle	Dairy cow feed additives (% methane reduction).	20%	50
Reducing emissions by including methane suppressing feed additives in non-dairy cattle	Non-dairy cattle feed additives (% methane reduction).	20%	35
Reducing emissions by reducing the Protein and Phosphorous content of livestock diets	Dairy cow low crude protein diet (% diet per crude protein unit).	1%	50
Ruminant Genetics Programme	Cattle genetic selection for reduced methane output (% methane reduction).	0.15% per year	50
**Increased slurry aeration and novel slurry treatment systems (Dairy)	Percentage dairy slurry aeration.	50% increase (+20% NH ₄ & -40% CH ₄).	3.5
**Increased slurry aeration and novel slurry treatment systems (Beef)	Percentage beef slurry aeration.	50% increase (+20% NH ₄ & -40% CH ₄).	1.05
**Increased slurry aeration and novel slurry treatment systems (Pig)	Percentage pig slurry aeration.	50% increase (+20% NH ₄ & -40% CH ₄).	2.7
***Anaerobic Digestion	Additional slurry utilised in anaerobic digestion.	Additional 6.0% managed slurry.	50

*Beef Sustainability Package Scheme 2 - The Suckler Cow Scheme includes the quantification of both reducing the average age at first calving of beef heifer replacements and reducing the average age at first calving of beef heifer replacements.

**Emissions savings for Dairy, Beef and Pig slurry aeration are calculated together

***Only methane emissions savings during slurry storage included in the analysis for Agriculture

Emissions Projections

Table 21 presents the projected emissions for the agriculture sector across the first carbon budgetary period. Agriculture sector emissions are projected to be 0.93 MtCO₂e more than the emissions levels assumed for this sector within the CCC adjusted pathway.

Table 21: Agriculture sector projected emissions in the Central Scenario compared with the adjusted CCC sectoral pathway

 Sector	Projected Emissions (MtCO ₂ e)						Difference in CCC adjusted pathway and Northern Ireland Projections
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total	
Agriculture	6.03	5.97	5.88	5.67	5.44	28.99	0.93 MtCO ₂ e
Agriculture CCC*	5.98	5.74	5.6	5.45	5.29	28.06	

**These figures are based on the CCC advisory pathway but have been adjusted to take account of the 2022 inventory publication.*

Further detail on the quantification of the agriculture sector policies is available in Chapter 3.7 of the Quantification Report (Annex A).¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ Chapter 3.7 p.89-109

Just Transition Considerations

The agri-food sector (comprising the agricultural industry and the food and drinks processing sector) plays a significant role in the economy of Northern Ireland. The value of gross output from the agricultural industry in 2023 was £2.87 billion, generating a gross value added (GVA) of £699 million.¹⁸⁹ This output is produced from over 26,000 farm businesses, mainly small and medium-sized enterprises, from an area with an agricultural labour force of almost 32,000 people.¹⁹⁰

The Northern Ireland Integrated Farm Survey¹⁹¹ published in 2023 reported that 78% of farm managers were over 45 years old, with 32% aged 65 and above. The DAERA Equality Indicators report in 2018¹⁹² outlined that very small farms (which account for three quarters of all farms in Northern Ireland) had a slightly higher age profile than those of larger farms. Almost two thirds of farmers stated that they had a long-term illness or disability which limited their daily activities with the incidence of disability inversely related to farm size. It is vitally important that the changes needed to reduce GHG emissions in this sector do not impact on the vulnerable within the sector or the productivity and food supply chain, which in itself could impact on other vulnerable communities through high food price impacts.

The overall objective of DAERA's Sustainable Agriculture Programme is to transition to a more sustainable farming sector by seeking to implement policies and strategies that benefit our climate and environment, while supporting our economically and socially significant agriculture sector. The schemes to be introduced through this programme will be essential levers in contributing to Northern Ireland's statutory obligations under the Act and in achieving a genuinely just transition.

During this carbon budget period, a new Farm Sustainability Payment will replace the Basic Payment Scheme, which has been the main form of direct payments to the agriculture sector in recent years. The Farm Sustainability Payment will provide a safety net for farm businesses to support farmers to improve the efficiency and productivity of their businesses while reducing their GHG emissions. Over time and in line with the capacity for delivery and uptake of new actions and schemes within the Sustainable Agriculture Programme, the Farm Sustainability Payment will reduce as funding is released to these other actions and schemes, for example, the Beef Sustainability Package and Farming with Nature Package.

¹⁸⁹ DAERA - Key statistics from 2007 onward

¹⁹⁰ Agricultural Census 2022 Publication_1.pdf (daera-ni.gov.uk)

¹⁹¹ Northern Ireland Integrated Farm Survey 2023.pdf

¹⁹² final-equality-indicators-report.xls

A key policy, to support farm businesses make the necessary changes to further develop more efficient and sustainable businesses, is knowledge. Through the Knowledge and Innovation actions outlined earlier in this chapter and delivered by CAFRE, training courses, peer learning opportunities and innovation demonstrations will be provided, with all farm families encouraged to participate.

To help farmers plan for succession within the family farm and to encourage the next generation of farmers into the industry, DAERA is developing a 'Farming for the Generations' programme which will provide advice on succession planning and support successors as they take on the responsibilities of farm business management and development. This programme will build on the specialist further and higher education courses provided by DAERA through CAFRE, for those wishing to pursue a career in the agriculture industry.

The Act¹⁹³ requires DAERA to establish a scheme for the administration of a fund to be known as the Just Transition Fund for Agriculture. The purpose of this Scheme is to provide advice and financial assistance to the agriculture sector to deliver its contribution to meeting carbon budgets and emissions reduction targets by implementing proposals and policies to be included in Climate Action Plans. Further detail on the establishment of the Just Transition Fund for Agriculture is included in the Investing in Climate Action chapter.

¹⁹³ Section 31 (1) and (2) in the Act

6.9 Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF)

Sector Summary	
LULUCF Sector Emissions Summary	• The Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sector covers emissions and removals of GHGs resulting from direct human-induced LULUCF. • LULUCF is the only sector where removal of emissions (sequestration) is recorded with the majority of removals by forest land and grasslands. • Whilst peatland is a natural sink for carbon dioxide it is currently estimated that the majority of our peatlands are degraded and act as emitters instead. • LULUCF emissions have reduced by 20.5% since 1990 and represent 10.1% of total annual emissions in Northern Ireland in 2022.
Policy Approach	Reducing emissions and increasing sequestration in the LULUCF sector can be achieved through key interventions which include, increasing forest cover through a policy to deliver the Forests for Our Future programme to create 9,000 hectares of new woodland by 2030. Also, through restoring peatland habitats by delivering the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy. Delivering carbon sequestration will reduce emissions through land management and will be supported through agri-environment schemes such as the delivery of the Farming with Nature Package and the Soil Nutrient Health Scheme. There are also additional land use proposals to develop a future land use policy for Northern Ireland and considering the feasibility of policy development for biomass.
Emissions Projections	Following the implementation of the policies and proposals set out in this chapter, the LULUCF sector is projected to emit 10.77 MtCO₂e over the course of the first carbon budget period. This compares to total assumed emissions of 10.07 MtCO₂e in the sector during the first carbon budget period within the CCC adjusted pathway.

Sector Overview

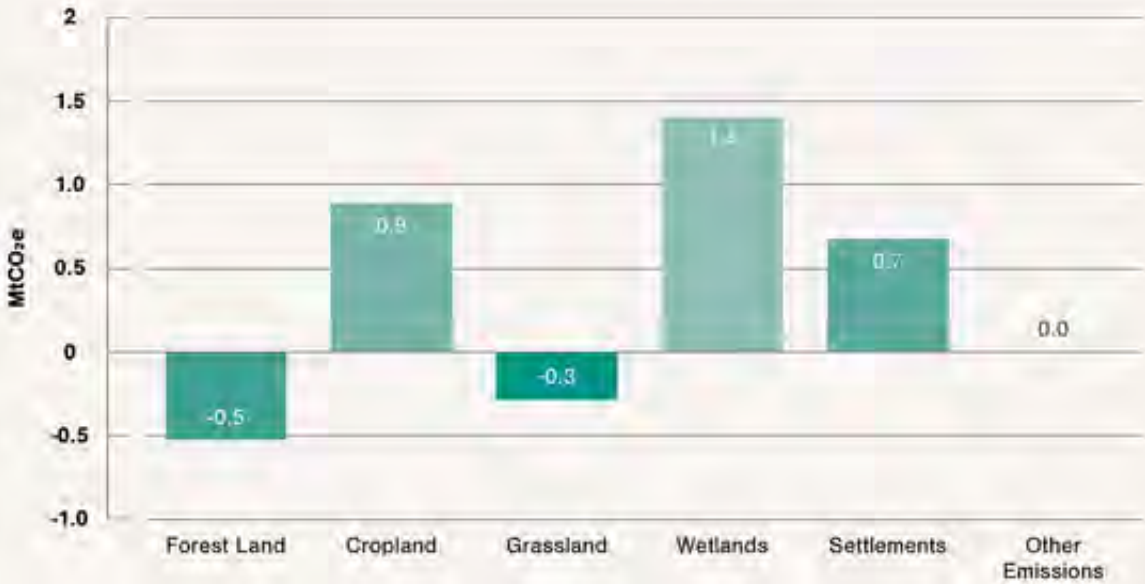
The LULUCF sector covers emissions from and removals of GHGs resulting from direct human-induced LULUCF activities. LULUCF is the only sector which has both emissions and sequestration. Wetlands, croplands and settlements were the main contributors to emissions within the sector. The highest sources of sequestration primarily consist of removals from forest land and removals by grasslands (Figure 27). Table 22 and Figure 27 provide an overview of the total emissions, taking into consideration sequestration from croplands, forest land and grassland.

Table 22: LULUCF sector emissions and sequestration

	Emissions (MtCO ₂ e)	Sequestration (MtCO ₂ e)	Net Total (MtCO ₂ e)
Wetlands	1.41	N/A	1.41
Croplands	0.91	-0.02	0.89
Settlements	0.68	N/A	0.68
Forest land	0.03	-0.56	-0.53
Grasslands	0.19	-0.48	-0.29

Source: Greenhouse Gas Inventories for England, Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland: 1990-2022 / National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory.

Figure 27: LULUCF sector emissions and sequestration 2022



Source: Greenhouse Gas Inventories for England, Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland: 1990-2022 / National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory

LULUCF emissions have reduced from 2.7 MtCO₂e in 1990 to 2.2 MtCO₂e in 2022 (Figure 28) and represent 10.1% of total annual emissions in Northern Ireland.

Figure 28: Change in LULUCF emissions 1990-2022



Source: Greenhouse Gas Inventories for England, Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland, 1990-2022 / National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory

Greenhouse gas inventory 1990-2022
Projections 2023-2027

Note: Base year is 1990 for CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O, or 1995 for fluorinated gases

Peatlands and peat soils are generally natural carbon sinks, that have been created over thousands of years. Current mapping estimates there are 242,000 hectares of land in Northern Ireland classified as peat. Much of this (approximately 170,000ha) is recognisable as peatland habitat, with the rest being peat soils, or buried peat that is now subject to intensive agriculture or peatland. It is estimated that the majority of our peatlands are currently classified as degraded and, are therefore sources of carbon emissions instead of being carbon sinks. To date as a result of management interventions over 4,000ha of peatland have been put on the road to recovery and a further 29,000ha are under remedial management actions through agri-environment schemes.¹⁹⁴

There has been limited progress made by the LULUCF sector within the past decade in reducing emissions, therefore radical action will be needed to reach net zero by 2050. There are almost 1.4 million hectares of land in Northern Ireland, providing the foundation for our environment, our economy, and our society. Over one million hectares

¹⁹⁴ Peatland restoration undertaken under Cooperation across Borders for Biodiversity (CABB), Collaborative Action for the Natura Network (CANN) and NI Water's Sustainable Catchment Area Management Practice Northern Ireland (SCAMP NI). Remedial action = DAERA Environmental farming schemes.

of this land is in agricultural use. Emissions from the LULUCF sector are determined in large part by how this land is used and managed therefore close collaboration with the agriculture sector will be vital to ensure the correct policies on agriculture, forestry and the environment are implemented including learning from existing policies.

Key to aiding this collaboration will be the continual updating and improvement of the data used for the LULUCF sector in the Northern Ireland GHG Inventory. In particular, as LULUCF policies and proposals are implemented and delivered, it is crucial that the impact of the actions is estimated in the most accurate way possible. This means that the inventory, used to account for LULUCF emissions, must be scientifically robust and agile, informed by the best data on how land is being used and the climate implications of that land management.

Whilst the GHG Inventory is the most robust tool available to assess levels of emissions in Northern Ireland and the UK, the scale and complexity of our interactions with the natural world, means there are high levels of uncertainty in estimating emissions from the land use sector and therefore, work is needed to increase the precision of estimates of LULUCF emissions within the inventory, subject to the availability of funding and resource.

Policies and Proposals

Delivering the first and subsequent carbon budgets will require transformative change in the way land is managed in Northern Ireland. We need to increase the levels of our valuable carbon stores underground and reduce emissions such that our use of land is no longer a source of GHG emissions. Policy on land use should deliver a thriving land sector which balances its use for food production with carbon emissions to deliver for our environment, our economy, and our society.

The LULUCF sector has engaged with stakeholders and relevant sector-specific advisory groups in relation to existing policies and in the development of new proposals to reduce emissions in this sector. The UK Government's approach to sustainable forestry is set out in the UK Forestry Standard (UKFS). As Northern Ireland has a common boundary with Ireland, sustainable forestry management includes the requirement to consult with the relevant authorities in Ireland.

In this first Climate Action Plan, LULUCF key interventions include:

1. Increasing forest cover.
2. Restoring peatland habitats.
3. Delivering carbon sequestration through land management and agri-environment schemes.
4. Additional land use proposals.

Increase Forest Cover

DAERA has a general duty to promote afforestation and sustainable forestry under the Forestry Act 2010.¹⁹⁵ Forest Service leads on the implementation of this general duty for DAERA and is responsible for setting policy direction and priorities for woodland creation and management. Fundamental and common to these priorities and forestry policies is the concept of sustainable forest management.

POLICY

Deliver the Forests for Our Future programme to create 9,000ha of new woodland by 2030 (Quantified)

The Forests for Our Future programme is an important part of the Northern Ireland Executive's multi-decade draft Green Growth Strategy and will be a key driver of the Northern Ireland target to achieve 12% woodland cover by 2050. Currently Northern Ireland has 8.6% woodland cover, compared to 13.4% across the UK.¹⁹⁶ This policy aims to support the creation of 9,000ha of new woodland by 2030. The creation of 9,000 hectares (equating to approximately 18 million trees) of new woodland under this programme will help to deliver a sustainable, healthy environment and economic growth and will enable more people to benefit from the increased wellbeing that woodlands can provide. DAERA intends to progress new ways to make afforestation more appealing to a broader range of public and private landowners by emphasising the delivery of a wide range of ecosystem services including sustainable wood production, protection of water quality and nature recovery. To date, over 1,760ha of new woodland has been planted under the Forests for Our Future programme, however, it is acknowledged that planting rates must be significantly increased in the coming years to meet projected targets.

DAERA intends to increase annual afforestation rates from the current average rate of 425 ha/year planted since 2020/21 to an annual rate of 600 ha/year for the remaining three years of the first Climate Action Plan period in 2027. This would create 3,560ha of new woodland under the Forests for Our Future programme by 2027, with the intention of increasing afforestation rates from 2027, ensuring Northern Ireland is on the pathway to delivering 9,000ha by 2030.

¹⁹⁵ Forestry Act (Northern Ireland) 2010

¹⁹⁶ Forestry Statistics 2021 Ch.1 (forestryresearch.co.uk)

In delivering this policy, suitable land will need to be made available as some land is inappropriate for a woodland land use such as designated sites, peatland, land over 300 metres elevation and the urban environment. Although opportunities for afforestation on publicly owned land continue to be explored, the scale of woodland creation proposed will require most of the land-use change to take place from within the current agricultural land use sector, which accounts for just over 75% of the land area of Northern Ireland.¹⁹⁷

Current woodland creation schemes are similar to those operating under the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme. New schemes are needed to continue delivery of the Forests for Our Future programme and promote the further expansion of forestry to meet the levels of carbon sequestration required, in order to meet net zero targets.

To support development of this policy the following actions will be progressed:

- During 2025 DAERA will take forward the business case for funding forest expansion schemes from national funds.
- During 2025 DAERA will investigate the potential to develop new woodland creation schemes. Land suitable for afforestation is a finite resource with significant demand for its use from a number of competing sectors. It is important that afforestation is sufficiently attractive as a land use to encourage woodland creation at the required scale.
- During this carbon budget DAERA will contribute to the UK Government working group to address the skills shortage in the forest sector and continue engagement beyond this as required.

While the Forests for Our Future programme was mandated by the former DAERA Minister, any new scheme and/or increase in allocated funding will require the necessary approvals.

¹⁹⁷ The Agricultural Census in Northern Ireland June 2023 (daera-ni.gov.uk)

Restore Peatland Habitats

Peatlands and peat soils can be a natural carbon sink, which are created over thousands of years. However, in Northern Ireland, it is estimated that the majority of our peatlands are classified as degraded and now act as carbon emitters. The following proposals seek to address and reverse this.

PROPOSAL

Deliver the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy (Quantified)

The draft Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy sets out the proposed actions to enable widespread peatland habitat restoration and conservation in Northern Ireland by 2040.¹⁷⁸ In the draft strategy, DAERA sets out priority actions which aim to deliver levels of peatland restoration in line with the CCC's recommended Pathway for Northern Ireland. Peatland restoration is a key driver in reducing carbon emissions and creating a nature-based solution to sequester carbon. It is also a major/key component in climate mitigation as healthy peatland habitat stores and sequesters carbon and provides ecosystem services such as flood alleviation, which will become more evident as climate change modelling predicts more and intense rainfall for Northern Ireland.

As temperature predictions are realised, more pressure will be put on water reservoirs - healthy peatlands will be able to store more water and release it gradually for use, with the added benefit that it will also require less treatment. The CCC recommends that 150,000ha of peatland must be restored in Northern Ireland by 2050. To achieve this, approximately 10,000ha of peatland habitat should be on the road to recovery by 2027. This means that Northern Ireland will have to dramatically increase its annual peatland restoration activity.

From restoring less than 100ha of peatlands per year in 2023 and 2024 to restoring approximately 2,750ha per year in 2025 and with the intention of increasing restoration rates year on year to 2027 and beyond. This will require significant financial investment and support to build capacity in peatland restoration, as a result DAERA has developed a strategic outline case to establish costings and an appropriate delivery model to deliver approximately 10,000ha of peatland restoration by 2027. The draft Peatland Strategy requires approval by the Northern Ireland Executive.

¹⁷⁸ Subject to Executive approval

To facilitate the draft Peatland Strategy and address the constraints listed above, the following actions will be progressed:

- During 2025, DAERA will establish a Peatlands stakeholder group to help inform delivery of peatlands restoration.
- By 2026, DAERA will have peatland mapping data available to support the identification of peatland sites for priority restoration and inform a peatland asset register.
- During 2025, DAERA will create an implementation plan and associated business plan that will achieve peatland landscape restoration at scale. This will focus on public land to act as demonstration sites to build capacity in the wider environmental Non-Governmental Organisation sector.
- During 2025, DAERA will secure funding to begin significantly upscaling peatland restoration.
- During 2025 DAERA will develop a communication plan to support engagement with farmer and landowners to secure buy-in for peatland restoration.

Deliver Carbon Sequestration Through Land Management and Agri-environment Schemes

Land management and agri-environment schemes are a key tool in delivering greater carbon sequestration on farm. The current Environmental Farming Scheme under the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme has sought to increase carbon sequestration by supporting farmers to adopt a series of actions on farms.

The first six tranches of the Environmental Farming Scheme delivered 174 ha of native woodland, 37 ha of agroforestry, as well as 591 kilometres of new hedgerows. Going forward, as the Environmental Farming Scheme is replaced by the Farming with Nature Package, delivery of carbon sequestration on farmland will continue to be an important outcome for agri-environment schemes.

POLICY

Sustainable Agriculture Programme – The Farming with Nature Package and the Soil Nutrient Health Scheme (Unquantified)

The Farming with Nature Package and the Soil Nutrient Health Scheme form part of the programme of change being progressed through the agriculture sector's Sustainable Agriculture Programme.

The Farming with Nature Package will continue to support a range of carbon sequestration schemes such as hedge and tree planting, in addition to a range of other actions supporting biodiversity that, in turn will contribute to land-use change targets. From 2023 DAERA will develop the Farming with Nature Package through co-design with farming and environmental organisations, introducing an initial scheme in 2025.

The Soil Nutrient Health Scheme is one of the more comprehensive regional soil nutrient sampling schemes to be undertaken anywhere in the world. It will establish an estimation of the baseline carbon storage capabilities in agricultural soils and above ground biomass through a Northern Ireland wide programme of soil testing and light detection and ranging (LiDAR).¹⁸⁰ By 2027, DAERA will have at least 75% of Northern Ireland agricultural fields soil sampled and analysed to form a baseline of key soil nutrients from which further and more refined targets in respect of soil nutrient health can be considered. The cumulative impact on biodiversity of providing recommendations to farmers to change application of nutrient practices will be assessed to ensure protections remain adequate.

While these activities are delivered by farmers and land managers operating in the agriculture sector, the emissions savings associated with these will be recorded in the LULUCF Sector. More information on these two schemes can be found in the Agriculture Section.

¹⁸⁰ LiDAR is aerial imagery scanning which will be used to estimate the current levels of above ground biomass, i.e. trees and hedgerows.

Land Use Proposals

This section outlines proposals that could help to support further emissions reductions and increase carbon sequestration in the LULUCF sector.

PROPOSAL

Develop a future land use policy for Northern Ireland (Unquantified)

LULUCF is an area identified by the CCC that needs to be addressed in Northern Ireland to reduce GHG emissions and improve sequestration rates to meet net zero targets. All other UK administrations have commenced work on a land strategy to tackle these issues.

In November 2021, Sir Peter Kendall published the Independent Strategic Review of the Northern Ireland Agri-Food Sector.²⁰⁰ The report recommended that DAERA should lead on the development of a co-designed, cross-departmental land use strategy for Northern Ireland that complements and informs its Future Agricultural Policy Framework (now called the Sustainable Agriculture Programme), future environmental schemes and the Northern Ireland Peatland, Energy, Green Growth and Circular Economy strategies. The Future Agricultural Policy Decisions document, published in 2022, included a commitment to progress with developing a land use policy. Work is underway to scope the development of a future land use policy for Northern Ireland, which will be underpinned by science and evidence.

PROPOSAL

Consider the feasibility of policy development for bioenergy crops, engineered removals and carbon capture (Unquantified)

In its carbon advice the CCC recommends the development of bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS) to remove CO₂ from the atmosphere while also producing energy. For BECCS to contribute to emissions reduction targets, any BECCS plants would need to be located in Northern Ireland, although the CO₂ could be transported elsewhere for storage. This would require significant development of infrastructure; development of transport of CO₂; storage, possibly outside Northern Ireland, and ensuring a significant biomass supply, including availability of bioenergy crops²⁰¹ such as short rotation coppice, Willow, and Miscanthus.

²⁰⁰ Independent Strategic Review of NI Agri-Food Reports

²⁰¹ The Climate Change Committee recommends that Northern Ireland would need to scale up bioenergy crop planting from zero to 1,700 hectares per year in 2027

However, this is a completely new area for Northern Ireland and currently the policies and infrastructure needed for engineered removals and carbon capture (BECCS) do not exist. In addition, capturing and storing CO₂ is expected to be more expensive for Northern Ireland compared to Great Britain.²⁰² As the implementation and delivery of Northern Ireland's Energy Strategy is currently underway, this presents an opportunity for DAERA and DfE to work together to consider the feasibility of developing policies in relation to bioenergy crops, engineered removals and carbon capture.

Deployment assumptions for delivery of LULUCF policies and proposals

Table 23 presents the level of expected deployment associated with the draft Climate Action Plan policies and proposals in the LULUCF sector to align with the projected emissions over the first carbon budget period.

Table 23: Deployment assumptions by 2027 to achieve the Central Scenario with LULUCF sector Northern Ireland policies

Policy	Mitigation	Between 2023-2027
		Hectares
Deliver the Forests for Our Future programme to create 9,000ha of new woodland by 2030	Ensure that afforestation is sufficiently attractive as a land use to encourage woodland creation at the required scale.	2,684
Deliver the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy	Require the financial investment and support to build capacity in peatland restoration.	9,866

Further detail on the quantification of the LULUCF sector policies is available in Chapter 3.8 of the Quantification Report (Annex A).²⁰³

²⁰² This is because in Great Britain there will be more CO₂ going into each CCS network, leading to lower unit costs due to economies of scale, and the CO₂ transport distance from source to storage location will be shorter. Outlined in the CCC's March 2023 Advice report: the path to a Net Zero Northern Ireland

²⁰³ Chapter 3.8 p.110-118

Emissions Projections

Table 24 presents the projected emissions for the LULUCF sector across the first carbon budgetary period. LULUCF sector emissions are projected to be 0.69 MtCO₂e more than the emissions levels assumed for this sector within the CCC adjusted pathway.

Table 24: LULUCF sector projected emissions in the Central Scenario compared with the adjusted CCC sectoral pathway

 Sector	Projected Emissions (MtCO ₂ e)						Difference in CCC adjusted pathway and Northern Ireland Projections
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total	
LULUCF	2.17	2.18	2.16	2.14	2.11	10.77	0.69 MtCO ₂ e
LULUCF CCC*	2.11	2.06	2.02	1.97	1.91	10.07	

**These figures are based on the CCC advisory pathway but have been adjusted to take account of the 2022 inventory publication.*

Just Transition Considerations

As the LULUCF sector works to reduce emissions and increase sequestration, it must do so in a way that factors in just transition considerations. Any LULUCF policy or proposal must consider the impact of any potential changes on landowners and related industries (e.g. forestry, peatlands, agriculture, bioenergy).

There are almost 1.4 million hectares of land in Northern Ireland and over one million hectares of this land is farmed. Northern Ireland has ambitious targets for afforestation (9,000 hectares of new woodland by 2030) and peatland restoration (150,000 hectares restored by 2050) and if they are to be delivered, consideration will need to be given to how any changes in land use are supported in a just way. Incentivising and encouraging forest expansion will also allow further investment in the social and community use of forests and woodlands for tourism, recreation and a wide range of initiatives to support rural businesses. These will assist sustainable economic development, making them more attractive places in which to live and work.

An independent survey of visits to DAERA forests²⁰⁴ conducted in 2019 highlighted the increasing popularity of woodlands with visits almost doubling from 4.7 million to 9 million between 2014 and 2019. The same survey indicated that the benefits to the wider economy could be projected at £172 million per annum.

In addition to this, forestry's economic contribution from timber supply in 2022 was worth between £60-80 million. Businesses involved in this industry range in scale from family-owned small and medium-sized enterprises UK-wide woodland management companies to world sized sawmills operating internationally. Supplying timber from forests to the wood processing industry, offers the opportunity for increased carbon storage in wood products produced from sustainably managed forests. Harvested wood products provide significant climate change mitigation by storing carbon and through the potential for carbon substitution benefits associated with the use of wood in construction instead of more fossil energy-intensive materials. Manufacturing harvested wood products from locally grown forests for sale and use in an all-Ireland and Great Britain market displaces importation of timber goods from other countries. A sustained expansion in woodland cover consistent with the existing policy to reach 12% by 2050 woodland cover will provide an increasing quantity of timber and timber products for value added processing.

While the proposals presented in this draft Climate Action Plan will require a modest upscaling of current capacity, there is a widely publicised skills shortage in the forestry sector as it looks to gear up in response to challenging planting targets to meet Forest Policy and Climate Change targets. DAERA is participating in work to mitigate this issue, which is being taken forward at a UK level across the sector.

Public understanding of the benefits of peatlands is low and in order to achieve our goal of restoring peatlands to functioning ecosystems, we will need to increase awareness and ensure that we support a range of knowledge exchange activities. DAERA will actively engage in local, national and international networks to share research outcomes in order to maximise impact on peatland conservation.

²⁰⁴ 181352_Northern Ireland Forest Survey Report 2019 FINAL v9 22.10.20.PDF

Restoring peatlands back to functioning ecosystems will make them resilient, while supporting future generations with the ecosystem services that healthy peatlands can provide. There is opportunity for the creation of employment in rural areas to carry out restoration and the potential future employment in peatland maintenance and tourism. There is the potential for families to retain land ownership if children do not wish to farm the land but could benefit from land subsidies to provide the ecosystem services that healthy peatland provide. It is also estimated that for every £1 spent on peatland restoration there is a net benefit of £4 to the economy.²⁰⁵

All potential impacts will require consideration to be given to how changes in land use may impact on rural jobs and also capitalise on opportunities for retraining or upskilling. Whilst farming practices may change, there is clear potential for job creation in rural communities to facilitate restoration and maintenance of peatland, increased afforestation and ecotourism of unspoilt landscapes. As the LULUCF policies and proposals are developed, further work will be required to fully understand the scale of these just transition considerations.

²⁰⁵ The economic costs and benefits of nature-based solutions

6.10 Fisheries

Sector Summary	
Fisheries Sector Emissions Summary	- Fisheries is the smallest emissions sector and includes emissions from activities associated with sea fisheries, inland fisheries and aquaculture. - Fisheries accounts for 0.1% of Northern Ireland GHG emissions (2022). - Fisheries emissions have decreased by 2.5% from 1990 to 2022.
Policy Approach	Reducing emissions in this sector will be through developing initiatives to decarbonise the fishing fleet. The UK Joint Fisheries Statement sets high level policies for how the fisheries policy authorities will work together to develop solutions that minimise the adverse effect of fishing and aquaculture activities on climate change whilst also adapting to climate change. In Northern Ireland the policy is to invest in research and development to create the innovative solutions needed to decarbonise the fishing fleet and minimise adverse effects of fishing on climate change. There is a proposal to prepare for roll-out of electrification and low or zero emission fuels across the fishing fleet.
Emissions Projections	Following the implementation of the policies and proposals set out in this chapter, the fisheries sector is projected to emit 108.41 KtCO₂e over the course of the first carbon budget period. This compares to total assumed emissions of 92.41 KtCO₂e in the sector during the first carbon budget period within the CCC adjusted pathway.

Sector Overview

The fisheries sector includes sea fisheries, inland fisheries and aquaculture. The range of activities undertaken by the fisheries sector is diverse and includes catching fish, operating vessels for catching, fish processing, transporting fish or fish products, loading and unloading fish or fish products and shore side processing of fish. Aquaculture activities include the production and sale of aquaculture organisms. Collectively, fishing and aquaculture activities contribute emissions to several Northern Ireland GHG Inventory sectors.

To avoid double counting, only emissions from sea fishing and aquaculture vessels are included in the fisheries sector within this draft Climate Action Plan.²⁰⁰ It is recognised that the methodology for estimating emissions from fishing vessels needs further development to more accurately reflect actual emissions. Some of the policies and proposals for the fisheries sector will contribute towards reducing emissions in other sectors.

This sector accounts for 0.02 MtCO₂e (0.1% of Northern Ireland GHG emissions in 2022), a 2.5% decrease from 1990 base year (Figure 29).

The fisheries sector is recognised as being a challenging sector for decarbonisation because of the technological developments that are needed and the whole system changes that must be made to use the technologies safely and reliably. Therefore, the focus of this carbon budgetary period is to build the capability for a sharp decrease in emissions post 2027.

²⁰⁰ These emissions are recorded under IPCC code 1A4c(i).

Figure 29: Change in fisheries emissions 1990-2022



Source: Greenhouse Gas Inventories for England, Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland: 1990-2022 / National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory

— Greenhouse gas inventory 1990–2022
- - - Projections 2023–2027

Note: Base year is 1990 for CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O, or 1995 for fluorinated gases

Fishing vessels are part of the wider domestic shipping sector, for which the Department for Transport (UK Government) is responsible. The policies and strategies developed by the Department for Transport extend across the UK and apply to Northern Ireland fishing vessels.

The Fisheries Act 2020²⁰⁷ contains eight objectives that provide the basis against which the fisheries policy authorities (UK Government and devolved governments) will manage their fisheries. This includes a climate change objective which requires that the adverse effect of fish and aquaculture activities on climate change is minimised, and fish and aquaculture activities adapt to climate change.

²⁰⁷ Fisheries Act 2020

DAERA, together with the other UK fisheries policy authorities, was required to produce a Joint Fisheries Statement setting out the policies for achieving or contributing to the achievement of the fisheries objectives described in the Fisheries Act 2020. The Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS) was developed in accordance with the process outlined in the Fisheries Act 2020, and following public consultation and scrutiny by the Northern Ireland Assembly and the other UK legislatures, was published in 2022.

Policies and Proposal

DAERA has engaged with stakeholders and relevant sector-specific advisory groups including The Northern Ireland Fishermen's Federation, Aquaculture Representative Group, Northern Ireland Fisheries Harbour Authority, Lough Neagh Fishermen's Co-operative Society and the Northern Ireland Marine Taskforce in relation to existing policies and in the development of new proposals to reduce emissions in the fisheries sector. DAERA and the Northern Ireland fisheries sector are actively engaging in forums and working groups at UK level that have been established to develop solutions to decarbonise the fishing sector, in particular design of future vessels.

This section lists policies and a proposal required to reduce emissions in the fisheries sector. These policy levers can be attributed to the following categories:

- UK level policies to decarbonise fisheries sector.
- Research and development to decarbonise the fishing fleet.
- Prepare for roll-out of electrification and use of low or zero emission fuels across the fishing fleet.

UK level climate change policies for the fisheries sector

POLICY

UK Joint Fisheries Statement (Unquantified)

The JFS sets out policies to secure successful and sustainable fisheries management within the UK. In balancing the application of the fisheries objectives, the JFS will aim to support a vibrant, profitable and sustainable fishing industry, underpinned by a healthy marine environment. It aims to protect and where necessary recover our fish stocks, reduce the effects of fishing on the environment and support a modern, resilient and environmentally responsible fishing industry that will seek to mitigate its contribution to climate change and adapt where possible.

The UK Joint Fisheries Statement²⁰⁸ recognises that mitigation of climate change needs to be considered across the supply chain and that the national fisheries authorities will need to work towards understanding the different steps of the supply chain's carbon contribution. Identifying feasible technological, behaviour and managerial changes to mitigate and reduce emissions across the fisheries supply chain will be vital to support the transition towards a net zero carbon emissions future and help to achieve the climate change objective.

The fisheries policy authorities will work together to support innovative solutions to realise carbon savings from engine upgrades, fishing gear improvements and green technology, as well as identifying opportunities for vessel emissions reductions through alternative fuels. Support will also be provided to promote innovation to reduce seabed abrasion.

The JFS recognises that nature-based solutions are important for tackling climate change and averting its impacts. This includes recognising the importance of protecting and restoring blue carbon habitats to support resilience to climate change and the potential role of aquaculture sub-sectors such as seaweed and shellfish aquaculture in carbon capture.

Research and development to decarbonise the fishing fleet - Northern Ireland Policy

POLICY

Invest in research and development to decarbonise the fishing fleet and minimise adverse effects of fishing on climate change (Unquantified)

The fisheries sector will be a challenging sector to decarbonise and research and development is required to develop tailored solutions for the Northern Ireland fisheries sector which will enable implementation of the UK level policies such as the Maritime Decarbonisation Strategy.²⁰⁹ DAERA and the Northern Ireland fishing industry have taken initial steps to consider how to prepare for the transition towards net zero. DAERA has provided financial assistance through the Maritime and Fisheries Fund 2022-2023 for a project to design a prototype net zero fishing vessel and is working with the Northern Ireland Fishermen's Federation to identify research priorities and develop proposals for demonstration projects.

²⁰⁸ Joint Fisheries Statement_JFS_2022_Final.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)

²⁰⁹ Maritime Decarbonisation Strategy

The fishing industry, in partnership with the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute and Ulster University is undertaking research to assess the interaction of fishing gear with the seafloor and the ecosystem response to disturbance. This includes potential release of carbon from seabed sediments and the study will improve the evidence base for the design of fisheries management measures, and support development of novel gear designs or fishing practices that reduce seafloor contact. DAERA has also provided grant funding to a number of projects to support the development of nature-based solutions, including blue carbon projects such as native oyster restoration.

In 2023, DAERA consulted on an Outline Strategy for Future Marine and Fisheries Funding 2023-2028⁷¹⁰ which included investment proposals to support climate action. A one-year Marine Environment and Fisheries Fund was opened for 2024-25, and a further one-year scheme will be open for 2025-26. Subject to budget confirmation, a multi-year scheme will be open for 2026/27 and 2027/28. These schemes will provide £8 million funding to support the following actions:

- From 2024, DAERA will invest in research and development to assess the most suitable technology for each of the fishing sub-sectors which will include feasibility studies for each fishing sub-sector and initial small scale demonstration projects.
- From 2024, DAERA will invest in research and development to optimise fishing vessels to reduce power and energy requirements. This will include hull design and gear (nets, trawls etc.) design.
- DAERA will continue to invest in research to assess potential impacts of fishing activities on natural carbon stores (blue carbon habitats) and support the development of novel gear designs that reduce seafloor contact.
- DAERA will continue to invest in research and development to explore the potential for aquaculture (algae and shellfish) to fix carbon dioxide into biomass and improve water quality by removing nutrients (nature-based projects).

Prepare for roll-out of electrification and use of low or zero emission fuels across the fishing fleet

PROPOSAL

Prepare for roll-out of electrification and use of low or zero emission fuels across the fishing fleet and reduce emissions along the fisheries supply chain (Unquantified)

The roll out of electrification and low or zero emission fuels are subject to the successful completion of demonstration projects that can be scaled up. This will require whole system changes to ensure the new technologies can be used safely

⁷¹⁰ Consultation on the Outline Strategy for Future Marine and Fisheries Support 2023 - 2028 | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (daera-ni.gov.uk)

and reliably, and sufficient notice must be given to allow time for investment and construction of vessels, and the necessary shore side infrastructure. The Marine Environment and Fisheries Fund will provide financial assistance to prepare for the transition to decarbonisation. This proposal will provide £3 million funding to support the following actions:

- From 2024, DAERA, in partnership with harbour authorities, will scope the future infrastructure requirements for electrification and alternative fuels.
- From 2024, DAERA will provide financial assistance for fishing harbours to invest in shore power and electric vessel charging infrastructure. This will include maximising opportunities through the UK Shipping Office for Reducing Emissions.
- From 2024, DAERA will identify and prioritise measures to incentivise decarbonisation of the fishing fleet. This will include maximising opportunities through the Maritime Decarbonisation Strategy and the UK's Shipping Office for Reducing Emissions (UK SHORE).
- By 2027, DAERA will develop a full roll-out plan for electrification, low or zero emission fuels and accompanying fleet retrofits or modifications.
- From 2024, DAERA will provide financial assistance to mitigate and reduce emissions along the fisheries supply chain.

Emissions Projections

The fisheries policies and proposals are not expected to result in the reduction of emissions until alternative fuels and vessel designs come into operation. Emissions are expected to hold relatively stable to 2030, before reducing to close to net zero by 2050.

Table 25 presents the projected emissions for the fisheries sector across the first carbon budgetary period. Fisheries sector emissions are projected to be 16.0 KtCO₂e** more than the emissions levels assumed for this sector within the CCC adjusted pathway.

Table 25: Fisheries sector projected emissions in the Central Scenario compared with the adjusted CCC sectoral pathway

 Sector	Projected Emissions (KtCO ₂ e)						Difference in CCC adjusted pathway and Northern Ireland Projections
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total	
Fisheries	21.09	21.41	21.69	21.97	22.26	108.41	
Fisheries CCC*	18.31	18.40	18.50	18.57	18.63	92.41	16.00 KtCO ₂ e

*These figures are based on the CCC advisory pathway but have been adjusted to take account of the 2022 inventory publication.
** Please note, emissions for the fisheries sector are displayed in KtCO₂e.

Further detail on the quantification of the fisheries sector policies is available in Chapter 3.9 of the Quantification Report (Annex A).²¹¹

Just Transition Considerations

The fishing sector is an important part of the economy of rural coastal communities and has a rich cultural heritage from which many of those communities draw a sense of place and identity. The sea fishing vessels supply the seafood processing sector and support 1,550 full-time equivalent jobs (905 in fishing and 645 in processing). Nearly 400 companies contribute to the fishing, seafood and fishing port sectors supporting 1,850 full-time equivalent jobs.²¹²

The Northern Ireland sea fishing fleet is comparatively old and to date has lacked re-investment into more efficient vessels. The fleet has mostly consolidated into the three Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority ports of Ardglass, Kilkeel and Portavogie. Within each port there are businesses that supply goods and services to the fishing fleet, with Kilkeel home to a cluster of engineering businesses providing vessel services and repair.

²¹¹ Chapter 3.9, p.119-121
²¹² Final report from the Fishing and Seafood Development Programme (FSDP) | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (daera-ni.gov.uk)

The existing skippers, crew and associated ancillary businesses have experience and skills in the production, operation, and maintenance of diesel-powered vessels. There will need to be a programme to re-skill the workforce so they can enable and support the transition to electric and alternative fuel vessels. In addition to reducing emissions, investment in new vessels will provide improved working and living conditions for crew. This has the potential to make fishing a more attractive career and address some of the skill shortages that the industry is currently dealing with. Improved welfare conditions on board may attract more women into the fishing sector.

Significant investment will be needed to enable the transition to decarbonisation and DAERA will develop financial assistance and incentive schemes that will provide support to those who most need it.

The fishing industry has taken initial steps to prepare for the transition and it is essential that a collaborative approach is taken to develop and maintain consensus as the plans for roll-out develop. DAERA and the fishing industry will continue to explore options for the development of collaboration mechanism that enable the industry, researchers, government departments, Non-Governmental Organisations and the community to engage and develop innovative solutions.

7. Impact Assessments

7.1 Introduction

Impact assessments are a key component of best practice in policy making and essential tools to employ when considering the individual and cumulative effect of policies and proposals. They allow impacts to be predicted, monitored and, if necessary, avoided or mitigated. To be most effective, the process of impact assessment should commence at the outset of the policy development process.

The Act stipulates that DAERA must commission a financial, social, economic and rural impact assessment on the effects of each Climate Action Plan. In addition, there is a need to consider statutory and non-statutory impact assessments in Northern Ireland including:

- Equality Screening and Equality Impact Assessment;
- Rural Needs Impact Assessment;
- Strategic Environmental Assessment;
- Habitats Regulations Assessment;
- Regulatory Impact Assessment; and
- Child Rights Impact Assessment.

The impact assessments on the draft Climate Action Plan have considered the cumulative effect of individual impact assessments conducted on policies and proposals across all sectors. The level of detail is proportionate to the scale and likely impact of the policy or proposal. Where proposals are not well advanced, some impacts may not yet have been identified.

The policies and proposals included in the draft Climate Action Plan take various forms, including fully developed Northern Ireland and UK-wide policies and proposals. This means that the impacts arising from the draft Climate Action Plan will reflect the status at a particular time and assessing impacts will be an iterative process. The assessments conducted for the draft Climate Action Plan are outlined below and details are included in Annex H.

7.2 Financial, Social and Economic Impact Assessments

The Financial, Social and Economic Impact Assessment (FSEIA) is a specific requirement of the Act.¹⁹⁶ To fulfil this requirement a new financial, social and economic impact was developed, alongside associated guidance. This assessment was subsequently completed for each individual quantified policy and proposal included in the draft Climate Action Plan to capture financial, social and economic impacts and identify mitigating actions.

An overall neutral financial impact from policies and proposals outlined in the draft Climate Action Plan is anticipated. Key negative impacts with minor effects are reported for the transport sector given the level of investment required, whilst in other sectors, minor negative impacts from costs incurred are generally balanced by positive effects in terms of cost savings or wider health or economic benefits.

Overall positive social and economic impacts with minor effects are expected. Positive social impacts are anticipated in terms of household income as a result of reduced costs; health and wellbeing and the living environment from improvements to environmental quality e.g. air quality; in addition to employment and education and skills development from new opportunities. Most policies and proposals are anticipated to bring benefits in terms of economic growth or to the sustainable green economy; competitiveness and jobs/employment with significant benefits expected from certain policies and proposals identified within the waste and agriculture sectors. Any minor negative impacts from upfront investment costs incurred which could have a negative impact on economic growth can be mitigated to an extent e.g. where adverse impacts in one market are balanced by positive impacts in another.

An FSEIA was commissioned on the draft Climate Action Plan as a whole, considering the cumulative and interactive effects of policies and proposals. The Climate Action Plan-level financial, social and economic impact assessment finds that whilst various trade-offs and conflicts have been identified across the financial, social and economic impacts of individual policies and proposals, the expected benefits outweigh these potentially negative impacts, thus the draft Climate Action Plan is considered to have an **overall positive impact from an economic and social standpoint**. From a financial point of view, draft Climate Action Plan policies and proposals are anticipated to yield **long-term financial benefits** for Northern Ireland but pose short-term financial costs. Climate Action Plan-related policies and proposals are expected to create synergies for Northern Ireland's finances in the long term while addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation needs (for example, some Climate Action Plan-related policies and proposals reduce the need for expenditure elsewhere, thereby having positive financial impacts), to enhance ecosystem services, and to increase tax revenues generated via increased economic activity.

¹⁹⁶ Section 30(c) of the Act.

7.3 Equality Impact Assessments

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998²¹⁴ places a statutory requirement on public authorities to consider equality of opportunity and good relations when introducing a new or amended strategy, policy, procedure, or legislation. This is intended to avoid discrimination against Section 75 groups.²¹⁵ It also encourages the promotion of good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Individual policies and proposals included in the draft Climate Action Plan have been subject to a Section 75 Screening Analysis. Following review of the available relevant equality information for each of the policies and proposals included in the draft Climate Action Plan and analysis of the Section 75 categories, it was determined that the information was sufficiently comprehensive to be considered as a combined Equality Screening and Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA). An Equalities and Disability Duties Screening Template has been completed for the draft Climate Action Plan and is included in Annex H.

It is expected that the draft Climate Action Plan will provide an overall benefit to all the population in Northern Ireland including all Section 75 categories. While acknowledging the overarching positive impact it is important to highlight that key inequalities must be addressed in order to achieve an inclusive just transition. The potential opportunities and benefits associated with the sector policies and proposals differ across Section 75 categories for example, agriculture is a largely male dominated sector; therefore, a higher number of males are likely to benefit than females from agricultural transition opportunities such as reskilling. Through a move to cleaner sources of heat, carbon emissions will be reduced along with energy costs, helping to tackle fuel poverty as well as reducing associated health problems.

The Human Rights Act 1998 has been considered in the development of the draft Climate Action Plan and no adverse impact on human rights has been identified. The transition to carbon neutrality can be a socially inclusive one, undertaken in an inclusive way. The draft Climate Action Plan provides opportunities for stakeholders and government to assess what change means in terms of reducing inequalities and positively promoting human rights along with maximising opportunities for vulnerable people, workers and communities. Through inclusive engagement and collaboration, we will make sure we hear the voices of all, those recognised under Section 75 and particularly young people to ensure their voice shapes a sustainable future.

Where a major impact is identified then an EQIA must be conducted. Impacts identified in the Screening Template and comments or views arising from the public consultation will then be taken forward in an EQIA for the final Climate Action Plan.

²¹⁴ Northern Ireland Act 1998 (legislation.gov.uk)

²¹⁵ Section 75 groups: people of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status, sexual orientation, men and women generally, people with and without a disability and people with and without dependents

7.4 Rural Needs Impact Assessments

As outlined above, consideration of rural needs is a requirement of the Act. DAERA also has a duty to implement the statutory requirements of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016,²¹⁶ which introduced a new duty on public authorities in Northern Ireland to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and when designing and delivering public services. A Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) is required to be completed on all policies and proposals included in the draft Climate Action Plan as stipulated in the Act.

An RNIA template was completed for the draft Climate Action Plan, drawing proportionately on information provided by departments responsible for each policy and proposal. An overall positive impact to the general population, including rural populations is expected, with no significant adverse effects anticipated from policies and proposals included in the draft Climate Action Plan.

In addition, an overarching RNIA has been carried out to reflect the effects of the draft Climate Action Plan and considers the interactive and cumulative impacts and potential mitigation measures. The RNIA considered a range of key rural statistics and identified a range of impacts on rural communities associated with the draft Climate Action Plan policies and proposals. Key areas of potential positive impact on rural communities include:

- Opportunities to create new green employment in rural areas, consistent with the just transition principle and PfG commitment to supporting good jobs and regional balance.
- Opportunities for improved provision of more sustainable and efficient travel methods with associated health and environmental benefits.
- Rural areas offer potential solutions to support energy transition through for example, community owned renewable energy projects.
- Opportunities to create improved and more sustainable agriculture and land use practices that helps to sustain a more resilient rural economy.

²¹⁶ Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (legislation.gov.uk)

Key challenges for rural communities could include:

- Adaptation to new agricultural and environmental policies for older farmers may be more challenging without adequate engagement, training and support.
- Efficiencies in farming practices and land use policies within the draft Climate Action Plan could change employment patterns in rural areas.
- Rural areas may experience higher energy costs compared to urban counterparts with more limited access to services generally. Transition may also be slower as they are yet to reach the gas network.
- Access to bus, rail and motorway networks is more limited in rural areas. The policies outlined in draft Climate Action Plan provide an opportunity to improve access to public transport in rural areas.

The RNIA also identified interactive and cumulative impacts across policies and set out how these can either exacerbate or counteract each other, for examples energy transition and low carbon transport, transport electrification and public transport, agriculture emission reduction policies and afforestation. It provided examples of suggested mitigation measures to address impacts in rural areas such as agroforestry, bulk buying schemes and workforce development policies, local engagement, training and financial support schemes.

7.5 Strategic Environmental Assessments

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a system of including environmental considerations into certain plans and programmes at an early stage of the development of the plan or programme.

To ensure full and proper consideration of potential environmental effects associated with the draft Climate Action Plan, an external contractor with specific expertise in SEA was engaged to carry out this process. Overall, the policies and proposals across all sectors of the draft Climate Action Plan are largely considered to lead to minor to significant positive effects across the six SEA themes of Biodiversity, Water and Soil Resources, Historic Environment, Landscape, Air Quality and Noise, and Healthy and Safe Communities. For example, it is considered that the draft Climate Action Plan could:

- Support habitats which facilitate carbon sequestration, and the role of healthy ecosystems in helping communities adapt to the impacts of climate change, including more frequent flooding and extreme heat events.
- Reinforce the regulating and provisioning roles of ecosystems and encourage innovative land use approaches.
- Enhance the fabric and setting of the historic environment, mitigating potential adverse impacts through utilisation of Heritage Impact Assessments.
- Provide opportunities in terms of health, wellbeing, quality of life and prosperity benefits.

Given that Northern Ireland's population is increasing (which is likely to lead to a higher demand for new housing, employment opportunities and infrastructure) and ageing (which will result in an increased demand for accessible accommodation and transport options), it will be important that government policy relating to the landscape character, the protections afforded to designated landscapes and other provisions ensure that appropriate mitigation is put in place to prevent adverse impacts on key landscapes.

The SEA recommended that the delivery of the policies and proposals set out within the draft Climate Action Plan are closely monitored at each stage to ensure that negative or unforeseen effects can be effectively responded to and managed. A proposed SEA monitoring programme was provided in the document.

7.6 Habitats Regulations Assessments

A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is a formalised process of identifying and evaluating impacts of proposed plans or projects on sites designated for protection, conservation or restoration.

An external contractor with specific expertise was engaged to carry out an HRA on the draft Climate Action Plan for all relevant protected sites within Northern Ireland.

The HRA assessed the impact pathways associated with the draft Climate Action Plan and their potential effects on habitats sites within Northern Ireland (or sites outside the Northern Ireland borders that are reasonably linked to the draft Climate Action Plan). It concluded that given its high-level strategic nature, the draft Climate Action Plan would not result in a likely significant effect on any habitats site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

7.7 Regulatory Impact Assessments

A Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) is a key tool in delivering better regulation and is an assessment of the policy options in terms of the costs, benefits and risks of a proposal. The Northern Ireland Better Regulation Strategy requires all departments, arm's length bodies and other public bodies to consider an RIA as part of their policy development process.

A Regulatory Impact Screening carried out for the draft Climate Action Plan determined that the draft plan itself will not make any new regulations and therefore will not impose any costs, savings, additional compliance or administrative burdens on the wider business community. If individual policies and proposals introduce regulatory burdens on the wider business community, then an RIA will be considered on a case-by-case basis and carried out by the NICS department responsible for that policy. For these reasons, a full RIA has been screened out.

7.8 Child Rights Impact Assessments

A Child Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) is a tool for assessing the impact of a policy, law or decision on children and young people and their rights and, if necessary, considering ways to avoid or mitigate any negative impacts.

This is a relatively novel concept of impact assessment therefore most existing policies included in the draft Climate Action Plan will not have considered it during policy development.

The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) has published a CRIA template which has been completed, based on research and engagement with key children's groups for the draft Climate Action Plan. The assessment found that all groups of children, youth and future generations will be affected but not necessarily in the same way. The effects of the draft Climate Action Plan on a child will be influenced by factors such as age, health status, socio-economic status however, all children and young people should benefit from a cleaner, healthier and more sustainable environment whilst providing opportunities for the economy and job creation. Recognising the need for investment to support delivery of policies and proposals, the importance of a just transition was highlighted to mitigate any potential adverse impacts e.g. on child poverty rates or access to youth services.

8. The Natural Environment and Climate Change

8.1 Introduction

It is internationally agreed that climate change and biodiversity loss are interdependent and need to be addressed together. There is a pressing need for Northern Ireland to reduce GHG emissions and meet carbon budgets, however, we also need to address other environmental challenges. Therefore, the Act requires us to set specific targets for soil quality, biodiversity and air quality in this draft Climate Action Plan.²¹⁷ The Act also requires that, where practicable, the policies and proposals should support and use nature-based projects, either individually or as part of wider action.

This chapter sets out targets and examples of nature-based solutions that aim to address the twin crises facing climate and biodiversity by reducing emissions and creating a climate-resilient landscape.

8.2 Soil Quality

Good soil quality means that soil will function as a balanced ecosystem which sustains plant and animal life, whilst supporting provision of our food, filtering water pollutants and providing some mitigation against flooding and drought. Soils also store carbon and play an important role in supporting biodiversity and the wider environment. Soil health is a measurement of how well our soils are performing these functions. Providing farmers with accurate baseline data on the nutrient health status of soils helps them to manage their soils sustainably, to support a range of environmental, economic and societal benefits.

A baseline is required to assess the current status of soil health across Northern Ireland. This is being achieved through the Soil Nutrient Health Scheme (agricultural soils) and the Northern Ireland Countryside Survey (Broad Habitat Types).

Northern Ireland is leading the way in terms of setting a baseline for soil health. The Soil Nutrient Health Scheme (SNHS)²¹⁸ is a unique Northern Ireland wide soil testing programme designed to establish a verifiable baseline database of key soil nutrients by 2027. This baseline allows credible future measurement against the baseline to bring about change. The scheme opened in 2022 and is being made available to all farm businesses on a zonal basis by 2026. It aims to sample and analyse soil from at least 75% of the (approximately) 750,000 farmed fields in Northern Ireland to establish baseline levels of key soil nutrients. These nutrients are phosphorus (P), potassium (K), magnesium (Mg), sulphur (S), calcium (Ca), as well as pH (acidity) and soil organic matter. In addition, the scheme will provide baseline estimates of carbon stocks in farmed soils and above ground biomass such as hedgerows, trees and woody scrub.

²¹⁷ Section 32 of the Act

²¹⁸ Soil Nutrient Health Scheme Overview | Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (afbni.gov.uk)

The proposed **Soil Quality Target** is:

By 2027, to have at least 75% of Northern Ireland agricultural fields soil sampled and analysed to form a baseline of key soil nutrients from which further and more refined targets in respect of soil nutrient health can be considered.²¹⁹

Individualised soil nutrient and carbon information will be provided to farmers at field scale. Farmers will also receive maps, created using Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) technology, which highlight areas where there is a high risk of nutrient run-off to watercourses. DAERA's College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) will provide farmers with training that will help them interpret their data and prepare a nutrient management plan. This will empower farmers to make informed decisions about managing their land to improve future soil health, water quality, biodiversity and carbon sequestration.

To ensure the baseline is verifiable, soil samples are being collected and analysed uniformly and independently by contractors, working under the direction of the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI). These contractors were appointed to carry out this work following a public procurement process.

Measuring these baselines is the beginning of Northern Ireland's journey to understanding the nutrient status of our soils. This will allow us to plan the future steps we need to take to assist farmers and landowners to measure and improve other soil health parameters. Through the Soil Nutrient Health Scheme, we plan to establish if soil organic matter can be a successful target for soil quality and what other aspects of soil health need to be built into target setting in the future. Once we have this baseline, clear targets can be set against which soil health can be enhanced or maintained. We see target setting as an iterative process, built upon over time as our evidence base and understanding develop. We will continue to keep our targets framework under review. A continuous programme of monitoring will be required thereafter, to measure change and track progress towards achieving the targets set.

There are currently no UK-wide set indicators for soil health. We are therefore developing a soil health indicator project, funded by DAERA alongside a Land Use for Net Zero (LUNZ) Hub project across the devolved governments. The project recognises that a 'one size fits all approach' for a soil health indicator would not be suitable as different metrics are required for reporting at national and on-farm level. The project will consider the significant challenges to developing benchmarks for indicators that arise, due to inherent differences in both the baseline and capacity to improve soil indicators between soil types, land uses and climate.

²¹⁹ Soil Nutrient Health Scheme | Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute

8.3 Biodiversity

Biodiversity is the variety of life found on Earth. It includes all species of plants, animals and micro-organisms and the habitats in which they live. It underpins our lives and livelihoods and supports the functioning and resilience of ecosystems. These are the complex interdependent natural systems that support all forms of life within them in every part of our natural world, including woodlands, forests, mountains, agricultural landscapes, wetlands, rivers, lakes and oceans. Our economy, health and wellbeing depend on healthy, resilient ecosystems that provide us with our food, clean water and air. They also provide us with raw materials and energy for our industries and can deliver protection against hazards such as floods. Healthy biodiversity plays a key role in regulating climate, reducing GHG emissions, sequestering carbon, reducing flooding risk and building climate resilience.

Biodiversity loss is accelerated by climate change, and climate change is exacerbated by biodiversity loss. The UN's frameworks on biodiversity²²⁰ and climate change²²¹ are closely aligned and recognise the importance of tackling biodiversity loss and climate change together. Nature can provide solutions to reduce risks such as flooding and increasing temperatures, which means that creating and restoring biodiverse habitats both on land and in our seas can lock up carbon, as well as help us to adapt to climate change. More detail is provided in the Nature-based Solutions chapter.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework under the Convention on Biological Diversity, which was agreed in December 2022, sets targets for nature and reversing biodiversity loss. At a Northern Ireland level, the Environmental Improvement Plan proposes that a "thriving, resilient and connected nature and wildlife" should be a strategic environmental outcome. In parallel, DAERA is developing (on behalf of the Executive) a Nature Recovery Strategy for Northern Ireland which will provide a local framework for halting and reversing the loss of biodiversity. It is imperative that there is clear alignment between the draft Climate Action Plan and the strategies for environmental improvement and nature recovery.

The desired outcome for biodiversity, in the context of climate action, can be described as a climate resilient landscape and seas. Resilience is the capacity of a socio-ecological system to cope with a hazardous event or disturbance, responding in ways that maintain its essential function, identity and structure, while also maintaining capacity for adaptation, learning and transformation.²²²

Landscapes and seas, therefore, could be said to be climate resilient if ecosystems can continue to maintain their ecological function, recover from losses and improve for the future, even with increased climate stress and more frequent climate events.

²²⁰ Convention on Biological Diversity

²²¹ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

²²² IPCC, 2014: Summary for policymakers. In: Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

Measuring this resilience and how it relates to achieving the carbon budget is not quantifiable for most ecosystem types. However, it is widely accepted that higher quality ecosystems are better carbon sinks than degraded ecosystems, and larger well-functioning natural ecosystems mean a larger carbon benefit.

To improve climate resilience, our spaces for nature need to be bigger, better, and more connected. The proposed biodiversity target in this draft Climate Action Plan reflects an interim target to set us on the path to achieving the apex Global Biodiversity Framework target for 2030 which calls for the effective protection and management of the world's terrestrial, inland water and coastal and marine areas by the year 2030. The proposed target is to improve the condition of existing protected sites and to increase the terrestrial, inland water, coastal and marine areas protected for biodiversity (working towards the protection of 30% of terrestrial, inland water, coastal and marine areas by 2030, the "30x30" target in the Global Biodiversity Framework).

The proposed **Biodiversity Target** is:

By 2027, to have 65% of designated features in protected sites to be in or approaching favourable conservation condition, and at least 12% of all land, freshwater and marine environments effectively conserved, managed and well connected for nature.

Favourable conservation condition describes the situation in which a habitat or species is thriving throughout its natural range and is expected to continue to thrive in the future. It includes all occurrences of a habitat or species, both those in the wider environment and those in protected sites.

Actions within the Sector Policies and Proposals Chapter: Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry also provide a significant opportunity to contribute to achieving this target, improving biodiversity across Northern Ireland. These actions relate to improving ecosystem function by restoring peatlands, expanding forests and woodlands, and improved land management and agri-environment schemes, helping to create a stable natural environment that will also benefit our health and wellbeing, whilst having a positive impact on our economy, including through the creation of green jobs.

8.4 Air Quality

Good air quality is vital for human health and the health of our environment. Air quality in Northern Ireland has improved substantially in recent decades. Concentrations of sulphur dioxide (SO₂), a pollutant associated with coal and oil combustion, have declined significantly since the 1990s. An overall decreasing trend in nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) concentrations is also observed at many monitoring sites in Northern Ireland over the past decade. However, new pollutants of concern continue to emerge, such as fine particulate matter. A continued effort to reduce air pollution is therefore important, together with monitoring to assess progress and to provide sound, science-based input into policy development.

Particulate matter (PM) has been identified as the most appropriate pollutant for incorporation into this draft Climate Action Plan. Particulate matter (PM) can be classified as either PM₁₀ (particles less than 10 micrometres in diameter), or PM_{2.5} (particles less than 2.5 micrometres in diameter). Both PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} can act directly as a respiratory irritant in the airways. For PM_{2.5}, because of the small size of these particles, they may cross from the lungs into the bloodstream, where they can have more indirect systemic effects, such as increasing the risk of cardiovascular disease and stroke. The main sources of PM that we find in the air in our towns and cities comes from industrial combustion, domestic combustion and road transport.

The Air Quality Standards Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010²²³ set annual average limit values and targets for PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}. These Regulations²²⁴ explain 'limit values' as a level of the particular pollutant that is not to be exceeded. The Regulations also require that NICS departments ensure that concentrations are maintained below the limit values set out in the Regulations.²²⁵ There is also a reference to sustainable development, which recognises that as society continues to develop, there is a risk to the environment and human health as a result of those activities. The inclusion of limit values provides a 'ceiling' above which ambient concentrations must not exceed. The Air Quality Standards Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 also use 'target values' which require only, that measures which are not disproportionately costly are taken to ensure that concentrations of the pollutants listed in these Regulations²²⁶ are not exceeded.

In recognition of the different approaches taken in developing limit and target values and objectives, and different degree of measures/mitigation required to meet these, we are considering the feasibility of implementing new regulations that would bring into operation tighter annual average limits/targets/objectives for PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀.

²²³ The Air Quality Standards Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010 (legislation.gov.uk)

²²⁴ Section 18(2)

²²⁵ Schedule 2

²²⁶ Schedule 3

The proposed **Air Quality target** is:

In 2025, DAERA will engage with other departments and key delivery organisations, with a view to considering the feasibility of implementing new regulations that would bring into operation tighter annual average limits/targets/objectives for PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀, in line with interim target 4 of the World Health Organisation Air Quality Guidelines 2021 of 10 and 20 ug/m³ respectively.

Collaborative work will be required, along with implementation of measures by departments to ensure that any change in legislation can be delivered. In addition to this, and to improve air quality across Northern Ireland, DAERA is developing Northern Ireland's first Clean Air Strategy. In autumn 2020, a Discussion Document²²⁷ was issued for public consultation. A synopsis of the responses was published in June 2022 along with the Discussion Document. An inter-departmental working group has been established to further develop proposals and identify policies for cross-departmental consideration and inclusion within the final strategy.

If brought in, it is envisaged that these tighter annual average limits/targets/objectives for PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ would be applied as a target in the next Climate Action Plan.

8.5 Nature-based Solutions

The importance of tackling biodiversity loss and climate change together has been described in the Biodiversity section – we must prioritise measures which can deliver for both nature and emissions reduction. These measures are known as Nature-based Solutions (NbS). The International Union for the Conservation of Nature defines NbS²²⁸ as *"actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human wellbeing and biodiversity benefits."*

Nature-based Solutions will create thriving habitats and ecosystems which reduce emissions, whilst also providing a landscape and marine environment which is more resilient to the impacts of climate change. The important role of NbS was recognised in the Glasgow Climate Pact²²⁹ which highlighted the interlinkages between climate change and biodiversity which provide both climate adaptation and mitigation benefits.

²²⁷ A Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland – Public Discussion Document | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

²²⁸ Informing the global standard for Nature-based Solutions

²²⁹ Report of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement on its second session, held in Glasgow from 31 October to 12 November 2021, Addendum (unfccc.int)

It is a legal requirement of the Act²³⁰ that, where practicable, the policies and proposals within the Climate Action Plan should support and use nature-based projects, whether alone or as part of other types of action. To support departments in enhancing their understanding of NbS to reduce emissions, DAERA co-hosted a workshop with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) in September 2023. This workshop was attended by representatives from across departments and examined themes such as peatland and tree planting, blue carbon, urban green infrastructure, greenway development and the economics of NbS.

NICS departments have been working collaboratively with academics and stakeholders to identify how nature-based projects can be integrated into policy making to fulfil this legal obligation. Examples of how NbS have been incorporated into policies and proposals for emission reductions across a range of sectors are set out below. As departments continue to develop expertise on NbS to address climate change, policies and proposals will be refined and enhanced to maximise benefit to nature and biodiversity.

Examples of Nature-based Solutions

1. Peatland Restoration in Co Antrim

Approximately 12% of Northern Ireland is covered by peat bogs,²³¹ however, much of this is in a degraded state. Therefore, it provides few of the ecosystem services that it should normally support, including carbon sequestration. Due to the state of degradation, peatlands in Northern Ireland are now emitting carbon and are one of the largest contributors to our GHG emissions profile. However, restoring peatlands exemplifies a Nature-based Solution that will have a substantial impact on combatting climate change. One such project can be seen on the Garron Plateau in Co Antrim, where Northern Ireland Water has undertaken peatland restoration. Since 2013, it has restored 1,188ha of rare blanket bog.²³² This has improved habitat for wildlife, reduced carbon emissions and provided better quality raw water for treatment, including regulating water levels in drought periods. Importantly, it is now actively sequestering c.1992 tonnes of carbon per year.

2. Agri-environment Schemes

The Environmental Farming Scheme is the existing voluntary Agri-Environment Scheme for farmers and landowners offering support for a range of environmental actions that mainly aim to enhance biodiversity, improve water quality and mitigate climate change. A number of measures include tree planting which contributes to carbon sequestration.

²³⁰ Section 34 of the Act

²³¹ Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy 2022-2040

²³² NI Water - Climate Change - Peatland Restoration

The scheme commenced in 2017 and during the lifetime of the scheme, 401 kilometres of tree boundaries have been enhanced, 591 kilometres of new hedgerows have been planted and 28 kilometres of riparian buffers have been created and planted with trees. In addition, 37.96 hectares of agroforestry, 174.1 hectares of native woodland under five hectares and 24.4 hectares of traditional orchards have been created. It is estimated that 466,303 trees have been planted across all wider level agreements and 89,456 trees planted across all higher-level agreements. Over 100 years these trees could sequester 127,174 tonnes and 24,397 tonnes of carbon respectively.

The Farming with Nature Package, being developed as part of the Sustainable Agriculture Programme, will focus on actions to reverse the trends in nature decline by creating and restoring habitats and improving biodiversity in line with the goals and targets of the Northern Ireland Nature Recovery (Biodiversity) and Peatland Strategies and the UN post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework²³³ agreed by the Convention on Biological Diversity. Eligible farmers or land managers will receive payments as part of this voluntary scheme, to manage land to achieve environmental outcomes. This includes carbon sequestration actions such as hedge and tree planting in addition to various other actions supporting biodiversity.

3. Nature in the Prison Estate

At HMP Magilligan in Limavady, nature and carbon sequestration are being incorporated within the lands surrounding the prison. Approximately 40,000 trees are in various stages of growth from seedlings to two years. Varieties include oak, alder, Scots pine, chestnut and beech. In autumn 2022, 27,000 seedlings were collected from forests across Northern Ireland. All seeds planted are from indigenous species of trees and certified by DAERA. In 2022, 7,000 trees were placed in the Magilligan locality, including at a local river to support climate adaptation by preventing erosion from a riverbank. This initiative is scheduled to continue with prisoners collecting seeds from the local forests to replant and help Northern Ireland sequester more carbon.

4. Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) Supporting Nature-based Solutions

The latest NIHE Sustainable Development Strategy²³⁴ makes an explicit commitment to develop a bespoke Nature Positive Strategy to create more nature-positive communities. NIHE intends to promote rewilding on the NIHE estate to enhance habitat provision, subject to community education and consultation and will also deliver a programme of tree planting. The NIHE will maintain their amenity gardens, lawns and grounds in ways that promote biodiversity and minimise environmental impact, for example by maintaining black top hard surface areas by non-chemical means.

²³³ First draft of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework (cbd.int)

²³⁴ Corporate Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan (2022-2027) (nihe.gov.uk)

5. **Protecting Nature in Road maintenance**

In 2022, DfI undertook a review of its policy on grass cutting and verge management, placing a greater emphasis on environmental protection and biodiversity enhancement. The revised policy was adopted and requires less grass cutting where safe to do so and delivers increased environmental value of road verges through promoting rewilding, therefore optimising the available biodiversity resource. In addition, the revised policy endeavours to further increase the number of 'Don't Mow Let it Grow' sites and biodiversity enhancement projects on the Northern Ireland road network. The policy will also promote pollinator friendly management of our soft estate. DfI also plans to identify further areas of land on the network for the creation of wildflower meadows or tree planting with the aim of improving biodiversity.

6. **Nature in the Health Estate**

The Department of Health and its arm's length bodies (ALBs) are to consider opportunities for biodiversity enhancement within the health estate. Promoting biodiversity action for health estates should recognise the variety in both the landscapes and size of the properties that make up the estates. Guidance principles and examples to inform action and best practice through a suite of case studies will be explored to promote further action in this area.

7. **Protecting and restoring blue carbon habitats**

Blue carbon is the term used to describe the carbon captured and stored by coastal and marine ecosystems. Blue carbon habitats include saltmarsh, seagrass beds, shellfish beds, kelp and marl beds and such habitats have the potential to be managed to increase their carbon sequestration. Not only do these habitats contribute to climate change mitigation; they offer wider high-value ecosystem services such as protection against coastal erosion and flooding, provide habitats to support wider biodiversity and nursery grounds for commercially important fish species. They also provide wider societal benefits, including opportunities for recreation, improved health and improved water quality. DAERA is working with stakeholders to co-design a blue carbon action plan for the protection and restoration of blue carbon habitats in Northern Ireland.



SECTION THREE

Climate Action Plan Delivery

3

9. Governance for Delivery

9.1 Introduction

The objective of this Climate Action Plan is to reduce our emissions in Northern Ireland by 2027 to set us on the pathway to net zero. Identifying policies and proposals is only part of the task. We will only meet our carbon budget if we can successfully deliver the policies and proposals we have identified. Achieving this will require ongoing commitment and prioritisation of this work, shared ownership and cross-departmental working, and appropriate levels of oversight and scrutiny to keep us on track. Managing this implementation process will mean establishing appropriate governance structures within government, creating new statutory oversight bodies and working in partnership with existing independent oversight bodies. We are committed to working collaboratively with, and learning from, others as we progress through this important journey.

9.2 Climate Action Governance in Government

Delivering the policies and developing the proposals identified at the pace and scale required to meet the 2023-2027 carbon budget will be challenging. It will require effective cross-government ownership and collaboration and a willingness to make decisions which ensure sufficient capacity to deliver commitments. Fit for purpose governance structures to support this work will be essential.

A Climate Action Plan Delivery Programme Board will be established to direct the delivery of policies and proposals included in the Climate Action Plan. The membership will comprise sector and departmental leads from relevant departments. The Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) will be the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) Director of Climate Action and will ensure that the Board fulfils its responsibilities, including cross-government collaboration, ownership and good governance; considering monitoring and reporting information; resolving issues; and recommending corrective action to keep progress on track. The cross-departmental Evidence and Analysis Group will continue to support the provision of robust evidence, analyses and advice to inform the implementation of Northern Ireland's first Climate Action Plan.

The Green Growth and Climate Change Strategic Oversight Group will coordinate, direct and oversee progress on implementation of the Climate Action Plan. The Group is comprised of Deputy Secretaries from all departments. Chaired by the DAERA Permanent Secretary, it will provide direction and leadership and ensure strategic alignment of work. Suitable governance arrangements are being established within departments to support the delivery of respective departmental responsibilities.

The Green Growth and Climate Change Strategic Oversight Group may escalate significant delivery challenges, risks and issues to the Permanent Secretaries¹³⁸ for consideration and resolution.

¹³⁸ Permanent Secretaries Stocktake | The Executive Office

Ownership of the Climate Action Plan will be at Northern Ireland Executive level given its cross-cutting nature, significance in terms of public service delivery, budget and far-reaching impact on society.

In addition, a series of sector-specific and thematic groups may be established, to focus on delivery of cross-cutting actions.

As DAERA is the lead department on climate change, the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (AERA Committee) will hold the DAERA Minister to account for delivery of DAERA's responsibilities in respect of the Climate Action Plan, in addition to the delivery of DAERA sector policies and proposals. Other relevant departmental committees will hold relevant Ministers to account in respect of the delivery of sector policies and proposals and departmental input.

The NICS Chief Scientific and Technology Adviser (CSTA) complements the DAERA and Department of Health (DoH) Chief Scientific Advisers in providing additional science and technology capability to the wider NICS. The CSTA enhances the support for Climate Action Plan delivery and assists in building further skills and capacity in areas such as behaviour change, analytics and science.

The Climate Action Plan team in DAERA will work closely with departments to facilitate collaborative working and knowledge sharing; to monitor implementation of policies and proposals; and to report on progress to the Green Growth and Climate Change Programme Board, in line with agreed reporting requirements and frequencies.

Figure 30: Climate Action Plan delivery governance



9.3 Northern Ireland Climate Commissioner

The Act²³⁹ has placed a statutory duty on The Executive Office (TEO) to establish the office of a 'Northern Ireland Climate Commissioner' under new legislation. The primary purpose of the Commissioner is to oversee and report on the operations of the Act. No further detail is given on how these functions should be undertaken or what powers the Commissioner will require to discharge their functions effectively. Instead, the Act notes that detail on how oversight and reporting functions of the Commissioner should be carried out may be included within the legislation. Work on this new policy requirement is at an advanced stage.

The Act states that the first draft of the new legislation, or regulations, must be laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly within two years of the date when the legislation came into effect. In practice, this meant that the first draft of the regulations should have been laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly by 6 June 2024.

As has been noted elsewhere within this Climate Action Plan, work on the requirements regarding the Commissioner commenced during a period of political uncertainty which had implications on the ability to make decisions on this new policy responsibility. Whilst significant progress was made, our ability to meet the timeframes set by the Act has been impacted. As required by the legislation, the regulations to establish the office of the Northern Ireland Climate Commissioner required approval by the Assembly before they could be made. Those regulations were laid in the Northern Ireland Assembly in January 2025 and debated and approved by the Assembly on 8 April 2025.

Through development work, a number of key themes for the Commissioner emerged which an incoming Commissioner will need to be mindful of, as their Office is established and embedded over coming years.

To maximise effectiveness and efficiency, there is also a need to ensure collaboration and mutually beneficial relationships and to avoid duplication with other statutory bodies which exist to oversee the delivery of climate action, notably the Climate Change Committee (CCC) and the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP). Establishing formal links between bodies to clarify roles and responsibilities will help to reduce unintended consequences in terms of ensuring value for money, clarity of policy and public messaging.

9.4 Just Transition Commission

The Act²⁴⁰ also requires that DAERA establishes a Just Transition Commission for Northern Ireland. This Commission will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the just transition elements of the Act and for providing advice to NICS departments on how to ensure that proposals, policies, strategies and plans comply with the just transition principle.

²³⁹ Section 50 of the Act

²⁴⁰ Section 37 of the Act

The public and other stakeholders need to have confidence that the Commission and its work are independent of government and the Commission is free to scrutinise policies and hold departments to account. The oversight function performed by the Commission and the advice it provides will help departments to realise the objectives the just transition principle aims to achieve. These objectives include supporting persons who are most affected by climate change, supporting jobs and the growth of jobs that are climate resilient and environmentally and socially sustainable, and reducing (with a view to eliminating) poverty, inequality and social deprivation.

The Commission will be set up as an independent body with a chairperson and members who will be recruited in accordance with the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (CPANI) Code of Practice.²³⁸ A consultation on the draft regulations that will establish the Commission was held between 11 November 2024 and 20 January 2025. The consultation sought views on a number of aspects including the type of public body the Commission should be and if any sectors should be represented on the Commission in addition to those mandated by the Act,²³⁹ for example, energy and transport sectors.

Work has already commenced to ensure there is secretariat support in place to help the Commission deliver on its agreed functions once established. When the regulations come into operation, work will continue to recruit members to the Commission who can provide expert advice and support to departments. Ensuring a just and fair transition, through maximising the social and economic benefits for wider society and expanding the opportunities of taking action on the climate and decarbonisation, is essential to ensure the transition is successful for all of our communities and future generations; the Just Transition Commission will play an integral role.

Once established, the Commission may choose to conduct an oversight review of the first Climate Action Plan and provide advice to departments on the delivery of policies and proposals within the plan. The Commission will be in a position to work with departments to inform the development of subsequent Climate Action Plans.

The Commission will have the autonomy to consider how it carries out its functions. However, it is envisaged it will not work in isolation and will interact with stakeholders, academics, businesses and the community and voluntary sector, as well as other public bodies and organisations, such as the Northern Ireland Climate Commissioner, the Office for Environmental Protection, the Climate Change Committee and Just Transition Commissions in other jurisdictions.

²³⁸ Code of Practice for Ministerial Public Appointments in Northern Ireland | The Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (publicappointmentsni.org)

²³⁹ Section 37(4) identifies representatives from agriculture and fisheries sectors; academia; trade unions; youth groups; civic society; and environmental groups

9.5 Climate Change Committee

The CCC²⁴⁰ is the UK's independent adviser on climate change and is responsible for providing expertise and guidance to the UK and devolved governments on emissions targets. The CCC plays a key role in overseeing how Northern Ireland goes about reducing emissions in line with targets set in legislation.

DAERA is required to seek the advice of the CCC when setting carbon budgets (or setting or amending emissions reduction targets) and to take this advice into account. The CCC has a number of additional roles:

- Provide advice, analysis, information and other assistance, when requested, on targets or budgets adopted;
- Provide advice, analysis, information and other assistance, when requested, on climate change generally;
- Provide advice about any proposals put forward by DAERA to make regulations as provided for in the Act;²⁴¹
- Report on progress on meeting the carbon budgets and interim emissions targets;
- Report on Northern Ireland's climate change adaptation programmes.

9.6 Office for Environmental Protection

The Environment Act 2021²⁴² established a new independent environmental oversight body, the OEP, to hold public authorities to account for their implementation of environmental law. It operates as an independent environmental oversight body across England and Northern Ireland, a role previously undertaken by the European Commission.

The OEP has four main functions in Northern Ireland:

- Scrutinising environmental improvement plans;
- Scrutinising Northern Ireland environmental law and its implementation;
- Advising on proposed changes to Northern Ireland environmental law and other matters relating to the natural environment; and
- Investigating and enforcing serious breaches of relevant environmental law by public authorities.

The OEP will exercise its functions, overseeing implementation of the Climate Action Plan insofar as it impacts the natural environment. The Northern Ireland Climate Commissioner will have primary oversight and reporting responsibilities for the Act and, as the powers of the Commissioner are developed, care will be taken to avoid an overlap with the OEP's remit. The OEP's strategy²⁴³ sets out how it intends to avoid

²⁴⁰ CCC was established under Section 32 of the Climate Change Act 2006

²⁴¹ Sections 56, 57 and 58 of the Act

²⁴² Environment Act 2021 (legislation.gov.uk)

any overlap between its functions and those of the CCC and, while it is under no statutory obligation to do so (as the Environment Act predates the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022), the OEP strategy states, *"We will work to establish similar relationships with the Northern Ireland Climate Commissioner when appointed under the terms of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022"*. The strategy also includes an enforcement policy that sets out how the OEP intends to exercise its enforcement functions in a way that respects the integrity of other statutory regimes that may be relevant.

There is a statutory Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the OEP and CCC, and voluntary MOUs between the OEP and other UK governance bodies. It will be for the OEP and the Commissioner, as independent bodies, to determine what formal arrangements, if any, are required in respect of the Climate Action Plan.

CHAPTER 9: SUMMARY OF GOVERNANCE FOR DELIVERY ACTIONS

Working with relevant bodies, we will continue to develop a fit for purpose governance arrangement to oversee the delivery of the Climate Action Plan. Key actions include:

1. During 2025, DAERA, working in partnership with other departments, will establish fit for purpose cross-departmental governance and support structures to facilitate delivery of our carbon budget and emissions targets;
2. During 2025, DAERA will make regulations to establish the Just Transition Commission, following consultation with the public;
3. During the carbon budget period, DAERA will continue to engage with the CCC to obtain their expert independent advice as we seek to progress the delivery of policies and proposals set out in this plan and work towards delivery of our targets;
4. During the carbon budget period, DAERA will work with the OEP to ensure clearly defined roles of the oversight bodies and a coherent approach to managing the climate and the environment.

10. Monitoring and Reporting

10.1 Introduction

The Act sets ambitious targets to reduce emissions. Monitoring and reporting on the implementation of policies and proposals and the resulting impact on emissions reduction will be an essential element of tracking progress towards achieving the 2023-2027 carbon budget and meeting interim targets set for 2030 and 2040. We will ensure a robust monitoring framework is in place to keep us on our net zero pathway. This framework will adapt to an evolving policy context, new data and emerging solutions. We will ensure a transparent approach to reporting that provides meaningful information and encourages participation from partners and stakeholders seeking to support our journey towards decarbonisation.

10.2 Statutory Monitoring and Reporting Requirements

Table 26 sets out specific statutory monitoring and reporting activities²⁴⁴ to chart progress and achievements in meeting the first carbon budget and interim emissions targets.

Table 26: Specific statutory monitoring and reporting activities

Report	Deadline	Requirements
Interim progress report on carbon budget period	End of 2025	• DAERA must publish a report to set out progress made in implementing policies and proposals during the carbon budget period. • Departments must provide information on progress to inform the report. • The report must be laid before the Assembly.

²⁴⁴ Sections 38-41 of the Act

Report	Deadline	Requirements
Final statement for carbon budget period	End of 2029	- DAERA must report on: - total GHG emissions; - total amounts of removals; - total amount of net emissions (emissions - removals); - information on any carbon credits/debits or carbon amounts carried back or forward; - whether the carbon budget for the period has been achieved and explain why; and - progress on the implementation and impact of each sector's policies and proposals on the carbon budget based on information provided by departments (by September 2029). - The statement must be laid before the Assembly.
	March 2030	- In the event that a carbon budget is not met, policies and proposals from departments to compensate for excess emissions must be set out. - These must be laid before the Assembly.
Statements on compliance with emission targets	End of 2032, 2042 and 2052	- DAERA must produce final statements on the 2030, 2040 and 2050 interim emission targets. This will be informed by the GHG Inventory for these periods. - The content is the same as that required for final carbon budget statements. - The statements must be laid before the Assembly.

Climate Change Committee Reports

The CCC will also provide DAERA with its views on progress towards meeting the emissions targets and carbon budgets and any further measures that should be taken.²⁴⁵ These reports will also be laid before the Assembly and DAERA must respond to points made within six months, with assistance from all departments.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ Sections 43 of the Act

²⁴⁶ Sections 47 of the Act

10.3 Monitoring and Reporting Framework

To allow effective monitoring of the implementation of policies and proposals and their impact, a monitoring and reporting framework, informed by best practice, is being developed to:

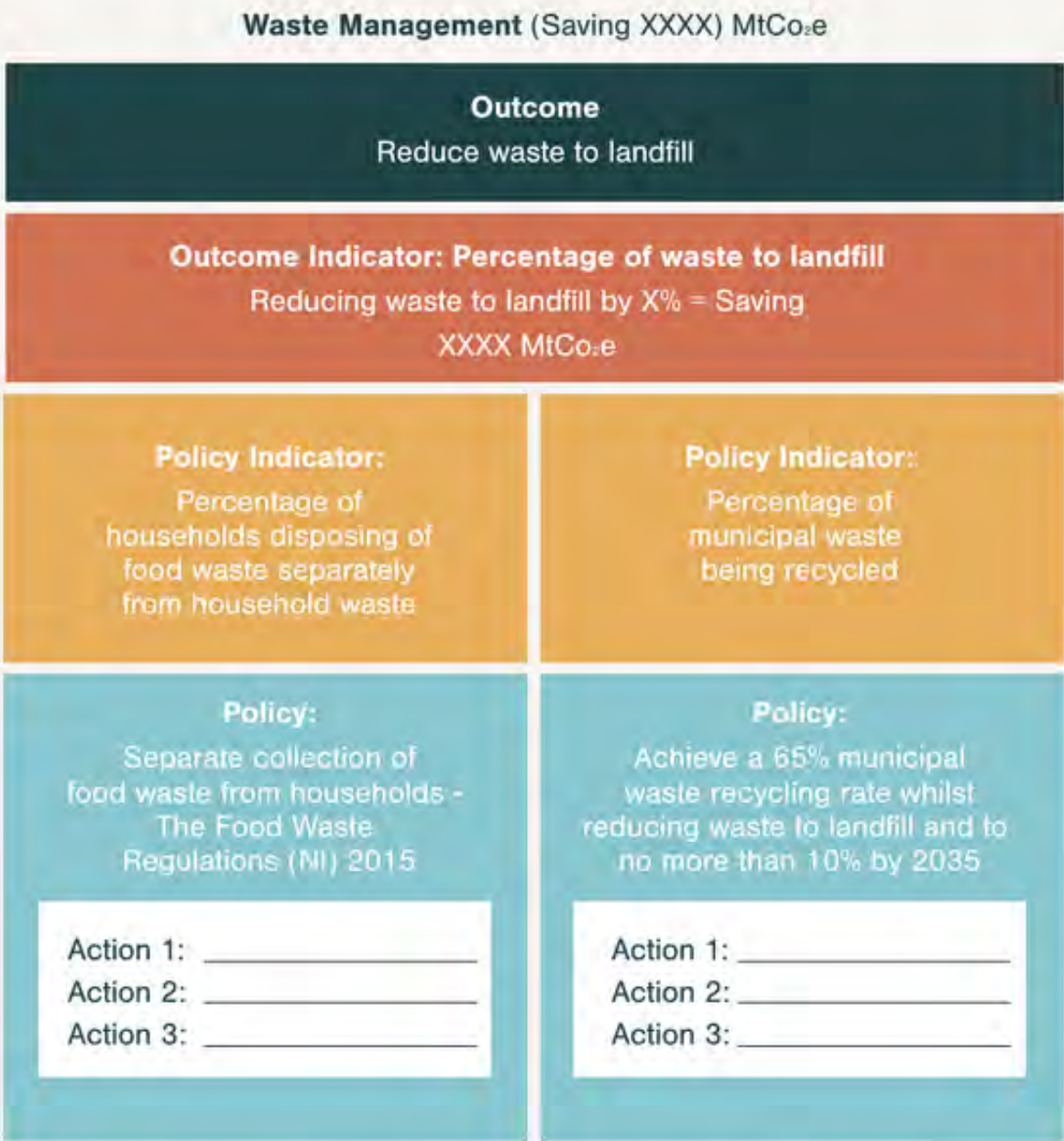
- satisfy the requirements of the Act;
- ensure rigor and effectiveness;
- facilitate accountability and transparency;
- promote improvements and corrective action where required; and
- be accessible and of value to stakeholders who use it.

The CCC has highlighted the need to ensure clear links between progress in implementing sector policies and emissions reductions achieved. Therefore, we propose to adopt four reporting levels for each sector, as outlined below.

- **Sector Emissions Savings:** at the highest level, total emissions savings will be reported for the sector;
- **Outcome Indicators:** will measure the progress which is being made towards achieving that outcome. Where possible, an estimated MtCO₂e saving will be provided alongside each outcome indicator e.g. 'Reducing waste to landfill by x% will reduce emissions by x.xx MtCO₂e';
- **Policy Indicators:** outcomes would be achieved through delivery of associated policies and proposals. Policy indicators will measure the impact of these policies e.g. percentage of households where food waste is collected separately from household waste.
- **Actions:** to measure progress on implementing the activities that are required to achieve delivery of policies and proposals.

Figure 31 illustrates the proposed monitoring and reporting framework, showing the linkages between reporting levels. This approach links the impact of policies and proposals to emissions reduction targets for each sector. Progress on implementing actions – even those which do not have a direct, measurable impact on emissions reductions – will be monitored and reported on to provide increased transparency and accountability. This approach enables us to monitor 'early indicators of change' to ensure we are on track.

Figure 31: Proposed monitoring and reporting framework



N.B. Whilst the policies included in this illustrative example are taken from policies included within the waste management chapter, the 'Outcome', 'Outcome Indicator' and 'Policy Indicator' have been included for illustrative purposes in this example to demonstrate what monitoring and reporting processes could look like. Departments within the Northern Ireland Civil Service are currently working to develop bespoke 'Outcomes', 'Outcome Indicators' and 'Policy Indicators' for the sectors they are responsible for; these will be used and included in future Climate Action Plan monitoring reports.

10.4 Monitoring and Reporting Procedure

Through further development of the monitoring and reporting framework, departments will identify early indicators of progress that will help to signal whether the rate of change across policies is on track so that timely corrective action can be taken. This will be particularly important for policies where emissions savings will not be evident for many years. In addition, we will consider indicators to track progress made in essential enabling themes such as skills, planning, innovation, investment and governance.

Interim and final progress reports will be produced based on up-to-date information provided by all departments. Reports will be scrutinised by the Climate Action Plan Delivery Programme Board. This will ensure that cross-cutting issues are considered when determining additional or corrective action needed. Once agreed by the Board, reports will be sent to the DAERA Minister and, subsequently, presented to the Northern Ireland Executive before being laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly and shared with relevant bodies including the Northern Ireland Climate Commissioner and the Just Transition Commission.

CHAPTER 10: SUMMARY OF MONITORING AND REPORTING ACTIONS

DAERA will continue to develop a fit for purpose monitoring system to track progress in the implementation of policies as set out in this draft Climate Action Plan.

Key actions include:

1. By early 2025, finalise a climate action reporting cycle which details information and data required, including outcomes, indicators and actions for each sector;
2. During the carbon budget period, identify areas where data is missing or limited and seek to fill those gaps, taking account of emerging data sources;
3. By June 2025, develop a platform to track and collate data received and present progress on policies; and
4. During the carbon budget period, engage with stakeholders to ensure that Climate Action Plan progress reports and statements are communicated and presented in a clear and meaningful way.

11. Public Sector Leading by Example

11.1 Introduction

The public sector is critical to the successful delivery of this draft Climate Action Plan – influencing and enabling positive behaviours, driving change and acting as a leader on climate action and low carbon innovation. We are committed to forging a net zero pathway by delivering vital public services in a way that reduces emissions, reduces waste and uses scarce resources more sustainably. We will pursue a net zero approach across all sectors of our economy and society, leading by example by taking actions across our estate, fleets, procurement processes, energy use and our approach to service delivery. We recognise that transformation of public services will help us to maximise the opportunities these changes bring. During the carbon budget period, we will continue to build on the actions outlined in this chapter to ensure that we deliver on our climate duty.

Each Northern Ireland department is required to provide policies and proposals to comply with its statutory obligations.²⁴⁷ The Sector Policies and Proposals chapter outlines policies and proposals to reduce emissions across sectors. In some cases, however, departments which do not lead sector input did not identify standalone policies or proposals to reduce GHG emissions for inclusion. Instead, these departments identified policies and/or actions that contribute to those wider sector policies and proposals that have been identified by sector lead departments.

11.2 Government Estate

Whilst the operation of the government estate contributes a relatively low proportion of overall emissions in Northern Ireland,²⁴⁸ by adopting exemplar standards for buildings, we can lead by example to help establish and grow the skills and supply chains locally that will be required to minimise and mitigate the impacts of climate change in Northern Ireland.

The Department of Finance (DoF) is responsible for the management and strategic planning of the NICS Office Estate which includes ensuring that the estate meets the changing needs of the NICS and meets its energy efficiency targets. An ambitious estate review is ongoing to achieve a 40% reduction of the in-scope office estate, reduce its carbon footprint and support the journey towards decarbonisation. An NICS Office Estate strategy²⁴⁹ was published which commits to a review of the carbon standards of all buildings and aims to deliver a greener estate.

DoF is continuing to develop the Government Land and Property Register (GLPR). This register consolidates data sources on land and property owned by departments and arm's length bodies (ALBs). Building on this work, government departments have funded the establishment, effective from April 2025, of a Strategic Assets Management Unit

²⁴⁷ Section 29 of the Act

²⁴⁸ The 'Buildings' sector covers residential and public buildings and accounts for 13% of Northern Ireland's GHG emissions (2022). Further detail is provided in the Public Buildings chapter including further information on the policies and proposals planned to reduce emissions.

²⁴⁹ NICS Estate Strategy | Department of Finance

(SAMU) within Land and Property Services. Providing metrics and reports, the SAMU will assist them with strategic decision making on how best to utilise their land and property assets to reduce carbon emissions.

The Hybrid Working Policy, developed as a result of new ways of working in the NICS, was launched in December 2021 and implemented in June 2022. The policy promotes better work-life balance for employees, increased productivity and delivery of environmental benefits. The policy is currently being reviewed. Six Connect 2 hubs were opened in August 2022, allowing NICS staff to work remotely, whilst connecting people, technology and the office and offering an occasional alternative to working from home or in their designated workplace. The locations of the hubs were selected to coincide with key commuter routes.

Wider Public Estate

Elsewhere, the majority of departments and a number of their ALBs have already begun to implement climate and sustainability action plans. For example:

- DAERA's plan identifies over 40 actions to be delivered by 2027 across seven themes: people, carbon, energy, water, buildings, resources and biodiversity.
- The Department of Justice (DoJ) is working alongside its ALBs (including PSNI, the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service and Northern Ireland Prison Service) to implement a sustainability strategy and plans to transform its estate and contribute to emissions reductions through reducing energy consumption, transitioning to renewables, using smart technology and reducing travel, waste and water consumption.
- DoH has a Capital Development Policy to achieve BREEAM 'excellent' for all new schemes above a certain capital limit, subject to affordability, and to achieve BREEAM 'very good' for all refurbishment projects. DoH is developing an approach to enable the implementation of the NHS Net Zero Building Standard to align with other regions of the UK and drive further reductions in both the embodied and operational carbon of buildings.

Innovation is an important aspect of future climate action. Collaboration between the public sector and innovative businesses has been used to identify new solutions and technologies. For example, in March 2023, the Education Authority (EA) successfully completed a Small Business Research Initiative (SBRI)²⁵⁰ Phase 1 proof of concept project which assessed the technical feasibility of deploying immersive, technology solutions to capture, baseline, track and report on carbon emissions across the EA's estate.²⁵¹ Phase 2 of the project concluded in March 2024, showing that the proof of concepts are scalable. Phase 2 was extended for a further seven months from September 2024 to March 2025 enabling a carbon reporting tool that can capture and record all carbon emissions across the education estate to be developed by the end of the project.

²⁵⁰ SBRI - Capturing our Carbon Capital | Education Authority Northern Ireland

²⁵¹ EA's estate comprises more than 200 premises, 2,000 schools, nearly 600 school meals' kitchens and a fleet of more than 1000 vehicles

11.3 Government Fleet

The Glasgow Declaration on Zero Emission Cars and Vans²⁵², to which the Northern Ireland Executive is a signatory, calls for “cities, states and regional governments to work towards converting owned or leased car and van fleets to zero emission vehicles by 2035 at the latest”. The Department for Infrastructure (DfI) is coordinating implementation of this commitment in respect of the government fleet.

DfI and public sector partners are working towards increasing the number of net zero public sector cars and vans. Through the NICS Fleet Working Group chaired by DfI, a framework for vehicle decarbonisation is being developed and will be agreed with relevant stakeholders across NICS by June 2025. This will provide a roadmap for a targeted approach to decarbonisation based on individual departmental priorities for fleet replacement and the use of alternative fuels.

Departments and their ALBs have already begun to accelerate action on transitioning their fleets. Department of Education (DE), DoH ALBs and DoJ (including PSNI), for example, have sizeable fleets and have already started their transition to low and zero carbon vehicles. The Executive Office (TEO) is supporting modal shift and reduced emissions from transport as part of a travel plan for the Stormont estate.

Translink, our main public transport provider, is leading by example to decarbonise its bus fleet. Since 2019, 63% (880 vehicles) of its 1400 bus fleet have been replaced with low or zero emission alternatives. By the end of 2023, over 2.2 million miles of emissions-free bus travel were completed in Belfast City removing 4,174 tonnes of CO₂ from the atmosphere.²⁵³ In 2023, Translink's entire Foyle Metro fleet in Derry/Londonderry was transitioned from diesel to zero emissions technology, making it one of the first cities in the UK to operate a fully zero emission urban bus service.

In 2025 the Translink fleet will consist of 247 zero emission vehicles which are in operation in Metro, Foyle Metro and Ulsterbus services. Translink's fleet strategy is to continue the introduction of zero emission vehicles as the current diesel vehicles reach the end of their operational life. This means that on average 110 zero emissions vehicles enter service each year. This strategy will enable Translink to deliver on its climate commitments and achieve a fully zero emission fleet by 2040.

Rathlin Island

DfI has been working with the Rathlin community to assist it in achieving its 2030 carbon neutral ambitions. Actions to date include assisting with the decarbonisation of transport provision through a community led electric car and electric bicycle scheme. DfI will continue to work with island residents to produce a climate action plan, and will support, where possible, subsequent actions arising from this plan.

²⁵² COP26 declaration on accelerating the transition to 100% zero emission cars and vans - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

²⁵³ Translink confirms 1.5 million miles (2.4m KM) of emissions-free bus travel last year

11.4 Government Spending and Procurement

Departments are committed to sustainable public procurement and DoF continues to update business case and procurement policy advice, including future-proofing measures, to recognise sustainability and contribute to wider green growth and net zero ambition.

This includes plans to publish updated business case guidance to aid the appraisal of environmental and climate impacts to ensure they are considered throughout the decision-making process. In addition, business cases to replace existing assets should include future-proofing measures that recognise sustainability and contribute to wider green growth and net zero targets.

The Act requires²⁸⁴ that the provision of financial assistance, relating to the promotion of economic development and the provision of infrastructure, goods or services in Northern Ireland, is considered. To satisfy this requirement, subject to Executive agreement, we plan to introduce a Green Growth Test to ensure that climate action, the environment and green jobs are considered in the development of business cases for all programmes and projects for which there are public funding implications. This is currently a commitment in the draft Green Growth Strategy. This test will be applied to activities seeking to utilise central government funding, thus ensuring that the climate responsibilities are taken account of by local government, the private sector and voluntary and third sectors when doing so.

The Green Growth Test will require information relating to the impacts of a programme or project on climate, the environment and green jobs to be recorded and considered. Whilst the test is in the early stages of development, it is our intention that it will assist decision makers to make informed decisions that assess the balance of potential net positive and net negative effects and how they might be mitigated (if negative) or maximised (if positive) and will provide greater transparency and accountability regarding those impacts and how they will be managed. Subject to Executive agreement of the draft Green Growth Strategy, we will develop proposals for consideration by Ministers by the end of 2025.

In September 2022,²⁸⁵ DoF published a construction toolkit to provide advice on the latest best practice techniques for public sector projects.²⁸⁶ It collates practical resources on decarbonisation for those procuring construction and infrastructure projects and programmes and links to an extensive range of guidance on measures to reduce energy usage and improve the environment. In April 2024, DoF reviewed this toolkit and added adaptation questions for commissioners/procurement staff to address. DoF will continue to review and update this toolkit where necessary to support climate change and wider environmental ambitions. In June 2021, DoF published an Executive Procurement Policy on Scoring Social Value²⁸⁷ which mandates the scoring of social value in departments' tenders. This included incorporating environmental considerations to deliver climate commitments and encourage contracts that support the delivery of net zero and environmental targets. A revised PPN 01/21

Social Value in Procurement²⁸⁸ was agreed by the Executive on 5 December 2024 and has been effective since 24 February 2025. The social value themes have been revised to reflect the role public procurement has in delivering climate action. The commitment to embed social value has been strengthened and the revised policy requires departments to develop a social value strategy to align social value objectives to their procurement pipeline and to look for other opportunities to improve economic, social and environmental outcomes. DoF has developed a Social Value Strategy²⁸⁹ to underpin its commitment to reducing carbon emissions through its procurement spend. This strategy sets out the social value goals and ambitions for DoF over the next two years focusing on the department's key responsibilities as owner of the NICS Office Estate and policy lead for finances, procurement and human resources.

Sustainable Medicines Prescribing

DoH is undertaking policy development on 'Valuing Medicines – A Strategy for the Sustainable Use of Medicines in Northern Ireland'. The Valuing Medicines Strategy (VMS) aims to inform improvements in the use of medicines within health and social care (HSC) to ensure they add value to health, are cost effective and sustainable.

A departmental steering group has been established, comprising stakeholders from various sectors involved in the use of medicines, including sustainable healthcare representatives.

One of the group's primary goals is to assess the environmental sustainability of current prescribing practices and medicine use in Northern Ireland and identify areas for improvement. The group is considering several recommendations that could be taken forward to reduce the environmental impacts of pharmaceuticals, including evaluation of anaesthetic gases, promoting the use of low carbon inhalers and other environmentally friendly medications, encouraging medicine waste recycling schemes, and reducing the packaging and waste associated with medicines.

²⁸⁸ Section 33(j) of the Act

²⁸⁹ Sourcing and Construction Toolkits | Department of Finance

²⁹⁰ This is linked to guidance published by Government Commercial Function on Zero Carbon and Sustainability in construction.

²⁹¹ PPN 0121 Scoring Social Value [pdf version 06 Oct 2022].PDF (finance-ni.gov.uk)

²⁹² PPN 01 21 - Social Value in Procurement Word master.pdf

²⁹³ Social Value Strategy 2025-2027

11.5 Energy Use

As the largest aggregated energy consumer in Northern Ireland, the public sector is well placed to demonstrate leadership on transitioning to renewable sources of energy and improving energy efficiency. The Energy Management Strategy for Central Government²³⁰ (EMS), which was published in 2019, aims to accelerate actions to maximise energy efficiency in public assets and improve governance, accountability, strategic management and reporting arrangements. It sets out two key strategic objectives to establish effective energy management processes that unlock value and reduce net energy consumption by 30% by 2030 against a 2016/17 baseline helping to improve energy efficiency, drive downward pressure on costs and improve decarbonisation efforts.

In addition to this work to improve energy efficiency, a number of renewable energy generation projects are being progressed by departments to ensure that public sector land is utilised, where appropriate. For example, DoH, in conjunction with its ALBs, plans to map potential sites and complete feasibility studies for renewable generation on the HSC estate and; the Northern Ireland Fishery Harbour Authority plans to install solar panels on all its fish markets, commencing with Ardglass and Portavogie. DAERA Forest Service will consider the potential to utilise the public forest estate for onshore wind generation. This will progress previous work which identified significant scope to integrate wind turbines within forest areas, particularly in geographic locations where the grid network has potential to accommodate power generation and where power generation is most likely.

GeoEnergy NI Project

In June 2023, the Department for the Economy (DfE) and the Geological Survey of Northern Ireland (GSNI), supported by their specialist contractor, launched the GeoEnergy NI Project, which includes development of two geothermal demonstrator projects on the Stormont estate and CAFRE's Greenmount campus. These projects will assess the potential to use geothermal energy to provide low carbon heating (and cooling) solutions for buildings on the Stormont Estate, the Greenmount campus and wider public and private sector facilities in Antrim.

²³⁰ Energy-Management-Strategy-March-2019.pdf (sibni.org)

Power of Water Project

The processes involved in treating our water and wastewater are energy and carbon intensive. Northern Ireland Water's Power of Water Project report proposes the development of a 75 MW wind farm to generate equivalent to Northern Ireland Water's annual energy use, driving substantial savings and eliminating 60% of Northern Ireland Water's carbon operating emissions. This would also deliver around 10% of the additional renewable generation capacity in the Energy Strategy targets for 2030. Northern Ireland Water is currently developing the outline business case for investment in a large-scale wind farm development to contribute towards decarbonisation and increased cost resilience for the business. The Power of Water project also proposes exploring the potential to utilise a redundant reservoir to create a hydro pump storage scheme to retain energy to generate 300 MW for up to 10 hours on demand and deploy 10 MW of electrolyzers to produce affordable green hydrogen for use in public transport whilst using the lower cost oxygen to help process wastewater.

11.6 Digital Infrastructure

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and digital services are increasingly recognised as an integral part of the solution to meeting emissions reduction targets through, for example, reducing the need to travel and helping to minimise waste.

DoF has several long-term initiatives in place to reduce carbon emissions and waste including the provision of two resilient data centres to host services; this has released expensive office space and moved physical equipment to a more efficient, virtual, shared platform. This has also reduced departmental use of electricity. In addition, a rollout of productivity software, collaboration and cloud-based services has reduced the amount of equipment used in data centres as services are moved to the public cloud. Tools such as Microsoft Teams, combined with increased levels of remote working, are reducing the need for work-related travel and have enabled more collaborative working. This digital transformation agenda enables people to access more services online, minimise the need for face-to-face contact and reduce paper-based transactions.

Several NICS departments have highlighted digital innovation as the way in which they intend to realise both efficiency gains and carbon emission reductions. For example, DoH is supporting its ALBs in using digital infrastructure for alternative health care provision, where appropriate, improving efficiency and wellbeing. The HSC sector is adopting digital tools and virtual appointments where appropriate, helping to enhance care for patients/clients including using Artificial Intelligence (AI). This has the added benefit of enabling more flexible ways of working for NHS staff and building on wider digital transformation projects being implemented across NICS.

Project Stratum

Project Stratum has committed £200 million funding to help deliver substantial enhancements to internet connectivity across Northern Ireland, with a key focus on rural connectivity. Deployment is expected to reach 81,000 properties with the project scheduled to conclude in June 2025. Public sector organisations and their employees have benefited from the expansions of full fibre internet access which supports the ability of individuals to work remotely, and the ambition of the NICS Hybrid Working Policy, reducing journeys to the workplace which in turn supports the proposal to right size the government estate.

11.7 Climate Change Skills and Capacity

Ensuring that NICS staff have the necessary skills and capabilities is essential to satisfy the statutory duty that is placed on all departments i.e. to execute functions in a way that will deliver the targets set out in the Act. Reflecting a commitment to tackling climate change, climate units or climate coordinators have been established within departments to support embedding climate considerations across business areas, strengthen cross-departmental and wider engagement on climate issues and build internal expertise.

Alongside the development of the draft Climate Action Plan, DAERA and DoF are working collaboratively with all departments to review our capacity and capability to deliver our obligations under the Act and the commitments in the draft Green Growth Strategy. This includes using a strategic workforce planning approach to identify expertise required, including within our science and finance teams, economists, behavioural scientists and statisticians to ensure that decisions are underpinned by advice and evidence that reflects up-to-date knowledge of climate and environment methodologies combined with up-to-date knowledge of behaviour change intervention delivery.

In April 2024, DAERA in conjunction with DoF, launched new climate change training courses on the NICS staff training system (LInKS) which are available to all NICS staff. The courses, known as 'Climate Smart for Civil Service', include two levels of training – one an initial 'introductory' training course to climate change and then a second 'additional learning' training course. The courses provide a high-level overview of key climate change themes in both a global and local context and build upon an earlier pilot exercise delivered by DAERA in 2023. By February 2025, over 1,100 civil servants had attended the training courses.

11.8 Local Government

Local government is already leading by example on climate action. Alongside central government, it will have a vital role in driving and facilitating the realisation of Northern Ireland's climate targets. During the carbon budget reporting period, departments have been working with the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) to establish structures which will facilitate a joined-up approach between central and local government. This will help to ensure strong leadership at all levels across our communities as we implement ambitious climate action.

Significant action is already being taken forward within local government; approximately half of our 11 local councils have put in place a climate action plan with target dates for reaching net zero ranging between 2040 and 2050.

Belfast City Council, for example, has a Resilient Belfast Strategy²⁶¹ and a Net Zero Carbon Roadmap.²⁶² It is committed to becoming a carbon-neutral organisation and to working with partners to reduce Belfast's net carbon emissions by 80% compared to 2005 levels as quickly as possible and to transition to a low carbon economy in a generation. In 2022, it adopted the following city targets: 66% reduction on the 2000 level of emissions by 2025; 80% by 2030 and 100% by 2050. Fermanagh and Omagh District Council,²⁶³ Derry City and Strabane District Council,²⁶⁴ Mid and East Antrim Borough Council²⁶⁵ and Ards and North Down Borough Council²⁶⁶ also have action plans in place,²⁶⁷ including both mitigation and adaptation actions and net zero target dates ranging from 2040 to 2045.

Both Belfast City Council and Derry City and Strabane District Council have established Sustainability and Climate Commissions,²⁶⁸ comprising members from the public, private and third sectors working collaboratively to translate climate policy into 'on the ground' action and bring about transformative change.

11.9 Public Body Reporting

Public bodies have a significant role to play in helping to achieve the reduction in emissions. Reporting on climate change can be an effective way for public bodies to recognise and understand the size of the challenge, prioritise their actions and develop targeted intervention plans. It also helps to embed climate change within strategic business and risk planning processes and assist in the management of climate risks which is key to achieving long-term sustainability.

²⁶¹ Resilient Belfast | Belfast City Council

²⁶² A Net-Zero Carbon Roadmap For Belfast (pcancities.org.uk)

²⁶³ Fermanagh and Omagh District Council Restore-Revive-Thrive-5-1.pdf

²⁶⁴ Derry City and Strabane District Council Climate Change adaptation plan

²⁶⁵ Climate and Sustainability Action Plan 2023 - 2027 | Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

²⁶⁶ Roadmap to Sustainability - Ards and North Down Borough Council

²⁶⁷ Such as those set out in Natural Environment and Climate Change chapter

²⁶⁸ Established in 2019, Belfast Climate Commission is co-chaired by Belfast City Council and Queen's University. Derry and Strabane Sustainability and Climate Commission was established in early 2024 and is chaired by Ulster University.

Climate change can impact public bodies in multiple ways such as:

- Physical risks: including operational and service delivery impacts of more frequent and more extreme weather events, or supply shortages; and
- Transition risks: which arise from society's response to climate change (and the transition to net zero) such as changes in technologies, markets and regulation.

Reporting can improve transparency for stakeholders and can help government identify and take account of actions public bodies are taking to address climate change and potentially where central government intervention and support is needed.

DAERA delivered its requirements²⁶⁹ by making the Climate Change (Reporting Bodies) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 (the Regulations).²⁷⁰ These first set of principal Regulations came into operation on 3 May 2024 and place climate change reporting duties on 40 large-sized, specified public bodies. The Regulations were informed by DAERA's pre-consultation with public bodies in the later quarter of 2022 and by an extended 10-week public consultation in 2023.²⁷¹

Climate change reporting is an iterative process and DAERA will explore expanding the scope of the Regulations at a future point, including who is required to report, through amending Regulations. In the interim, voluntary reporting will be encouraged by those public bodies not specified to report.

The Regulations require reporting on both mitigation and adaptation as follows:

- Mitigation reporting is required on a three-yearly cycle and the first reports are due to be submitted to DAERA by 31 October 2025. The reports must include the public bodies' emissions levels and sources for specified years, action plans to reduce those emissions and an assessment of any progress made between reporting periods.
- Adaptation reporting is required on a five-yearly cycle, with the exception of the first report which must be submitted to DAERA by 31 March 2026. Adaptation reports must include an assessment of the current and predicted impact of climate change in relation to the body's functions, action plans to manage those risks and impacts and an assessment of any progress made between reporting periods.

The Regulations require the specified public bodies to consider the latest UK-wide Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA); the Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme (NICCAP); and the benefit of coordinating proposals and policies with corresponding bodies in other parts of the UK, Republic of Ireland or elsewhere. The reports will be published on the DAERA website along with findings from any particular reporting period.

²⁶⁹ Section 42 of the Act

²⁷⁰ The Climate Change (Reporting Bodies) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024

²⁷¹ Summary of Responses and Next Steps: Consultation on Climate Change Reporting by Specified Public Bodies - Developing New Regulations

DAERA is currently developing and providing the following practical support to help public bodies meet their reporting duties, through:

- development and provision of an online portal for public bodies to record climate change data;
- mitigation-specific, co-designed technical reporting guidance and a template of questions;
- adaptation-specific, co-designed technical reporting guidance and a template of questions; and
- development and provision of separate and specific mitigation and adaptation training.

Collaborative work and the co-design process is ongoing with public bodies on the delivery and implementation of the reporting system including the development of tools and further practical support for reporting bodies, such as guidance, an online reporting portal and a training programme.

CHAPTER 11: SUMMARY OF PUBLIC SECTOR LEADING BY EXAMPLE ACTIONS

We will continue to deliver our duty on climate, driving change through actions which demonstrates leadership across the public sector. Key actions include:

1. By 2028, DoF will complete Phase 1 of the review of the NICS Office Estate which is planned to achieve a 40% reduction of the in-scope office estate, reduce its carbon footprint and support the journey towards decarbonisation.
2. During the carbon budget period, DfI will work with Northern Ireland government departments to develop a pathway for a Zero Emission Vehicle Action Plan to support the transition of the government's fleet.
3. During the carbon budget period, DoF will publish updated business case guidance as soon as possible after the Green Growth Strategy has been finalised, to take account of developments in green growth and ensure that climate and environmental considerations are further embedded in the decision-making process for projects and programmes.
4. By 2030, DfE will deliver Energy Management Strategy objectives to reduce net energy consumption by 30% (from 2016/17 baseline).
5. During the carbon budget period, DfI will support Northern Ireland Water's bids for funding to progress renewable energy initiatives under its Power of Water Project.
6. During the carbon budget period, departments will progress the NICS digital transformation agenda to facilitate digital and virtual service alternatives for staff and the public, including the delivery of Project Stratum by June 2025.
7. During the carbon budget period, we will establish structures which facilitate coordinated central and local government action that supports the transformative changes needed to tackle climate change and deliver net zero.

12. Enabling the Transition to Net Zero

12.1 Introduction

The importance of science and innovation, education and skills, infrastructure, planning, behaviour change and communication as enablers to delivering our pathway to net zero cannot be underestimated. Through collaboration and co-design with delivery partners, we will utilise innovation, science and technology to deliver effective solutions. Through proactive education and skills development, we will inspire and equip our children, young people, businesses, communities and employees to embrace the climate challenge, acting as catalysts for change. Through targeted investment in key infrastructure projects that are consistent with our net zero ambitions and an effective planning system that positively facilitates sustainable development, we will contribute to shaping a more socially, economically and environmentally sustainable society. Finally, by making use of behavioural science we will both raise awareness of the need for societal behaviour change and increase lasting climate conscious behaviours.

12.2 Science and Innovation

Science is central to our understanding of climate change, its consequences and how we can adapt to its impacts. Science will also provide us with the high-quality evidence base needed to shape our action to combat climate change by reducing emissions on a pathway to net zero.

We will continue to use the best available science to inform decision making and action to reduce emissions, including the policies, proposals and actions which make up this draft Climate Action Plan and its successors. We know that we do not yet have all the answers for the many challenges which delivering on net zero will pose. We will need innovation across our economy and society to deliver the solutions required, including new technologies and different and new ways of using and conserving our resources.

Scientific expertise will be critical in assessing the contribution which Climate Action Plan policies and proposals can make to the broad range of environmental goals and identifying how any impacts can be mitigated or optimised. Nature-based solutions provide an excellent example of how climate action can, and should, deliver across multiple environmental metrics.

Within Northern Ireland, we have a highly developed science system well placed to deliver on the climate change challenge. But to date, that science system, although highly effective in its disparate parts, has not been strategically aligned and coordinated as well as it might be. The 2024 appointment of the NICS CSTA is helping to address that, recognising that strategic scientific and technological advice needs to be available to the Northern Ireland Executive and senior decision makers in a more structured and sustained way. Science and technology will be at the heart of Northern Ireland Executive

decision making, including in regard to climate change and the wider green agenda, ensuring that Northern Ireland is more fully connected to developments across the UK, Republic of Ireland and internationally. The NICS CSTA brings an extra dimension of expertise and capacity to participate in and shape national and international programmes related to the use of AI and data to help inform decision making that can be applied to addressing climate change.

The CSTA proactively and independently promotes the value and benefits of science and technology, developing the first phase of a regional strategy designed to promote research and innovation. One of the first core work areas to be addressed by the CSTA will be climate change. The CSTA leads a cross-departmental and cross-agency advisory group which aims to ensure an integrated approach to the access and use of data for multiple applications, including climate change.

Through DfE's Matrix Panel, the Northern Ireland Science Industry Panel, there is also business-led and academic-supported focus on all matters pertaining to the high tech and science-based economy. Key to this is the green economy. Matrix is playing a key role in driving forward strategic approaches to renewable energy, the circular economy and advanced manufacturing. In 2022, Matrix brought forward a highly commended report²⁷² into the accelerated development of a hydrogen energy sector and market in Northern Ireland. The report outlines the capabilities Northern Ireland has to meet the commercial demand for hydrogen and sets recommendations for policy development and future interventions into the demand for hydrogen. Matrix recognises the potential of hydrogen as supportive to green economy initiatives given the ideal natural conditions for generating clean, renewable electricity coupled with adaptable infrastructure and a highly skilled workforce. It suggests Northern Ireland can be at the forefront of developing a hydrogen economy to heat our homes, fuel our transport and power our industry.

The Agri-Food Bio-Sciences Institute (AFBI) is playing an important role in meeting the climate challenge by supporting GHG reduction techniques in agriculture such as improved feed conversion efficiency, sophisticated dairy and beef carbon footprint calculators, feed additives and other dietary changes, as well as managing the Soil Nutrient Health Scheme (SNHS) to deliver a baseline for soil carbon.

Innovation: There are many opportunities for innovation, particularly around rapid advances in technology. The DAERA Innovation Strategy 2021-2025²⁷³, acknowledges that the exploitation of Big Data, AI and Transformative Bioeconomy initiatives can play a key role in our quest for green growth, with the aim of transforming our society to achieve net zero GHG emissions by 2050, protect and enhance our environment and sustainably grow our economy.

²⁷² Northern Ireland's Future Hydrogen Demand and Capability - Matrix

²⁷³ DAERA Innovation Strategy launched

As part of the implementation of the DAERA Innovation Strategy, pilot projects are being taken forward to encourage the development of innovative solutions to the challenges faced. DAERA has partnered with Digital Catapult on their Tenfold Net Zero Accelerator programme which aims to encourage the development of new and innovative proposals which will contribute to delivering sustainable climate action solutions and which will benefit local businesses in their drive to achieve net zero. In addition, DAERA has worked in collaboration with the Department of Food, Agriculture and the Marine (DAFM) in Ireland to co-design a €9m Bioeconomy Demonstration Initiative which seeks to foster innovative cross-border collaborations which will be crucial in delivering climate action and supporting a greener economy through biobased solutions.

The Innovation Strategy for Northern Ireland 2014-2025²³⁸ also highlighted the need for increased innovation within the public sector. However, in addition to it becoming more innovative in how it operates, whether as an intelligent customer or as a partner to drive change, the public sector can play a powerful role in encouraging innovation within the sectors it serves. Governments need to be innovative and also create the right conditions for innovation to occur, both within and across systems; this can include stimulating innovation through providing incentives for research and development and innovation, assisting in knowledge exchange and innovation adoption, supporting facilitation activity to encourage and support innovation and enabling collaboration.

Innovation is critical to delivering solutions to these challenges as well as promoting a thriving business sector to increase economic productivity and sustainability in line with green growth commitments.

Priorities for Climate Science: Evidence needs will vary across each sector. However, some key principles will apply as the science system supporting climate change is developed and optimised. These include:

- Development of a smarter and more sophisticated GHG Inventory which captures current practices with precision and can account for emerging emissions reduction technologies as they are implemented;
- Provision of high quality and timely evidence which identifies and balances the actions required to set a pathway to net zero;
- Communication of scientific outputs to policymakers, industry and citizens in a clear and appropriate way to ensure that the right information is delivered to the right people at the right time; and
- Identifying the new approaches required in each sector to deliver the pathway to net zero in Northern Ireland.

²³⁸ Northern Ireland Innovation Strategy

Optimising the Inventory: The Northern Ireland GHG Inventory provides the basis for the assessment of GHG emissions on a territorial basis for Northern Ireland across nine individual sectors, in line with international reporting guidelines. It uses information on activity levels in each sector and scientific evidence on emissions levels associated with these activities to provide the emissions estimates per sector. A key priority for climate science in Northern Ireland must be to ensure that the data informing the inventory is as accurate as possible, is regularly updated and uses as much Northern Ireland specific information as possible. As new technologies and innovative solutions for climate action are developed and implemented, scientific knowledge must keep pace with accurate assessment of their impact on emissions levels for incorporation within the inventory.

Optimising Climate Action: Science expertise is needed to ensure that the actions proposed in this draft Climate Action Plan and its successors are capable of implementation, and are sufficient, fair and appropriate. There will inevitably be challenging policy choices associated with identifying the best pathway to net zero for Northern Ireland. Good science will provide those responsible for these policy choices with evidence on the risks, benefits and implications associated with each potential pathway. We must ensure that we provide a landscape of high-quality science which guides the path to net zero.

Informing Citizens and Businesses: For Northern Ireland to deliver on net zero, transformation is required across our society. The science system must deliver the strong scientific evidence base for the changes in behaviour so that the public understand how best they can reduce emissions and why it is important. Climate science should be communicated in a way that cuts through the complexity and delivers clear, concise and transparent messages to people and businesses.

Preparing for the Future: Although theoretical pathways to net zero by 2050 have already been developed, it is inevitable that these will be refined as new technologies come online and new data and evidence becomes available on the optimal route to net zero. High quality scientific research will be of integral importance as these pathways are optimised. We should not assume that the answers which appear best today will remain so. Our policy and our science framework must support production of a world-class evidence base and be adaptive to its findings, while not allowing the inevitable uncertainties to hinder the urgent action required to meet net zero. As the Northern Ireland science system works to deliver these, an early priority should be a robust assessment of the speculative options outlined by the CCC in their Northern Ireland Advice Report which are:

- Direct Air Capture with Carbon Capture and Storage (DACCS);
- Reducing livestock numbers by almost half by 2050;
- Enhanced weathering on croplands (applying fine crushed rock such as basalt to fields to achieve carbon dioxide removal);
- Addition of biochar to agricultural land; and
- Purchasing removals from elsewhere.

Urgent assessment of these approaches is required, in respect of their emissions reduction potential, practicality, economic impact and cost, and whether alternative options exist which can deliver net zero for Northern Ireland. In doing so, the science system will facilitate an informed decision about how Northern Ireland should reach its net zero requirement and adapt to a changing climate.

12.3 Education and Skills

Education has an essential role to play through developing awareness, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that will drive effective change. Initiatives that seek to provide an opportunity for children, young people and workforces to learn about climate change issues and about practical steps that can be taken to measure and improve carbon footprints, are a fundamental step on the net zero journey.

Since 2020, DAERA has been supporting the delivery of climate change education programmes to schools and community groups, building on successful programmes such as 'Eco-Schools'⁷⁷⁵ and 'Live Here Love Here'⁷⁷⁶ and working with delivery partners such as Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful (KNIB). This has included the provision of free 'Climate Smart' and accredited 'Carbon Literacy' training to teachers, students and community groups.

The Northern Ireland Curriculum will continue to play a vital role in supporting the green economy and nurturing environmentally conscious citizens. Through the integration of topics related to sustainability, climate change, and green growth, schools can equip children and young people with the knowledge, understanding, skills, and values necessary to contribute actively to a greener future. A curriculum that emphasizes the green economy can also prepare our children for future careers in sectors such as renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and green technology. To support this, the Department for Education (DE) is considering how best green growth and climate change can be embedded and enhanced in the curriculum.

Since 2021, DAERA and DfE has supported the Business in the Community (BITC) led 'Business Action on Climate' campaign. Through the campaign, businesses make public commitments to reduce their emissions by either 30% or 50% by 2030 and to work towards measuring and reporting emissions. To support businesses in this campaign, BITC has developed a Climate Action Resource Hub and provides support to businesses and their staff through accredited carbon literacy training; introductory 'carbon conscious' training, the provision of advisory workshops on how to measure their carbon footprint; and the development of bespoke climate action plans for their business. By August 2023, 87 companies had signed up to the climate action campaign with 383 employees being certified as being 'carbon literate'.

⁷⁷⁵ Eco-Schools Northern Ireland (eco-schoolsni.org)

⁷⁷⁶ Live Here Love Here - Environmental & Community Improvement Projects Northern Ireland

It is equally important that we plan for the impact of changes on our labour market. We will need to ensure our workforce is equipped to facilitate the transition to a low carbon economy through vital skills development.

In June 2023, DfE published a report²⁷⁷ which considered the skills required for 'a transition to an advanced zero emission, indigenous energy secure and circular economy in Northern Ireland'. It provides information to encourage relevant organisations in Northern Ireland to develop the required skilled workforce – maximising benefits to all sections of the Northern Ireland population. The report covers eight industries that align to a significant degree with the sectors identified in this plan: large-scale energy production; infrastructure; domestic low carbon technologies and energy efficiency; industrial processes; circular economy; transport; agriculture; and fisheries.

The report identifies skills that will be required by new and existing workers to support the transition to a net zero economy in Northern Ireland. In addition to the need for generalist skills (such as management and digital skills), the report highlights sector-specific skills (including in environmental and agri-food science and technology, and supporting: the developing offshore wind industry; the planning, construction and operation of heat networks; the production, storage and transport of hydrogen and biofuels; the installation of smart technology; the maximisation of value from waste; and the operation and maintenance of electric/fuel cell/hydrogen vehicles and vessels); and specialist skills (such as in geoscience, chemistry and physics). There will also be a greater need for workers to be multi-skilled.

It was recognised that diverse training pathways which offer ongoing opportunities to develop and build skills at various levels will also be required. For example, at occupational entry level, apprenticeships and through further and higher education. More will need to be done to address skills gaps and to retain and develop those with relevant skills through, for example, establishing stronger links with educational establishments and training providers, employers, policymakers and other stakeholders. To ensure a just transition approach is supported, targeted and/or incentivised promotion of learning and career pathways for specific groups (such as unemployed young people; those with physical or learning disabilities; those from specific disadvantaged and deprived communities) should ensure that all sections of the community have access to training and employment opportunities in green industries.

A series of recommendations outlined in the report to address these challenges, working in collaboration with government and industry stakeholders including through engagement with the Office for Clean Energy Jobs,²⁷⁸ will be taken forward.

²⁷⁷ Investigating the skills required for a transition to an advanced zero emission, indigenous diverse energy secure and circular economy in Northern Ireland (economy-ni.gov.uk)

²⁷⁸ Assessment of the clean energy skills challenge – GOV.UK

12.4 Infrastructure

Infrastructure plays a critical role in our everyday lives. For instance, our roads, railways, ports and airports connect people and facilitate the transport of goods and services. Our water system brings fresh drinking water to homes and businesses and our sewer system removes and treats our waste, ensuring high standards of public health. Our gas and electric networks distribute the energy to power and heat our buildings. While the telecommunication systems allow people to connect and communicate, facilitating access and storage of electronic data.

The draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI)²⁷⁹ sets out how the Executive will deliver on three strategic objectives up to 2050. One of these relates to the achievement of a clean, secure and sustainable environment through delivery of key infrastructure priorities:

- Adapt to a changing climate;
- Decarbonise energy networks and surface transport;
- Transition to sustainable homes and waste management and a more circular economy; and
- Enrich biodiversity and natural environment.

In bringing forward future investment projects and programmes, reducing carbon emissions must be key in policy development and implementation.

Infrastructure is one of the sectors specified in the Act²⁸⁰ through which the carbon budget must be achieved. However, unlike most of the other sectors, emissions specifically from infrastructure are not easily derived from the Northern Ireland GHG Inventory as they are connected to sectors such as transport, energy and buildings. For the purposes of this Climate Action Plan, infrastructure is the physical and organisational structures and facilities needed for the operation of a society. As associated emissions are incorporated in the policies and proposals of other sectors, there are no specific policies and proposals relating to an 'infrastructure sector'.

Central to the objective of a clean, secure and sustainable environment is the need to consider how we use, and reuse, our existing infrastructure, and how we plan for new infrastructure to ensure that it meets our future needs while reducing our dependency on carbon intensive materials, our extraction of virgin materials and our fossil fuel reliance. Adopting recognised international standards will help to mitigate emissions from the infrastructure sector. As policies are developed to support the transition to a low carbon future, all sectors have an important role to play in reducing GHG emissions, meeting Northern Ireland's first carbon budget and achieving net zero by 2050. All sectors must move to more efficient manufacturing processes, increase energy efficiency and commit to reducing waste and increasing recycling. To achieve this, new innovations and technologies will need to be developed and implemented, supported by enabling policies that help change individual and societal behaviours and attitudes, legislation and long-term investment in skills.

PAS 2080²⁸¹ is a global standard for managing carbon in buildings and infrastructure. It considers the whole value chain while aiming to reduce carbon through design, construction, and use of infrastructure. The UK Government's Construction Playbook²⁸² and the Northern Ireland Construction Toolkit²⁸³ provide guidance for government and industry in delivering public works programmes, both reference PAS 2080.

At the outset, the need for any new infrastructure must be compliant with addressing climate action and utilise low carbon alternatives where possible. Work on developing and adopting low carbon construction materials must continue at pace. Infrastructure uses significant quantities of material such as concrete, metal, bitumen, aggregate, chemicals, plastics, glass, etc. which needs to be extracted, processed, manufactured and transported.

The continued need for this should be considered along with seeking more sustainable and possibly more versatile alternatives. Infrastructure needs to be designed and constructed to be more resilient to the changing climate so that it can last longer and reduce the need for future maintenance. It needs to be able to withstand the growing challenges presented by flooding, extreme weather events and rising global temperatures. Without adaptation, our infrastructure will face pressures that, in some cases, it was not designed to withstand. This could result in costly and time-consuming repairs. For example, NICCAP cites the impact of Storm Eleanor which left 25,000 premises without power as well as transport disruption.²⁸⁴ Similarly, in August 2017 heavy rainfall in the north and west of Northern Ireland led to the flooding of hundreds of homes, five bridges being washed away and the temporary closure of the City of Derry Airport.²⁸⁵ Infrastructure adaptation measures can help improve resilience, limit severity and reduce costs from future climate events.

It is also important to recognise that there are emissions originating from various stages of the infrastructure lifecycle – from construction and maintenance to its operation and use, and finally to repurposing, retrofitting or decommissioning. Action must be taken in the short term to reduce infrastructure emissions in support of efforts to reach net zero by 2050, and where possible, promote a circular economy approach to minimise environmental and carbon impacts.

²⁷⁹ Infrastructure-2050-draft-investment-Strategy-for-Northern-Ireland-FINAL.pdf

²⁸⁰ Section 33(c) specifies infrastructure as a sector through which the carbon budget is achieved and specifies that it should include infrastructure for electric vehicular transport. However, to avoid potential duplication and double counting of emissions savings, consideration of policies and proposals relating to infrastructure for electric vehicles is considered as part of the transport sector in Chapter 6.3.

²⁸¹ Guidance Document for PAS 2080

²⁸² The Construction Playbook – September 2022 (publishing.service.gov.uk)

²⁸³ Construction Toolkit.pdf (finance-ni.gov.uk)

²⁸⁴ Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme 2019-2024 Final-Laid.PDF (daera-ni.gov.uk)

²⁸⁵ Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (legislation.gov.uk)

12.5 Planning

Planning policy and planning decisions both have significant roles to play in enabling the delivery of climate action. The planning system should positively and proactively facilitate development that contributes to a more socially, economically and environmentally sustainable Northern Ireland.

The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011²⁰⁶ established the two-tier system for the delivery of planning functions in Northern Ireland. Under the Planning Act, responsibility for delivering the main planning functions passed from a central government department to local councils in April 2015. DfI has responsibility for preparing regional strategic planning policy and legislation, monitoring and reporting on the performance of councils' delivery of planning functions and making planning decisions in respect of a small number of 'regionally significant' and 'called in' applications, including many renewable electricity applications. Together, both central and local government have important roles to play in ensuring that the control of development is appropriate but also that enabling investment in the technologies and infrastructure required to respond to the climate emergency is not delayed.

The Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) for Northern Ireland – Planning for Sustainable Development²⁰⁷ was published in September 2015 following Executive agreement. The SPPS sets out DfI's regional planning policies for securing the orderly and consistent development of land in Northern Ireland. A review of regional strategic planning policy on renewable and low carbon energy was announced on 21 April 2021. The review is at an advanced stage of completion, and it is expected that the revised policy will be published as soon as possible following Executive agreement.

The aim of the review is to ensure that SPPS policy on this topic remains fit for purpose and up to date to inform plan making and decision making, recognising the important facilitating role the planning system can play in supporting climate action. Last year, DfI undertook a call for evidence on a potential focused review of the SPPS in relation to climate change, including the decarbonisation of transport.

Northern Ireland's two-tier planning system plays a positive enabling role in supporting opportunities to mitigate and adapt to climate change in the planning for and management of development across many of the Climate Action Plan sectors. For example, the planning system can:

- Encourage compact mixed-use developments;
- Encourage layouts and designs that reduce carbon emissions;
- Integrate land use and transportation;
- Enable appropriate renewable energy infrastructure;
- Preserve existing green space and carbon sinks and require the provision of new green space when new development is permitted; and
- Protect flood plains and encourage sustainable drainage systems.

²⁰⁶ Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (legislation.gov.uk)

²⁰⁷ The Strategic Planning Policy Statement | Department for Infrastructure (infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)

It is important going forward that the legislative, policy and guidance frameworks for plan making and decision making is appropriate and suitably future proofed. This will ensure that planning authorities continue to contribute to the wider efforts of government in addressing the climate emergency through their Local Development Plans and their consideration of planning applications. Those involved in the planning system (developers, communities, councils and others) have a collective responsibility to work positively and proactively to establish and maintain resilient sustainable solutions which can adapt to the ever-changing impacts of climate change.

In addition, DfI is seeking to increase its contribution to supporting the transition to net zero in several areas, including:

- **Legislation:** The Energy Strategy Action Plan 2022²⁸⁸ contained a commitment for DfI to review permitted development legislation for low carbon heat installations. DfI issued a consultation in October 2022 seeking views on proposals to revise permitted development rights for the installation of domestic microgeneration equipment such as heat pumps. Following the consideration of responses, DfI brought forward amendments to the Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015²⁸⁹ to expand permitted development rights for the installation of microgeneration equipment. These came into effect in July 2023. The amendments will help to encourage the use of low carbon heat technologies and ensure the permitted development rights are up to date and fit for purpose; and align Northern Ireland with other UK jurisdictions.
- **Casework:** DfI will continue to review casework to facilitate climate mitigation and adaptation by considering how relevant policies have been applied, review the effectiveness of mitigating actions and promote shared learning from previously approved schemes; and
- **Plan Oversight:** DfI will continue to oversee production of Local Development Plans to ensure that the impacts of climate change have been considered in each plan's policies.

Marine Planning

DAERA is the marine plan authority for Northern Ireland's inshore and offshore marine plan areas. DAERA consulted on a draft Marine Plan for Northern Ireland in 2018 and is progressing towards adoption and publication of the Marine Plan. Decision makers should have regard to the draft Marine Plan and all authorisation decisions must be in accordance with the UK Marine Policy Statement until the Marine Plan for Northern Ireland is adopted. Following publication of the adopted Marine Plan for Northern Ireland, all authorisation decisions must be in accordance with the Marine Plan policies.

²⁸⁸ <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/economy/energy-strategy-path-to-net-zero-action-plan.pdf>

²⁸⁹ The Planning (General Permitted Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 (legislation.gov.uk)

The Marine Plan for Northern Ireland will provide a holistic and transparent framework to be used by both marine and terrestrial decision makers to enable them to facilitate sustainable marine development and ensure a healthy marine area. The Marine Plan has been developed to support and complement other Northern Ireland and UK legislation, policies, plans and strategies (including the Act). Public authorities must consider the potential impact of proposals on GHG emissions and the proposals' ability to adapt to a changing climate. The Marine Plan for Northern Ireland and marine licensing decisions will have significant roles to play in enabling the delivery of climate action.

12.6 Behaviour Change and Communication

According to analysis by the CCC, approximately 60% of the changes needed to achieve net zero will require some element of societal or behaviour change.²⁹⁰ The pathway to net zero will require responses from everyone: as consumers, workers, homeowners, tenants and landlords, motorists, farmers, communities, individuals and families. Without informing, engaging, empowering and enabling people to take collective action, we will struggle to achieve our net zero targets.

The concept of behaviour change is not new; it is about altering our habits and behaviours. The UK Government Communication Service explains that *"a behaviour is an action that is observable – who does what, when and how?"*²⁹¹ A behaviour is not a change in attitude, being more aware of something, being engaged in something, a culture shift or a social norm. However, each of these is often an important step in getting sectors, communities and individuals to the stage where they adopt the behaviour.

Behaviour change can take many forms. In government, it is the framework of interventions or tools used to encourage people to adopt new positive behaviours, such as regular exercise, or to stop negative behaviours, such as drink driving. In taking action to reduce emissions, this might include implementing policies and actions that reduce certain behaviours, such as encouraging people to take fewer short car journeys, or guidance or support that enables and encourages people to adopt positive behaviours such as insulating their homes to reduce emissions and save money.

A report by the UK Behavioural Insights Team²⁹² sets out *"ways in which changes in behaviour can be harnessed positively for the net zero transition."* It indicates that nine out of ten people in the UK want to make sustainable choices but that many of the behaviours required are currently too expensive, too inconvenient, too unappealing or too different from what we are used to. Research undertaken by DAERA in March 2024 showed that 70% of respondents from Northern Ireland were fairly, very or extremely worried about climate change, and that 55% felt Northern Ireland is already starting to feel the effects of climate change.²⁹³ It is important that government harnesses the public's desire to play their part in tackling climate change; effective communication, education, advice and support are key to enabling this.

²⁹⁰ CCC, May 2019; Net Zero - The UK's contribution to stopping global warming - Climate Change Committee (theccc.org.uk) or CCC, June 2021; Progress Report to Parliament - Climate Change Committee (theccc.org.uk)

²⁹¹ Strategic Communications: a behavioural approach - GCS

A report published in October 2022 by the House of Lords Environment and Climate Change Committee²⁹⁴ on the UK Government's approach to behaviour change for climate and environment goals, highlighted a number of insights:

- The public want clear government leadership, with a coordinated approach;
- A 'behavioural lens' should be applied consistently across government climate and environment policies;
- Where government has shaped the choice environment they have had more success in changing behaviours;
- Awareness campaigns and information are not enough to bring about major change; other levers, including regulations, fiscal incentives and disincentives, and development of infrastructure, are needed.

Recognising these challenges, the Northern Ireland Executive commitment 5 in the draft Green Growth Strategy states: *"We will promote and support behaviour change by providing low carbon options, infrastructure, timely information, advice and support to citizens and businesses to enable them to make informed choices on the transition to a net zero emissions economy."* Building on the full spectrum of policy levers that the House of Lords report recommends, this recognises the importance of removing barriers to and enabling change as an effective means of delivering action on climate. This approach reflects the developing use of behavioural science, which is about understanding behaviour and then developing effective interventions to influence it.²⁹⁵

In Northern Ireland, we will use behavioural science to understand and identify which behaviours influence the desired outcome and aim to develop effective interventions to support and enable those positive changes which reduce emissions in a fair and acceptable way. This will entail undertaking user research (for example on attitudes, concerns, actual behaviours and willingness to change behaviour) to understand, identify and reduce barriers to behaviour change and promote effective policies, programmes and interventions. As such, choices and behaviours that will support the transition to net zero will be made easier and eventually new social norms will be created. Other behavioural science principles will be used to help tailor messages for different audiences, ensure engagement on specific behaviours is targeted and appropriate, and provide feedback and positive reinforcement to sustain positive changes in behaviours that are beneficial.

²⁹² How to build a Net Zero society | BJT

²⁹³ Full analysis of this research is not available as yet.

²⁹⁴ House of Lords Environment and Climate Change Committee

²⁹⁵ Public Health England, February 2020; Achieving behaviour change: a guide for local government and partners (publishing.service.gov.uk)

We will make use of behavioural insights to engage and involve key sectors and members of the public through, for example: highlighting positive examples; promoting learning and awareness through active participation; fostering a sense of community; enhancing the perceived impact of individual actions; encouraging a sense of ownership and responsibility; and emphasising the need for collective action, incentivising, recognising and rewarding.

We will continue to work closely with counterparts in the UK Government, Devolved Administrations and Republic of Ireland, as well as local and international academics, scientists and practitioners, learning from their experiences and successes in identifying interventions that are fair and can work for all our communities. We have much to learn from other countries, but we also need to ensure that interventions suit the circumstances and needs of people in Northern Ireland. Our commitment to education, communication, genuine participative engagement and behavioural science are key enablers to ensuring the journey and transition to net zero works for all our people.

To do this we will ensure that we gather and use data and evidence to understand the issues unique to Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland's people so that we make the right and most effective interventions to support the move to a fair, sustainable and decarbonised society and economy.

Addressing climate change in Northern Ireland requires a planned, strategic, behaviourally-informed approach to communication and engagement. Public engagement and effective communications are essential for listening to and responding to the public, their concerns and ideas. Engagement and communications will be used to ensure that net zero policies and interventions will be developed collaboratively, will be understood and supported, and will help us to develop and build collective responsibility for delivering Climate Action Plans. All aspects of the Act (including the just transition principles) will be integrated into this process. The Northern Ireland behaviour change approach will be monitored and adapted in response to feedback to ensure ongoing effectiveness and use of emerging best practice. Adjustments will be made based on data-driven insights to enhance impact and address any emerging challenges.

CHAPTER 12: SUMMARY OF ENABLING THE TRANSITION TO NET ZERO ACTIONS

1. DE has commissioned the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) to greater embed sustainability and climate change education into the curriculum. During 2025, a progression framework and resource hub will be published, drawing together up-to-date resources and sources of support for teachers, pupils and young people in green growth and climate change knowledge, skills and understanding.
2. In 2024, DfI carried out a call for evidence on a potential focused review of the SPSS to ensure that it supports the climate change agenda, including the decarbonisation of transport. The responses to this call for evidence are being analysed with a view to presenting options to the DfI Minister in 2025.
3. During the carbon budget period, DAERA will ensure that behavioural science is used to support the delivery of Climate Action Plans, through coordinating with other departments and engaging with sectors and the public.
4. In 2024, DAERA completed a landscape review of the use of social science, including behavioural science, across NICS. The findings of this review will be considered in 2025 and, where appropriate, will support green growth and climate change policy development; and
5. During the first carbon budget period, DAERA will provide credible, evidence-based support, enabling citizens and businesses to make informed choices by actively communication and engaging with stakeholders and ensuring transparency in methods to capture, analyse and interpret data.

13. Investing in Climate Action

13.1 Introduction

Implementing the policies and proposals set out in this draft Climate Action Plan will require investment. This investment is necessary if we are to realise the wide-ranging benefits and transformative opportunities that come with the transition to a low carbon economy and an improved society for future generations. We also need to avoid the additional costs incurred from delayed action and the damage that occurs because of our changing climate. Additional investment by government will be crucial to finance the major infrastructure projects required to enable the transition to a low carbon economy. It will also be necessary to incentivise further investment in early-stage technologies and demonstrator projects.

Delivering a cost-effective path to decarbonisation in Northern Ireland requires action across all sectors of the economy and a joined-up approach.²⁵⁶ Funding our net zero transition will be a collaboration between the public and private sectors.

This chapter provides an estimate of the public sector investment required to deliver this Climate Action Plan across financial years 2023/24 to 2026/27 and the benefits that may be achieved. It summarises how the public sector will seek to encourage and unlock private sector investment to support the net zero transition. Private sector investment will be attracted where markets provide opportunity for a return on investment. In some areas, this could mean additional cost for consumers, however, in other areas, private sector investment in green technologies can accelerate innovation, bring greater choice to consumers, and drive prices down.

13.2 Investment Required and Anticipated Benefits

Public Sector Investment to Deliver the Draft Climate Action Plan

Delivering the emissions savings projected in this plan will require a commitment to investing in net zero. In developing this draft Climate Action Plan, departments have sought to estimate the capital investment required to deliver the policies and proposals outlined in the Sector Policies and Proposals chapter²⁵⁷.

The information presented in this section focuses on the anticipated level of Climate Action Plan investment required from the Northern Ireland Executive budget to support our transition to net zero. All values provided are in line with the Central Scenario criteria, which assumes that credible funding arrangements are in place or there is high confidence of funding availability²⁵⁸.

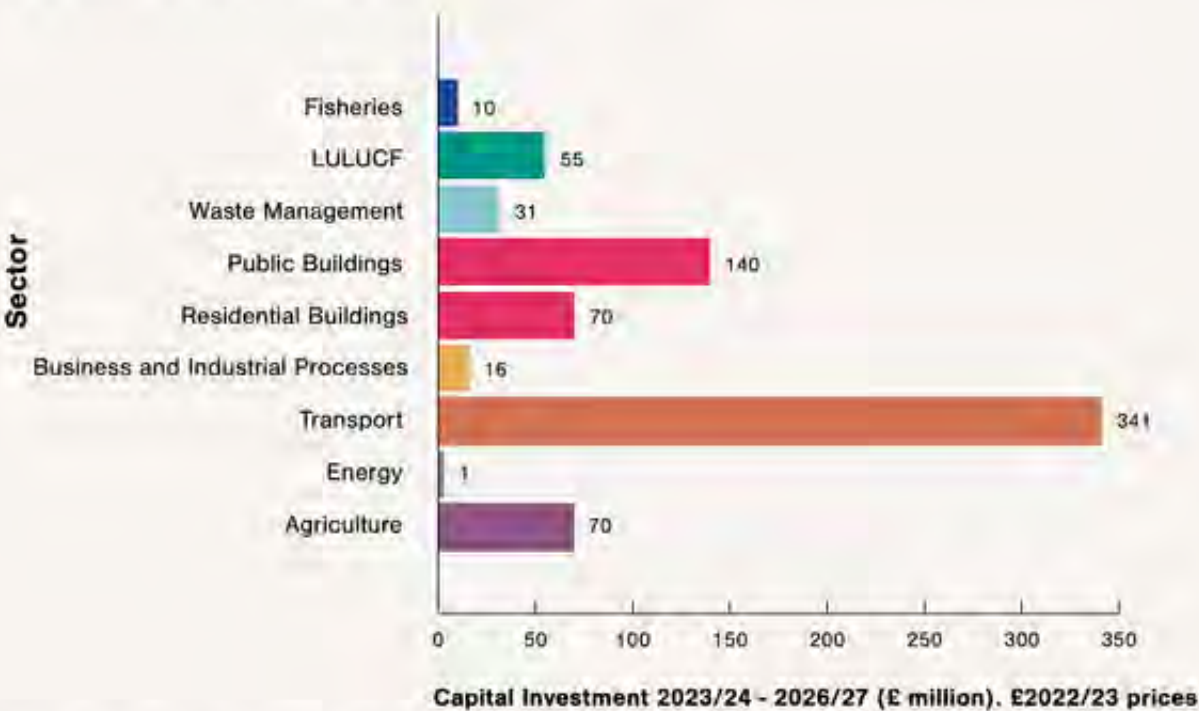
While this document highlights overall investment levels, not all expenditure will be new or additional. According to the Northern Ireland GHG Inventory²⁵⁹, between 1990 and 2022, our GHG emissions fell by 26%. The Northern Ireland Executive already has a long track record of directing investment toward policies which aim to improve our environment and support climate targets.

²⁵⁶ Reducing emissions in Northern Ireland - Climate Change Committee (theccc.org.uk)

Not all policies and proposals listed within the draft Climate Action Plan impact Northern Ireland Executive budgets; some policies are UK-wide and driven at a UK Government level. The estimates do not include investment through UK-led policies and proposals or private investments (from businesses and households). The fiscal impact from wider economic impacts associated with the transition to net zero (including significant economic benefits) are not reported, nor are the implications of technological progress, changes in the wider political landscape and scientific advances which are sources of uncertainty beyond the scope of this plan.

Across the four full financial years of the Climate Action Plan (2023/24-2026/27), it is estimated that a total of £718 million³⁰⁰ of capital investment will be directed to deliver the policies and proposals within the draft Climate Action Plan. **This equates to an average total capital investment of £93 per person, per year.** Figure 32 illustrates the level of capital investment required by each sector.

Figure 32: Sector capital investment ³⁰¹



Rising from £56 million in 2022/23, total capital investment through Climate Action Plan policies and proposals will increase to approximately £274 million in 2026/27. This level of annual investment increases throughout the Climate Action Plan period, as proposals become policies and begin to be implemented, as illustrated in Figure 33.

³⁰⁰ It should be noted that investment values listed are estimates and forecasts and, therefore, will be subject to a number of uncertainties, including a high level of sensitivity to budgetary, economic and political assumptions.

³⁰¹ See Chapter 5 for full definitions

³⁰² Northern Ireland Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2022

³⁰³ All costs listed within this chapter are in £2022/23 prices

³⁰⁴ Note that values will not tally to total due to duplication of costs between sectors.

By 2026/27, capital investment through the implementation of policies and proposals within the Climate Action Plan will represent less than 2% of the total Northern Ireland Executive budget, or 14% of total capital allocation.

Figure 33: Annual Climate Action Plan capital investment as a % of total Northern Ireland Executive capital budget



It is not possible to accurately estimate what portion of total Northern Ireland Executive capital budgets would have been spent on policies to promote decarbonisation without the draft Climate Action Plan. It is likely that at least some of this capital would have been invested through the same (or a similar) set of policies and proposals to support other legislative requirements and strategic commitments. Not all of this increase in expenditure will result in an equivalent increase in departmental budgetary pressures.

The level of capital investment varies between sectors. The annual investment estimates across each sector can be found in Table 27.

Table 27: Annualised sector capital investment

Sector Capital Investment (£ million) (2022/23 prices)	2022/2023 (base year)	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	Total
Agriculture	2.4	4.8	7.3	19.4	38.7	70.2
Energy production and supply	-	-	-	0.5	0.6	1.0
Transport	-	31.8	64.8	111.8	132.3	340.6
Business and industrial processes	-	1.7	2.8	5.9	5.9	16.3
Residential Buildings	16.0	14.0	9.5	15.2	31.4	70.2
Public Buildings	35.0	35.0	35.0	35.0	35.0	140.0
Waste Management	-	-	-	15.5	15.5	31.1
LULUCF	5.1	66	14.1	14.2	20.6	55.5
Fisheries	0.1	1.9	1.9	3.8	2.8	10.4
Total	56.2	93.5	132.6	218.5	273.7	718.3

**Costs will not sum due to rounding and duplication of policies/proposals across sectors*

The costs outlined in this section demonstrate that significant investment will be required to deliver the action set out in this plan. As there is currently no mechanism whereby HM Treasury will provide additional required public funding for Northern Ireland to deliver this plan, prioritisation of budgets will be essential. The Executive will need to consider how climate change can be prioritised within its budget, as part of the priorities set out in the Programme for Government. The Executive published its Budget Sustainability Plan in October 2024, a strategic framework designed to support the long-term financial health and viability of the Executive's budget. It is envisaged that the forward work programme associated with the Budget Sustainability Plan led by DoF will examine improvements in the budget process, including how best to connect the budget process with strategic directions which will include Programme for Government and its associated climate targets. It is also important that the costs and opportunities of addressing climate change are embedded within the economic appraisal processes and through the application of a Green Growth Test (as discussed in the Government Spending and Procurement section in the Public Sector Leading by Example chapter).

While significant investment will be required across the public and private sectors to meet our net zero target, the transition to a low carbon economy will present many opportunities as we deliver green jobs, reduce pollution, promote more efficient use of resources within a circular economy, improve infrastructure and support sustainable economic growth. The up-front costs represent investments in an improved society for future generations and the cost of delaying action will ultimately be much greater.

Benefits

The transition to a low carbon society will have wider implications on how we live our lives. Although rarely measured, quantified, or monetised, co-benefits³⁰² increasingly form a key consideration in decisions relating to climate change.³⁰³ The policies and proposals which are identified in this plan, and which contribute to decarbonisation, are expected to bring substantial co-benefits, particularly for public health, green jobs, households and businesses, the natural environment and climate resilience.

Figure 34: Selected benefits of climate action



³⁰² Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, "Fifth Assessment Report, Annex II Glossary" IPCC, 2014

³⁰³ Measuring the Co-Benefits of Climate Change Mitigation | Annual Reviews

³⁰⁴ Walking, Cycling, and Obesity Rates in Europe, North America, and Australia in: Journal of Physical Activity and Health Volume 5 Issue 6 (2008); What are the benefits of reducing global CO2 emissions to net zero by 2050? - Hartley - 2022 - Weather - Wiley Online Library

The CCC Advisory Group on Health (2020) review of **health impacts** from acting on climate change suggested that sound policy can deliver significant near-term benefits to public health. Successful implementation of transport policies will lead to improved air quality avoiding premature deaths, reductions in respiratory and obesity related illnesses, improved physical and mental health, fewer traffic deaths, and reduced noise pollution.³⁰⁴ In addition, policies which promote more comfortable and efficient homes and workplaces support physical and mental health improvements and reduced work/school absenteeism.

The transition to a low carbon society will have major positive benefits in terms of **green jobs**. The draft Green Growth Strategy, alongside DfE's economic vision, promotes growing a greener and sustainable economy. Green jobs are defined by the Office of National Statistics as *"employment in an activity that contributes to protecting or restoring the environment, including those that mitigate or adapt to climate change."*³⁰⁵ Research by the UK Energy Research Centre³⁰⁶ and CCC suggests^{307,308} that net zero transition is likely to result in net job creation, high skilled jobs, economic growth and productivity in the low carbon transition. This could be particularly important given median annual earnings for full-time employees in Northern Ireland in 2024 were £3,000 lower than the UK median of £37,400.³⁰⁹ Transitioning to a net zero economy will provide an opportunity for substantial investments in clean automotive, renewable energy, energy efficiency and new technologies to create higher wage jobs.³¹⁰ Policies which support the retrofitting of homes, the switch to low emissions vehicles, the move to a circular economy, and afforestation, for example, will support the creation of green job opportunities locally.

Benefits to **households and businesses** also arise from investment in energy, energy efficiency and the circular economy in the form of: cost savings arising from reduced impacts on vulnerable households from increases in energy costs; the creation of a market for local firms supplying energy efficiency products and services; lower rent arrears; and less investment needed to generate, store and transmit decarbonised energy. Policies which target reducing waste and resource wastage and moving toward a circular economy will help to increase competitiveness, stimulate innovation, boost economic growth and create jobs.³¹¹ Investment through the implementation of the draft Climate Action Plan policies and proposals in the business and industrial processes sector is aimed at improving the global competitiveness of local industry by, for example, providing fuel switching options, reducing energy and resource use, and increasing productivity in the sector.

³⁰⁴ "Green jobs" update, current and upcoming work - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

³⁰⁵ Low carbon jobs: The evidence for net job creation from policy support for energy efficiency and renewable energy | UKERC | The UK Energy Research Centre

³⁰⁶ UNEP (2011) Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication

³⁰⁷ Net Zero and the Labour Market: Evidence from the UK | LSE Public Policy Review

³⁰⁸ <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/news/employee-earnings-northern-ireland-2024#:~:text=Annual%20earnings%20in%20NI%20are,earned%20at%20least%20%C2%A360%2C000>

³⁰⁹ [Jobs_for_a_strong_and_sustainable_recovery_from_Covid19.pdf](https://www.ukonward.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Qualifying-for-the-race-to-net-zero-FINAL.pdf); <https://www.ukonward.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Qualifying-for-the-race-to-net-zero-FINAL.pdf>; https://www.jse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Are-Green-Jobs-Good-Jobs_Full-report-4.pdf

³¹⁰ <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20151201STO05603/circular-economy-definition-importance-and-benefits>

This investment will also contribute to enhanced conservation of the **natural environment** resulting in clear air and water, more sustainable land use, improved habitats and greater biodiversity. As outlined in the Natural Environment and Climate Change chapter, our economy and wellbeing depend on healthy, resilient ecosystems that provide us with our food, clean water and air, raw materials and energy for our industries and sequestration of carbon. It is estimated that more than half of global production depends on nature³¹² so protecting nature and biodiversity will benefit the climate, environment and the economy.

While investments through the Climate Action Plan are aimed at reducing our GHG emissions, many investments also **improve our resilience**. The Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) recognises that achieving net zero carbon emissions is the necessary pathway to limit the worst impacts of climate change yet to come. As the impacts of a changing climate are already being felt, prioritised investment is required to ensure infrastructure is equipped to handle a range of shocks and stresses in the short, medium and long term.³¹³ Investment through the implementation of the draft Climate Action Plan policies and proposals – particularly through investments in the LULUCF, agriculture, transport and energy sectors – can help to maximise long-term benefits from maintaining, planning and delivering resilient infrastructure.

Additional benefits are expected from the commitment to a just transition, which will seek to increase collaboration between communities and organisations across Northern Ireland and work to ensure that the costs and benefits of transitioning to a low carbon economy are shared more equally.

While it has not been possible to accurately measure, quantify or monetise the benefits of the transition toward net zero for this draft Climate Action Plan, we will continue to invest in research and modelling to understand the investment implications, public and private, and macro-economic consequences, and wider benefits of net zero transition.

Cost of Delay

While the investment required to move toward net zero is significant, failure to invest appropriately will lead to higher public expenditure in the future. In 2021, the Office for Budget Responsibility reported that delayed action, which requires the abrupt introduction of actions to deliver the required emission reductions within a shorter space of time requires higher levels of investment, increases national debt and causes significant economic disruption.³¹⁴ The CCC has also³¹⁵ stated that the **greatest risks are associated with failing to act quickly enough to tackle climate change**, increasing uncertainty for businesses and households, leading to unnecessary costs in future, and Northern Ireland missing out on the potential benefits of climate investment that takes place elsewhere in the UK.

³¹² https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Accelerating_Decarbonization_through_Trade_2022.pdf

³¹³ Resilient Infrastructure for Northern Ireland | 2024 | Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE)

³¹⁴ Office for Budget Responsibility Fiscal risks report. (2021). Available at: https://obr.uk/docs/default-source/fiscal_risks_report_july_2021.pdf

³¹⁵ <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/letter-economic-costs-of-setting-and-delivering-a-2050-emissions-target-for-northern-ireland/>

Delays in investing can stifle economic growth – while the costs to recover from the damaging impacts of climate change continue to increase. The costly impacts of flooded homes, damage to infrastructure and disruption to businesses and homes from severe flooding and storms will increase without mitigation investment and adaptation investment.³¹⁶ The Grantham Institute³¹⁷ estimated that the total cost of climate change damages in Northern Ireland will increase from 0.83% of GDP at present to 2.38% by 2060 and 7.6% by the end of the century. Failure to deliver timely investment in climate action will result in missed opportunities with significant economic consequences.

Estimating the investment needed to deliver these policies and proposals is a critical first stage in understanding the cost of this draft Climate Action Plan. Using this information, during the remainder of the carbon budget period, we will continue to invest in research and modelling to understand the public and private investment implications, the macroeconomic consequences and the wider benefits associated with a transition to net zero.

13.3 Funding the Transition

Funding our net zero transition requires public and private funding. We need to better understand the barriers to unlock private sector investment so that, as government, we can both encourage, incentivise and regulate private sector investments. This will require consideration of how we can scale up private finance to deliver our net zero requirement.

A range of relevant funding streams to assist in achieving the carbon budget in relevant emitting sectors are in place, planned or in development. To increase awareness of available funds with the objective of increasing uptake, DfE, DAERA and DoF will undertake a joint landscape review of all the funding streams available for climate action and how these can be accessed.

In addition, the EU Peace Plus Programme, delivered by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), is worth €1.145 billion and includes a budget allocation of approximately €303 million to support collaborative initiatives 'Supporting a Sustainable and Better Connected Future' within the programme area (Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of Ireland). This, and other areas of programme intervention, may positively impact on reducing emissions.³¹⁸

Achieving our net zero targets requires a more innovative approach to funding and how we can work collaboratively to leverage and attract private investment. Market conditions must be attractive, and investments must be enabled by creating routes to market, facilitating partnerships and addressing disincentives to invest while at the same time ensuring that there is fair access to opportunity for all.

³¹⁶ <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/adapting-to-climate-change-progress-in-northern-ireland/>

³¹⁷ What will climate change cost the UK? Risks, impacts and mitigation for the net-zero transition - Grantham Research Institute on climate change and the environment

³¹⁸ <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/news/minister-sets-out-his-vision-economy>

One such funding mechanism, identified by DoF, which has been in place since 2017, is the Northern Ireland Investment Fund (£150 million), which aims to help address market failures and accelerate and increase investment in private sector-led development, including infrastructure and low carbon projects.

Another example is the development of a Net Zero Accelerator Fund which is currently being explored. Building on the success of the Northern Ireland Investment Fund, the Net Zero Accelerator Fund would create a new equity fund. This fund would be part funded through Financial Transactions Capital and private finance to accelerate the delivery of net zero projects needed to help Northern Ireland meet its obligations under the Act. Specifically, the fund would be available to address market inertia in areas where investments are needed but where the market signals are not yet clear. It would support private and community sector investments that deliver on the policy objectives of the draft Green Growth Strategy³¹⁸, the draft Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland³²⁰, the DfE Economic Mission and the Energy Strategy.³²¹ This would help to build skills and funding to support achieving emissions targets, to reduce delivery time that helps to achieve the pace needed and to maximise benefits for the public sector.

Invest Northern Ireland will work in partnership to embed net zero and green economy principles into its internal structures to ensure that it is well placed to support businesses locally and to attract the right investment. In addition, it will deliver a green economy proposition for Northern Ireland by ensuring appropriate solutions and targeted investment are in place to advance business opportunities in the green economy and to enable business transition to net zero.

Private sector investment that supports nature and nature-based solutions will also be crucial and we recognise that we need to do much more to understand how best to achieve this and to encourage investment that will deliver for climate and our environment. Part of this will involve our continued engagement in the work being undertaken to develop a UK Green Taxonomy. This taxonomy will act "as a common framework, for investments that can be defined as environmentally sustainable, helping to tackle 'greenwashing', improve understanding of environmental impact to help companies and investors make informed green choices, support investment in sustainable projects and boost efforts to tackle climate change"³²².

³¹⁸ Consultation on the draft Green Growth Strategy for Northern Ireland | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (daera-ni.gov.uk)

³²⁰ Infrastructure:2050-draft-investment-strategy-for-northern-ireland-FINAL.pdf

³²¹ The Path to Net Zero Energy: Safe, Affordable, Clean. (economy-ni.gov.uk)

³²² New independent group to help tackle 'greenwashing' - GOV.UK

Integrating Climate Action in Infrastructure Plans and Budgets

A refocusing of investment by government will be crucial to fund the major infrastructure projects required to enable the transition to a low carbon economy; to fund the research and development necessary to develop technologies and solutions required to meet short-, medium- and long-term targets; and to incentivise further investment in early-stage technologies and demonstrator projects. This means aligning our climate action with infrastructure plans and budgeting.

Investment Strategy and 10-year Investment Plan

The Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland (ISNI) reflects the Executive's objectives for infrastructure investment. A 10-year investment plan will be set out within the ISNI. This will include strategically significant infrastructure projects and programmes that are underway or otherwise committed to, and other infrastructure investments which should be advanced to progress the Executive's objectives. In advancing the latter, project sponsors will be required to give consideration to obligations under the Act – this is unlikely to mean that all projects are net zero but, as a whole, will put Northern Ireland on an improved trajectory to meet its obligations by (i) considering climate impact at the earliest stage of project design in order to reduce emissions, and (ii) supporting projects/ innovations that bring the potential to offset emissions. Inevitably, this means a change of focus on future investment plans, with some projects not progressing and others accelerating, depending on their contribution to addressing climate change.

The availability of capital for (and the revenue consequences of) publicly funded infrastructure investment is a key constraint to progress; meaning it cannot be renewed at the pace we would wish and there must be a focus on prioritisation. As such the ISNI brings attention to the need for better asset management to improve the performance of our existing assets, to prevent asset failure and adapt to climate change. Separate to the investment plan, the ISNI identifies a set of infrastructure challenges that require Executive action, for example, decarbonisation of the grid, where legislation is required to improve the regulatory environment and drive the appropriate private sector investment.

Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland – Qualitative Prioritisation Framework

The development of the ISNI was aided by a qualitative assessment framework developed with cross-departmental input. The framework assesses the relative contribution of departmental proposals to the achievement of People, Planet and Prosperity-focused outcomes that align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. To do this, departments self-assessed their capital investment proposals against the framework shown below scoring each proposal on a scale of 1-10 against a set of criteria.

1	People		Social Inclusion	Health & Wellbeing	Quality Homes	Places & Spaces	Public Safety
2	Planet		Climate Mitigation	Climate Adaptation	Air & Water Quality	Waste & Circular Economy	Nature & Biodiversity
3	Prosperity		Innovation and R&D	Productivity	Economic Activity	Regional Balance	Education, Skills & Learning

Budget Position

The public sector finance position in Northern Ireland has been challenging, and this is likely to remain the case for the duration of the carbon budget period. This will influence the pace and scale that the policies outlined in this plan can be implemented. However, departments should continue to work to reprioritise investments to deliver climate action that has greatest impact; where possible, actively identify external funding opportunities and models; exploit opportunities afforded by UK initiatives such as those outlined in the UK Green Finance Strategy³²³; identify if there are any relevant financial instruments under UK Green Investment policy; take a new approach to compete for UK-wide funding, including collaborating, where possible, with the National Wealth Fund to build a local pipeline of investible projects³²⁴; and embed net zero in our decision-making processes.

³²³ Mobilising green investment: 2023 green finance strategy - GOV.UK)

³²⁴ The UKIB aims to partner with the private sector and local government to increase infrastructure investment focusing on two strategic objectives: tackling climate change and enabling regional and local economic growth. The bank has £22 billion financial capacity to invest across these two functions, providing corporate and project finance and investing across the capital structure to private sector whilst offering impartial, expert advisory services, currently at no charge, and has £4 billion of the lowest cost finance to support local authority infrastructure projects above £5 million. The UK Government has also announced a new 'National Wealth Fund' with a commitment to provide an additional £7.3 billion of funding to the UK Infrastructure Bank to invest in priority areas, including renewable energy.

Just Transition Fund for Agriculture

A specific section in the Act²²⁵ requires DAERA to establish a scheme for the administration of a fund to be known as the Just Transition Fund for Agriculture. The purpose of this scheme is to provide advice and financial assistance to the agriculture sector to deliver its contribution to meeting carbon budgets and emissions reduction targets by implementing proposals and policies to be included in Climate Action Plans.

The nature and scale of a future bespoke Just Transition Fund for Agriculture will be determined by emerging needs and the advice from the Just Transition Commission and will need to be considered in the context of budgetary pressures and priorities across the Northern Ireland Executive. However, as a starting point, the Executive has agreed to set aside dedicated funds in 2025/26 for a Just Transition Fund for Agriculture in the budget.

For the first carbon budget period, the majority of actions to support the agriculture sector to reduce emissions, outlined in the Agriculture chapter of this Climate Action Plan, are those being developed through DAERA's new Sustainable Agriculture Programme. This programme aims to transition to a more sustainable farming sector by seeking to implement policies and strategies that benefit climate and the environment, while very importantly supporting our economically and socially significant agriculture sector. The schemes to be introduced through this programme will be essential levers in contributing to Northern Ireland's statutory obligations under the Act and achieving a genuinely just transition.

²²⁵ Section 31 (1) and (2) in the Act

13.4 Carbon Pricing, the Emissions Trading Scheme and Carbon Leakage

Carbon pricing captures the external costs of emissions.³²⁶ These external costs are the costs of climate change that society pays for, for example, crop damage, health care costs from heat waves, and loss of property from flooding and sea level rise. Carbon pricing links these costs to their sources by putting a price on the carbon dioxide (CO₂) emitted. This shifts the costs from the public to those responsible. It incentivises polluters to change their activities to reduce emissions or to continue emitting but pay for the damage caused.

The World Bank points to the growing consensus among governments and businesses on the fundamental role of carbon pricing in the transition to a decarbonised economy. It can help to incentivise clean development; whilst providing a source of revenue and mobilising financial investment, which is particularly important where budgets are constrained.

Emission Trading Schemes (ETS) are an important carbon pricing instrument. In the UK and EU, they act as strong policy levers for driving down GHG emissions in energy intensive industries and the aviation and power sectors. They work on a 'cap and trade' principle, where a limit is set on the total amount of certain GHG that can be emitted by sectors covered by the schemes. This restricts the total amount of carbon that can be emitted and, as the cap is decreased over time, can make a significant contribution to achieving the net zero target. Within this cap, participants receive free allowances and/or buy emission allowances at auction or on the secondary market to cover their reportable emissions. If a company reduces its emissions, it can either keep spare allowances to cover future needs or sell them. This trading process creates a carbon market, putting a price on carbon to incentivise decarbonisation.

As the quantity of available allowances reduces, the price of carbon may be expected to rise. This makes it more cost effective to invest in abatement technology and switch to cleaner fuels, than to purchase carbon allowances. In this way, the schemes promote carbon emissions reduction and investment in clean, low carbon technologies.

The impact of ETS policy is intrinsic to emission projections for the applicable sectors, such as energy, and therefore ETS is not recorded specifically as a savings in our quantification exercise.

Following the UK's departure from the EU, Northern Ireland participates in both the UK Emission Trading Scheme (UK ETS) and, under the terms of the Windsor Framework (formerly the Northern Ireland Protocol), the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (EU ETS), solely for its electricity generators, to preserve the operation of the Single Electricity Market (SEM) on the island of Ireland.

The EU Commission adopted several laws in April 2023 to align with net zero objectives as part of their wider Fit for 55 Climate Package³²⁷, which provides their roadmap for

³²⁶ What is Carbon Pricing? | Carbon Pricing Dashboard (worldbank.org)

³²⁷ Fit for 55 - The EU's plan for a green transition - Consilium (europa.eu)

reducing the EU's GHG emissions by 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels and reach climate neutrality by 2050 as now enshrined in EU Law. This includes increasing the overall ambition of the EU ETS, including the reduction of the number of carbon allowances to align the cap with a net zero trajectory.

The UK ETS is a UK-wide scheme and is administered jointly by the UK, Welsh and Scottish governments, and DAERA in Northern Ireland, which collectively constitute the UK ETS Authority. DAERA also administers the EU ETS on behalf of Northern Ireland. In Northern Ireland, sectors that participate in either the EU or UK ETS accounted for 16.39% of Northern Ireland's total GHG emissions for 2020. This percentage is likely to increase as the UK ETS develops over the coming years.

The participation of the UK in emissions trading schemes since the inception of the EU ETS in 2005 has seen a 52% decrease in traded sector emissions in Northern Ireland alone. That is equivalent to just over 3 mega tonnes reduced in Northern Ireland from just those sectors. It is expected to build on this progress with the ongoing development of the UK ETS. The UK ETS primary auctions have generated £15 billion in revenue for HM Treasury in the first three years of its existence.

Last year, the UK ETS Authority consulted on proposals to develop the UK Scheme to align with the UK Government and Devolved Administrations' net zero targets. Key outcomes outlined in the government response to this consultation included the intention to implement a reduced emissions cap, aligned with net zero emissions, from 1 January 2024 and expand the scope of the scheme into other sectors (domestic maritime and waste incineration/energy from waste). The government response also committed to consult further on future opportunities for scheme development, including the incorporation of Greenhouse Gas Removal (GGR) technology into the UK ETS carbon market and on consideration as to how carbon dioxide from UK ETS installations being transported to permanent geological storage, by means other than via pipelines, can be accounted for within the scheme.

Carbon leakage is the transfer of the production of goods (including agricultural goods) and the provision of services to countries with less stringent climate change policies. It has the potential to undermine action to reduce global emissions, resulting in missed investment opportunities and offshoring²²⁸ of production and jobs.

To date, ETS-related policy development has been identified as posing a potential risk of carbon leakage. High carbon prices and reduced allocation of free allowances under ETS (free allowances being the main carbon leakage mitigation policy tool within the scheme) could increase the risk of carbon leakage and reduce availability of capital to invest in decarbonisation. This will need to be taken into consideration in the development of the UK Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). In December 2023, the UK Government announced its intention to implement a CBAM from 2027.

²²⁸ Offshoring is the relocation of a business process from one country to another.

A CBAM applies a levy on imported goods within scope, based on the equivalent UK ETS price, ensuring that imported goods are subject to an equivalent carbon price to that faced by UK producers. We will continue to work closely with the UK Government as they seek to address this issue and engage internationally to establish methodologies that allow fair comparison of measuring emissions and mitigations. Consideration will also need to be given to how the proposed UK CBAM will interact with the EU CBAM, which was introduced, on a reporting only basis from 1 October 2023 (i.e. importers of goods within scope are required to report on the emissions associated with production of those goods but are not yet subject to a financial liability).

CHAPTER 13: SUMMARY OF INVESTMENT, COST AND BENEFITS ACTIONS

1. By December 2025, subject to funding availability, DAERA will commission further research to understand the macroeconomic impact of climate action and understanding of the cost/benefits of different measures.
2. During the carbon budget period, departments will review potential funding sources and communicate with relevant stakeholders to maximise uptake.
3. During the carbon budget period, DAERA will establish a scheme for the administration of a Just Transition Fund for Agriculture informed by need and potential benefit.
4. During the carbon budget period, departments will need to invest in research and development to inform decision making and future policy development.
5. During the carbon budget period, DAERA will work closely with the EU and UK to ensure that the Northern Ireland position is reflected in the design and implementation of the ETS.

14. Climate Adaptation

14.1 Introduction

The world is already experiencing changes in average temperatures and an increasing frequency of severe weather events as a result of climate change.³²⁹ During 2023 and 2024 we have seen global heat and sea temperature records repeatedly broken, and the extreme impacts that this is having on our weather systems, on food production and yields, and increased health risks from extreme heat stress.³³⁰ It is critical that we ensure that our society, economy and environment are well adapted and resilient to both the current and future projected impacts of climate change.

14.2 Adaptation and Mitigation

Whilst in recent years much focus has been placed on climate mitigation measures concerned with reducing our emissions, we must not lose sight of the fact that reduction of emissions is only part of the climate change challenge. Even when emissions are reduced to net zero, we will still have locked in climate change impacts as a result of historic emissions. To properly address the impacts of climate change, we must ensure that there continues to be adequate investment and attention given to climate adaptation measures, whilst we simultaneously continue to progress work to reduce our emissions.

Some measures, such as peatland restoration and afforestation provide dual mitigation and adaptation benefits through the carbon they store and their contribution to flood prevention through increased water storage capacity and lag time following periods of heavy rainfall. However, it is also critical that we continue to invest in and take forward specific climate adaptation measures, focused on protecting our economy, communities and environment from the impacts of climate change that cannot be avoided through emissions reduction alone.

In developing the policies and proposals which seek to reduce our GHG emissions, within this plan we have taken account of both the current and projected impacts of climate change as required by the Act.

14.3 Impacts of Climate Change in Northern Ireland

The UK Climate Risk Summary Report for Northern Ireland³³¹ which was published by the CCC in June 2021, highlighted that Northern Ireland is already observing climate-related changes. We can also observe how climate change can exacerbate existing challenges especially in our natural environment. We have seen this locally with the proliferation of blue-green algae in Lough Neagh.

Table 28³³² highlights that these changes include an average annual temperature increase of 0.7°C and an annual mean rainfall increase of 6.4% from the mid-1970s to mid-2010s in Northern Ireland; and a UK-wide increase in extreme heat events and sea level rise of ~1.4mm per year since 1901 (i.e. 16cm to date).

³²⁹ Introduction | UNFCCC

³³⁰ From widespread floods to severe heatwaves, ESOTC 2023 puts Europe's climate in focus | Copernicus

³³¹ CCRA-Evidence-Report-Northern-Ireland-Summary-Final.pdf (ukclimaterisk.org)

³³² UK Climate Projections (UKCP) - Met Office

Table 28: Observed impacts of climate change in Northern Ireland from UK Climate Projections 2018

Variable	Change in Northern Ireland
Average annual temperature	Increase of 0.7°C from mid-1970s to mid-2010s
Annual mean rainfall	Increase of 6.4% from mid-1970s to mid-2010s
Weather extremes	UK-wide increase in extreme heat events Little evidence yet on changes in extreme rainfall
Sea level rise	UK-wide increase of ~1.4mm per year since 1901 (16cm to date)

The 2018 UK Climate Projections³³³ for Northern Ireland predict (as compared to a 1981-2000 baseline):

- A rise in annual temperatures of approximately 1.2°C by the 2050s;
- Hotter, drier summers with warmer, wetter winters;
- An increase in winter rainfall of approximately 3% by the 2050s;
- A rise in sea level of approximately 14-16cm by the 2050s; and
- Greater weather extremes and increased frequency of severe weather events.

The CCC's independent assessment of climate risk, which was used to help inform the third UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA3), identified 61 risks and opportunities from climate change to Northern Ireland – including to business, infrastructure, housing, the natural environment and our health – and from the impacts of climate change internationally. Each of these risks were given an urgency score where risks categorised as 'more action needed' and 'further investigation' are more urgent than those categorised as 'watching brief' and 'sustain current action'. Of the 61 risks and opportunities considered in the assessment, more action is needed now to address 31 of them, further investigation is needed for 19, sustaining current adaptation action is only deemed appropriate for five of the risks or opportunities, and six have been classified as remaining on a 'watching brief'. This represented a significant increase in risk ratings from the previous advice which informed the CCRA2³³⁴ in 2017.

Specific risks considered included risks of new pests, pathogens and climate sensitive diseases; increased risk of wildfires during prolonged periods of heat; risks to water supply (quality and abundance) and risks to energy generation; over-heating of buildings which may impact upon more vulnerable members of society such as those with

³³³ UK Climate Projections (UKCP) - Met Office
³³⁴ UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2017 Evidence Report - Climate Change Committee

underlying health conditions; associated damage to property and infrastructure from an increased frequency of severe weather events and associated disruption to businesses and emergency services access; reduced employee productivity; coastal erosion; and food production and distribution impacts.

In recent years, we have experienced the impacts of climate change locally in Northern Ireland.³³⁵ From widespread flooding in the North-West in 2017³³⁶ to more recent flooding events in Downpatrick and Newry in 2023.³³⁷ We have also seen back-to-back and significant storm events, including Storm Éowyn in January 2025 and Storms Isha and Jocelyn in 2024, resulting in power outages³³⁸ and damage to IT infrastructure³³⁹ whilst also seeing record temperatures broken³⁴⁰ and significant wildfire events.³⁴¹

14.4 The Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme

The Climate Change Act 2008 requires that the UK makes an assessment of climate risk and takes subsequent action to address these risks on a five-yearly cycle. Northern Ireland, along with the other devolved governments, contributes towards the development of a UK-wide CCRA³⁴² which is informed by the CCC's independent assessment of climate risk to the UK (CCRA-IA).

In response to the latest CCRA, Defra³⁴³ leads on coordinating the development of a UK-level National Adaptation Programme (NAP), whilst DAERA coordinates the development of a Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme (NICCAP)³⁴⁴ on behalf of the Northern Ireland Executive. These adaptation programmes, as required by the 2008 Act, set out details of policies and proposals to be implemented by departments in response to the latest CCRA over the lifespan of the five-year programme.

We recognise the important role our councils, environmental non-government organisations, businesses, industry and academia play in creating climate resilience and so, while not required by the 2008 Act, we also include actions from key stakeholders outside of departments in our adaptation programmes. Northern Ireland is, at present, the only UK region to have incorporated local government and civil society into its adaptation programme.

³³⁵ Extreme Weather Events in Northern Ireland | Climate NI

³³⁶ Review of North West Flooding August 2017 | Department for Infrastructure (infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)

³³⁷ Flooding causes havoc across Northern Ireland - in pictures - BBC News

³³⁸ Storm Éowyn: Thousands without power as storm batters NI - BBC News

³³⁹ Fibrus: Storm-damaged broadband repairs may take a week - BBC News

³⁴⁰ Castlederg confirmed as holding NI's hottest day record - BBC News

³⁴¹ Slieve Donard: Over 100 firefighters continue to tackle Mourne's 'major incident' - BBC News

³⁴² Section 56 of the UK Climate Change Act 2008

³⁴³ The UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

³⁴⁴ The current NICCAP was published in September 2019, Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme 2019-2024 Final-Laid. PDF (dawra-ni.gov.uk)



In January 2022, the CCRA3³⁴⁵ was laid in Parliament by Defra following the publication of the CCC's independent assessment of climate risk to the UK in June 2021. The CCRA3 laid in Parliament agreed with the CCC's independent assessment across the 61 risk and opportunity areas.

In response to the CCRA3, DAERA has commenced the development of the third Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme (NICCAP3) in 2024 which, subject to Executive agreement, following a period of public consultation in early 2025 is due to be published during 2025.

To help inform the development of NICCAP3, and with the agreement of other departments, DAERA took the proactive step of commissioning the CCC to undertake an independent assessment of NICCAP2 ahead of a new legal requirement under the Act³⁴⁶. Key messages highlighted in the CCC's assessment,³⁴⁷ which was published in April 2023, included that planning for the impacts of climate change in Northern Ireland remained at an early stage with limited evidence of delivery (Figure 35). The CCC also recommended that the next NICCAP will need to increase its scope to include the full range of sectors and policy areas which require adaptation, address data gaps and build upon the progress made to date. In the development of NICCAP3, in response to the CCRA3, departments are taking account of the CCC's advice and recommendations as appropriate.

Figure 35: Key messages from CCC assessment

NICCAP2 has some of the elements required for a vision of a well-adapted Northern Ireland. The current NICCAP objectives envisage a Northern Ireland that is adapted to climate change across seven areas. Most of the seven areas have one or more key actions within the programme.

Planning for climate change in Northern Ireland remains at an early stage. Across key areas of adaptation most of the critical policy and planning milestones that we identify as important for delivering adaptation are not in place. Preparation for climate change in areas falling outside the scope of NICCAP2 is noticeably poorer than for areas within the programme.

Despite the critical importance of adapting to climate change, there is only limited evidence of delivery, and data gaps in key areas are unacceptably large. The absence of relevant data is a key barrier to assessing all aspects relevant to delivery and implementation of adaptation policy. For two-thirds of the adaptation outcomes we look at in this report, the lack of relevant indicator data prevents us making a judgement on progress in delivery and implementation. This needs to be addressed with urgency.

The next NICCAP must go much further than its predecessor. It must increase its scope to include the full range of sectors and policy areas which require adaptation, and critical data gaps need to be closed.

³⁴⁵ UK Climate Risk Assessment (CCRA3)

³⁴⁶ Sections 48 and 49 in the Act.

³⁴⁷ Adapting to climate change – Progress in Northern Ireland - Climate Change Committee (theccc.org.uk)

To ensure that future adaptation progress is independently monitored, the Act places a requirement²⁴⁸ on the CCC to undertake an assessment of the progress made, to make recommendations for the next adaptation programme which DAERA must coordinate and to lay a response in the Assembly with input provided by other departments as appropriate. This new legal requirement will commence for NICCAP3.

CHAPTER 14: SUMMARY OF CLIMATE ADAPTATION ACTIONS

1. During 2025, DAERA will consult on and finalise the third Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme (NICCAP3).
2. Throughout the carbon budget period, departments will work with a range of key stakeholders and through networks such as Climate Northern Ireland to raise awareness of the need for climate adaptation measures.

²⁴⁸ Sections 48 and 49 in the Act

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Annex C	Summary of Information – Stakeholder Engagement
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Annex I	Consultation Document
Annex J	Easy Read

List of Acronyms

Acronym	Meaning
AA	Appropriate Assessment
AD	Anaerobic Digestion
AERA Committee	Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
AFBI	Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ALBs	Arm's Length Bodies
BECCS	Bioenergy with carbon capture and storage
BEVs	Battery Electric Vehicles
BITC	Business in the Community
BREEAM	Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method
BRT2	Belfast Rapid Transport 2
Ca	Calcium
CABB	Cooperation across Borders for Biodiversity
CAFRE	College of Agriculture Food and Rural Enterprise
CAN	Calcium Ammonium Nitrate
CANN	Collaborative Action for the Natura Network
CBAM	Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism
CCC	Climate Change Committee
CCEA	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations & Assessment
CCRA	Climate Change Risk Assessment

Acronym	Meaning
CCRA-IA	Independent assessment of climate risk to the UK
CCS	Carbon Capture and Storage
CH ₄	Methane
CHPQA	Combined Heat and Power Quality Assurance
CO ₂	Carbon Dioxide
COP26	26th United Nations Climate Change Conference
COP29	29th United Nations Climate Change Conference
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 19
CPANI	Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland
CRIA	Child Rights Impact Assessment
CSTA	Chief Scientific and Technology Adviser
DACCS	Direct Air Capture with Carbon Capture and Storage
DAERA	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (NI)
DE	Department of Education (NI)
DEFRA	Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs (UK)
DESNZ	Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (UK)
DfC	Department for Communities (NI)
DfE	Department for the Economy (NI)
DfI	Department for Infrastructure (NI)
DoF	Department of Finance (NI)

Acronym	Meaning
DoH	Department of Health (NI)
DoJ	Department of Justice (NI)
DUKES	Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics
EA	Education Authority
EAYS	Education Authority Youth Service
EIP	Environmental Improvement Plan
EMS	Energy Management Strategy for Central Government
EPT	Emissions Projection Tool
EQIA	Equality Impact Assessments
ETS	Emission Trading Scheme
EU	European Union
EU ETS	EU Emission Trading Scheme
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
F-gases	Fluorinated Gases
FSEIA	Financial, Social and Economic Impact Assessment
GB	Great Britain
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GGR	Greenhouse Gas Removal
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GLPR	Government Land and Property Register

Acronym	Meaning
GSNI	Geological Survey of Northern Ireland
GWh	Gigawatt hours
GWP	Global Warming Potential
HEVs	Hybrid Electric Vehicles
HFCs	Hydrofluorocarbons
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessments
HSC	Health and Social Care
ICE	Internal Combustion Engines
ICE	Institution of Civil Engineers
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDNI	Industrial Decarbonisation for Northern Ireland
IETF	Industrial Energy Transformation Fund
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ISNI	Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland
JFS	Joint Fisheries Statement
K	Potassium
KNIB	Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful
KtCO ₂ e	Kilotonne of Carbon Dioxide equivalent
kWh	Kilowatt hour
LACMW	Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste Statistics

Acronym	Meaning
LGV	Light Goods Vehicle
LiDAR	Light detection and ranging
LSE	Likely significant effects
LULUCF	Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry
LUNZ	Land Use for Net Zero
Mg	Magnesium
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
MtCO ₂ e	Million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent
MW	Megawatt
N ₂ O	Nitrous oxide
NAP	National Adaptation Programme
NbS	Nature-based Solutions
NF ₃	Nitrogen trifluoride
NI	Northern Ireland
NICCAP	Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme
NICCY	Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People
NICS	Northern Ireland Civil Service
NIEA	Northern Ireland Environment Agency
NIEN	Northern Ireland Electricity Network
NIHE	Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Acronym	Meaning
NIRO	Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation
NO	Nitrogen monoxide
NO ₂	Nitrogen dioxide
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OEP	Office for Environmental Protection
OREAP	Offshore Renewable Energy Action Plan
P	Phosphorus
PFCs	Perfluorocarbons
PfG	Programme for Government
PHEVs	Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles
PM	Particulate matter
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
RIA	Regulatory Impact Assessment
RNIA	Rural Needs Impact Assessment
RoI	Republic of Ireland
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
S	Sulphur
SAMU	Strategic Asset Management Unit
SCAMP NI	Sustainable Catchment Area Management Practice Northern Ireland
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals

Acronym	Meaning
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SEM	Single Electricity Market
SEUPB	Special EU Programmes Body
SF ₆	Sulphur hexafluoride
SNHS	Soil Nutrient Health Scheme
SO ₂	Sulphur dioxide
SOLACE	Society of Local Authority Chief Executives
SONI	System Operator for Northern Ireland
SPPS	Strategic Planning Policy Statement
SRO	Senior Responsible Owner
SSFP	Smart Systems Flexibility Plan
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
SUVs	Sport Utility Vehicles
TEAGASC	Agriculture and Food Development Authority (RoI)
TEEP	Technically, Environmentally and Economically Practical
TEM	Transport Emissions Model
TEO	The Executive Office (NI)
UK	United Kingdom
UK ETS	UK Emission Trading Scheme
UKCP	UK Climate Projections

Acronym	Meaning
UKFS	UK Forestry Standard
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UR	Utility Regulator
VETS	Vehicle Emissions Trading Schemes
VMS	Valuing Medicines Strategy
WCLO	Waste and Contaminated Land Order (NI) 1997
ZEVs	Zero Emissions Vehicles



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Depairtment o'

**Fairmin, Environment
an' Kintra Matthers**

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NORTHERN IRELAND CLIMATE ACTION PLAN



Department of
Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs

An Roinn

Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe

Department of

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**Consultation Document
2023-2027**

This document is also available on the DAERA website at:
<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/climate-action-plan-consultation>

On request, we can arrange to provide other formats of the documents above, such as:

- Paper Copy
- Large Print
- Braille
- Other Languages

To request an alternative format, please contact us:

Email: climateactionplan@daera-ni.gov.uk

Telephone: 028 9081 6904 and talk to one of the Consultation Team.

If you have a hearing difficulty, you can contact the Department via Text Relay.

Dial: 18001 028 9081 6904

Post: Climate Action Delivery Division
 Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
 Clare House
 303 Airport Road
 BT3 9ED

Guidance is provided on the 'Confidentiality' of responses under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, in Annex 1 for your reference. Also, if you require any further information, please contact a member of the consultation team on 028 9081 6904.

Seeking your views

Why we are consulting?

We have engaged with organisations and individuals to start a climate conversation about this draft Climate Action Plan. However, this plan will impact everyone - so we want everyone to have the opportunity to consider and inform the final plan by holding a 16-week public consultation.

We want you to tell us what you think of the policies and proposals that we have identified and share any comments or suggestions that you have. The draft Plan will be revised to reflect the views from the consultation, before we lay a final Plan before the Assembly, following Executive agreement.

How to respond to the consultation

You are invited to respond to the questions by completing the online survey. The survey is quick and simple to complete and seeks views on our proposed approach, policies and proposals and delivery and monitoring arrangements. Please supplement your response with any relevant information, evidence or analysis.

The consultation will run from 19 June 2025 at 10:00 to 8 October 2025. We encourage early responses, and all responses should be submitted no later than **11.59pm on 8 October 2025** to ensure they can be fully considered.

If you are unable to complete the survey online, please contact the Climate Action Plan consultation team by email: climateactionplan@daera-ni.gov.uk

An easy read version of the consultation document is available online but if you need documents to be provided in an alternative format, please let us know.

By responding to this consultation, you are agreeing that any information gathered may be shared with other NICS departments.

There will be a series of stakeholder engagement events during the consultation period. These will take place both online and in person across Northern Ireland.

Details are available on the DAERA website:
<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/climate-action-plan-consultation>

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1. Introduction

This is Northern Ireland's first Climate Action Plan 2023-2027. It is important because it is the first step on our journey to net zero. Producing this plan is a statutory requirement under the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022. In December 2024, the Executive agreed that for the period of this plan, 2023-2027, greenhouse gas emissions need to be reduced by 33% on average¹, to set us on the right path to net zero and contribute to global climate targets.

This first draft Climate Action Plan sets out 52 policies and proposals to reduce emissions across nine sectors: energy production and supply; transport; business and industrial processes; residential buildings; public buildings; waste management; agriculture; land use, land use change and forestry; and fisheries.

Our analysis shows that if all the policies and proposals are implemented at the pace and scale detailed in this plan, the first carbon budget 2023-2027 can be met.

Innovation and creative solutions to existing challenges will have an important role to play in this Climate Action Plan. Without it we will not achieve our goals. New ideas and technologies will help us achieve our climate ambition and create opportunities along the way.

This draft Northern Ireland Climate Action Plan 2023-2027 Consultation Document provides some of the key elements of what is an extremely detailed, complex and technical document. The full draft Climate Action Plan is available to access on the DAERA website along with alternative formats as requested.



¹ Compared to the base year (1990 for most gases)

2. Overview

In 2022, Northern Ireland passed its first climate legislation. The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (the Act) sets an ambitious target to reduce Northern Ireland's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to net zero by 2050. This means that we must remove at least as many emissions from our atmosphere as we produce.

The Act requires us to prepare and publish a Climate Action Plan every five years.

This plan sets out policies and proposals to achieve reductions in emissions and the actions to enable this to happen. The focus of this Climate Action Plan is on meeting the first carbon budget. A carbon budget sets a limit on the maximum amount of greenhouse gas emissions that can be produced over a five-year period. Keeping emissions within the limit set for each carbon budget period is important as it will set us on the right pathway to meet 2030, 2040 and 2050 targets, in line with the requirements of the legislation.

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has co-ordinated the publication of this draft Climate Action Plan, with each Northern Ireland department identifying policies and proposals to reduce emissions to reduce emissions and ensure that the carbon budget is achieved.

2.1 Climate Commitments in Northern Ireland

In January 2020, the need for a coordinated and strategic approach to the challenge of climate change was recognised in 'New Decade, New Approach', the deal to restore devolved government in Northern Ireland. Following the UK, Scottish and Welsh governments, it committed to introducing legislation and targets for reducing carbon emissions in line with the Paris Agreement.

In March 2022, the Northern Ireland Assembly passed the Climate Change Bill fulfilling the Executive's commitment to introduce its first climate legislation. Having received Royal Assent, the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 took effect in June 2022. The Act sets an ambitious emissions target of net zero by 2050, to achieve an overall balance in the emissions that we produce and those we remove from our atmosphere.

The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 sets a number of legal obligations including:

- Net zero target by 2050,
- Carbon budgets have to be set for each five year period, beginning in 2023 to 2027
- Climate Action Plans to be published covering each five year period – setting out how we will achieve our carbon budgets,
- Establish an independent Northern Ireland Climate Commissioner (being led by The Executive Office),
- Establish a Just Transition Commission,
- Establish a Just Transition Fund for Agriculture to provide advice and financial assistance to the agriculture sector,
- Sectoral Plans which set out longer term plans to meet targets,
- The requirement for Public Body Reporting legislation,
- Climate Action Plans must contain targets on soil quality, air quality and biodiversity and to support nature-based projects and solutions,
- Policies and proposals must have regard to the Just Transition Principle and the 11 just transition objectives.

2.2 Carbon Budget 2023-2027

After the Act was passed, DAERA sought advice from the Climate Change Committee (CCC) on what a path to net zero might be on appropriate emissions reduction targets for 2030 and 2040 and on appropriate levels for Northern Ireland's first three carbon budgets. This advice was provided by the CCC in its Advice Report² which was published in March 2023.

Following completion of the consultation exercise and consideration of the responses provided (a summary of the responses is available on DAERA's website³), regulations reflecting the CCC's recommendations were approved by the DAERA Minister and ultimately passed by the Assembly in December 2024. As a result, Northern Ireland's first three carbon budgets have been set in law and a new target for 2040⁴ has been set through an amendment made to the Act⁵. The current emissions reduction targets in the Act and carbon budgets which have been set for Northern Ireland under the Act are outlined in Table 1.

² Advice report: The path to a Net Zero Northern Ireland - Climate Change Committee (theccc.org.uk)

³ Summary of Responses: Consultation on Northern Ireland's 2030 & 2040 Emissions Reduction Targets & First Three Carbon Budgets & Seeking views on Climate Change Committee (CCC) Advice Report: The path to a Net Zero Northern Ireland | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

⁴ The Climate Change (2040 Emissions Target) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024

⁵ The Climate Change (Carbon Budgets 2023-2037) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024

Table 1: Northern Ireland’s 2030 and 2040 targets and first three carbon budgets.

Target/Budget	Emissions reductions required
2030 Target	A 48% emissions reduction by 2030 against the baseline ⁶
2040 Target	A 77% emissions reduction by 2040 against the baseline
2050 Target	A 100% emissions reduction by 2050 against the baseline
Carbon Budget 1 (2023-2027)	33% average annual reduction compared to the baseline
Carbon Budget 2 (2028-2032)	48% average annual reduction compared to the baseline
Carbon Budget 3 (2033-2037)	62% average annual reduction compared to the baseline

To achieve the emission reductions in line with the first carbon budget (covering the period 2023-2027), emissions need to reduce by an average of 33% annually, from the 1990 base year emission levels, across the five-year period. Therefore, policies and proposals included in this first draft Climate Action Plan need to meet this first carbon budget over the five-year period from 2023 to 2027.

⁶ The net Northern Ireland emissions account should be at least 48% lower than the baseline in 2030 and at least 77% lower than the baseline in 2040, while for carbon budgets, the recommended average annual reduction relates to reductions in the net Northern Ireland emissions account across the period compared to the baseline. The net Northern Ireland emissions account for a year means the aggregate amount of net emissions of each greenhouse gas in Northern Ireland (emissions and removals of a gas plus/minus any carbon units debited or credited to the account). The baseline is the aggregate amount of net Northern Ireland emissions of each greenhouse gas in the year specified in relation to that gas (1990 for Carbon dioxide, Methane and Nitrous oxide; 1995 for Hydrofluorocarbons, Perfluorocarbons, Sulphur hexafluoride and Nitrogen trifluoride).

3. Developing the Climate Action Plan

Developing this draft Climate Action Plan has provided a significant opportunity to work together, across government, across sectors and across society to address the most important challenge of our time. Significant collaboration across departments has taken place to understand the Act's requirements (including roles and responsibilities), determine the strategic direction, identify methodologies and agree the content of this pivotal plan. Against a background of complex circumstances, departments have managed priorities, reallocated staff resources and built internal knowledge and capacity to support the development process as far as possible. In wider engagement with stakeholders, the shared goal has been to ensure that Northern Ireland is well placed to meet the challenge of reducing emissions.

3.1 DAERA Responsibilities

DAERA is responsible for leading the preparation and publication of this draft Climate Action Plan. DAERA is required to carry out a 16-week public consultation on the draft plan and, subsequently, to lay the results of the public consultation before the Assembly, and at the same time lay a final Climate Action Plan. In fulfilling these responsibilities, DAERA is required to collaborate with all departments and other stakeholders¹.

¹ Section 29 of the Act

3.2 Departments' Responsibilities

Whilst all departments have informed the development of this Climate Action Plan, Table 2 identifies the lead department assigned to eight sectors.

Table 2: Climate Action Plan Sectors and associated Lead Department

Climate Action Plan	Lead Department(s)
Energy production and supply (including for residential, public and district heating and cooling purposes)	Department for the Economy
Transport (including shipping and aviation)	Department for Infrastructure
Business and Industrial Processes	Department for the Economy
Residential and Public Buildings [*]	Residential Buildings – Department for Communities Public Buildings - Department for the Economy
Waste Management	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Agriculture	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Land Use and Land Use Change, including Forestry	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Fisheries	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

^{*} For the purposes of this plan, the two components of the buildings sector are considered separately.

3.3 Measuring Greenhouse Gases

Greenhouse Gas Inventories are compiled by following detailed guidance produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – the UN body for assessing the science related to climate change. Inventories report on seven direct GHGs:

- Carbon dioxide (CO₂);
 - Methane (CH₄);
 - Nitrous oxide (N₂O);
 - Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs);
 - Perfluorocarbons (PFCs);
 - Sulphur hexafluoride (SF₆); and
 - Nitrogen trifluoride (NF₃).
- } known as Fluorinated gases or F-gases

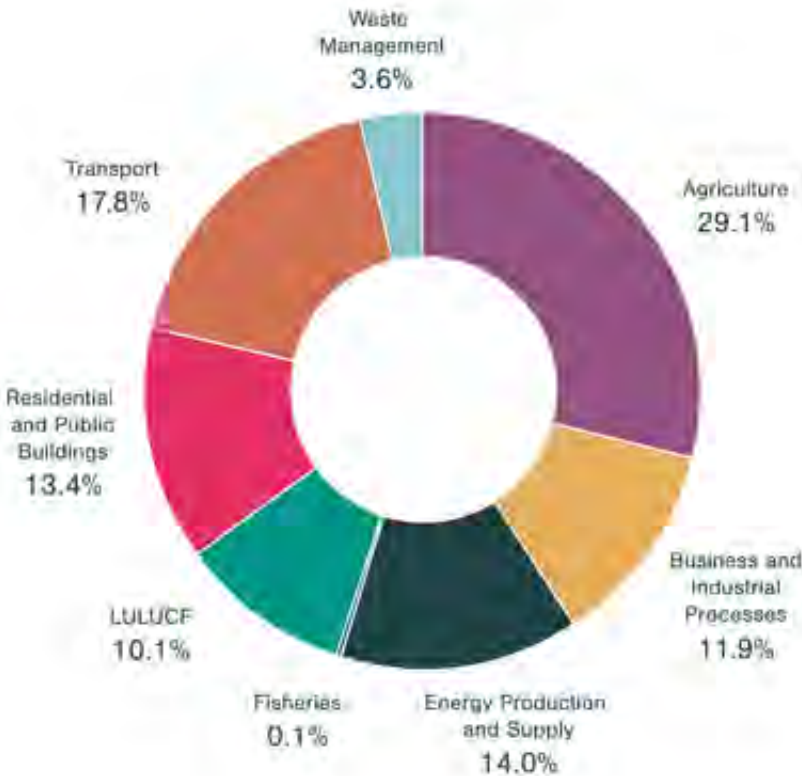
Each of these gases has been assigned a global warming potential (GWP) which defines how potent it is compared with CO₂ over a 100-year cycle (where CO₂ has a GWP of 1). Once the emissions of GHGs are converted into their GWP equivalents, the emissions are presented as CO₂ equivalent emissions, i.e. CO₂e.⁹ This approach, known as GWP100, is the internationally accepted reporting standard required by the UN.

⁹ Emissions are based on 100-year GWPs (without climate feedback) that are set out in the IPCC's Fifth Assessment report (AR5). As such, data contained in this document is reported on an 'AR5' basis.

3.4 Current Emissions by Sector

The Act requires that plans are made to reduce emissions by sectors. Therefore, a profile of greenhouse gases emitted within each of the sectors is detailed in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Net Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Sector (%), 2022¹⁰



¹⁰ From 2022, there have been changes to emissions reporting in the UK GHG Inventory, with NC sectors being replaced by Territorial Emissions Statistics (TES) sectors to better meet users' needs. These changes have been reflected in the Northern Ireland GHG Inventory statistical bulletins. For the Northern Ireland draft Climate Action Plan and Quantification Report, inventory lines within the TES sectors have been mapped back to the NC sectors to maintain alignment to the sectors detailed in the Act. The data used to inform this chart is available at: Greenhouse Gas Inventories for England, Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland: 1990-2022 | National Atmospheric Emissions Inventory

4. Quantification Summary

The policies and proposals set out across the sectors in the Sector Policies and Proposals chapter in the plan represent Northern Ireland’s approach to delivering the emissions reductions required during the first carbon budget period (2023-2027). To assess the impact this suite of policies and proposals will have on emissions levels, an Evidence and Analysis Group, representing each department and led by the DAERA Chief Scientific Adviser, oversaw the estimation of emissions savings arising from the policies and proposals in each sector. Details of the exercise to quantify each policy and proposal, including the methodologies used and assumptions for each sector, are set out in the Quantification Report which has been published alongside the draft Climate Action Plan. Chapter 5 in the plan summarises the approach to and results of the quantification exercise for the first carbon budget period (2023-2027).

4.1 Quantification of Policies and Proposals

Each policy and proposal within the plan was assessed for its projected impact on GHG levels and the findings were combined into sectoral and overall analyses. Emissions projections to 2027, based on the draft Climate Action Plan policies and proposals, are outlined in Table 3. These projections align with the Central Scenario for all policies and proposals and therefore represent the expected outcome of the draft Climate Action Plan.

Table 3: Annual emissions levels for period 2020 to 2027 (actual and projected)

Year	Historic Emissions (MtCO ₂ e)	Central Projected Emissions (MtCO ₂ e)	Reduction in emissions from Base Year
Base Year*	**29.0	-	-
2020	**21.2	-	27.0%
2021	**22.0	-	24.1%
2022	**21.3	-	26.4%
2023	-	20.5	29.1%
2024	-	19.6	32.3%
2025	-	19.4	33.1%
2026	-	19.0	34.3%
2027	-	18.4	36.6 %
Total (2023-2027)	-	97.0	33.1% Average Annual Reduction

*1990 Base Year refers to 1990 for CO₂, CH₄ and N₂O, or 1995 for fluorinated gases (F-gases¹¹). **published GHG Inventory data.

¹¹ F-gases are fluorine containing compounds which are potent greenhouse gases, including: Sulphur Hexafluoride (SF₆), Nitrogen Trifluoride (NF₃), Perfluorocarbons (PFCs) and Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs).

5. Sector Policies and Proposals

This chapter describes the policies and proposals required to achieve the first carbon budget for Northern Ireland.¹²

Policies and Proposals

A policy is a committed course of action to which a policy outcome can be attributed with a reasonable level of confidence.

A proposal is a suggested course of action or exploratory action, the details of which might change as this course of action is explored further. Proposals are generally at an earlier stage of development than policies and more work will be needed to determine what they entail, how they might be delivered and how they could be funded.

Collectively, the policies and proposals included in this plan describe the approach to meeting Northern Ireland's emissions reduction targets.

The policies and proposals outlined in this chapter of the draft Climate Action Plan represent those which departments consider are achievable and deliverable as part of a credible approach to meeting our proposed 2023-2027 carbon budget.

To assess the impact the suite of policies and proposals will have on emissions levels, an Evidence and Analysis Group, representing each department and led by the DAERA Chief Scientific Adviser, oversaw the estimation of emissions savings arising from the policies and proposals in each sector. For some of the policies or proposals, the emissions savings cannot be quantified at this time (referred to as unquantified in subsequent sections in this report)

¹² The sectors in this chapter are ordered to align with section 33 of the Act.

5.1 Energy production and supply

Sector Summary



Energy Production and Supply Emissions Summary

- Energy production and supply emissions are almost exclusively from burning fossil fuels for electricity generation at power stations.
- Energy production and supply emissions have made the biggest contribution to the overall decrease in Northern Ireland emissions from 1990 to 2022, with a 43.8% decrease in this sector.
- Renewable sources produced 45.4% of Northern Ireland's electricity from April 2023 – March 2024.¹³
- The Act sets a target of at least 80% of electricity consumption to come from renewable sources by 2030.

Policy Approach

Further emissions reductions will be achieved through **increasing renewable energy production**. This requires continued management of the **Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation (NIRO)** support scheme and a new **Renewable Electricity Support Scheme** which both protects consumers and provides incentives to invest in new renewable electricity projects.

Policies and Proposals

Policy: The Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation (NIRO) support scheme (jointly quantified in the 80% of electricity consumption from renewable energy by 2030 target).

Proposal: A new Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (jointly quantified in the 80% of electricity consumption from renewable energy by 2030 target).

Policy: Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases (F-Gases) Regulations (2015) (UK-wide policy, but with separate Regulations for GB and NI), and new EU Regulation on F-gases in 2024 (Unquantified).

Emissions Projections:

Table 4 presents the projected emissions for the energy production and supply sector across the first carbon budgetary period. Energy production and supply sector emissions are projected to be 0.52 MtCO₂e less than the emission levels assumed for this sector within the CCC adjusted pathway.

¹³ Electricity Consumption and Renewable Generation in Northern Ireland (nirsra.gov.uk)

Table 4: Energy production and supply sector projected emissions in the central scenario compared with the adjusted CCC sectoral pathway.

 Sector	Projected Emissions (MtCO ₂ e)						Difference in CCC adjusted pathway and Northern Ireland Projections
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total	
Energy Production and Supply	2.98	2.29	2.35	2.39	2.33	12.33	-0.52 MtCO ₂ e
Energy Production and Supply CCC*	2.76	2.63	2.58	2.5	2.37	12.85	

**These figures are based on the CCC advisory pathway but have been adjusted to take account of the 2022 inventory publication.*

To read the policies and proposals for this sector in full, please go to Chapter 6 in the draft Climate Action Plan document.

5.2 Transport (including shipping and aviation)

Sector Summary



Transport Sector Emissions Summary

- Tackling transport sector emissions will require a clear, strategic, focused approach. Interventions linked to switching fuels will be crucial in decarbonising the transport sector. Whilst other interventions, such as a focus on shifting modes of travel and reducing travel journeys, will not deliver the same level of reductions to overall emissions, they will have an important role to play in contributing to the decarbonisation agenda and the wider strategic goals of DfI.
- The Transport Sector includes emissions from surface road transport, domestic shipping and aviation, and aircraft support vehicles. It is the second largest contributor to emissions in Northern Ireland.
- Tailpipe emissions from road transport - cars, buses, light duty trucks, heavy duty trucks, and motorcycles are responsible for 88.7% of the sector's emissions in 2022, with the passenger car being the largest contributor to transportation emissions.
- The Northern Ireland Greenhouse Gas emissions inventory highlights that the Transport Sector Emissions in 2022 (3.8 MtCO₂e) are greater than 1990 emissions (3.6 MtCO₂e).
- This increasing road transport emissions trend is a global issue. Although there have been improvements in vehicle and fuel efficiency; this benefit has been offset by increasing numbers of registered private vehicles, increased journeys and the increasing size and weight of vehicles.

Policy Approach

Tackling transport sector emissions will require a clear, strategic, focused approach. DfI will prioritise and deliver against three policies over the first carbon budget period to reduce vehicle emissions:

1. Policy One: Reducing vehicle emissions by **switching** fuels to zero and low emission alternatives
 2. Policy Two: **Shifting** modes of transport away from private car journeys to sustainable travel alternatives.
 3. Policy Three: **Reducing** the need and length of vehicle journeys.
- Interventions linked to switching fuels will be crucial in decarbonising the transport sector. Shifting modes of transport or reducing journeys will not, of themselves, deliver the same level of reductions to overall emissions but are important elements of our overall approach and the wider strategic goals of the Department have a relatively lower impact on transport emissions we will use a precautionary approach to sustaining or developing other forms of transport and travel options.

Sector Summary

- Dfi will develop a strategic approach to communications to support the three high level policies. This will be informed by behavioural science to increase awareness and encourage behaviour change.
- Dfi's bespoke Transport Emissions Model (TEM) will assist in scenario testing to identify options for future policy development.

Policies and Proposals

Policy: 'SWITCH'- Reducing vehicle emissions by switching fuels to low emission alternatives (Quantified)

Policy: 'SHIFT' – Reducing vehicle emissions by shifting modes of transport away from private car journeys to sustainable travel alternatives (Unquantified)

Policy: 'REDUCE' - Reducing vehicle emissions by reducing the need and length of journeys (Unquantified)

To read the policies and proposals for this sector in full, please go to Chapter 6 in the draft Climate Action Plan document.

Emissions Projections:

Table 5 presents the projected emissions for the transport sector across the first carbon budgetary period. Transport sector emissions are projected to be 1.12 MtCO₂e more than the emission levels assumed for this sector within the CCC adjusted pathway.

Table 5: Transport sector projected emissions in the Central Scenario compared with the adjusted CCC sectoral pathway.

 Sector	Projected Emissions (MtCO ₂ e)						Difference in CCC adjusted pathway and Northern Ireland Projections
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total	
Transport	3.83	3.78	3.72	3.65	3.55	18.53	1.12 MtCO ₂ e
Transport CCC*	3.87	3.69	3.47	3.29	3.1	17.41	

*These figures are based on the CCC advisory pathway but have been adjusted to take account of the 2022 inventory publication.

5.3 Business and Industrial Processes

Sector Summary



Business and Industrial Processes Sector Emissions Summary

- The business and industrial processes sector includes:
 - Business emissions from stationary combustion in industrial and commercial sectors including industrial off-road machinery, refrigeration and air conditioning, and the use of fluorinated gases for other applications. These account for the majority of emissions in the sector at 91.9%.
 - Industrial processes sector contains all emissions from industry except for those associated with fuel combustion accounting for the remaining 8.1% in the sector.
- Emissions have decreased by 54.9% since 1990.
- This is the fifth largest emitting sector, accounting for 11.9% of Northern Ireland greenhouse gas emissions.

Policy Approach

Unlike other sectors, business and industrial processes relies predominantly on UK wide policies. The UK policies are complemented by Northern Ireland specific policies that are intended to address our small and medium sized economy. There are also some EU policies that have an influence on the sector in Northern Ireland as a result of the Windsor Framework.

UK and EU-led Regulation, Compliance and Reporting has an important role to play. Key policies include assessing combined heat and power schemes on the basis of their energy efficiency and environmental performance, thus ensuring that the associated tax benefits are in line with environmental performance and ensuring that harmful fluorinated gases are ultimately eliminated. Other policies relate to improving the energy performance of buildings, emissions trading, product design and labelling, the reporting of emissions and funding to support the transition.

Northern Ireland-led Regulation, Compliance and Reporting also has a role. This will be through two policies and two proposals. The policies are Fuel switching to natural gas, (it is recognised that fuel switching to natural gas is not a long-term solution to emissions reduction, but gas has a role to play in the short to medium term as a transition fuel) and Uplifts to Building Regulations in Northern Ireland. This will potentially have a significant role in reducing emissions from new buildings and from existing buildings that are being upgraded. The two proposals under Northern Ireland-led regulation relate to biomethane and further uplifts to building regulations.

Sector Summary



- There are a number of other initiatives which are being delivered by Investing in Northern Ireland's Businesses, through Invest Northern Ireland, especially in relation to capital grants, resource matching and technical consultancy. Invest Northern Ireland also lead the Industrial Decarbonisation for Northern Ireland project. The aim of the project is to identify effective ways for organisations to make environmental and economic improvements by reducing energy consumption.

Policies and Proposals

Policy: The Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases (F-Gases) Regulations (2015) (UK-wide policy, but with separate Regulations for GB and NI), and new EU Regulation on F-gases in 2024 (Quantified)

Policy: The EU Ecodesign Directive and Energy Labelling Framework Regulation (Quantified)

Policy: Industrial Non-Road Mobile Machinery Decarbonisation (Quantified)

Policy: Energy Performance of Buildings (Certificates and Inspections) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 (as amended) (Quantified)

Policy: Industrial Energy Transformation Fund (Quantified)

Policy: Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (Quantified)

Policy: Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme (Quantified)

Policy: Combined Heat and Power Quality Assurance Programme (Quantified)

Policy: UK Emissions Trading Scheme (Unquantified)

Policy: Gas Network Connections General Determinations 2023-2028 (Quantified)

Policy: 2012 and 2022 Uplifts to Part F (Conservation of Fuel and Power) of the Building Regulations in Northern Ireland (Quantified)

Proposal: Further Building Regulations Uplifts (Unquantified)

Proposal: Biomethane (Quantified)

Policy: Invest Northern Ireland Energy and Resource Efficiency Programme for Northern Ireland Businesses (Quantified)

Proposal: Invest Northern Ireland Industrial Decarbonisation for Northern Ireland project (Quantified)

To read the policies and proposals for this sector in full, please go to Chapter 6 in the draft Climate Action Plan document.

Emissions Projections:

Table 6 the projected emissions for the business and industrial processes sector across the first carbon budgetary period. Business and industrial processes sector emissions are projected to be 0.89 MtCO₂e less than the emission levels assumed for this sector within the CCC adjusted pathway.

Table 6: Business and industrial processes sector projected emissions in the central scenario compared with the adjusted CCC sectoral pathway.

 Sector	Projected Emissions (MtCO ₂ e)						Difference in CCC adjusted pathway and Northern Ireland Projections
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total	
Business	2.02	1.92	1.86	1.71	1.57	9.07	-0.89 MtCO ₂ e
Industrial Processes	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	1.03	
Business and Industrial Processes total	2.23	2.12	2.06	1.91	1.77	10.1	
Business and Industrial Processes CCC*	2.43	2.3	2.2	2.09	1.97	10.99	

*These figures are based on the CCC advisory pathway but have been adjusted to take account of the 2022 inventory publication.

5.4 Residential Buildings

Sector Summary



Residential Buildings Sector Emissions Summary

- The buildings sector is covered in two sections within this draft Climate Action Plan: a Residential Buildings sector, and a Public Buildings sector.
- Together they account for 13.4% of Northern Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions.
- Residential buildings sector emissions have fallen by 31.4% between 1990 and 2022 and account for 89.6% of emissions from the overall buildings sector. This represents 12.0% of Northern Ireland's emissions in 2022.
- Residential building emissions are primarily affected by fuel combustion for heating and the production of hot water.¹⁴

Policy Approach

Policies and proposals for retrofitting existing dwellings to reduce energy consumption through energy efficiency are important to reducing emissions in residential buildings and in preparing homes for the adoption of decarbonised heating systems. These will be delivered through existing schemes and delivery partners, including the Utility Regulator and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive with the delivery model for proposals for a new **energy efficiency programme** and a future warm healthy, homes scheme aimed at addressing fuel poverty, subject to necessary procurement and funding.

Reducing emissions will also rely on the adoption and **use of low carbon options for heating**. This will be delivered through a policy of **fuel switching to natural gas** which includes exploring the potential **use of biomethane** to displace fossil fuel gas in the gas network and a proposal to provide support to **low carbon heating technologies** delivered through electrification.

The current estimates of impacts from policies which raise standards mean they play an important part in overall emissions reduction. Savings will be delivered through current and proposed **Uplifts to Building Regulations in Northern Ireland, more energy efficient product designs and improved labelling**.

¹⁴ 'Includes fuel combustion for heating, cooking, garden machinery, gases released from aerosols and inhalers, and emissions released from the breakdown of products such as detergents.' Emissions are affected by energy efficiency, heating and hot water demands, and the fuel type for domestic combustion.

Sector Summary



Policies
and Proposals

- Policy:** Affordable Warmth Scheme (Quantified)
- Policy:** Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme (including uplifts) (Quantified)
- Policy:** Northern Ireland Housing Executive Stock Investment Programme – Including Thermal Improvements (Quantified)
- Proposal:** Warm Healthy Homes Scheme (Quantified)
- Proposal:** Scale and Launch Energy Efficiency Programmes (Quantified)
- Policy:** Clean Heat Market Mechanism (Quantified)
- Policy:** Gas Network Connections General Determinations 2023-2028 (Quantified)
- Proposal:** Low Carbon Heat Support Programme (Quantified)
- Proposal:** Biomethane (Quantified)
- Policy:** The EU Ecodesign Directive and the Energy Labelling Framework Regulation (Quantified)
- Policy:** Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases (F-Gases) Regulations (2015) (UK-wide policy, but with separate Regulations for GB and NI), and new EU Regulation on F-gases in 2024 (Quantified)
- Policy:** 2012 and 2022 Uplifts to Part F (Conservation of Fuel and Power) of the Building Regulations in Northern Ireland (Quantified)
- Proposal:** Further Building Regulations Uplifts (Unquantified)

To read the policies and proposals for this sector in full, please go to Chapter 6 in the draft Climate Action Plan document.

Emissions Projections:

Table 7 presents the projected emissions for the residential buildings sector across the first carbon budgetary period. Residential buildings sector emissions are projected to be 1.31 MtCO₂e less than the emission levels assumed for this sector within the CCC adjusted pathway. CCC adjusted pathway.

Table 7: Buildings sector (including residential and public buildings) projected emissions in the central scenario compared with the adjusted CCC sectoral pathway.

 Sector	Projected Emissions (MtCO ₂ e)						Difference in CCC adjusted pathway and Northern Ireland Projections
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total	
Residential Buildings	2.27	2.24	2.24	2.3	2.3	11.36	-1.31 MtCO ₂ e
Public Buildings	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	1.40	
Buildings total	2.55	2.52	2.52	2.58	2.58	12.76	
Buildings CCC*	3.02	2.94	2.83	2.71	2.57	14.07	

*These figures are based on the CCC advisory pathway but have been adjusted to take account of the 2022 inventory publication.

5.5 Public Buildings

Sector Summary



Residential Buildings Sector Emissions Summary

- The buildings sector is covered in two sections within this draft Climate Action Plan: a Residential Buildings sector, and a Public Buildings sector.
- Together they account for 13.4% of Northern Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions.
- Public building emissions account for 10.4% of the overall buildings sector emissions with a 49.8% reduction in public building emissions from the base year of 1990. This represents 1.4% of Northern Ireland's emissions in 2022.
- Sector emissions primarily result from fuel combustion in public buildings for heating, cooling and hot water.

Policy Approach

Reducing emissions in this sector will be through two key Northern Ireland policies and two UK wide policies. Within Northern Ireland, the **Energy Management Strategy & Action Plan to 2030**¹⁵ seeks to reduce sector emissions and manage financial exposures. It will be delivered by access to better data and analytics to inform investment decisions through an Energy Invest to Save Fund. Behavioural change, building performance standards and procurement also have key roles to play in delivery. Emissions will also be reduced through uplifts to Building Regulations in Northern Ireland which will provide a basis for emissions assessment and measuring improved standards.

UK wide policies include reporting on **annual energy use**, **greenhouse gas emissions** and **energy efficiency actions** thereby encouraging cost savings and emission reductions. Also included are policies to improve the **design and labelling of products** aiming to take the least efficient products off the market and to give consumers clear energy use information to guide their purchasing decisions.

Policies and Proposals

Policy: The Energy Management Strategy and Action Plan to 2030 (Quantified)

Policy: 2012 and 2022 Uplifts to Part F (Conservation of Fuel and Power) of the Building Regulations in Northern Ireland (Quantified)

Policy: The EU Ecodesign Directive and the Energy Labelling Framework Regulation (Quantified)

Policy: Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (Quantified)

To read the policies and proposals for this sector in full, please go to Chapter 6 in the draft Climate Action Plan document.

¹⁵ Energy-Management-Strategy-March-2019.pdf (sibni.org)

Emissions Projections:

Table 8 presents the projected emissions for the public buildings sector across the first carbon budgetary period. Buildings sector emissions are projected to be 1.31 MtCO₂e less than the emission levels assumed for this sector within the CCC adjusted pathway.

Table 8: Buildings sector (including residential and public buildings) projected emissions in the central scenario compared with the adjusted CCC sectoral pathway.

 Sector	Projected Emissions (MtCO ₂ e)						Difference in CCC adjusted pathway and Northern Ireland Projections
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total	
Residential Buildings	2.27	2.24	2.24	2.3	2.3	11.36	-1.31 MtCO ₂ e
Public Buildings	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	1.40	
Buildings total	2.55	2.52	2.52	2.58	2.58	12.76	
Buildings CCC*	3.02	2.94	2.83	2.71	2.57	14.07	

*These figures are based on the CCC advisory pathway but have been adjusted to take account of the 2022 inventory publication.

5.6 Waste Management

Sector Summary



Waste Management Sector Emissions Summary

- Emissions in the waste management sector include those released from waste disposal at landfill sites, wastewater treatment and waste incineration.
- The sector is responsible for 3.6% of total Northern Ireland greenhouse gas emissions.
- Waste Management Sector emissions have fallen by 62.1% between 1990 and 2022.
- Household recycling rates have increased from 10% in 2010 to just over 51% in 2023/2024.
- The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 includes a requirement to recycle at least 70% of waste by 2030.

Policy Approach

Reducing emissions in the waste management sector will be achieved through two key interventions. The first is to reduce landfill emissions, through improvements to the **separate collection of food waste from households** and a new proposal to **divert biodegradable waste from landfill**. The other is to increase recycling rates and improve quality of the material that is collected for recycling. To drive this, a target is in place to achieve a **65% local authority collected waste recycling rate whilst reducing waste to landfill to no more than 10% by 2035**. This is supported by two proposals to **increase household recycling** and the **introduction of mandatory recycling for the commercial and industrial sector**.

Policies and Proposals

- Policy:** Separate Collection of Food Waste from Households - The Food Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (Quantified)
- Proposal:** Diverting Biodegradable Waste from Landfill (Quantified)
- Policy:** Achieve a 65% municipal waste recycling rate whilst reducing waste to landfill to no more than 10% by 2035 (Quantified)
- Proposal:** Introduction of Mandatory Recycling for Commercial and Industrial Sector (Quantified)
- Proposal:** Increasing Household Recycling (Quantified)

To read the policies and proposals for this sector in full, please go to Chapter 6 in the draft Climate Action Plan document.

Emissions Projections:

Table 9 presents the projected emissions for the waste management sector across the first carbon budgetary period. Waste management sector emissions are projected to be 0.15 MtCO₂e less than the emission levels assumed for this sector within the CCC adjusted pathway.

Table 9: Waste management sector projected emissions in the central scenario compared with the adjusted CCC sectoral pathway.

 Sector	Projected Emissions (MtCO ₂ e)						Difference in CCC adjusted pathway and Northern Ireland Projections
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total	
Waste Management	0.74	0.73	0.68	0.68	0.56	3.39	-0.15 MtCO ₂ e
Waste Management CCC*	0.79	0.75	0.71	0.67	0.61	3.54	

**These figures are based on the CCC advisory pathway but have been adjusted to take account of the 2022 inventory publication.*

5.7 Agriculture

Sector Summary	
Agriculture Sector Emissions Summary	• In agriculture the two main greenhouse gases are methane and nitrous oxide rather than carbon dioxide. Livestock emissions dominate greenhouse gases in the agriculture sector. Other key sources are from manure management, soils and emissions from off-road vehicles and machinery. • The agriculture sector is the largest emitter and accounts for 29.1% of Northern Ireland greenhouse gas emissions in 2022. • There has been a 14.9% increase in agriculture emissions from the base year of 1990. • While the Act requires overall net emissions for 2050 to be 100% lower than the baseline, it does not require methane emissions to be more than 46% lower than the baseline.
Policy Approach	Reducing emissions in the agriculture sector will be achieved through the delivery of DAERA's new Sustainable Agriculture Programme. This Programme and associated policies and proposals will support the sector's decarbonisation, focusing on improving the productivity of the agriculture sector, delivering improvements in environmental sustainability and resilience and supply chain integration. The CCC's Path to Net Zero for Northern Ireland assumes a significant reduction in livestock numbers and an associated transition to bioenergy cropping and increased forestry on agricultural land. The reduction in livestock numbers is based on the assumption that the consumption of livestock products in the UK will fall and that this will lead to an equal reduction in Northern Ireland livestock numbers. The Sustainable Agriculture Programme encourages a rapid transition to low carbon farming practices, as advised by the CCC, but also provides an alternative approach for reducing emissions from the agriculture sector to that advised by the CCC through more targeted (but still significant) reductions in livestock numbers, delivered through improved livestock productivity while allowing the agriculture sector to maintain output, avoid carbon leakage, and contribute to the growing global demand for livestock food products projected by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

Sector Summary

Policies and Proposals

Policy: Beef Sustainability Package (including The Beef Carbon Reduction Scheme and The Suckler Cow Scheme)

Policy: Knowledge and Innovation

Policy: Reducing emissions by including methane suppressing feed products in Livestock Diets and reducing the Protein and Phosphorous content of Livestock Diets (Quantified)

Policy: Ruminant Genetics Programme (Quantified)

Policy: Capital Investment Scheme (Unquantified)

Proposal: Increased slurry aeration and novel slurry treatment systems (Includes pig, beef and dairy slurry aeration) (Quantified)

Proposal: Anaerobic Digestion (Quantified)

Policy: The Carbon Footprinting Project (Unquantified)

Policy: The Soil Nutrient Health Scheme (Unquantified)

Policy: The Farming with Nature Package (Unquantified)

To read the policies and proposals for this sector in full, please go to Chapter 6 in the draft Climate Action Plan document.

Emissions Projections:

Table 10 presents the projected emissions for the agriculture sector across the first carbon budgetary period. Agriculture sector emissions are projected to be 0.93 MtCO₂e more than the emission levels assumed for this sector within the CCC adjusted pathway.

Table 10: Agriculture sector projected emissions in the central scenario compared with the adjusted CCC sectoral pathway

 Sector	Projected Emissions (MtCO ₂ e)						Difference in CCC adjusted pathway and Northern Ireland Projections
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total	
Agriculture	6.03	5.97	5.88	5.67	5.44	28.99	0.93 MtCO ₂ e
Agriculture CCC*	5.98	5.74	5.6	5.45	5.29	28.06	

*These figures are based on the CCC advisory pathway but have been adjusted to take account of the 2022 inventory publication.

5.8 Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry

Sector Summary



LULUCF Sector Emissions Summary

- The Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sector covers emissions and removals of greenhouse gases resulting from direct human-induced land use, land-use change, and forestry activities.
- LULUCF is the only sector where removal of emissions (sequestration) is recorded with the majority of removals by forest land and grasslands.
- Whilst peatland is a natural sink for carbon dioxide it is currently estimated that the majority of our peatlands are degraded and act as emitters instead.
- LULUCF emissions have reduced by 20.5% since 1990 and represent 10.1% of total annual emissions in Northern Ireland in 2022.

Policy Approach

Reducing emissions and increasing sequestration in the LULUCF sector can be achieved through key interventions which include, increasing forest cover through a policy to deliver the **Forests for Our Future** programme to create 9,000 hectares of new woodland by 2030. Also, through restoring peatland habitats by delivering the Northern Ireland **Peatland Strategy**. Delivering carbon sequestration will reduce emissions through land management and will be supported through agri-environment schemes such as the delivery of the **Farming with Nature Package** and the **Soil Nutrient Health Scheme**.

There are also additional land use proposals to develop a future land use policy for Northern Ireland and considering the feasibility of policy development for biomass.

Policies and Proposals

Policy: Deliver the Forests for Our Future programme to create 9,000ha of new woodland by 2030. (Quantified)

Proposal: Deliver the Northern Ireland Peatland Strategy (Quantified)

Policy: Sustainable Agriculture Programme – The Farming with Nature Package and the Soil Nutrient Health Scheme (Unquantified)

Proposal: Develop a future land use policy for Northern Ireland (Unquantified)

Proposal: Consider the feasibility of policy development for bioenergy crops, engineered removals and carbon capture (Unquantified)

To read the policies and proposals for this sector in full, please go to Chapter 6 in the draft Climate Action Plan document.

Emissions Projections:

Table 11 presents the projected emissions for the LULUCF sector across the first carbon budgetary period. LULUCF sector emissions are projected to be 0.69 MtCO₂e more than the emission levels assumed for this sector within the CCC adjusted pathway.

Table 11: LULUCF sector projected emissions in the central scenario compared with the adjusted CCC sectoral pathway

 Sector	Projected Emissions (MtCO ₂ e)						Difference in CCC adjusted pathway and Northern Ireland Projections
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total	
LULUCF	2.17	2.18	2.16	2.14	2.11	10.77	0.69 MtCO ₂ e
LULUCF CCC*	2.11	2.06	2.02	1.97	1.91	10.07	

*These figures are based on the CCC advisory pathway but have been adjusted to take account of the 2022 inventory publication.

5.9 Fisheries

Sector Summary	
Fisheries Sector Emissions Summary	- Fisheries is the smallest emissions sector and includes emissions from activities associated with sea fisheries, inland fisheries and aquaculture. - Fisheries accounts for 0.1% of Northern Ireland Greenhouse Gas emissions (2022). - Fisheries emissions have decreased by 2.5% from 1990 to 2022.
Policy Approach	Reducing emissions in this sector will be through developing initiatives to decarbonise the fishing fleet. The UK Joint Fisheries Statement sets high level policies for how the fisheries policy authorities will work together to develop solutions that minimise the adverse effect of fishing and aquaculture activities on climate change whilst also adapting to climate change. In Northern Ireland the policy is to invest in research and development to create the innovative solutions needed to decarbonise the fishing fleet and minimise adverse effects of fishing on climate change. There is a proposal to prepare for roll-out of electrification and low or zero emission fuels across the fishing fleet.
Policies and Proposals	Policy: UK Joint Fisheries Statement (Unquantified) Policy: Invest in research and development to decarbonise the fishing fleet and minimise adverse effects of fishing on climate change (Unquantified) Proposal: Prepare for roll-out of electrification and low or zero emission fuels across the fishing fleet and reduce emissions along the fisheries supply chain (Unquantified)

To read the policies and proposals for this sector in full, please go to Chapter 6 in the draft Climate Action Plan document.

Emissions Projections:

The fisheries policies and proposals are not expected to result in the reduction of emissions until alternative fuels and vessel designs come into operation. Emissions are expected to hold relatively stable to 2030, before reducing to close to net zero by 2050.

Table 12 presents the projected emissions for the fisheries sector across the first carbon budgetary period. Fisheries sector emissions are projected to be 16.00 KtCO₂e** more than the emission levels assumed for this sector within the CCC adjusted pathway.

Table 12: Fisheries sector projected emissions in the central scenario compared with the adjusted CCC sectoral pathway

 Sector	Projected Emissions (KtCO ₂ e)						Difference in CCC adjusted pathway and Northern Ireland Projections
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	Total	
Fisheries	21.09	21.41	21.69	21.97	22.26	108.41	16.00 KtCO ₂ e
Fisheries CCC*	18.31	18.40	18.50	18.57	18.63	92.41	

*These figures are based on the CCC advisory pathway but have been adjusted to take account of the 2022 inventory publication. ** Please note, emissions for the fisheries sector are displayed in KtCO₂e.

Impact Assessments

A range of impact assessments have been conducted on the draft Climate Action Plan including environmental, economic, rural and equality impact assessments. To read a summary of the impact assessments please go to Chapter 7 in the draft Climate Action Plan document. A full suite of impact assessments are available on the DAERA website: www.daera-ni.gov.uk/climate-action-plan-consultation

6. The Natural Environment and Climate Change

It is internationally agreed that climate change and biodiversity loss are interdependent and need to be addressed together. The Act requires us to set specific targets for soil quality, biodiversity and air quality in this draft Climate Action Plan. The proposed targets are set out below.

The proposed Soil Quality Target is:

By 2027, to have at least 75% of Northern Ireland agricultural fields soil sampled and analysed to form a baseline of key soil nutrients from which further and more refined targets in respect of soil nutrient health can be considered.¹⁶

The proposed Biodiversity Target is:

By 2027, to have 65% of designated features in protected sites to be in or approaching favourable conservation condition, and at least 12% of all land, freshwater and marine environments effectively conserved, managed and well connected for nature.

The proposed Air Quality target is:

In 2025 DAERA will engage with other departments and key delivery organisations, with a view to considering the feasibility of implementing new regulations that would bring into operation tighter annual average limits/targets/objectives for PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ in line with interim target 4 of the World Health Organisation Air Quality Guidelines 2021 of 10 and 20 ug/m₃ respectively.

We must prioritise measures which can deliver for both nature and emissions reduction. These measures are known as Nature-based Solutions (NbS). Nature-based Solutions will create thriving habitats and ecosystems which reduce emissions, whilst also providing a landscape and marine environment which is more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

It is a legal requirement of the Act¹⁷ that, where practicable, the policies and proposals within the Climate Action Plan should support and use nature-based projects, whether alone or as part of other types of action.

¹⁶ Soil Nutrient Health Scheme | Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute

¹⁷ Section 34 of the Act

7. Monitoring and Reporting

The Act sets ambitious targets to reduce emissions. Monitoring and reporting on the implementation of policies and actions and the resulting impact on emissions reduction will be an essential element of tracking progress towards achieving the 2023-2027 carbon budget and meeting interim targets set for 2030 and 2040. We will ensure a robust monitoring framework is in place to keep us on our net zero pathway. This framework will adapt to an evolving policy context, new data and emerging solutions. We will ensure a transparent approach to reporting that provides meaningful information and encourages participation from partners and stakeholders seeking to support our journey towards decarbonisation.

8. Public Sector Leading by Example

The public sector is critical to the successful delivery of this draft Climate Action Plan - influencing and enabling positive behaviours, driving change and acting as a leader on climate action and low carbon innovation. We are committed to forging a net zero pathway by delivering vital public services in a way that reduces emissions, reduces waste and uses scarce resources more sustainably. We will pursue a net zero approach across all sectors of our economy and society, leading by example by taking actions across our estate, fleets, procurement processes, energy use and our approach to service delivery. We recognise that transformation of public services will help us to maximise the opportunities these changes bring. During the carbon budget period, we will continue to build on the actions outlined in chapter 11 to ensure that we deliver on our climate duty.

8.1 Local Government

Local government is already leading by example on climate action. Alongside central government, it will have a vital role in driving and facilitating the realisation of Northern Ireland's climate targets. During the carbon budget reporting period, departments have been working with the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) to establish structures which will facilitate a joined-up approach between central and local government. This will help to ensure strong leadership at all levels across our communities as we implement ambitious climate action.

Significant action is already being taken forward within local government; approximately half of our 11 local councils have put in place a climate action plan with target dates for reaching net zero ranging between 2040 and 2050.

9. Investment Required and Anticipated Benefits

Implementing the policies and proposals set out in this draft Climate Action Plan will require investment. This investment is necessary if we are to realise the wide-ranging benefits and transformative opportunities that come with the transition to a low carbon economy and an improved society for future generations. We also need to avoid the additional costs incurred from delayed action and the damage that occurs because of our changing climate. Additional investment by government will be crucial to finance the major infrastructure projects required to enable the transition to a low carbon economy. It will also be necessary to incentivise further investment in early-stage technologies and demonstrator projects.

Delivering a cost-effective path to decarbonisation in Northern Ireland requires action across all sectors of the economy and a joined-up approach.¹⁸ Funding our net zero transition will be a collaboration between the public and private sectors.

9.1 Investment Required and Anticipated Benefits

Public Sector Investment to Deliver the Draft Climate Action Plan

Delivering the emissions savings projected in this plan will require a commitment to investing in net zero. In developing this draft Climate Action Plan, departments have sought to estimate the capital investment required to deliver the policies and proposals outlined in the Sector Policies and Proposals chapter.

The information presented in this section focuses on the anticipated level of Climate Action Plan investment from the Northern Ireland Executive budgets to support our transition to net zero. All values provided are in line with the Central Scenario criteria, which assumes that credible funding arrangements are in place or there is high confidence of funding availability.¹⁹

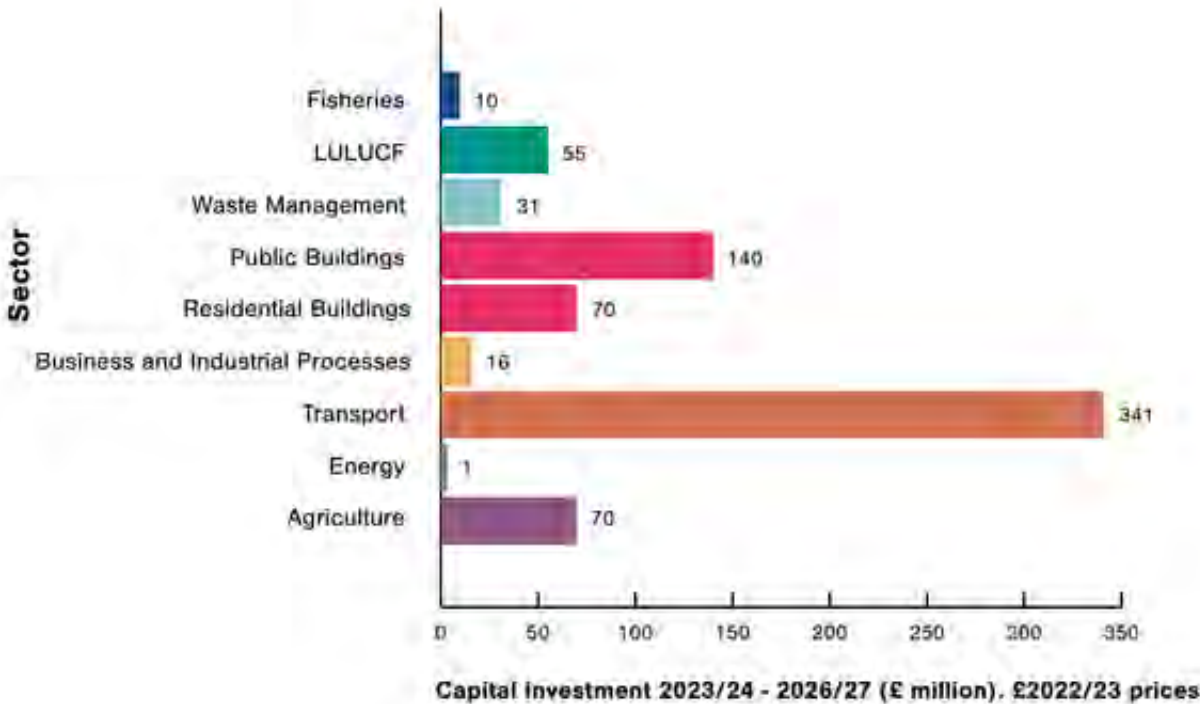
Across the four full financial years of the Climate Action Plan (2023/24 – 2026/27), it is estimated that a total of £718million²⁰ of capital investment will be directed to deliver the policies and proposals within the draft Climate Action Plan. **This equates to an average total capital investment of £93 per person, per year.** Figure 2 illustrates the level of capital investment required by each sector.

¹⁸ Reducing emissions in Northern Ireland - Climate Change Committee (theccc.org.uk)

¹⁹ See Chapter 5 for full definitions

²⁰ All costs listed within this chapter are in £2022/23 prices

Figure 2: Sector Capital Investment²⁴



It is not possible to accurately estimate what portion of total Northern Ireland Executive capital budgets would have been spent on policies to promote decarbonisation without the draft Climate Action Plan. It is likely that at least some of this capital would have been invested through the same (or a similar) set of policies and proposals to support other legislative requirements and strategic commitments. Not all of this increase in expenditure will result in an equivalent increase in departmental budgetary pressures.

While significant investment will be required across the public and private sectors to meet our net zero target, the transition to a low carbon economy will present many opportunities as we deliver green jobs, reduce pollution, promote more efficient use of resources within a circular economy, improve infrastructure and support sustainable economic growth. The up-front costs represent investments in an improved society for future generations and the cost of delaying action will ultimately be much greater.

²⁴ Note that values will not tally to total due to duplication of costs between sectors.

The transition to a low carbon society will have wider implications on how we live our lives. Although rarely measured, quantified, or monetised, co-benefits²² increasingly form a key consideration in decisions relating to climate change.²³ The policies and proposals which are identified in this Plan and which contribute to decarbonisation are expected to bring substantial co-benefits, particularly for public health, green jobs, households and businesses, the natural environment and climate resilience.



Figure 3: Selected benefits of Climate Action

While investments through the Climate Action Plan are aimed at reducing our GHG emissions, many investments also **improve our resilience**. The Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) recognises that achieving net zero carbon emissions is the necessary pathway to limit the worst impacts of climate change yet to come. As the impacts of a changing climate are already being felt, prioritised investment is required to ensure infrastructure is equipped to handle a range of shocks and stresses in the short, medium and long term.²⁴ Investment through the implementation of the draft Climate Action Plan policies and proposals – particularly through investments in the LULUCF, agriculture, transport and energy sectors – can help to maximise long-term benefits from maintaining, planning and delivering resilient infrastructure.

²² Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, "Fifth Assessment Report, Annex II Glossary". IPCC, 2014

²³ Measuring the Co-Benefits of Climate Change Mitigation | Annual Reviews

²⁴ Resilient Infrastructure for Northern Ireland | 2024 | Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE)

10. Adaptation and Mitigation

Whilst in recent years much focus has been placed on climate mitigation measures concerned with reducing our emissions, we must not lose sight of the fact that reduction of emissions is only part of the climate change challenge. Even when emissions are reduced to net zero, we will still have locked in climate change impacts as a result of historic emissions. To properly address the impacts of climate change, we must ensure that there continues to be adequate investment and attention given to climate adaptation measures, whilst we simultaneously continue to progress work to reduce our emissions.

Some measures, such as peatland restoration and afforestation provide dual mitigation and adaptation benefits through the carbon they store and their contribution to flood prevention through increased water storage capacity and lag time following periods of heavy rainfall. However, it is also critical that we continue to invest in and take forward specific climate adaptation measures, focused on protecting our economy, communities and environment from the impacts of climate change that cannot be avoided through emissions reduction alone.

Overview

Public Consultation on Northern Ireland's draft Climate Action Plan 2023-2027

In 2022, Northern Ireland passed its first climate legislation - the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (the Act).

The Act sets an ambitious target to reduce Northern Ireland's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to net zero by 2050. This means by 2050 that we must remove at least as many emissions from our atmosphere as we produce each year.

The Act requires us to prepare and publish a Climate Action Plan every five years. The draft Climate Action Plan (2023-2027) is the first step on Northern Ireland's journey to net zero. It sets out policies and proposals to achieve reductions in emissions and the actions which will enable this to happen. The focus of this draft plan is on meeting the first carbon budget.

A carbon budget sets a limit on the maximum amount of GHG emissions that can be produced over a five-year period. Keeping emissions within the limit set for each carbon budget period is important as it will set us on the right pathway to meet 2030, 2040 and 2050 targets, in line with the requirements of the legislation.

In December 2024, the Executive agreed that for the period of this plan, 2023-2027, greenhouse gas emissions need to be reduced by 33% on average, to set us on the right path to net zero and contribute to global climate targets.

Innovation and creative solutions to existing challenges will have an important role to play in this Climate Action Plan. Without it we will not achieve our goals. New ideas and technologies will help us achieve our climate ambition and create opportunities along the way.

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has co-ordinated the publication of this draft Climate Action Plan, with each Northern Ireland department identifying policies and proposals to reduce emissions in line with the carbon budget.

The draft Climate Action Plan is available to access on the DAERA website along with alternative formats on request. There will be a series of stakeholder engagement events during the consultation period.

These will take place both online and in person across Northern Ireland. Details are available on the DAERA website <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/climate-action-plan-consultation>

Why your views matter

We have already engaged with organisations and individuals in the development of the draft Climate Action Plan. However, given its impact, we are now holding a 16-week public consultation, to provide everyone with the opportunity to consider the draft plan.

We want you to tell us what you think about the draft Climate Action Plan and share any comments or suggestions that you have.

It is not essential for everyone to answer every question, rather, we would prefer you to only answer the questions you feel are relevant to you or the organisation you are responding on behalf of. We are encouraging everyone to respond to this consultation through our Citizen Space website as this makes analysing the responses and any future decision making more consistent and provides better data outputs. However, if you cannot respond using the website and would like to submit your response using a different format, please contact climateactionplan@daera-ni.gov.uk

Your feedback will be used to inform the final Climate Action Plan which will be laid before the Assembly, following Executive agreement.

Privacy

The information you provide in completing this consultation will be controlled and processed in line with Data Protection Legislation by DAERA. To find out more about how we handle your personal information, DAERA's Privacy Notice can be viewed online at <http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/daera-privacy-statement>

Further information about the consultation

The draft Climate Action Plan and other supporting documents are also available on the DAERA website at: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/climate-action-plan-consultation>

On request, we can arrange to provide other formats of the documents, such as:

- Paper copy
- Large print
- Braille
- Other languages

To request an alternative format, please contact the consultation team:

Email: climateactionplan@daera-ni.gov.uk

Telephone: 028 9081 6904

Post:

Climate Action Delivery Division
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Clare House
303 Airport Road West
Belfast BT3 9ED

If you have a hearing difficulty, you can contact the Department via Text Relay:

Dial: 18001 028 9081 6904

Guidance on the confidentiality of responses under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 is provided in Annex 1 of the Consultation Document for your reference. If you require any further information, please contact the consultation team using the details provided above.

About You

First, please tell us a little 'About You' to help us analyse the responses.

A. What is your name?

Name (Required)

B. What is your email address?

Email (Required)

C. What is your postcode?

Postcode (Required)

D. Are you responding as an individual or as part of an organisation?

(Required) Personal response

Organisation (Please tell us your organisation name or what sector you operate in)

Consultation Questions

Relates to Chapter 5: Quantification Summary

Quantification of Emissions Reduction from Policies and Proposals

1. To what extent do you agree with the quantification methodology used to calculate emissions reductions from policies and proposals?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any alternatives
2. Do you have any comments on the quantification methodology used to calculate emissions reductions from policies and proposals?
Yes/No If yes, please provide your comments

Relates to Chapter 6: Sector Policies and Proposals

Energy Production and Supply Sector Contribution to Carbon Budget 2023-2027

Energy production and supply emissions are almost exclusively from burning fossil fuels for electricity generation at power stations.

3. To what extent do you agree with the proposed approach to achieving a just transition in the energy production and supply sector?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any alternatives

Transport Sector Contribution to Carbon Budget 2023-2027

The transport sector includes emissions from surface road transport, domestic shipping and aviation, and aircraft support vehicles. It is the second largest contributor to emissions in Northern Ireland.

4. To what extent do you agree with the proposed policies and proposals to reduce emissions for the transport sector?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any alternatives
5. To what extent do you agree with the proposed policies and proposals to reduce emissions for the transport sector?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any alternatives
6. To what extent do you agree with the proposed approach to achieving a just transition in the transport sector?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any alternatives

Business and Industrial Processes Sector Contribution to Carbon Budget 2023-2027

Business emissions from stationary combustion in industrial and commercial sectors including industrial off-road machinery, refrigeration and air conditioning, and the use of fluorinated gases for other applications.

7. To what extent do you agree with the proposed policies and proposals to reduce emissions for the business and industrial processes sector?

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives

8. To what extent do you agree with the proposed approach to achieving a just transition in the business and industrial processes sector?

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives

Residential Buildings Sector Contribution to Carbon Budget 2023-2027

Residential building emissions are primarily affected by fuel combustion for heating and the production of hot water.

9. To what extent do you agree with the proposed policies and proposals to reduce emissions for the residential buildings sector?

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives

10. To what extent do you agree with the proposed approach to achieving a just transition in the residential buildings sector?

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives

Public Buildings Sector Contribution to Carbon Budget 2023-2027

Sector emissions primarily result from fuel combustion in public buildings for heating, cooling and hot water.

11. To what extent do you agree with the proposed policies and proposals to reduce emissions for the public buildings sector?

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives

12. To what extent do you agree with the proposed approach to achieving a just transition in the public buildings sector?

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives

Waste Sector Contribution to Carbon Budget 2023-2027

Emissions in the waste management sector include those released from waste disposal at landfill sites, wastewater treatment and waste incineration. The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 includes a requirement to recycle at least 70% of waste by 2030.

13. To what extent do you agree with the proposed policies and proposals to reduce emissions for the waste sector?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any alternatives
14. To what extent do you agree with the proposed approach to achieving a just transition in the waste sector?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any alternatives

Agriculture Sector Contribution to Carbon Budget 2023-2027

In agriculture the two main greenhouse gases are methane and nitrous oxide rather than carbon dioxide. Livestock emissions dominate greenhouse gases in the agriculture sector. Other key sources are from manure management, soils and emissions from off-road vehicles and machinery.

15. To what extent do you agree with the proposed enabling actions to reduce emissions for the agriculture sector?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any alternatives
16. To what extent do you agree with the proposed approach to achieving a just transition in the agriculture sector?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any alternatives

Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry Sector Contribution to Carbon Budget 2023-2027

The Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sector covers emissions and removals of greenhouse gases resulting from direct human-induced land use, land-use change, and forestry activities.

17. To what extent do you agree with the proposed policies and proposals to reduce emissions for the LULUCF sector?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any alternatives
18. To what extent do you agree with the proposed approach to achieving a just transition in the LULUCF sector?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any alternatives

Fisheries Sector Contribution to Carbon Budget 2023-2027

Fisheries sector includes emissions from activities associated with sea fisheries, inland fisheries and aquaculture.

19. To what extent do you agree with the proposed policies and proposals to reduce emissions for the fisheries sector?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any alternatives
20. To what extent do you agree with the proposed approach to achieving a just transition in the fisheries sector?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any alternatives

Relates to Chapter 7: Impact Assessments

Impact Assessment of the Climate Action Plan

Several impact assessments have been undertaken as part of the development of the draft Climate Action Plan. Individual assessments have been carried out for the policies and proposals across all sectors, with each assessment proportionate to the scale and likely impact of the respective measure. In addition, overarching impact assessments have been conducted to consider the cumulative effects of the draft plan as a whole. Where proposals are at an early stage of development, some impacts may not yet be fully identified, and these will be considered further as the proposals are refined.

21. To what extent do you agree with the key findings of the Financial, Social and Economic Impact Assessments that have been carried out on the policies and proposals in the draft Climate Action Plan?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any comments on the findings:
22. To what extent do you agree with the key findings of the overarching Financial, Social and Economic Impact Assessment of the draft Climate Action Plan?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree Please provide your reasons and any comments on the findings:
23. To what extent do you agree with the key findings of the Equality Screening and Equality Impact Assessment?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree Please provide your reasons and any comments on the findings:
24. To what extent do you agree with the key findings of the Rural Needs Impact Assessments that have been carried out on the policies and proposals in the draft Climate Action Plan?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any comments on the findings:

25. To what extent do you agree with the key findings of the overarching Rural Needs Impact Assessment of the draft Climate Action Plan?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any comments on the findings:
26. To what extent do you agree with the key findings of the Strategic Environmental Assessment?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any alternatives
27. To what extent do you agree with the key findings of the Habitats Regulations Assessment?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any alternatives
28. To what extent do you agree with the key findings of the Regulatory Impact Assessment?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any alternatives
29. To what extent do you agree with the key findings of the Children's Rights Impact Assessment?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any alternatives
30. Can you provide any further information which will help to supplement the completion of these impact assessments?
Please provide details, identifying the assessment to which the information relates

Relates to Chapter 8: The Natural Environment and Climate Change

Soil Quality, Biodiversity and Air Quality Targets

The Act requires us to set specific targets for soil quality, biodiversity and air quality in this draft Climate Action Plan. The Act also requires that, where practicable, the policies and proposals should support and use nature-based projects, either individually or as part of wider action.

31. To what extent do you agree with the proposed target for Soil Quality?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any alternatives
32. To what extent do you agree with the proposed target for Biodiversity?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any alternatives
33. To what extent do you agree with the proposed target for Air Quality?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any alternatives

Nature-Based Solutions to Reducing Emissions

Nature-based Solutions will create thriving habitats and ecosystems which reduce emissions, whilst also providing a landscape and marine environment which is more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

34. Can you provide any further information which will help us to incorporate Nature-based Solutions into our policies and proposals?
Yes/No If yes, please provide details

Relates to Chapter 9: Governance for Delivery

Climate Action Governance Arrangements

We will only meet our carbon budget if we can successfully deliver the policies and proposals we have identified. Achieving this will require ongoing commitment and prioritisation of this work, shared ownership and cross-departmental working, and appropriate levels of oversight and scrutiny to keep us on track. Managing this implementation process will mean establishing appropriate governance structures within government, creating new statutory oversight bodies and working in partnership with existing independent oversight bodies.

35. To what extent do you agree with the proposed governance arrangements to support the delivery of the Climate Action Plan?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any alternatives

Relates to Chapter 10: Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring and Reporting on Policies and Proposals

Monitoring and reporting on the implementation of policies and actions and the resulting impact on emissions reduction will be an essential element of tracking progress towards achieving the 2023-2027 carbon budget and meeting interim targets set for 2030 and 2040. We will ensure a robust monitoring framework is in place to keep us on our net zero pathway.

36. To what extent do you agree with the proposed approach to monitoring and reporting on policies and proposals?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any alternatives

Relates to Chapter 11: Public Sector Leading by Example

Public Sector Leading by Example

The public sector is critical to the successful delivery of the draft Climate Action Plan - influencing and enabling positive behaviours, driving change and acting as a leader on climate action and low carbon innovation. We are committed to forging a net zero pathway by delivering vital public services in a way that reduces emissions, reduces waste and uses scarce resources more sustainably.

37. Do you have suggestions about other actions that we should be taking across the public sector?
Yes/No If yes, please provide details

Relates to Chapter 12: Enabling the Transition to Net Zero

Enabling the Change to net zero

The draft Climate Action Plan sets out the importance of science and innovation, education and skills, infrastructure, planning, behaviour change and communication as enablers to delivering our pathway to net zero.

38. To what extent do you agree with the actions that we are taking to enable the transition to net zero?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any alternatives

Relates to Chapter 13: Investing in Climate Action

Cost of Implementing the Climate Action Plan

Delivering a cost-effective path to decarbonisation in Northern Ireland requires action across all sectors of the economy and a joined-up approach. Funding our net zero transition will be a collaboration between the public and private sectors.

39. To what extent do you agree with the assessment of the costs of implementing this Climate Action Plan?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any alternatives

40. Do you have any other information to inform this cost assessment?
Yes/No If yes, please provide details

Just Transition Fund for Agriculture

The purpose of this scheme is to provide advice and financial assistance to the agriculture sector to deliver its contribution to meeting the carbon budgets and emissions reduction targets by implementing proposals and policies to be included in Climate Action Plans.

41. To what extent do you agree with the proposed approach to establishing a Just Transition Fund for Agriculture?
Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree
Please provide your reasons and any alternatives

Annex 1

Publication of Responses

Confidentiality

The Department will publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process. Your response, and all other responses to the consultation may be disclosed on request. The Department can refuse to disclose information only in exceptional circumstances. Before you submit your response, please read the paragraphs below on the confidentiality of consultations as these provide guidance on the legal position of any information given by you in response to this consultation. Any confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system in e-mail responses will not be treated as such a request.

Data Protection

Section 8 (e) of the Data Protection Act 2018 permits processing of personal data when necessary for an activity that supports or promotes democratic engagement. Information provided by respondents to this consultation exercise will be held and used for the purposes of the administration of this current exercise and subsequently disposed of in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulation.

Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority (the Department in this case). This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this consultation, including information about your identity, should be made public or treated as confidential. This means that information provided by you in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances.

The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

- The Department should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's functions and it would not otherwise be provided;
- The Department should not agree to hold information received from third parties 'in confidence' which is not confidential in nature;
- Acceptance by the Department of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

For further information about confidentiality of responses, please contact the Information Commissioner's Office:

0303 123 1113

ni@ico.org.uk

www.ico.org.uk



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Depairtment o'

**Fairmin, Environment
an' Kintra Matthers**

www.daera-ni.gov.uk



DAERA (draft) NI Climate Action Plan 2023-27 Questions

Relates to Chapter 5: Quantification Summary

Quantification of Emissions Reduction from Policies and Proposals

1. *To what extent do you agree with the quantification methodology used to calculate emissions reductions from policies and proposals?*

Strongly agree / **Agree** / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

Council agrees with the quantification methodology used to calculate emissions reductions from policies and proposals as it follows the Greenhouse Gas Inventories compiled by following detailed guidance produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The quantification modelling used allows a sector-specific approach to assessing emissions reductions, which Council supports. The methodology has considered the emissions for each sector in-line with the GHG Inventory, risk-based approach – particularly to areas of potential double-counting), and has used appropriate scaling ratios to the UK GHG Inventory to determine NI-specific emission levels.

Annex 1 provides the full quantification methodology.

2. *Do you have any comments on the quantification methodology used to calculate emissions reductions from policies and proposals?*

Yes/No If yes, please provide your comments

The draft Plan stated (page 44) states that as each GHG has a different capacity to contribute to global warming, it is reflected in its GWP value, and specifically as individual gas types. Whilst this is the current approach, the draft Plan (page 46) states the inventory uses the GWP100 metric in its estimates as this is the required metric for assessment of GHG emission levels under international and national legal obligations such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the UK's Climate Change Act 2008, however later on (page 46) it also states that a more refined version of GWP* is ideal as it breaks analysis down further into short and longer-term gas emissions, which would provide further insight and therefore potentially further refinement of positive interventions / solutions to address these individual gases. DAERA will report using the

GWP100 approach, however Council would question when (if ever) a transition to the GWP* metric will/may occur.

Relates to Chapter 6: Sector Policies and Proposals

Energy Production and Supply Sector Contribution to Carbon Budget 2023-2027

Energy production and supply emissions are almost exclusively from burning fossil fuels for electricity generation at power stations.

3. To what extent do you agree with the proposed approach to achieving a just transition in the energy production and supply sector?

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

Economic Development:

Agreed that addressing the emissions from the energy production and supply sector through a range of renewable energy incentives and programmes would appear to be the most appropriate means of a just transition within this sector. Potentially more work required on the qualification and eligibility criteria for these schemes, including incentives for domestic micro-generation also presenting an opportunity but something that appears not to be fully incentivised currently, especially for the able to pay market.

Project such as the HyTech NI project will support demonstrators including a hydrogen gas blending demonstration project, exploring the logistics and value of low carbon energy supply as part of the just transition. The Hydrogen Training Academy has delivered training to up-skill and re-skill engineers who could potentially be working on a zero or low carbon heating network in future.

Transport Sector Contribution to Carbon Budget 2023-2027

The transport sector includes emissions from surface road transport, domestic shipping and aviation, and aircraft support vehicles. It is the second largest contributor to emissions in Northern Ireland.

4. To what extent do you agree with the proposed policies and proposals to reduce emissions for the transport sector?

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

Transport

The Climate Action Plan rightly identifies that transport contributes approximately 18% of Northern Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions. A key strategy for reducing these emissions is the transition from fossil fuels to low-carbon alternatives. However, the fuel switching stratagem does speak to a focus on EV and appropriate charging infrastructure. The opportunity to hasten transition to true ZEV's rather than ULEV's being classified as ZEV (as is often the case) could be offered through incentivisation of micro-generation & BESS as an integral component of EV charging infrastructure. To date any public realm charging

infrastructure has been delivered by local authorities with financial support from ORCS & DfI. Hard to reach users who may not transition to public transport should also be supported through DfI directly delivering on expansion of the public charging networks, and / or expedited approval of low-cost cross kerb charging solutions.

Council has conducted extensive trials comparing diesel and Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) offering a practical and immediate pathway to contribute to decarbonising fleet operations offering a practical and immediate pathway to decarbonise fleet operations. However decarbonising emissions occurring from feedstock resource process would increase confidence in actual impacts, through increased accuracy in conversion factors when comparison is made to fossil-based fuels. As the current approach to simply remove carbon from scope can undermine confidence in this fuel source.

However, the primary barrier to widespread adoption is the cost differential, which can be as high as 30% more than diesel. This financial gap makes it challenging for local authorities and other organisations to justify the switch, despite the environmental benefits. A revision of duty rates would help incentivise the transition through lessening current financial impact to end users, with a precedence being set for this approach (not being renewed on expiry 2023) implementation should not be a significant barrier.

We strongly recommend that the Northern Ireland Executive and DAERA explore mechanisms to reduce the cost of HVO, such as:

- Subsidies or tax incentives for HVO use in public and private fleets.
- Inclusion of HVO in green procurement standards for public sector contracts.

Supporting the transition to HVO would demonstrate leadership in climate action and help meet the targets set out in the Climate Change Act.

Grant aided support for local production of green Hydrogen may also support

Harbours & Marinas:

To note: as we operate in the mostly leisure side of the boating industry, our customers are unlikely to reduce their journeys to help reduce carbon emissions, boating is their hobby so they will continue to do it.

Additionally, there are currently very few zero emission alternatives to ICE in boats.

On top of this, many boats are older than 15 years (as this is what the general population can afford) and it is unlikely they will retrofit carbon neutral propulsion.

Lastly, a lot of commercial operators are reluctant to switch to carbon neutral propulsion as they require the reliability and 're-fuelability' of ICE. They don't have time to wait for a battery to charge if they have additional work to carry out, they would much rather refuel with diesel.

Economic Development:

Agreed that switching to low or zero emissions fuels is the most impactful means of reducing transport sector emissions and there seems to be significant support mechanisms in place for public transport authorities to lead this transition. Unsure how attainable the idea of moving away from private car journeys to sustainable travel alternatives as a modal shift is. Evidence would suggest that the public transport network in Northern Ireland is insufficient to support this transition currently, with connectivity not what it needs to be. The added challenge of the electricity grid being unable to support a wholesale move to electric vehicles

is also a limiting factor. Progression of emerging low carbon technologies and the relevant policies to support their implementation is likely to be critical to this transition.

Projects such as the Hydrogen Training Academy have delivered skills training to support the ongoing transition to zero emissions vehicles and the proposed HyTech NI project will further demonstrate the viability of utilising hydrogen in the alternative fuel mix for both public transport authority, Council fleet, transport and logistics sector and private cars.

Town centres face several challenges in transitioning to a low-carbon future when focusing on transportation options, particularly the provision for retail deliveries and on-street parking. Addressing these issues requires a combination of retrofitting existing structures at a high cost, promoting green infrastructure, and encouraging low-carbon business practices.

5. To what extent do you agree with the proposed policies and proposals to reduce emissions for the transport sector?

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

Duplicate question.

6. To what extent do you agree with the proposed approach to achieving a just transition in the transport sector?

Strongly agree / Agree / **Neither agree nor disagree** / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

Business and Industrial Processes Sector Contribution to Carbon Budget 2023-2027

Business emissions from stationary combustion in industrial and commercial sectors including industrial off-road machinery, refrigeration and air conditioning, and the use of fluorinated gases for other applications.

7. To what extent do you agree with the proposed policies and proposals to reduce emissions for the business and industrial processes sector?

Strongly agree / **Agree** / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

Economic Development:

Agree that the plans to reduce emissions from business and industrial sectors build on a range of existing UK decarbonisation plans with many different support mechanisms already in place to drive this change. Continued support for business and industrial sectors, including implementation of policy considerations, reporting requirements and targets will be critical. The i4C Innovation and CleanTech Centre will support business and industrial process sectors (among others) to increase their knowledge, understanding, capability, commercial viability and will provide access to support and expertise as these sectors continue to reduce their emissions.

8. To what extent do you agree with the proposed approach to achieving a just transition in the business and industrial processes sector?

Strongly agree / **Agree** / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

Economic Development:

Agree that the proposed approach to achieving a just transition within the business and industrial sectors should build on a range of existing UK decarbonisation plans with many different support mechanisms already in place to drive this change. Continued support for business and industrial sectors, including implementation of policy considerations, reporting requirements and targets will be critical. The i4C Innovation and CleanTech Centre will support business and industrial process sectors (among others) to increase their knowledge, understanding, capability, commercial viability and will provide access to support and expertise as these sectors continue to reduce their emissions.

Residential Buildings Sector Contribution to Carbon Budget 2023-2027

Residential building emissions are primarily affected by fuel combustion for heating and the production of hot water.

9. *To what extent do you agree with the proposed policies and proposals to reduce emissions for the residential buildings sector?*

Strongly agree / **Agree** / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

Council would agree that focus has been given to areas of significant opportunity and appropriate policies and proposals forward, i.e. reduce energy consumption, use of low carbon options for heating and raising standards. It is noted that fuel switching from e.g. kerosene / LPG to a natural gas alternative is a short-term approach with immediate impact, and would be entirely appropriate given the longer-term plans for upstream decarbonisation i.e. biomethane injection.

Electrification may be more challenging given a number of major hurdles to achieving decarbonisation while assuring a just transition. Any risk in an over reliance on upstream decarbonisation technologies (wind & solar) with inherent security in supply concerns is compounded by the need for significant investment in storage solutions and grid hardening / reinforcement. Electrification of downstream space heating proposed through heat pumps while reducing carbon (similar to a switch to natural gas) comes with the inherent risk of simply shifting combustion carbon to electrical demand. Micro generation & storage solutions will address this concern to an extent but would need to be subsequent to a 'fabric-first' approach given NI housing stock suitability in terms of air tightness. A focus on raising standards, and a fabric-first approach is appropriate and therefore welcome. A wholesale review of fuel poverty strategy is also welcome given the measurable impacts on fuel poverty over the past 24 years would not encourage simply carrying on with the status quo.

10. To what extent do you agree with the proposed approach to achieving a just transition in the residential buildings sector?

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

The financial evaluation / affordability assessment process used to determine eligibility for grant aid can limit public engagement, as the current approach is very invasive in terms of privacy, and unnecessary if assessment returns to gateway benefits (previously taken) is taken. The use of a green tariff fund (administered through Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme (NISEP) is welcome as it offers access to those who may not qualify for Affordable Warmth, yet opportunity for domestic aid may be limited by the significant aid given to non-domestic customers through NISEP programs.

Public Buildings Sector Contribution to Carbon Budget 2023-2027

Sector emissions primarily result from fuel combustion in public buildings for heating, cooling and hot water.

11. To what extent do you agree with the proposed policies and proposals to reduce emissions for the public buildings sector?

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

Council supports the underlying principles of the previously published DfE Energy Strategy and Action Plan and looks forward to the next iteration on this framework.

While an uplift to Part F of the building regulations (NI) is appropriate and recognised as an instrumental component of the net zero journey, the energy labelling framework (while necessary) may prove less impactful. A more rigorous building certification methodology may go further in satisfying requirements under the building performance regulations and take from and feed into the Energy Carbon Data Repository (ECDR) piece in quality data informing performance and meaningful recommendations being produced from assessment.

In terms of support from the DfE 'Invest to Save' fund available to all departments and their arm's length bodies, non-departmental public bodies and academic institutions referred to as 'the Northern Ireland Central Government estate', it should be noted that local government is excluded from accessing this support. Further to this exclusion, restricting investment opportunity for local authorities, same authorities are also barred from accessing the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) energy purchasing process, and by extension outside of the ECDR framework. It should therefore be recognised that a significant part of the public estate loses out on the opportunities presented.

12. To what extent do you agree with the proposed approach to achieving a just transition in the public buildings sector?

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

An appropriate consideration is given in terms of investing in people through resource building. This opportunity could be expanded upon to ensure local SME's are supported in traversing the new public procurement requirements and given opportunity to grow through inclusive procurement practices rather than restricting access to a few larger national / international entities.

Waste Sector Contribution to Carbon Budget 2023-2027

Emissions in the waste management sector include those released from waste disposal at landfill sites, wastewater treatment and waste incineration. The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 includes a requirement to recycle at least 70% of waste by 2030.

13. To what extent do you agree with the proposed policies and proposals to reduce emissions for the waste sector?

Strongly agree / **Agree** / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

It is proposed through this draft Plan that reducing emissions in the waste management sector will be achieved through two key interventions:

- reduce landfill emissions, through improvements to the separate collection of food waste from households and divert biodegradable waste from landfill; and
- increase recycling rates and improve quality of the material that is collected for recycling.

To drive this, a target is in place to achieve a 65% local authority collected waste recycling rate whilst reducing waste to landfill to no more than 10% by 2035. This is supported by two proposals to increase household recycling and the introduction of mandatory recycling for the commercial and industrial sector. This figure has been further uplifted to 70% recycling requirement, as set out in the Act.

Council would note that obtaining recycling performance improvements from households is challenging, particularly in the absence of clear direction from DAERA and in the absence of a Waste Management Strategy for NI. Funding that is currently available for Councils is prohibitive to specific collections models, limiting the options available to boost Council recycling performance. Funding opportunities shouldn't dictate the method of which recycling is collection, instead this should be considered and the most suitable option chosen by the local Council.

Council responded to the 'Rethinking our Resources: Measures for Climate Action and a Circular Economy in NI' consultation in June 2024. Whilst we acknowledge the need for businesses and other organisations to do their part in achieving the recycling targets, there has been no indication how this will be achieved. Particularly of note to Councils, there has been no indication who would provide the recycling collection service to this sector. Should proposals be developed which involves Councils collecting recycling materials from this sector, adequate financing and resourcing will need to be provided to meet this new service requirement.

14. *To what extent do you agree with the proposed approach to achieving a just transition in the waste sector?*

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

As per question 13, Council supports an increased diversion from landfill, improvement recycling performance and bringing businesses and organisations into scope for recycling collections, however we reiterate that any form of new recycling collection service provided to the business/organisation sector will need to be properly considered. Should Councils be required to provide this service, realistic financing and resourcing will be required to meet this new service demand.

In addition, as stated in question 13, central government can not be prescriptive in allocating funding to NI Councils for their chosen recycling collection model. This limits Council's options, especially when analysis has been undertaken to demonstrate one particular model would yield higher recycling engagement from residents and at a lower cost. In addition, Council has undertaken a carbon analysis of several collection models; all had similar carbon emission output, therefore there are no significant gains from one particular model.

Agriculture Sector Contribution to Carbon Budget 2023-2027

In agriculture the two main greenhouse gases are methane and nitrous oxide rather than carbon dioxide. Livestock emissions dominate greenhouse gases in the agriculture sector. Other key sources are from manure management, soils and emissions from off-road vehicles and machinery.

15. *To what extent do you agree with the proposed enabling actions to reduce emissions for the agriculture sector?*

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

The draft Plan proposed that reducing emissions in the agriculture sector will be achieved through the delivery of DAERA's new Sustainable Agriculture Programme. This Programme and associated policies and proposals will support the sector's decarbonisation, focusing on improving the productivity of the agriculture sector, delivering improvements in environmental sustainability and resilience and supply chain integration. The Soil Nutrient Health Scheme has been rolled out across Northern Ireland with impressive uptake. Zone 4 (Co. Antrim) is currently open to applicants (until September 2025). This scheme, and other schemes which sit under the Sustainable Agriculture Programme will take time to bed in and therefore carbon emission reductions will take time to become evident. The current carbon budget runs between 2023-27 and several of the proposed schemes have not yet been initiated (notably 'Supply Chain' scheme proposed to start in late 2026). How realistic is it that the proposed carbon savings projected in the draft Plan will be achieved?

The CCC's Path to Net Zero for Northern Ireland assumes a significant reduction in livestock numbers and an associated transition to bioenergy cropping and increased forestry on agricultural land. The reduction in livestock numbers is based on the assumption that the

consumption of livestock products in the UK will fall and that this will lead to an equal reduction in Northern Ireland livestock numbers.

The Sustainable Agriculture Programme encourages a rapid transition to low carbon farming practices, as advised by the CCC, but also provides an alternative approach for reducing emissions from the agriculture sector to that advised by the CCC through more targeted (but still significant) reductions in livestock numbers, delivered through improved livestock productivity while allowing the agriculture sector to maintain output, avoid carbon leakage, and contribute to the growing global demand for livestock food products projected by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

Livestock

When considering Policy / Scheme 1 The Beef Carbon Reduction Scheme (page 155), the draft Plan states:

"However, to discourage any increase in production, a quantitative limit of 352,000 animals per year has been set at a Northern Ireland level on the number of animals that can qualify for the payment."

This could disproportionately impact the farming community, as some farms have exceptionally large livestock numbers, and conversely, small farms have smaller livestock numbers. Council would ask for clarify on how proportionality is considered when arriving at this total annual figure.

Equally, Policy / Scheme 1 The Suckler Cow Scheme (page 155) states:

"The Suckler Cow Scheme will include a quantitative limit of 222,000 per year at a Northern Ireland level to discourage any increase in production."

Again, Council would seek clarity on how this will be apportioned across NI farms.

An additional note in in relation to the Reducing the age at first calving of dairy herd replacements (page 156) and Reducing the average calving interval in dairy herds by 15 days (page 157) – AFBI have undertaken extensive research to establish these time reductions – Council would like to understand the potential health impacts on the animals from these reductions. Essentially, reducing calving intervals (currently 30.9 months and proposed down to 24 months) in order to produce the same volume of milk with a smaller herd could have negative health implications for the animal.

Fertilisers

Council is supportive of the Policy Knowledge and Innovation: Reducing emissions by using alternative fertilisers proposal. Urea fertiliser treated with a urease inhibitor significantly reduces nitrous oxide compared to current practices.

Legumes

Council is supportive of the Policy Knowledge and Innovation: Reducing emissions by a reduction in the use of nitrogen fertilisers by including Legumes in grass swards.

Carbon Footprinting Project

Council is supportive of this project which will see every farm business in Northern Ireland being offered a carbon footprint over a four-year period commencing in 2025/26 and participation will be a condition of receipt of the new Farm Sustainability Payment.

16. *To what extent do you agree with the proposed approach to achieving a just transition in the agriculture sector?*

Strongly agree / Agree / **Neither agree nor disagree** / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

Council agrees with the acknowledgement set out in the draft Plan that NI has an aging farming population. Two thirds of NI farms are small and often managed by people aged 45 or over (78%) and aged 65 or over (32%), often who have illnesses or other disabilities making proposed changes more of a challenge. Council welcomes support via CAFRE to address these vulnerabilities. Council is also supportive of proposals set out around succession within the family farming, encouraging the next generation of farmers into the industry and welcome DAERA's plans to develop a 'Farming for the Generations' programme which will provide advice on succession planning and support successors as they take on the responsibilities of farm business management and development.

Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry Sector Contribution to Carbon Budget 2023-2027

The Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) sector covers emissions and removals of greenhouse gases resulting from direct human-induced land use, land-use change, and forestry activities.

17. *To what extent do you agree with the proposed policies and proposals to reduce emissions for the LULUCF sector?*

Strongly agree / **Agree** / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

Parks Development:

Council welcomes the policy approach particularly in relation to the Forest of our future programme and Peatland Strategy. Council has small pockets of land which are currently managed primarily for recreation however some of these could be used for exemplar sites for specific management for carbon sequestration. A recent climate canopy project funded by Woodland Trust enabled Council to work with a wide range of both private and public landowners to increase woodland cover. This could be further developed with the right supporting mechanisms.

It's vital to support and highlight the benefits of trees on farms, in particular agroforestry, where farm operations are improved with the addition of trees. Agroforestry is a strong solution to nutrient run off, water infiltration, nitrogen fixing, protection of streams and rivers, and increases biodiversity in farmland and countryside areas.

Council has carried out extensive mapping exercises in the borough particularly on Council owned land but also utilising mapping from other agencies and through the MEA Tree and Woodland Strategy further mapping will be carried to ascertain the health of our woodland.

The Climate Action Plan should consider how this can be done in a consistent manner throughout NI.

Council welcomes the department in providing figures in terms of carbon sequestration for each habitat and feel this again is essential to have a consistent approach. Council would welcome carbon sequestration levels for other land use e.g. amenity grass, grass pitches etc.

18. To what extent do you agree with the proposed approach to achieving a just transition in the LULUCF sector?

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

The demand for quality outdoor recreational space continues to increase. Consideration needs to be given to the opportunity for a change in land use which also provides recreational opportunities and associated economic opportunities for the local area. This needs to be fully considered to ensure no or limited negative impact on these areas and that the potential job opportunities for local peoples are realistic.

Fisheries Sector Contribution to Carbon Budget 2023-2027

Fisheries sector includes emissions from activities associated with sea fisheries, inland fisheries and aquaculture.

19. To what extent do you agree with the proposed policies and proposals to reduce emissions for the fisheries sector?

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

No comment.

20. To what extent do you agree with the proposed approach to achieving a just transition in the fisheries sector?

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

No comment.

Relates to Chapter 7: Impact Assessments

Impact Assessment of the Climate Action Plan

Several impact assessments have been undertaken as part of the development of the draft Climate Action Plan. Individual assessments have been carried out for the policies and proposals across all sectors, with each assessment proportionate to the scale and likely impact of the respective measure. In addition, overarching impact assessments have been

conducted to consider the cumulative effects of the draft plan as a whole. Where proposals are at an early stage of development, some impacts may not yet be fully identified, and these will be considered further as the proposals are refined.

21. To what extent do you agree with the key findings of the Financial, Social and Economic Impact Assessments that have been carried out on the policies and proposals in the draft Climate Action Plan?

Strongly agree / **Agree** / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any comments on the findings:

Council's Performance team commentary - The assessment provides a comprehensive and balanced review of the draft Climate Action Plan's potential effects. Each assessment uses clear methods and thoughtful analysis to highlight both the benefits and challenges of the Plan.

The Financial Impact Assessment offers a well-organised view of costs, savings, and long-term financial benefits across sectors, while acknowledging areas for improved clarity around assumptions and funding risks. The Social Impact Assessment demonstrates positive impacts on health, wellbeing, employment, and education, alongside a realistic approach to managing potential social risks. Meanwhile, the Economic Impact Assessment shows strong potential for growth, sector competitiveness, and green job creation, with practical mitigation for transitional challenges.

Council's Economic Development team commentary: These assessments have been prepared by a team of economists and experts at Cambridge Econometrics and is based on an agreed and approved methodology and we would not be qualified to challenge any of the methodology and assumptions applied or the conclusions reached. The assessments are based on quantitative and qualitative analysis and for example with the economic impact assessment the lead department assessed the economic impact of the individual policies and proposal within the draft Climate Action Plan and scored these against identified criterion, provided commentary in respect of the same; identified and described mitigations to reduce any adverse economic impacts.

22. To what extent do you agree with the key findings of the overarching Financial, Social and Economic Impact Assessment of the draft Climate Action Plan?

Strongly agree / **Agree** / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any comments on the findings:

Economic Development commentary: These assessments have been prepared by a team of economists and experts at Cambridge Econometrics and is based on an agreed and approved methodology and we would not be qualified to challenge any of the methodology and assumptions applied or the conclusions reached. The assessments are based on quantitative and qualitative analysis and for example with the economic impact assessment the lead department assessed the economic impact of the individual policies and proposal within the draft Climate Action Plan and scored these against identified criterion, provided commentary in respect of the same; identified and described mitigations to reduce any adverse economic impacts.

Overall Conclusions

The assessment finds that whilst various trade-offs and conflicts have been identified across the financial, economic and social impacts of individual policies and proposals, the expected benefits outweigh these potentially negative impacts, thus the draft Climate Action Plan is considered to have an overall positive impact from an economic and social standpoint.

Council's Economic Development (ED) commentary – broadly agree with the overall conclusions in principle based on knowledge and experience working with businesses on cleantech/net zero projects rather than on the basis of any financial, economic or social impact assessment.

1. Financial Impact Conclusions

In conclusion, the draft Climate Action Plan is anticipated to yield long-term financial benefits for Northern Ireland, although they may pose short-term financial challenges. For example, low-emission vehicles have high upfront costs, but the benefits of reduced greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution only occur in the long term.

ED commentary – Council's HyTech NI DfE Funded project includes funding for hydrogen vehicles for Council and companies within the MTF network recognising the high upfront costs associated with these vehicles and the need to incentivise to achieve benefits to support climate change.

2. Social Impact Conclusions

*The roll-out of renewable energy, the transition to low-carbon private vehicles and heating systems, along with energy efficiency retrofits, can collectively have a beneficial impact on **household income**.* Schemes that incentivise the roll-out of renewable energy, particularly when coupled with storage solutions, can lead to reduced electricity prices in the medium- and long-term. Consequently, households transitioning from fossil-fuel based heating systems to clean heating systems (such as heat pumps) may benefit from lower electricity costs, which could potentially increase their discretionary income.

ED commentary – Council's HyTech NI DfE Funded project includes funding for a gas blending demonstrator project at the St Patrick's Barracks site in Ballymena which will trial utilisation of a hydrogen gas blend in a dedicated housing estate which could support the positive social impact conclusion on potential increases in discretionary income.

*Most policies and proposals are not expected to considerably affect **education, training, and skills**.* The implementation of waste, agriculture and public building policies may lead to a growing need for specialised technical skills across multiple industries. Demand for skilled workforce is likely to increase in several sectors, including construction, manufacturing and electrical engineering. As a result, the draft Climate Action Plan should lead to positive education outcomes if the public and private sectors can work together to ensure adequate upskilling and training.

ED commentary – Council has already worked in partnership with a range of public sector funders, academic partners and private sector sponsors to deliver bespoke training and skills projects, including bespoke skills academies on a range of subjects such as CleanTech and the award-winning Hydrogen Training Academy which focused on development of skills and accredited training around hydrogen technologies and applications. It is our ambition, in collaboration with academia and private sector partners, to develop this offering further and provide a suite of accredited training programmes not just for hydrogen but for CleanTech in general. This will bolster the current offering and complement existing provision across Further and Higher education sectors and will be aligned with Department for Economy objectives set out in the recently published Green Skills Action Plan.

In addition, the iLAB which will be part of the i4C Innovation and CleanTech Centre will have a cleantech sector demonstration and skills training element that builds SME capacity and provides supports for this sector similar to the council-led pilot Hydrogen Training Academy delivered in 2022/23.

The HyTech NI project is a collaborative project between MEABC and QUB/AMIC/Ulster University to support investment in an emerging hydrogen economy, which includes a hydrogen technology accelerator and a range of hydrogen demonstrators across Ballymena in key areas of mobility, blending and skills training. Within this project it is proposed to invest upwards of £2m at MEABC's existing ECOS Hub in the creation of a green hydrogen/renewables demonstration facility that includes for a modular construction 'energy laboratory' building (circa 100sqm) for skills training and event demonstration purposes. The ECOS Hub infrastructure will be an addition to the innovation ecosystem in Ballymena forming a triangle of innovation and skills training support infrastructure alongside the i4C and NRC campuses.

3. Economic Impact Conclusions

The interconnectedness between Waste Management, Residential Building, Public Building and Agriculture sectors arises from their shared focus on sustainability, resource efficiency, and economic development. For example, waste management policies and proposals foster a circular economy by recovering resources that can be reintegrated into manufacturing processes, agricultural practices or energy production, reducing input costs and improving sustainability across sectors.

ED commentary – Broadly agree that the interconnectedness between Waste Management and Public Buildings in particular, as Council manages these resources, is focused on creating efficiencies, improving sustainability and considering the ongoing impact of these areas on Economic Development. As a Council, we continually aim to make decisions on resource management or service provision which have a positive impact on long term sustainability, both within Council as an organisation and across the Mid and East Antrim Borough Council area and beyond. This is evidenced by initiatives such as a sustainable tyre contract or alternative fuel trials for Council fleet; sustainable waste disposal practices, maximising of circular economy opportunities; and a renewables generation 'invest to save' scheme on Council owned buildings. Furthermore, from an economic development perspective, projects such as MEANZ Business, the CleanTech Collaborative Growth Network and the Council's Business Growth support initiatives all feature circular economy, sustainability and waste reduction practices as key priorities as we support the local business and industrial community with Climate Change Action.

Overarching climate action can induce ripple effects in local economies. Job creation and productivity enhancements in one sector boost demand and opportunities in others. For instance, advancements in recycling technologies may lead to cheaper inputs for agricultural production or materials for construction, fostering interconnected growth. Additionally, improved housing and infrastructure can attract businesses and skilled workers, amplifying regional economic development. Energy efficiency measures can reduce costs for local businesses.

ED commentary – Broadly agree – the rationale for the economic development teams activities, initiatives and projects including the Hydrogen Training Academy, the CleanTech CGN, the MEANZ business project and the planned i4C Innovation and CleanTech Centre and the HyTech NI project all have key objectives to support local economic growth.

Regions that prioritise sustainable practices can attract investments from environmentally conscious companies. Sustainable investment can drive economic growth by aligning with global sustainability goals (UNEP, 2022). By setting ambitious environmental targets, Northern

Ireland can create new markets and opportunities for green products and services, which may have a positive overarching effect on the economy.

ED commentary – The i4C Innovation and CleanTech Centre is a proposal for a new significant scale building located on the St Patrick's Regeneration Site in Ballymena that will provide a physical hub, supporting future innovation activity in the Mid and East Antrim (MEA) area and future CleanTech sector (clean technology) needs across NI. i4C will serve as an accommodation base and the platform for an enhanced innovation and commercialisation support ecosystem for local entrepreneurs, SME's and industry. This includes for high quality Grade A Office accommodation that will be targeted at investors who want to focus on development of green products and services and development of sustainable practices.

Implementing a variety of sustainability measures is likely to have a positive effect on competitiveness. Well-designed environmental regulations may stimulate innovation, improve efficiency and enhance competitiveness, and possibly even offset the costs of compliance (Porter, 1991). The draft Climate Action Plan policies and proposals could catalyse firms to develop new technologies, optimise their processes and invest in research and development to meet the requirements. This results in innovation, improved productivity and ultimately increased competitiveness due to new growth, differentiation and opportunities in the market.

ED commentary – As noted above, the i4C Innovation and CleanTech Centre is a proposal for a new significant scale building located on the St Patrick's Regeneration Site in Ballymena that will provide a physical hub, supporting future innovation activity in the Mid and East Antrim (MEA) area and future CleanTech sector (clean technology) needs across NI. i4C will serve as an accommodation base and the platform for an enhanced innovation and commercialisation support ecosystem for local entrepreneurs, SME's and industry.

Creating opportunities in the Business and Industrial Processes sector provides employment by encouraging businesses to adopt sustainable practices. The Invest Northern Ireland Programme promotes the adoption of energy-efficient technologies and resource-saving practices by businesses. By providing grants and technical support, it encourages companies to invest in new equipment and processes, which often requires hiring skilled workers for installation, maintenance, and operation. Furthermore, the programme helps businesses reduce costs, enabling them to reinvest in growth and potentially create more jobs

ED commentary – Broadly agree – the rationale for the economic development teams activities, initiatives and projects including the Hydrogen Training Academy, the CleanTech CGN, the MEANZ business project and the planned i4C Innovation and CleanTech Centre and the HyTech NI project are all designed and developed to support local economic growth.

Investment in the electric vehicle (EV) sector has far-reaching economic implications and can mitigate potential negative impacts from transitioning away from internal combustion vehicles (ICEs). The decarbonisation of road transport is expected to create new employment opportunities in manufacturing, battery technology, and infrastructure development. Potential losses in industries reliant on ICEs and fossil fuels are expected to be replaced by new jobs – for instance, traditional petrol stations could be transformed to charge EVs, and jobs in the oil and gas industry may transition to the power sector. In addition, the demand for skilled workers in engineering, software development, and renewable energy integration continues to grow, promoting innovation and economic resilience.

ED commentary – Agree that there are economic benefits from investment in the EV sector but would also suggest that hydrogen vehicles and the hydrogen economy offer potential to achieve positive economic outcomes. Council's HyTech NI DfE Funded project aims to support investment in an emerging hydrogen economy, which includes a hydrogen technology

accelerator and a range of hydrogen demonstrators across Ballymena in key areas of mobility, blending and skills training.

23. *To what extent do you agree with the key findings of the Equality Screening and Equality Impact Assessment?*

Strongly agree / **Agree** / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any comments on the findings:

Council welcomes the Equality Screening accompanying the Draft Climate Action Plan and acknowledges the efforts made to consider both positive and negative impacts across all Section 75 categories.

The screening identifies a number of potential benefits for different Section 75 groups, including targeted support for those in fuel poverty, particularly disabled people, older people, and families with children, improved air quality for individuals with respiratory conditions, reskilling and employment opportunities for minority ethnic communities and men in the agricultural sector, and environmental education initiatives aimed at young people.

We also welcome the stated commitment to key principles such as a just transition, equitable cost distribution, and the need to avoid exacerbating existing inequalities. However, it is noted that some actions within the Draft Climate Action Plan remain underdeveloped at this stage, which in turn limits the Equality Screening's ability to fully assess their potential impact across and between Section 75 groups. The report itself recognises these limitations.

To strengthen the equality assessment, it will be important to provide greater clarity as the plan develops, particularly in relation to how potential impacts will be monitored, how mitigation will be applied, and how access to emerging opportunities (such as green jobs and skills programmes) will be made inclusive and accessible to all. Ongoing engagement with Section 75 groups and relevant stakeholders will also be critical to ensuring the plan's delivery reflects the needs and experiences of all categories.

24. *To what extent do you agree with the key findings of the Rural Needs Impact Assessments that have been carried out on the policies and proposals in the draft Climate Action Plan?*

Strongly agree / **Agree** / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any comments on the findings:

Council welcomes DAERA's thorough approach to assessing rural impacts in the RNIA. The use of varied data and focus on rural social and economic needs provides a solid basis for addressing rural challenges in the Climate Action Plan. While the assessment offers valuable insights, more detail on transitional impacts and future engagement would improve it. The strong emphasis on just transition and support for key rural sectors is positive. Continued engagement, clear implementation, and monitoring will be vital to ensure real benefits for rural communities.

25. *To what extent do you agree with the key findings of the overarching Rural Needs Impact Assessment of the draft Climate Action Plan?*

Strongly agree / **Agree** / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any comments on the findings:

Council welcomes the Overarching Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) for its depth, clarity, and commitment to addressing the needs of rural communities within the Draft Climate Action Plan. The assessment provides a comprehensive analysis of how climate policies may impact rural areas.

The RNIA demonstrates a strong understanding of the structural and emerging social and economic challenges faced by rural communities. It identifies key differences in energy infrastructure, transport access, digital connectivity, housing affordability, and reliance on traditional rural industries.

Council welcomes the consistent focus on Just Transition throughout the assessment and the recognition of the need for targeted support, rural-proofed delivery mechanisms, community engagement, and investment in infrastructure and skills is encouraging. The RNIA also highlights the potential costs of not transitioning and the risks of rural areas being left behind if not properly supported.

The inclusion of detailed mitigation measures is also a strength, particularly where they link to existing schemes and acknowledge the need for sustained financial and institutional support. However, the success of these measures will depend heavily on early, meaningful engagement with rural stakeholders and the continued prioritisation of rural needs during policy design and delivery.

Finally, Council welcomes the strong analysis of interactive and cumulative impacts across sectors. The emphasis on equity, rural proofing, and ongoing monitoring in this context is particularly important.

26. *To what extent do you agree with the key findings of the Strategic Environmental Assessment?*

Strongly agree / **Agree** / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

27. *To what extent do you agree with the key findings of the Habitats Regulations Assessment?*

Strongly agree / **Agree** / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

Council welcomes the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening and propose it is clearly structured and demonstrates a methodical approach in line with regulatory requirements. It is positive to see the use of precautionary principles throughout, with clear reference to relevant European sites, conservation objectives, and pathways for potential

effects. The inclusion of an in-combination assessment is also welcome and adds robustness to the conclusions.

The document acknowledges areas of uncertainty and outlines how future actions, such as project-level assessments or further screening, may be required depending on the implementation of specific measures. This reflects good practice and ensures flexibility in the application of the Plan.

As a constructive observation, the screening could be further strengthened by more explicitly outlining how site-specific risks will be addressed during the delivery phase would enhance transparency and reassurance.

28. *To what extent do you agree with the key findings of the Regulatory Impact Assessment?*

Strongly agree / **Agree** / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

Council welcomes the commitment that individual Northern Ireland Civil Service departments will carry out RIAs where specific policies may create regulatory impacts. It is important that oversight mechanisms are in place to ensure consistency, with particular attention given to sectors likely to be most affected, including agri-food, transport, energy, and small or rural businesses.

29. *To what extent do you agree with the key findings of the Children's Rights Impact Assessment?*

Strongly agree / **Agree** / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

Council welcomes the Child Rights Impact Assessment. It provides a clear and structured overview of how the draft Climate Action Plan may affect children and young people. It is positive to see explicit recognition of children as a key stakeholder group, and the alignment with the UNCRC and relevant rights-based frameworks is welcome. In particular, the consideration of how climate change may disproportionately affect vulnerable groups of children demonstrates a thoughtful and responsible approach.

The assessment rightly identifies opportunities for positive impacts, such as through improved health outcomes and greater engagement in climate education and participation. It is also helpful that it notes the indirect nature of many of the Plan's impacts on children, which is a realistic reflection of the Plan's strategic scope.

As a point of constructive feedback, the assessment could be strengthened by including more detail on how children and young people have been or will be engaged in the development and implementation of the Plan. Additionally, further consideration of monitoring mechanisms for child-specific outcomes would help ensure that the anticipated benefits are realised in practice.

30. Can you provide any further information which will help to supplement the completion of these impact assessments?

Please provide details, identifying the assessment to which the information relates:

N/a.

Relates to Chapter 8: The Natural Environment and Climate Change

Soil Quality, Biodiversity and Air Quality Targets

The Act requires us to set specific targets for soil quality, biodiversity and air quality in this draft Climate Action Plan. The Act also requires that, where practicable, the policies and proposals should support and use nature-based projects, either individually or as part of wider action.

31. To what extent do you agree with the proposed target for Soil Quality?

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

The draft Plan states:

"By 2027, to have at least 75% of Northern Ireland agricultural fields soil sampled and analysed to form a baseline of key soil nutrients from which further and more refined targets in respect of soil nutrient health can be considered."

Council is supportive of this approach, however does note that Zone 4 (Co. Antrim) is currently only open to applicants at present (until September 2025). Will AFBI have time to analyse this data/evidence alongside the NI Countryside Survey collated data within this timeframe in order to inform further soil nutrient targets? Council welcomes opportunity for soil quality testing outside of agricultural and to ensure that all those responsible for land management can ensure that any action taken is appropriate.

Council welcomes the new soil health indicator project, funded by DAERA alongside a Land Use for Net Zero (LUNZ) Hub project across the devolved governments.

Council also notes the proposal raised by Mark H Durkan MLA on his Private Members Bill on Environment and Nature Restoration, to introduce binding targets for nature's recovery into law in Northern Ireland which went out for public consultation in 2025 – this will need to be considered in any future plan development.

32. To what extent do you agree with the proposed target for Biodiversity?

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

The draft Plan states:

"By 2027, to have 65% of designated features in protected sites to be in or approaching favourable conservation condition, and at least 12% of all land, freshwater and marine environments effectively conserved, managed and well connected for nature."

Council would suggest it is an extremely ambitious target to achieve over the proposed timeframe. With a large proportion of protected sites falling into privately owned land management e.g. farms, and with the newly introduced, or to be introduced Sustainable Agricultural Programme (with associated schemes) which will bring a series of land use management changes, Council suggests the timeframe of this target is unrealistic.

While the acknowledgement of interlinkages of climate change and biodiversity is welcomed, the target focusing on designated features removes substantial opportunities for meaningful improvements for biodiversity. Many designated areas are in unfavourable condition – it is essential that the wider environment is protected to ensure buffer in place for these protected sites – to be able to achieve favourable conditions.

The biodiversity target of 12% all land, freshwater and marine environments effectively conserved, managed and well connected for nature is a nice idea but the feasibility of delivering this is unclear – what is going to be put in place to make this happen – there are legislative issues that need to be tackled to protect and enhance biodiversity in NI. Local Councils have a part to play however this needs to be wide reaching to achieve any traction. The reference to 'well-connected' is essential and we need to move away from having pockets of 'good' habitat as this is not sustainable.

Council also notes the proposal raised by Mark H Durkan MLA on his Private Members Bill on Environment and Nature Restoration, to introduce binding targets for nature's recovery into law in Northern Ireland which went out for public consultation in 2025 – this will need to be considered in any future plan development.

33. To what extent do you agree with the proposed target for Air Quality?

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

The draft Plan states:

"In 2025, DAERA will engage with other departments and key delivery organisations, with a view to considering the feasibility of implementing new regulations that would bring into operation tighter annual average limits/targets/ objectives for PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀, in line with interim target 4 of the World Health Organisation Air Quality Guidelines 2021 of 10 and 20 ug/m³ respectively."

Council welcomes DAERA's plans to develop Northern Ireland's first Clean Air Strategy. If brought in, it is envisaged that these tighter annual average limits/targets/objectives for PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀ would be applied as a target in the next Climate Action Plan.

Council also notes the proposal raised by Mark H Durkan MLA on his Private Members Bill on Environment and Nature Restoration, to introduce binding targets for nature's recovery into law in Northern Ireland which went out for public consultation in 2025 – this will need to be considered in any future plan development.

Nature-Based Solutions to Reducing Emissions

Nature-based Solutions will create thriving habitats and ecosystems which reduce emissions, whilst also providing a landscape and marine environment which is more resilient to the impacts of climate change.

34. Can you provide any further information which will help us to incorporate Nature-based Solutions into our policies and proposals?

Yes/No

If yes, please provide details:

Development of Council-led Local Biodiversity Action Plans that link to the proposed new Private Members Bill on Environment and Nature Restoration (Mark H Durkan MLA), to introduce binding targets for nature's recovery into law in Northern Ireland.

Council would welcome the development of a Land Cover Map (LIDAR) for Northern Ireland which identified habitat types, condition and potential carbon storage.

Parks Development:

Protection of flood zones – and where possible utilisation of these zones as both flood zones and environmental education/recreation facilities e.g. Ecos Nature Park. This site in Ballymena already provides the flood element however investment could allow for a strong educational and awareness raising facility to help people understand the importance of wetland habitats both in terms of biodiversity and flood alleviation.

Growing woodland is an effective carbon sink, so buffering long established and ancient woodland to protect it's longevity is key. Established woodland also provides other benefits such as improved air and water quality, and flood mitigation through slowing down rainfall both through canopy and roots. While new woodland creation is vital, existing woodlands should be equally protected.

Local Councils have land available and would welcome drivers to help protect and restore habitats on their land.

The Lawton principles of 'Bigger, Better and Better Connected' have been flagged for many years now as overarching principles, and it would be beneficial to see them enacted here.

Relates to Chapter 9: Governance for Delivery

Climate Action Governance Arrangements

We will only meet our carbon budget if we can successfully deliver the policies and proposals we have identified. Achieving this will require ongoing commitment and prioritisation of this work, shared ownership and cross-departmental working, and appropriate levels of oversight and scrutiny to keep us on track. Managing this implementation process will mean establishing appropriate governance structures within government, creating new statutory oversight bodies and working in partnership with existing independent oversight bodies.

35. To what extent do you agree with the proposed governance arrangements to support the delivery of the Climate Action Plan?

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

The draft Plan states:

"Working with relevant bodies, we will continue to develop a fit for purpose governance arrangement to oversee the delivery of the Climate Action Plan. Key actions include:

1. During 2025, DAERA, working in partnership with other departments, will establish fit for purpose cross-departmental governance and support structures to facilitate delivery of our carbon budget and emissions targets;

2. During 2025, DAERA will make regulations to establish the Just Transition Commission, following consultation with the public;

3. During the carbon budget period, DAERA will continue to engage with the CCC to obtain their expert independent advice as we seek to progress the delivery of policies and proposals set out in this plan and work towards delivery of our targets;

4. During the carbon budget period, DAERA will work with the OEP to ensure clearly defined roles of the oversight bodies and a coherent approach to managing the climate and the environment."

Council is supportive of this approach, however we would like to note that the Plan delivery relies heavily on public sector support – to date there has been very limited engagement with NI Councils on effective delivery mechanisms. Indeed, the draft NI Climate Action Plan was originally planned to be a co-designed approach with NI Councils, which didn't occur. Upon review of the governance structure of the draft Plan, it is difficult to establish NI Councils role in its delivery.

Council welcomes the establishment of a Northern Ireland Climate Commissioner and a Just Transition Commission for Northern Ireland.

Relates to Chapter 10: Monitoring and Reporting

Monitoring and Reporting on Policies and Proposals

Monitoring and reporting on the implementation of policies and actions and the resulting impact on emissions reduction will be an essential element of tracking progress towards achieving the 2023-2027 carbon budget and meeting interim targets set for 2030 and 2040. We will ensure a robust monitoring framework is in place to keep us on our net zero pathway.

36. *To what extent do you agree with the proposed approach to monitoring and reporting on policies and proposals?*

Strongly agree / **Agree** / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

The draft Plan states:

"DAERA will continue to develop a fit for purpose monitoring system to track progress in the implementation of policies as set out in this draft Climate Action Plan.

Key actions include:

1. By early 2025, finalise a climate action reporting cycle which details information and data required, including outcomes, indicators and actions for each sector;
2. During the carbon budget period, identify areas where data is missing or limited and seek to fill those gaps, taking account of emerging data sources;
3. By June 2025, develop a platform to track and collate data received and present progress on policies; and
4. During the carbon budget period, engage with stakeholders to ensure that Climate Action Plan progress reports and statements are communicated and presented in a clear and meaningful way."

Council supports this approach, however note that the Climate Change (Reporting Bodies) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 have not been referenced in this section. Councils are invited to provide a return on climate mitigation (due October 2025) and climate adaptation (March 2026). This chapter does not set out how this data/information will be processed / analysed or assimilated into sector carbon analysis.

In addition, Council would welcome clear plans to inform each respective Council of their individual 'carbon budget' over the three carbon budget periods, once monitoring and reporting cycles are complete.

Relates to Chapter 11: Public Sector Leading by Example

Public Sector Leading by Example

The public sector is critical to the successful delivery of the draft Climate Action Plan - influencing and enabling positive behaviours, driving change and acting as a leader on climate action and low carbon innovation. We are committed to forging a net zero pathway by delivering vital public services in a way that reduces emissions, reduces waste and uses scarce resources more sustainably.

37. Do you have suggestions about other actions that we should be taking across the public sector?

Yes/No

The draft Plan states:

"We will continue to deliver our duty on climate, driving change through actions which demonstrates leadership across the public sector. Key actions include:

2. During the carbon budget period, DfI will work with Northern Ireland government departments to develop a pathway for a Zero Emission Vehicle Action Plan to support the transition of the government's fleet.

Council query if an action plan will be rolled out further to support public sector bodies. At present, there has been very limited engagement with NI Councils to support them to decarbonise their fleet.

4. By 2030, DfE will deliver Energy Management Strategy objectives to reduce net energy consumption by 30% (from 2016/17 baseline).

Council queries which specific objectives?

5. During the carbon budget period, DfI will support Northern Ireland Water's bids for funding to progress renewable energy initiatives under its Power of Water Project.

Council applauds DfI's commitment to support NI Water's bid for initiatives under this project, however we do query how DfI plans to support other public sector bodies with similar proposals. In terms of a just transition, it is important that central government departments offer support in a fair and just way.

If yes, please provide details:

Tourism:

There aren't any specific references to Tourism which Council believes is a significant oversight, particularly given the number of visitors coming to NI.

We now have two UNESCO World Heritage sites in Northern Ireland. UNESCO is actively working towards net-zero emissions in tourism by 2050. This involves integrating climate action into tourism business models, promoting sustainable practices, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders. Their key strategies and initiatives include:

Decarbonising Buildings - Implementing regulations and policies to ensure new buildings reduce carbon emissions to net-zero by 2030, with all buildings following suit by 2050.

Reducing Waste - Aiming to reduce waste generation by at least 15% per capita by 2030 and halving the volume of municipal solid waste sent to landfills or incinerators.

Promoting Sustainable Consumption and Production - Redefining success in tourism to prioritise the regeneration of ecosystems, biodiversity, and communities, alongside economic value.

Supporting Community-Based Tourism - Fostering sustainable tourism practices in waterway cities of ASEAN through projects like webinars and workshops.

Utilising Renewable Energy - Exploring and implementing renewable energy solutions like hydro schemes to power historical sites and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

Offsetting Carbon Emissions - Implementing initiatives like tree planting to offset carbon emissions from tourism activities.

Engaging Stakeholders - Consulting with local communities, businesses, and other stakeholders to develop and implement sustainable tourism strategies.

Addressing Climate Change Impacts:

- Climate change can impact the sustainability of World Heritage sites, potentially leading to the loss of their status.
- UNESCO emphasises the need to decouple tourism from natural resource impacts and carbon emissions.
- There is a focus on developing policies and strategies to protect both cultural and natural resources from the negative impacts of tourism.

Economic Development:

Providing Local Councils and Local Government with the tools, mechanisms and powers to enable and facilitate climate action locally across a wide range of sectors could be a key asset for central Government in accelerating the transition to net zero. Programmes like the Innovate UK Future Ready programme, including Fast Followers and Pathfinders projects delivered under the Innovate UK Net Zero Living Programme, have highlighted the positive impact which Local Authorities can have on climate action, taking a place based and systems change approach to a just transition and convening, facilitating or supporting various other sectors to accelerate towards net zero targets.

There are numerous examples of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council leading on or collaborating on projects which accelerate the transition to Net Zero. The Hydrogen Training Academy, an award-winning public/private sector partnership demonstrated the value in bringing together Local Government, academia and the private sector to deliver an impactful project on hydrogen skills and training, which could be replicated with ease elsewhere. Other examples of Council playing a leading role in projects include: The MEANZ Business project (Council led) which supported businesses on their decarbonisation journeys; The HyTech NI project, which will be a collaboration between Council, academia and private sector and will demonstrate innovative technological solutions for zero emissions vehicles, low carbon heating and cleantech skills development; and the i4C Innovation and CleanTech Centre which will act as a significant catalyst to accelerate decarbonisation, support sustainable practices and foster innovation and collaboration across a range of sectors.

Relates to Chapter 12: Enabling the Transition to Net Zero

Enabling the Change to net zero

The draft Climate Action Plan sets out the importance of science and innovation, education and skills, infrastructure, planning, behaviour change and communication as enablers to delivering our pathway to net zero.

38. *To what extent do you agree with the actions that we are taking to enable the transition to net zero?*

Strongly agree / **Agree** / Neither agree nor disagree / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

The draft Plan states:

"Summary of enabling the transition to net zero actions

1. *DE has commissioned the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) to greater embed sustainability and climate change education into the curriculum. During 2025, a progression framework and resource hub will be published, drawing together up-to-date resources and sources of support for teachers, pupils and young people in green growth and climate change knowledge, skills and understanding.*

Council is very supportive of this action. Our young people are the future of today and educating them at a young age is significantly important and they inherit the earths condition in their later lives. Already, Climate is a key topic in the Eco Schools Programme (manged by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful), however it is absolutely

essential climate and sustainability is embedded into the full CCEA curriculum at all levels of academia.

2. *In 2024, DfI carried out a call for evidence on a potential focused review of the SPPS to ensure that it supports the climate change agenda, including the decarbonisation of transport. The responses to this call for evidence are being analysed with a view to presenting options to the DfI Minister in 2025.*

Council provided a response to this consultation. Council is supportive of the development of the Eastern Transport Plan which incorporates active and sustainable travel, as well as low carbon transport options.

3. *During the carbon budget period, DAERA will ensure that behavioural science is used to support the delivery of Climate Action Plans, through coordinating with other departments and engaging with sectors and the public.*

Council would like to be engaged in this co-ordination – as a public body, Councils have direct linkages with residents and stakeholders in the borough.

4. *In 2024, DAERA completed a landscape review of the use of social science, including behavioural science, across NICS. The findings of this review will be considered in 2025 and, where appropriate, will support green growth and climate change policy development.*

Council would welcome access to the report findings so that this information can be used to help shape new climate-related Council policies.

5. *During the first carbon budget period, DAERA will provide credible, evidence-based support, enabling citizens and businesses to make informed choices by actively communication and engaging with stakeholders and ensuring transparency in methods to capture, analyse and interpret data."*

Again, Council requests to be involved in a co-design approach in relation to communications, engaging with stakeholders etc, so a joined-up approach is delivered. Too often there have been many conflicting sources of climate data and information – having a co-designed and co-delivered communication and engagement strategy will assist in reducing climate scepticism, climate fatigue and mis-information.

Economic Development:

Agreed that the proposed plans to support a transition to net zero will undoubtedly take place across a range of enablers such as science and innovation (which may benefit from also including support for development of technological solutions at pace and at scale?), education and skills and each of the other areas noted above. For example, re-introducing and/or expanding programmes such as the Tenfold Net Zero Accelerator programme to encompass other sectors, challenges, technological solutions and potentially widen eligibility criteria could help to further accelerate progress.

A key focus is placed on Governments and Public Sector organisations becoming more innovative but there are many constraints such as short funding cycles, lack of resources or expertise and lack of strategic focus, which can impact the ability of public sector to move at the pace and scale required. Supporting systems change and giving time for this to take place is one of the key drivers for realising an increase in public sector innovation activity.

Supporting skills and education initiatives which develop the new skills required to implement a just transition to net zero, is critical to achieving net zero targets and climate action. This includes re-skilling, upskilling and should have an impact across everything from curriculum, to vocational skills, academic pathways and on the jobs skills and training. The green skills action plan is a welcome initiative but continuing to support successful initiatives such as the Hydrogen Training Academy will be crucial.

Within Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, the economic development teams activities, initiatives and projects including the Hydrogen Training Academy, the CleanTech CGN, the MEANZ business project and the planned i4C Innovation and CleanTech Centre and the HyTech NI project all have key objectives to support local economic growth with a focus on the sectors playing a leading role in sustainability, clean or green energy and advanced manufacturing or engineering.

Relates to Chapter 13: Investing in Climate Action

Cost of Implementing the Climate Action Plan

Delivering a cost-effective path to decarbonisation in Northern Ireland requires action across all sectors of the economy and a joined-up approach. Funding our net zero transition will be a collaboration between the public and private sectors.

39. To what extent do you agree with the assessment of the costs of implementing this Climate Action Plan?

Strongly agree / Agree / Neither agree nor disagree / **Disagree** / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

Council supports the ambition of the Climate Action Plan 2023–2027 and agrees that a joined-up, cost-effective path to net zero is important. However, the current cost assessment is too uncertain to give Councils a reliable basis for planning, and the draft Plan does not clearly demonstrate that the full programme is financially affordable for local government or ratepayers.

While the plan explains its quantification method, the cost estimates still have high uncertainty. This is a concern because these figures will be used to set targets that may carry financial penalties for Councils. Targets are also based on data from multiple sources, but it is unclear whether their assumptions align. Without more certainty, there is a risk of setting unrealistic obligations that could lead to financial penalties for reasons outside of local Council's control.

The draft Plan assumes councils already have capital and revenue budgets in place. In reality, provision is very limited—only a small capital amount in 2025/26 and almost nothing for revenue. Without ring-fenced central funding, Councils will have to cut services or raise

rates, giving ratepayers a double burden as they also pay for their own home or business decarbonisation alongside increasing inflationary costs.

While DAERA's financial impact assessment concludes a "neutral" overall effect, this does not reflect the reality for individual Councils. The costs and responsibilities outlined in the draft Plan fall unevenly across local authorities, and without dedicated, ring-fenced funding, Councils will face significant net costs. For some Councils, these will be substantial and ongoing, with no guarantee that local economic benefits will offset them in the short to medium term. National averages and aggregate cost-benefit assessments in the consultation mask the very real budget pressures that will be felt locally. It is also important to recognise that the financial impacts of the plan will not be evenly distributed across all Councils, which raises further concerns about fairness and affordability at a local level.

Council is concerned that the costs and impacts of implementing the draft NI Climate Action Plan will not be felt evenly across the 11 Councils, likely widening existing disparities in rates paid by local residents. Councils with larger fleets, older infrastructure, or more challenging emissions profiles may face higher costs, while smaller or more rural Councils may have less capacity to absorb these costs or benefit from economies of scale. This could result in significant differences in the financial burden placed on ratepayers across different boroughs.

Furthermore, the continuing reduction in the Rate Support Grant exacerbates these disparities, limiting Councils' ability to manage additional costs without increasing rates. We recommend exploring options to enhance or restructure the Rate Support Grant or other financial mechanisms to provide targeted support for Councils disproportionately affected by decarbonisation costs. Without such measures, the plan risks increasing financial inequality among communities in Northern Ireland.

The financial impact extends beyond initial capital outlay. Councils need long-term, multi-year funding to cover ongoing operational costs, maintenance, training, and capacity building. Significant costs will also arise from fleet decarbonisation, waste management infrastructure, energy-efficiency upgrades to buildings, and statutory monitoring and reporting duties. The plan provides a Just Transition Fund for Agriculture, but there is no equivalent ring-fenced support for Councils, creating a risk of unfunded mandates.

We recommend lowering the uncertainty in cost estimates before finalising targets, with clearer ranges and improved explanations. A detailed funding map should be published showing confirmed budgets, possible funding sources, and timelines for release. Funding for Councils should be ring-fenced to meet statutory obligations and to provide the long-term, multi-year resources needed for skills development and capacity building. The plan should clearly explain how the whole programme will be paid for, so Councils and ratepayers aren't faced with unaffordable costs. It should also explain how targets linked to financial penalties will work, making sure councils aren't unfairly punished because of uncertain costs or things outside their control. Ongoing transparency around costs and funding arrangements, along with dedicated support for Councils facing disproportionate financial burdens, will be critical. Without this, affordability challenges risk undermining successful delivery and inequalities across Northern Ireland could grow.

40. Do you have any other information to inform this cost assessment?

Yes/No

If yes, please provide details:

Capital Programme:

The Climate Action Plan acknowledges the significant challenge in delivering actions that support the net zero agenda, attempting to quantify the level of investment needed to do so. However, organisations are investing in their assets etc now with significant levels of investments, which whilst not net zero focused, have the ability to include elements of this plan now. The difficulty, and perhaps this is somewhat of a misconception, is where sustainable solutions come at a higher cost than traditional methods. This financial tension often limits the ability to adopt low-carbon or innovative approaches, even when they align more strongly with long-term climate goals. To meaningfully progress the plan's ambitions, it would be beneficial to establish a mechanism that enables the selection of higher-cost options on the basis of their net zero credentials, rather than defaulting to the most affordable solution. Such an approach would provide a clearer pathway for embedding climate priorities into decision making and capital investment.

Procurement:

The Procurement service in MEABC is guided by managers in terms of the works, goods and services they need to procure, rather than a budget holder itself. Procurement legislation enables local authorities to develop tender specifications and apply selection evaluation criteria that cover environmental / sustainability and related requirements, and the MEABC Procurement Unit would work with Council managers in areas such as waste to assist them in developing evaluation criteria. However, it has no direct policy role over this area.

Just Transition Fund for Agriculture

The purpose of this scheme is to provide advice and financial assistance to the agriculture sector to deliver its contribution to meeting the carbon budgets and emissions reduction targets by implementing proposals and policies to be included in Climate Action Plans.

41. To what extent do you agree with the proposed approach to establishing a Just Transition Fund for Agriculture?

Strongly agree / Agree / **Neither agree nor disagree** / Disagree / Strongly disagree

Please provide your reasons and any alternatives:

No comment.

Council/Committee:	Environment and Economy Committee
Date:	15 September 2025
Report Title:	DAERA Plastic Pollution Plan Consultation
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Catherine Hunter, Acting Climate & Sustainability Manager
Approver:	Shaun Morley, Director of Operations

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This report is to update Elected Members on the DAERA draft Plastic Pollution Plan (PPP) information-gathering consultation for Northern Ireland (Appendix 1) and to seek approval of the draft response at Appendix 2.

2. Background

- 2.1. The production of plastic worldwide continues to increase exponentially, despite growing concerns and the extensive media coverage regarding over-consumption and its environmental impacts. For example,
 - Production of plastics increased exponentially, from 2.3 million tonnes in 1950 to 448 million tonnes by 2015. Production is expected to double by 2050.
 - Half of all plastics ever manufactured have been made in the last 15 years.
- 2.2. Plastic as a material is extremely versatile, affordable and durable. These properties mean our society has developed a strong dependency on it, particularly in our modern day 'throw away' culture. This durability means that every piece of plastic that has ever been created still exists in our world.
- 2.3. However, it is important that we do not demonise all plastic. Many plastics have lifesaving capabilities when used, for example, in healthcare settings and its use in packaging helps to prolong the life of our food, in turn preventing even more harmful carbon emissions from food waste. Significant progress is being made in the reduction of plastic in packaging and the search for alternatives to plastic in food packaging, where possible.
- 2.4. A Call for Evidence was launched between 25 June - 1 October 2021. The primary purpose of which was to help ensure that DAERA captured all the actions taking place across Northern Ireland aimed at tackling and eliminating plastic pollution.



- 2.5. The main aim of this consultation is to gather consultees' views on what the future Plastic Pollution Plan for Northern Ireland (PPP NI) should look like. Views collected from this consultation will be used to help achieve the aim of developing a well-informed Plan which will:
- Encourage and incentivize action and progress towards the elimination of plastic pollution in Northern Ireland - by ensuring the right information is gathered to inform public bodies, as well as government, to take effective decisions and actions to tackle this issue;
 - Be timely and of good quality (in terms of questions asked and data received) to enable gathering of the most effective and useful information; and
 - Help deliver desired effects and benefits - it should help widen government's understanding on how well Northern Ireland is tackling plastic pollution, so that well informed policy, actions and interventions can be made by them.
- 2.6. This consultation will be used to inform the development of the PPP. It does not create new policy, rather it collates existing and future actions which aim to tackle the issue of plastic pollution and seeks views on any further measures that may enable progress on the elimination of plastic pollution.
- 2.7. This consultation will run for 12 weeks from 1 July 2025 to 23 September 2025.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

- 3.1. The draft Plan is being informed by the following evidence
- research undertaken by DAERA policy teams;
 - stakeholder engagement with government, regulators, industry and the public; and
 - responses to DAERA's Call for Evidence.
- 3.2. The information gathered in the Call for Evidence has been analysed to supplement the wider research and stakeholder engagement that has been undertaken to inform the Plan.
- 3.3. To achieve the aims of the PPP NI, the following outcome objectives have been identified to complement the UN Strategic Development Goals:
- **Objective 1:** We will reduce the impact of plastic pollution on our environment and have clean and biodiverse water, seas and oceans improving the health and wellbeing of society.
 - **Objective 2:** We will ensure responsible consumption, production and disposal of plastic, contributing to Net Zero through a reduction in plastic carbon emissions.



- **Objective 3:** We will build a sustainable community that is free from unnecessary plastic pollution.
- 3.4. The consultation contains 15 questions – all are relevant to Council.
- 3.5. Overall, Council is generally supportive of the three objectives and supporting actions proposal sets out under each; however, it would highlight:
- Council believes that Objective 2 should be split into two separate objectives. The first part focusses on ensuring responsible consumption, production and disposal of plastic. The second part focuses on contributing to Net Zero through a reduction in plastic carbon emissions; this is a separate matter entirely. Both parts should have specific actions to address the objective focus.
 - Better enforcement – although Council welcomed the increase in the fixed penalty notice fine costs in December 2022, we would encourage even higher fine costs to people who decide to litter.
 - Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) – once this fully comes into effect, Council suggests this will see better full lifecycle management of packaging materials, which includes litter management.

4. General Considerations / Implications

- 4.1. **Financial Implications** – through supporting development of a new Plan, Council may see reduced litter levels and better recapture of packaging containing plastic, which will reduce Council costs on litter management and will see revenue share through EPR.
- 4.2. **Human Resources** – currently management of plastic waste/recycling falls to the waste service area – the adoption of any new Plan may require internal policy development which will require staff resource.
- 4.3. **Equality Screening / Rural Proofing and Environmental Impact** – this consultation has been screened through an Equality Disability Impact Screening and Rural Needs Impact Assessment.
- 4.4. **Alignment with Corporate Priorities and Link to Corporate Plan** – supporting the development of a draft Plan aligns with key outcomes in the 'Planet' pillar of the Corporate Plan 2024-28 and the 'Environment' cross-cutting pillar in the Community Plan 2017-2032.
- 4.5. **Reputation** - there is significant political and community interest in waste management, particularly recycling and plastics – supporting the development of a draft Plan will demonstrate a commitment to tackling needles single-use plastics, manage waste in circulation and improve upon recyclable content in packaging.



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Antrim**
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- 4.6. **Legal** – the Climate Change (NI) Act 2022 calls for 70% recycling – the development of a draft Plan will support a pathway to achieving this. Council also has a Sustainable Duty – supporting the development of this Plan will support a low carbon circular economy..

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1. It is proposed to seek approval of the draft response at Appendix 2 to this consultation and submit it to DAERA before the deadline of 24 September 2025.

6. Recommendation or Decision

- 6.1. It is recommended that Elected Members approve the draft response (Appendix 2) to this consultation.

7. Appendices / Links

- Appendix 1 DAERA draft Plastic Pollution Plan
Appendix 2 MEA Draft Consultation Response



Consultation on the Plastic Pollution Plan for Northern Ireland



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**
www.daera-ni.gov.uk

An Roinn
**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Department of
**Fairmin, Environment
an' Kintra Matthers**

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This document is also available on the DAERA website at:

[Public Consultation on the Plastic Pollution Plan for Northern Ireland](#)

On request, we can arrange to provide other formats of this document, such as:

- Paper Copy
- Large Print
- Braille
- Other Languages

To request an alternative format, please contact us:

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Guidance is provided on the 'Confidentiality' of responses under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, on Page 27 for your reference.

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1. Ministerial Foreword

Northern Ireland is home to some of the most beautiful places in the world and it is vital that we ensure they are protected from plastic pollution. A clean and resilient environment is essential for our health and wellbeing and our ability to adapt to the effects of climate change. Despite efforts made to tackle it, plastic pollution remains a problem in Northern Ireland. Current practice is not going far enough to deliver the improvements needed and our consumption of natural resources and the waste streams we produce are not sustainable.

My Department have been leading on the development of a plan to enable the elimination of plastic pollution in Northern Ireland. The Plastic Pollution Plan will set the course for Northern Ireland to be part of the plastic solution and become a leader in driving the necessary change.

A range of policy measures have already been brought forward and actions to move towards the reduction of plastic pollution have seen some great achievements in reducing the impact of plastic waste on our environment. For example, A [ban on microbeads](#), found in cosmetics and cleaning products, has been in place since March 2019; a carrier bag levy on all carrier bags was introduced in Northern Ireland in 2013 and has seen an estimated reduction of more than [2.4 billion bags to date](#); my Department has led the implementation of the Plastic Reduction Action Plan for the Government Estate since October 2021, in which a ban on many single-use plastic items has come into operation across the Northern Ireland Civil Service; and most recently the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) was published on 27 September 2024.

These are initiatives to be proud of, but there is a lot more work to be done. The draft Green Growth and Circular Economy Strategies, alongside the Climate Change Act, set out the strategic direction, including more ambitious recycling targets, reducing emissions and better quality and quantity in resource recovery leading to a circular economy where resources are kept in use for as long as possible.

We all need to be committed to continuing to change behaviours. Everyone has a role to play in tackling plastic pollution. Small actions like picking up litter or reducing the amount of plastic you use in your home or business will all help contribute to reducing plastic pollution in Northern Ireland. The actions detailed in this Plan create new economic opportunities, creating potential for new jobs for our region through investment in recycling infrastructure, new schemes, products and markets for plastic alternatives. Ultimately, this approach, by setting out a range of policies and actions to reduce plastic pollution, will help ensure we leave a better place for future generations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Muir', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Andrew Muir, MLA

Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

2. Setting the scene

2.1 Background - Why do we need to change?

The production of plastic worldwide continues to increase exponentially, despite growing concerns and the extensive media coverage regarding over-consumption and its environmental impacts. For example,

- Production of plastics increased exponentially, from 2.3 million tonnes in 1950 to 448 million tonnes by 2015. Production is expected to double by 2050.
- Half of all plastics ever manufactured have been made in the last 15 years.[†]

Plastic as a material is extremely versatile, affordable and durable. These properties mean our society has developed a strong dependency on it, particularly in our modern day 'throw away' culture. This durability means that every piece of plastic that has ever been created still exists in our world. However, it is important that we do not demonise all plastic. Many plastics have lifesaving capabilities when used, for example, in healthcare settings and its use in packaging helps to prolong the life of our food, in turn preventing even more harmful carbon emissions from food waste. Significant progress is being made in the reduction of plastic in packaging and the search for alternatives to plastic in food packaging, where possible.

Plastic pollution is a global problem and enormously complex. Plastic and the environmental damage caused by plastic pollution is attracting significant local, national and global attention. Communities, environmental groups, businesses, industries and governments worldwide have called for action to avoid the misuse of plastic, encourage responsible consumption of plastic, increase the recovery of plastic resources and reduce the impact of plastic pollution on our environment.

It is therefore important that new plastic products are responsibly produced with consideration given to how they will be dealt with when they reach their end of use to avoid plastic pollution. It is when plastic is not disposed of correctly that it can lead to great harm to the environment and human health. There are clear environmental, economic and social costs associated with wasting resources and plastic pollution.

To effectively tackle plastic pollution, we need to reduce plastic through the design, manufacture and packaging of products, while considering their ultimate disposal. As part of Northern Ireland's transition to a circular economy, where waste is avoided, reused and recycled to the greatest extent possible, a fundamental shift in the way that we design, use, reuse and reprocess plastics is needed.

[†] The World's Plastic Pollution Crisis Explained (nationalgeographic.org)

Although plastic is mostly recyclable, a large proportion is neither recovered nor recycled. Since the 1950s, an estimated 9% of all plastic produced by humanity has been recycled. While there has been an increased interest in and development of plastic recycling systems and facilities, still only 14% of plastic waste is currently being collected for recycling.²

Often, plastic is designed to be single-use, perhaps only in our lives for a matter of minutes before being discarded. A plastic bottle can take up to 450 years to decompose after a few minutes of use.³ Not only is this wasteful, but it is also an avoidable loss of valuable resources and places unnecessary demand for plastic on the earth's virgin resources and the fossil fuels used in its production.

There are different ways that plastic can enter our environment as pollution, from littering on land to the release of microfibers from washing synthetic clothes. Once in the environment, plastic persists breaking down into micro and nano plastics which disperse over time.

Below are some statistics concerning plastic pollution that emphasise the need for action:

- Every year, about 8 million tonnes of plastic waste escapes into the oceans from coastal nations. That is the equivalent of setting five bags full of rubbish on every foot of coastline around the world.
- 90% of floating waste in the ocean is plastic.
- The Great Pacific Garbage Patch is 6 times the size of the UK! This is just 1 of 5 plastic patches in our oceans.
- A report from the United Nations Environment Programme suggest that plastic pollution could triple by 2040 based on current trends.
- More than 250 million plastic bottles are thrown out each year in Northern Ireland.
- Every person in Northern Ireland uses on average 95 plastic bottles each year.
- Plastic is the most common type of marine litter found on Northern Ireland beaches.



² Plastic Waste Management | Plastics and the Environment Series - Geneva Environment Network.

³ The Lifecycle of Plastics

3. Our Approach

3.1 Call for Evidence

A Call for Evidence was launched between 25 June - 1 October 2021. The primary purpose of which was to help ensure that DAERA captured all the actions taking place across Northern Ireland aimed at tackling and eliminating plastic pollution.

Responses were received from 34 individuals, businesses, Councils and political party representatives.

The Call for Evidence asked for responses to 4 questions:

1 Detail any actions that you or your organisation has been involved in with the aim of tackling plastic pollution in Northern Ireland and which could be used as an exemplar in the Northern Ireland plastic pollution plan.
2 Have you any plastic pollution suggestions that you would like to include in the Northern Ireland plan which you feel have not been addressed by government or by another scheme?
3 Have you, or your organisation, any solutions or sources of evidence and expertise that could be used to help eliminate the problem of plastic pollution in Northern Ireland?
4 Any other comments or contributions that will help inform the plan and the commitment by the Northern Ireland Executive to eliminate plastic pollution.

Respondents were supportive of the Plan with some providing broad commentary on the need for action to reduce problem plastic across Northern Ireland and others giving clear examples of action that could be taken.

3.2 Action Selection

The Plan is being informed by the following evidence:

- research undertaken by our policy teams;
- stakeholder engagement with government, regulators, industry and the public;
- responses to our Call for Evidence.

The information gathered in the Call for Evidence has been analysed in order to supplement the wider research and stakeholder engagement that has been undertaken to inform the Plan.

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The responses to the Call for Evidence included actions, such as: the introduction of Terracycle collection points/bins, cigarette ballot bins, the use of levies and fines to encourage behaviour change and promotion of the waste hierarchy; paying particular attention to the promotion of reuse over the less favourable recycle option, stating “any ambiguity of message will continue to confuse consumers”.



4. Aim and Scope

4.1 Aim of the Consultation

The main aim of this consultation is to gather consultees' views on what the future Plastic Pollution Plan for Northern Ireland (PPP NI) should look like. Views collected from this consultation will be used to help achieve the aim of developing a well-informed Plan which will:

- Encourage and incentivise action and progress towards the elimination of plastic pollution in Northern Ireland - by ensuring the right information is gathered to inform public bodies, as well as government, to take effective decisions and actions to tackle this issue;
- Be timely and of good quality (in terms of questions asked and data received) to enable gathering of the most effective and useful information; and
- Help deliver desired effects and benefits - it should help widen government's understanding on how well Northern Ireland is tackling plastic pollution, so that well informed policy, actions and interventions can be made by them.

The aim of the PPP NI is to collate the targets incorporated in existing policies and strategies across Northern Ireland and identify the actions and activities taking place or planned that will contribute to reducing unnecessary plastic from Northern Ireland.

The PPP NI will be an overarching document. It will focus on policies and proposals aimed at reducing unnecessary and problematic plastic across Northern Ireland. This will involve collaboration across UK, ROI and further afield.

4.2 Scope of the Consultation

This consultation will be used to inform the development of the PPP. It does not create new policy, rather it collates existing and future actions which aim to tackle the issue of plastic pollution and seeks views on any further measures that may enable progress on the elimination of plastic pollution.



5. Objectives

To achieve the aims of the PPP NI, the following outcome objectives have been identified to complement the UN Strategic Development Goals:

Objective 1: We will reduce the impact of plastic pollution on our environment and have clean and biodiverse water, seas and oceans improving the health and wellbeing of society.

Objective 2: We will ensure responsible consumption, production and disposal of plastic, contributing to Net Zero through a reduction in plastic carbon emissions.

Objective 3: We will build a sustainable community that is free from unnecessary plastic pollution.

These objectives will be achieved using a range of measures that include legislation, policy levers, innovation, behaviour change and collaboration. They will be a combination of international, national and local actions that will contribute to the goal of reducing plastic pollution within Northern Ireland.

You can contribute to this consultation by providing your comments in respect of the questions highlighted throughout the document. Please supplement your response with any relevant supporting information, evidence and/or analysis. You can access the online survey [HERE](#).

Consultation Questions

- 1) Do you agree that the objectives are appropriate for the PPP NI?
- 2) If not, what alternative objectives would you like to see in the PPP NI?

Objective 1

We will reduce the impact of plastic pollution on our environment and have clean and biodiverse water, seas and oceans improving the health and wellbeing of society.

Policy and Legislative Levers

Programme for Government

The PPP encompasses key strategies and initiatives all of which, in turn, support the Northern Ireland Programme for Government 2024-27 priorities: “Grow a Globally Competitive and Sustainable Economy” and “Protecting Lough Neagh”.⁴

DAERA Corporate Plan

The objectives within the PPP also align with those included in the DAERA Corporate Plan Priority: Protecting and restoring our terrestrial and marine environment.⁵

Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP)

The Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) will provide the focus for protecting and enhancing our natural environment for the coming decades. Its action areas and targets centre around six strategic environmental outcomes, aiming to be ambitious, inspiring, targeted, and most importantly, challenging us to put the environment at the very heart of what we do across government. Northern Ireland Executive approval for the draft EIP was obtained on 26 September 2024 and the EIP was published the following day. DAERA is required to publish annual progress reports that: (a) describe what has been done to implement the plan; and (b) assess whether the natural environment has improved. The Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) is also required to monitor progress and report on an annual basis. The first annual report will be published in January 2026 and will cover the 12-month period starting on 27 September 2024.

(Draft) Green Growth Strategy

(Draft) Green Growth Strategy - this is the Northern Ireland Executive's multi-decade strategy, balancing climate, the environment and our economy. Its aim is to ensure future government policy making has climate and environmental action at its core, embracing and enabling science and innovation to drive solutions. One of the high-level Green Growth principles underpinning the strategy is to ‘Reduce our wasteful use of resources - through greater efficiency and an increasingly diverse and circular economy.’

⁴ The Northern Ireland Programme for Government.

⁵ DAERA Corporate Plan 2025-27 (Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs).

Littering

Plastic litter impacts the aesthetic value and visual amenity of a place. It makes our region look uncared for, unpleasant to be in and less likely to be enjoyed by the public. Research has shown that an area clear of litter is more likely to remain so. Its impacts on our wildlife and environment are also increasingly apparent.

DAERA and councils use a combined approach of legislation, including The Litter (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 and Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, education, awareness and enforcement to tackle the scourge of littering in Northern Ireland. In December 2022 legislation increased the maximum fixed penalty notice from £80 to £200 for fines issued by councils for littering and dog fouling offences.

The Department provides significant funding to Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful (KNIB) to promote behavioural change and environmental awareness. Through a variety of programmes and initiatives such as Adopt-a-Spot, the Big Spring Clean, their Clean Coastline Programme and the Eco-schools Programme. KNIB aims to challenge litter-habits directly as well as changing attitudes, awareness and behaviours towards litter and littering.

Vapes (e-cigarettes) have increased in popularity in recent years, becoming more mainstream products. There has been a sharp increase in the use of disposable vapes (sometimes referred to as single-use vapes) in particular. Disposable vapes are defined as products that are not rechargeable (they use a lithium battery which cannot be recharged), that are not refillable (once empty, the cartridge or pod cannot be refilled) or that are neither rechargeable nor refillable. Vapes that are rechargeable and not refillable or that are refillable and not rechargeable, are still considered disposable or 'single-use' even though the lifetime of the vape can be extended through refilling or recharging it. In addition, some reusable vapes have a coil (which produces heat and vaporises the e-liquid). If there is a coil, it must be removable and replaceable by the vape user.

The rise in the use of disposable vapes has led to an increase in the disposal of these products. There has been growing concern over the environmental impact as these vapes are typically discarded to general waste in a bin or littered, rather than recycled. In 2023, it was estimated that almost 5 million disposable vapes were either littered or thrown away in general waste every week in the UK, almost four times as much as the previous year.⁶ The estimated figure for NI is 140,000 per week.

To tackle the environmental harm caused by inappropriate disposal of single use vapes and pursue a more circular economy where our resources are kept in use for longer and things are built to last, the Environmental Protection (Single-use Vapes) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 banning the sale and supply of single-use vapes were made and laid before the NI Assembly in December 2024 and came into operation on 1st June 2025.

⁶ Material Focus (2023). Number of disposable single-use vapes thrown away have in a year quadrupled to 5 million per week.

Marine

The quality of our marine water must be improved and the pollution of inland bodies of water must be reduced. Plastic enters our watercourses and coastal waterways through littering, both intentional and windblown, as well as through some maritime activities, for example shipping and fishing. Plastic can also affect marine fauna through direct physical impacts such as strangulation and interference with digestion such as micro and nano-plastics which can accumulate in marine life through the food chain.

The [Northern Ireland Marine Litter Strategy](#) published in 2013 is currently being reviewed.

Health and Wellbeing

As plastic products fragment into smaller particles (micro and nano plastics) research has shown that these are entering into our environment and food chain. These particles can have concentrations of toxic chemicals associated with them that further impact on our environment.

Plastic textile fibres are becoming a dominant source of plastic pollution and have been found in the sediment surrounding beaches, in mangroves, in Arctic ice, in marine life living in the deepest parts of the ocean, even in what we eat and drink.

Clothing labelled 100% polyester, acrylic, nylon or polyamide are in fact 100% plastic, made from fossil fuels and not biodegradable and make up over half of the world's clothing material. Some of those fibres are caught by washing machine filters or in water-treatment plants, but it is estimated that about 35% of the microplastics that enter the ocean come from these synthetic materials.

Wastewater and Sewage Related Debris

Wastewater systems are a pathway for plastic to enter our environment. Disposable nappies, period products, incontinence products and most wet wipes contain plastic. Such items are often sent to landfill/incineration, with approximately 1.5 billion sanitary items flushed down toilet in the UK per year.

Eleven billion wet wipes are used in the UK per year.⁷ Often disposed of via a toilet, wet wipes will not travel further than 20 metres from where they are flushed. Inappropriately flushed items cause the majority of sewer blockages, with 11,500 blockages recorded in Northern Ireland in 2022/23.

Wet wipes containing plastic break down into microplastics over time, which research shows can be harmful to human health and disrupt our ecosystems. There has been a voluntary shift by some manufacturers and retailers to move away from wet wipes containing plastic. DAERA will introduce legislation alongside the other UK nations to ban the sale and supply of wet wipes containing plastic removing this source of microplastic pollution from entering our waterways.

⁷ [Consultation launched to ban wet wipes containing plastic](#)

Actions:

- A. DAERA will implement the Environmental Improvement Plan for Northern Ireland and publish annual progress reports.**
- B. DAERA will continue to provide funding to various delivery partners to reduce street and marine littering and evaluate its impact on litter reduction annually.**
- C. The Marine Litter Strategy for Northern Ireland is currently being reviewed and will be revised as necessary.**
- D. DAERA will introduce regulations to ban wet wipes containing plastic in Northern Ireland in 2025.**

Consultation Questions

- 3) For Objective 1 are the proposed outcome actions sufficient to enable the elimination of plastic pollution? Yes/No**
- 4) Are there any further measures not identified that might also contribute to the Objective 1 and enable the elimination of plastic pollution?**

Please list any additional actions that you believe are required and provide evidence to show how this would contribute towards the reduction of plastic pollution.



Objective 2

We will ensure responsible consumption, production and disposal of plastic, contributing to Net Zero through a reduction in plastic carbon emissions.

Fossil fuels, especially oil and shale gas are used in the production of plastic and account for approximately 10% of the global annual usage of fossil fuels. Mass production and consumption of plastic, especially that of single-use packaging plastic, are major contributors to both terrestrial and marine plastic pollution, endangering ecosystems. Action must be taken to reduce plastic consumption, leading to a decrease in plastic production, plastic waste/pollution and CO₂ emissions to prevent average temperature increases.

Policy and Legislative Levers

To aid the achievement of this objective different mechanisms are set out in legislation. Some of the relevant legislation includes:

- [The Plastic Packaging Tax \(General\) Regulations 2022](#) - this aims to increase the amount of recycled plastic material used in new products.
- [The Landfill Tax Regulations 1996](#) - this is an important fiscal lever to dis-incentivise waste disposal in landfill.
- [The Waste \(Circular Economy\) \(Amendment\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2020](#) - this legislation introduced minimum weights of packaging waste (including plastic contained in packaging waste) to be recycled by 2025 and 2030 and targets for municipal recycling and landfill. Targets included in the regulations are as follows:

measures to be taken to ensure that:

- by 2025, the preparing for re-use and the recycling of municipal waste shall be increased to at least 55% by weight;
- by 2030, the preparing for re-use and the recycling of municipal waste shall be increased to at least 60% by weight;
- by 2035, the preparing for re-use and the recycling of municipal waste shall be increased to at least 65% by weight; and

measures to be taken to ensure that:

- the amount of municipal waste landfilled is reduced to 10% or less of the total amount of municipal waste generated (by weight) by 2035.
- [The Climate Change Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2022](#) - this includes a range of measures including a requirement of at least 70% waste recycled by 2030 for the waste sector.

Global and UK Policy Levers

Global

Northern Ireland is or will be a signatory to international and domestic treaties, strategies and initiatives that aim to decrease plastic production and consumption. These include:

- [The Global Treaty to End Plastic Pollution](#) - At the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly in March 2022 nearly 200 countries, including the UK, reached agreement to start negotiations on an international agreement to draw up a Global Plastics Treaty: “End Plastic Pollution: Towards an International Legally Binding Instrument” that could set rules for production, use and disposal of plastics worldwide. Negotiations continue on the plastic pollution treaty, including which elements will be legally binding and how the deal will be financed.
- [The High Ambition Coalition \(HAC\) to End Plastic Pollution](#) - A large group of countries, including the UK and Ireland, have formed a coalition with a common ambition to end plastic pollution by 2040.

UK

- [The UK Plastics Pact](#) - DAERA has been a signatory to the UK Plastics Pact since 2019. The UK Plastic Pact engages with industry partners to develop opportunities for Northern Ireland in reducing plastic packaging.⁸ The aspiration is that Pact members will eliminate problematic plastics reducing the total amount of packaging on supermarket shelves, stimulate innovation and new business models and help build a stronger recycling system in the UK.
- **Packaging Extended Producer Responsibility (pEPR)** - this is a UK-wide scheme to shift the cost of managing packaging onto producers from 2025, with regulations in place for additional data reporting from 2023. It contains a number of measures to reduce plastic waste and increase plastic recycling. These include:
 - Material specific recycling rates including increasing the recycling target for plastic packaging to 65% by 2030.
 - Producers paying higher fees for packaging that they place on the market that is less recyclable (eco-modulated fees). This will reduce the amount of complex, composite packaging containing plastic being sold, which is difficult or impossible to recycle. Producers are already making changes to packaging in advance of the regulations being made.

⁸ Ellen MacArthur Foundation's New Plastics Economy.

- Recyclable plastic films and flexibles will be collected for recycling from households by March 2027, this will contribute to the increased target for plastic packaging recycling of 65% by 2030.
- **Deposit Return Scheme (DRS)** - DRS across the UK is planned for introduction from October 2027. The aim of DRS is to achieve a recycling target of 90% within 3 years of launch for single-use drinks containers made from polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic, steel or aluminium. Based on the data from the 2021 Impact Assessment, the amount of unrecycled PET bottles in Northern Ireland equates to approximately 120 million. It is estimated that DRS will reduce this figure by approximately 80 million. The size of containers in scope is 150ml to 3 litres. DRS also aims to reduce littering by adding a fee to the bottle that will be reimbursed when returned.

Northern Ireland

- **Circular Economy Strategy for Northern Ireland** - the strategy provides a vision and direction of travel for the transition to a circular economy in NI. It sets a target to reduce our annual material footprint to 8 tonnes per capita by 2050 and details twelve proposals for change which aim to create more sustainable production and consumption patterns for Northern Ireland. The Strategy identifies four material flows, one of which is packaging which incorporates plastic, paper and glass, within the local economy that have the potential to achieve the best outcomes from circular economy policy interventions. Designing out waste is a key principle of a circular economy with the use of safe and circular materials reducing the amount of waste at the end of product life.
- **Waste Management Strategy for Northern Ireland** - Under Article 19 of [The Waste and Contaminated Land Order 1997](#) DAERA is required to have a Waste Management Plan that contains its policies in relation to the recovery and disposal of waste in Northern Ireland. A Waste Management Strategy is currently under development that will set the policy direction for the future management of waste, through a range of actions and targets over the next 6 years. The aim of the new strategy is to move waste up the hierarchy, retain as much of our valuable resources as possible within NI and futureproof waste management to aid embedding the Circular Economy and achieving Net Zero by 2050. The draft Strategy will be launched for public consultation in 2025.
- **Carrier Bag Levy** - the Carrier Bag Levy in Northern Ireland is the most extensive of its kind across all UK jurisdictions. Prior to introduction of the levy in 2013 there were approximately 300 million bags in circulation every year across Northern Ireland and it has already delivered the removal of an estimated 2.4 billion bags, regardless of the material used, from circulation. On 1st April 2022, revised legislation increased the Northern Ireland Carrier Bag Levy from 5p to 25p and also extended the scope to include all bags priced at £5 or less, regardless of the material they are made from.
- **Recycling Collections in Northern Ireland** - DAERA is working towards achieving a municipal recycling rate of 65% by 2035, introduced through the Circular Economy

Package (CEP), which amended the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997. In addition, a new target was introduced in the Climate Change Act (NI) 2022 which requires Northern Ireland to achieve 70% of waste recycled by 2030. The CEP amendments also introduced a new definition of 'municipal' waste, bringing into scope around 57,000 businesses which produce waste which is similar in nature to that which is produced from households. DAERA engaged extensively with key stakeholders to co-design a range of proposals included in the consultation document titled, *Rethinking Our Resources: Measures for Climate Action and a Circular Economy in NI*. The consultation included 26 proposals for household and non-household waste management to help NI achieve its statutory requirements, including the increased collection of plastic from the kerbside for recycling. Analysis of consultation responses has helped inform a draft Departmental Response, which is in its final stages.

- **Recycling End Destinations** - in 2022, DAERA developed and launched [MyRecyclingNI](#), in association with the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP). This public facing website allows people to view where their recycling ends up once it has been collected. MyRecyclingNI shows recycling rates and Green House Gas emissions for Northern Ireland and for each local council area. In the long term, it is hoped to help improve data and assist in the transition to the circular economy by keeping more of our resources in Northern Ireland for reprocessing.
- **Single-Use Plastic Reduction Action Plan (PRAP)** across the Northern Ireland Civil Service Government Estate - as part of the Executive plan agreed in October 2020 DAERA, in partnership with the Department of Finance (DoF) successfully removed all unnecessary single-use plastic from the Government estate within the target date of October 2021. The PRAP focused mainly on the categories of cleaning, catering, tableware and takeaway containers. Disposable items across the Government Estate have been replaced with reusable items or more environmentally friendly alternatives.



- **Single-Use Plastic (SUP) EU Directive** - In December 2020 elements of this EU Directive were added to Annex 2 of the Northern Ireland Protocol (Windsor Framework). These elements include bans on common SUP items for which alternatives are readily available e.g straws, stirrers and cutlery. The introduction of marking and labelling requirements, technical requirements in relation to caps/lids remaining attached as well as on recycled content in bottles and for action to reduce the consumption of SUP cups and food containers. While work is underway to make the necessary legislation the measures have not yet been introduced in Northern Ireland. However, as measures on SUP items have been introduced across the UK and the EU these interventions are having an impact on SUP products in Northern Ireland.
- **Single-Use Plastic Beverage Cups and Food Containers** - following consultation in late 2021, DAERA is currently developing policy options for the reduction of the usage of Single-use Plastic (SUP) beverage cups and food containers in Northern Ireland. Every year in Northern Ireland we use over 70 million single-use plastic cups and around 150 million single-use plastic takeaway food containers. Options will be considered to reduce the use of the targeted types of SUP packaging and to encourage the wider take up of multi-use cups and containers and/or non-plastic alternatives that are recycled.
- **Support Industrial Innovation** - industry is constantly evolving and developing innovative techniques and processes that will aid the reduction of plastic pollution. This includes enhanced sorting technologies for waste materials to aid recycling. Advances are being made in the application of chemical recycling and bioplastics, enhanced digital waste tracking, reuse/refill models and plastic packaging alternatives. DAERA are also working with UK Administrations and research partners to undertake and fund research projects to better understand the sources, distribution and impact of microplastics in our marine environments. We will maintain a flexible approach to innovation that will promote reducing plastic pollution aims and objectives.
- **Support Scientific and Educational Innovation** - for example:
 - The College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) is an integral part of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs. It delivers education, knowledge transfer and innovation programmes to the agri-food and land-based sectors in Northern Ireland. CAFRE works closely with all sectors of the industry to provide support in areas such as product innovation, sensory analysis, factory design, quality assurance, process development and packaging with focused programmes being delivered to industry entrants and those working in the food and food packaging industries. It is equipped with a packaging materials lab and a distribution testing facility where sustainable packaging options can be evaluated.
 - The Agri-Food BioSciences Institute (AFBI) - AFBI is a leading provider of scientific research and services to government, non-governmental organisations and commercial organisations which is sponsored by DAERA. AFBI has participated in research into microplastic pollution and its effect on marine life in the Irish Sea.

- **Agricultural Plastic Waste** - under The Waste Management Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006, farmers are not permitted to burn or bury agricultural waste or put agricultural waste into the household residual kerbside collection. Agricultural waste is required to be recovered or disposed of without endangering human health and without using processes or methods which could harm the environment. Two voluntary Producer Responsibility schemes (APE UK and Green Tractor) were announced in 2019 with the intention to assist farmers with the collection/recycling/disposal of certain waste streams.

Actions:

- E. DAERA will continue to implement and review legislative targets that enable measures towards the elimination of plastic pollution.
- F. DAERA will report progress against legislative targets that enable the elimination of plastic pollution every 3 years.
- G. DAERA will continue to participate in global and UK initiatives that enable the elimination of plastic pollution.
- H. DAERA will continue to develop strategies and policies that will enable the elimination of plastic pollution.
- I. DAERA will review the Carrier Bag Levy and legislation every 5 years to ensure its objectives are met.
- J. DAERA will use the responses received on the recent recycling consultation, *"Rethinking Our Resources: Measures for Climate Action and a Circular Economy in NI"* to inform any future policy direction, subject to Ministerial and Executive approval.
- K. DAERA will continue to support industrial, scientific and educational innovation through different measures, including funding and providing expertise.

Consultation Questions

- 5) For Objective 2 are the proposed outcome actions sufficient to enable the elimination of plastic pollution? Yes/No
- 6) Are there any further measures not identified that might also contribute to the Objective 2 and enable the elimination of plastic pollution?

Please list any additional actions that you believe are required and provide evidence to show how this would contribute towards the elimination of plastic pollution.

Objective 3

We will build a sustainable community that is free from unnecessary plastic pollution.

Transitioning to a circular economy means developing a low carbon, resource efficient society in which resources are valued and reused, putting them back into the economy and waste is prevented. Encouragement and education are needed to create a culture that values its resources, as well as making information easy to access about how to reduce waste and resource consumption, how to reuse and how to repair items.

In Northern Ireland alone it is estimated that 27,000 tonnes of textile waste are thrown out each year, with approximately 8,000 tonnes of it ending up in landfill.⁹ We buy more clothes per person in the UK than any other country in Europe and now have five times more clothes than we bought in the 1980s.¹⁰ Changing the behaviour of people who frequently buy clothes is an essential part of the solution.

The prevention of waste is key to achieving this objective, so a strong focus has been placed upon the prevention of waste through a range of initiatives and measures as outlined below.

Waste Prevention Measures

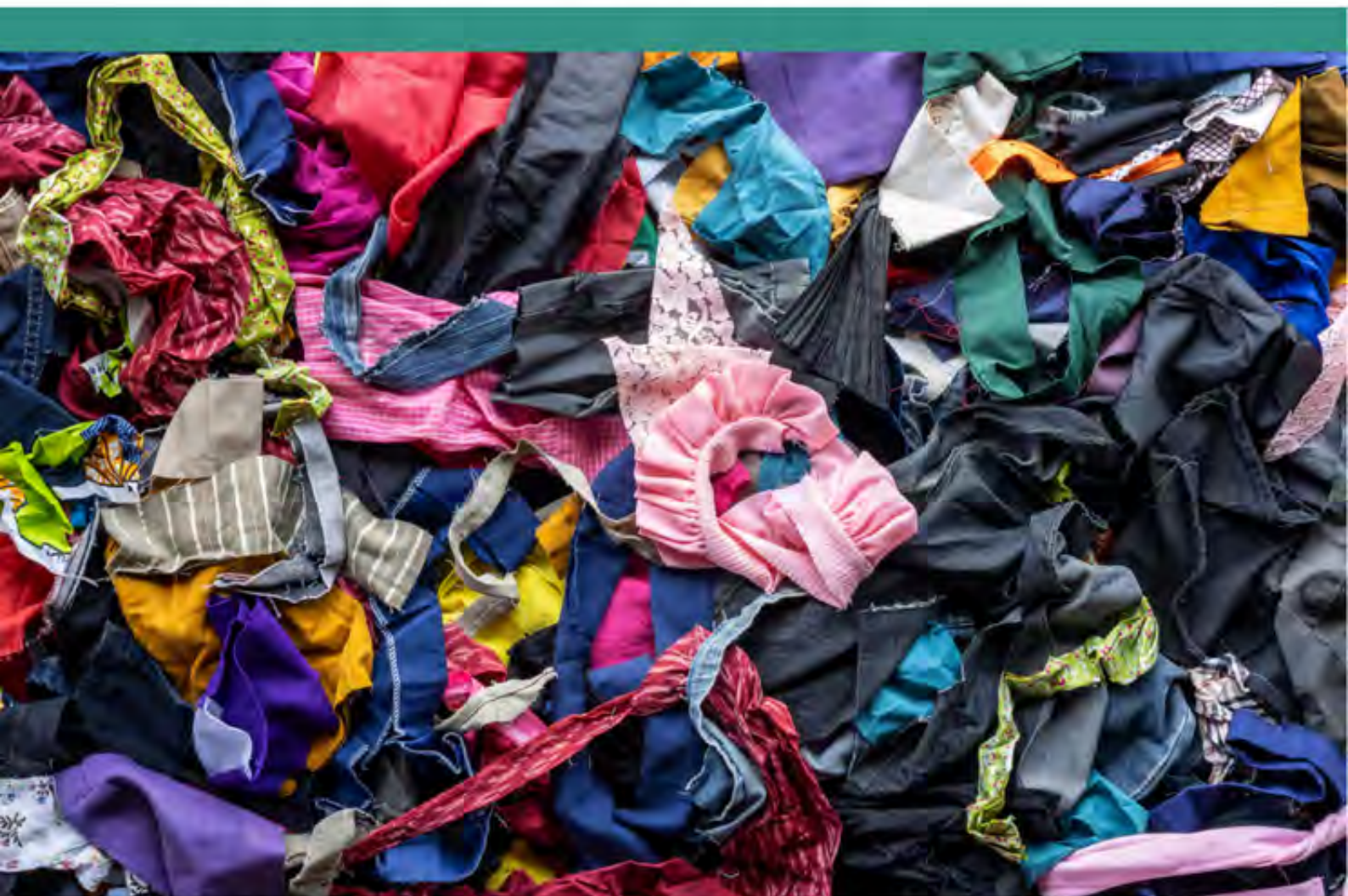
- [Waste Prevention Programme for Northern Ireland 2019 - Stopping Waste in its Tracks](#) - the Waste Prevention Programme is a statutory obligation and has to be reviewed every 6 years. The next review is due in 2025. It contains detail on 22 actions which aim to continue the downward trend in waste arisings in Northern Ireland.
- **Northern Ireland Resources Network (NIRN)** - NIRN was initially developed as a pilot project by Community Resources Network Ireland and funded by DAERA to establish a network in Northern Ireland to promote sustainable reuse and repair as a practical and effective way of tackling Northern Ireland's waste generation. Further to the success of this pilot, NIRN was created as a stand-alone organisation in February 2022. NIRN members include local businesses, social enterprises, community organisations and councils who are taking positive action and informing the public on sustainable alternatives to Northern Ireland's current overuse of resources, including plastic. 2024 saw 8,300 tonnes of materials reused or repaired with 42,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions avoided.
- **Reuse/Refill Shopping Models** - supermarkets have been trialling reuse and refill schemes after consumer concerns about the environmental impact of packaging. Refill shops (or zero waste shops) tend to be small, independent stores that sell non-packaged food requiring shoppers to 'Bring Your Own' containers; most of the time it will be dry goods like pasta, rice, oats, spices, nuts, cereals, and oils but occasionally they also provide locally sourced produce. They can also sell many other sustainable products, like refill cleaning products, soaps, and homewares.

⁹ UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), 2018.

¹⁰ [Fixing fashion: clothing consumption and sustainability](#) - Environmental Audit Committee ([parliament.uk](#)).

- **Tackling Textiles Programme** - Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful (KNIB) is an environmental charity dedicated to creating a healthy environment, resilient communities and thriving places. The DAERA funded Tackling Textiles programme has been delivered by KNIB from 2021 to 2025. It is important to prevent textile waste where possible as consumer research completed by [Cognisense](#) in 2021 as part of KNIB Tackling Textiles Programme found that only 4% of people surveyed in Northern Ireland considered textiles of environmental concern or harmful to the environment. People surveyed were shocked at the idea that they could be releasing plastic into the ocean through washing clothes. The vast majority of people, 83%, reported that they buy new clothing/textiles rather than repairing/buying second hand and most were not aware of terms like polyester, nylon, acrylic and polyamide, which are contained within many of the clothes we buy and are plastics.

The programme also includes a 'Fashion Forever' campaign and Fast Fashion school workshops to highlight the environmental impact of clothing; the need for a circular and sustainable clothing and textiles industry; and a reduction in consumption. As part of this campaign the "Fashion Forever Festival" won the European Week for Waste Reduction Non-Government Organisation category award in June 2023.



- **Behaviour Change Initiatives** - within Northern Ireland there are numerous different projects that are actively encouraging behaviour change within different sectors to reduce the impact of plastic consumption and pollution within our environment. Listed below is a small representation of these projects.
 - **Tackling Plastic Programme** - The Tackling Plastic Programme, funded by DAERA and delivered by KNIB from 2018 to 2025 worked strategically in areas of policy, behaviour change and action, influencing and informing four key sectors of Northern Ireland society: councils, schools, the general public and businesses.
 - **The Plastic Promise** - this has been active since 2020 and supported by DAERA. It raises awareness and drives change within Northern Ireland society by obtaining meaningful and lasting commitments from the signee. It encourages people, business, councils, and schools to commit to reducing their consumption of plastics and put an end to "throwaway" plastics.
 - **Live Here Love Here** - DAERA funds KNIB to deliver this programme, which works to inspire positive changes in communities, individuals, and groups to act on social/environmental issues such as: cleaner streets, less dog fouling and graffiti, more biodiversity and better use of unused spaces.
 - **Lyric Eco Theatre Project** - this project is a piece of theatre devised by a team from the Lyric and funded by DAERA to increase environmental awareness and promote positive behaviour change in relation to waste prevention, littering, recycling and SUP across Northern Ireland. It is aimed at Key Stage 2 pupils and in the last four years has been performed in front of over 13,380 pupils in 152 schools, in both rural and urban communities across all eleven councils.
 - **Royal Ulster Agriculture Society (RUAS) Events: Balmoral Show** - Free filtered drinking water stations have been introduced for use with visitors own reusable cups/bottles or the option to buy reusable water bottles. Work is ongoing to further reduce the use of SUP at future Balmoral Shows and events run by RUAS.
 - **Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) SUP Initiative** - Northern Ireland's GAA has introduced a programme to remove SUP bottles from Gaelic Games clubs and grounds. DAERA and other government Departments have provided input to the GAA's initiative through a working group and will continue to engage with the GAA as they implement their action plan, providing support, guidance and advice.
 - **Single-Use Plastic Bottle Bins** - the nudge behaviour project to collect plastic bottles in a 1400 litre SUP Bottle Bin, designed to mimic a plastic bottle, was launched in the Derry/Londonderry North-West Transport Hub in November 2021 and has collected 43,200 bottles in the first 2 years. A second SUP Bottle Bin was installed in Lanyon Place on 11 August 2022, collecting 64,000 bottles by November 2023. This project was fully funded by DAERA and has prevented SUP bottle littering, encouraged reduction in plastic littering behaviour and has reduced

obstructive and unsightly litter from Translink stations. Due to the success of the project a further SUP Bottle Bin was installed in the new Belfast campus of the Ulster University in January 2024. This will encourage new and existing students to make responsible choices while on campus, continuing at home and elsewhere.

- **Tap Water Refill Schemes** - Northern Ireland Water run a campaign under the banner of “[Refillution](#)” aimed at encouraging local businesses to offer tap water from their premises to those using refillable bottles. Approximately 300 refill sites are available across all council areas across Northern Ireland. Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council also run a campaign ‘H₂O on the Go’ scheme to provide free water. A further two schemes having a presence in Northern Ireland are ‘City to Sea’ and ‘Refill Ireland’. Both schemes follow the same concept: premises and organisations voluntarily join the scheme, offer the public facilities to refill their bottles for free, advertise this with a sticker placed on the front door or window and are mapped onto a website or app.
- **Terracycle** - is a recycling company that specialises in recycling typically hard to recycle waste which is not processed by local councils e.g. crisp bags, bread bags, wrappers and cosmetic products. DAERA has funded Terracycle initiatives via KNIB Tackling Plastics Programme to help increase recycling of ‘difficult’ waste streams.

Actions:

- L. DAERA will review and update as necessary the Waste prevention Programme for Northern Ireland 2019 – Stopping Waste in its Tracks in line with statutory obligations.
- M. DAERA will work alongside other GB nations to implement a Deposit Return Scheme with a collection target of 90% within 3 years of operation.
- N. DAERA will continue to support the reuse, refill and reduce network and measure environmental benefits from projects.
- O. DAERA will continue to support behaviour change initiatives and measure environmental benefits from projects.

Consultation Questions

7) For Objective 3 are the proposed outcome actions sufficient to enable the elimination of plastic pollution? Yes/No

8) Are there any further measures not identified that might also contribute to the Objective 3 and enable the elimination of plastic pollution?

Please list any additional actions that you believe are required and provide evidence to show how this would contribute towards the elimination of plastic pollution.

On the overall Plan:

9) Do you have any comments on the specific actions included in the Plan?

10) What challenges would there be in implementing the actions detailed in the Plan?

11) Please detail 3 actions you consider to be most effective in eliminating plastic pollution.

12) Do you have any other comments or contributions?

6. Monitoring and Reporting

The consultation on the PPP NI identifies several partners who share responsibility for working to achieve the overarching objective of reducing plastic pollution in Northern Ireland

DAERA coordinates the collective performance results from the wide range of partners who share responsibility for actions and targets contained within the PPP NI.

Significant changes have already been made across all areas of Northern Ireland from Government Departments, businesses and schools to community groups and individuals, but the need to reduce plastic waste, and encourage population wide changes in behaviour increases daily.

DAERA proposes to monitor and report on the progress of the Plan in the following way:

- Environmental Resources Policy Division will manage and coordinate the Performance Reporting for the Plan.
- A composite report providing evidence of performance against actions and targets set out in this Plan will be published after 3 years following implementation.
- The Plan will be reviewed and updated as necessary after the initial report has been published.

Consultation Questions

13) Do you agree with the proposal for monitoring and reporting on the Plan?

14) Are there any additional reporting requirements that should be included in the Plan?

15) Have you any other comments or contributions to the monitoring and reporting of the Plan?

7. How to Respond

Responses are invited via Citizen Space at:

[Public Consultation on the Plastic Pollution Plan for Northern Ireland](#)

The online survey is quick and simple to complete. Please supplement your response with any relevant supporting information, evidence and/or analysis.

If you are unable to complete the survey online, please contact the team by email: singleuseplastics@daera-ni.gov.uk

We would encourage an online response in order to limit any environmental impact.

Those Affected: This is a public consultation, open to all who may have an interest and who wish to be part of improving the environmental impact of plastic pollution. It is hoped that many will take an interest in this consultation and provide feedback. All views are welcomed by the Department.

Duration:

This consultation will run for a period of **12 weeks**.

It will open on **1st July 2025** and close on **23rd September 2025**.

8. Next Steps

Following completion of this consultation process, we will analyse the responses, and the views of consultees will be considered. The PPP NI will be amended accordingly for the consideration of Minister.

We encourage you to participate in this important consultation providing feedback to inform the Plan.

7.1. Publication of Responses

Confidentiality of Consultations

The Department may publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process. Your response, and all other responses to the consultation, may be disclosed on request. The Department can refuse to disclose information only in exceptional circumstances. Before you submit your response, please read the paragraphs below on the confidentiality of consultations as these provide guidance on the legal position about any information given by you in response to this consultation. Any confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system in e-mail responses will not be treated as such a request.

Data Protection

Section 8(e) of the Data Protection Act 2018 permits processing of personal data when necessary for an activity that supports or promotes democratic engagement. Information provided by respondents to this consultation exercise will be held and used for the purposes of the administration of this current exercise and subsequently disposed of in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation.

Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority (the Department in this case). This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this consultation, including information about your identity, should be made public or treated as confidential. This means that information provided by you in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances.

The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

- the Department should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's functions and it would not otherwise be provided;
- the Department should not agree to hold information received from third parties 'in confidence' which is not confidential in nature;
- acceptance by the Department of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

For further information about confidentiality of responses, please contact the Information Commissioner's Office:

Tel: 0303 123 1113

Email: ni@ico.org.uk

Website: <https://ico.org.uk>

Plastic Pollution Plan for Northern Ireland
Environmental Resources Policy Division
Clare House
303 Airport Road West
Sydenham Intake
Belfast
BT3 9ED

Email: singleuseplastics@daera-ni.gov.uk

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Department of

**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Depairtment o'

**Fairmin, Environment
an' Kintra Matthers**

www.daera-ni.gov.uk

Appendix 2 – MEA draft response**1) Do you agree that the objectives are appropriate for the PPP NI?**

Yes.

2) If not, what alternative objectives would you like to see in the PPP NI?

Yes, however, Council would like to see a separate objective that sees central government work directly with industry, i.e. plastic packaging manufacturers, to reduce the use of plastic in packaging products, proposing alternatives through dedicated research (potentially with QUB, UU or other universities) in order to move away from single-use plastic use. The issue of unnecessary single-use plastic starts when it is placed on shelves for consumers to purchase. If this were addressed early on in the supply chain, there wouldn't be the opportunity for large volumes of this material ending up in circulation. This is lightly covered in the Objective 2 description; however, Council would like to see an entirely separate objective with separate actions.

Council believes that Objective 2 should be split into two separate objectives. The first part of objective 2 focusses on ensuring responsible consumption, production and disposal of plastic. The second part is focussing on contributing to Net Zero through a reduction in plastic carbon emissions, which is a separate matter entirely. Both parts should have specific actions to address the objective focus.

3) For Objective 1 are the proposed outcome actions sufficient to enable the elimination of plastic pollution?

No

4) Are there any further measures not identified that might also contribute to the Objective 1 and enable the elimination of plastic pollution? Please list any additional actions that you believe are required and provide evidence to show how this would contribute towards the reduction of plastic pollution.

This consultation document includes detail of delivery partners, which includes local NI Councils. Whilst Council has a responsibility to undertaken enforcement duties, with respect to littering, Councils are exceptionally under-resourced in this area, and the general public will take the opportunity to litter as no visible presence of Council Enforcement Officers in their area. Council suggests that an action should be to better support local NI Councils in their duty to deliver this function. We welcome the increase in the potential FPN from £80 to £200 in December 2022, however this does not seem to have reduced the total number of incidents occurring.

Council would like to make DAERA aware of an existing new project we're conducting with Polysorb. Council is aware of the ongoing nanoplastic issue and are trying to be at the forefront of developing strategies to combat it.

Overview of the Polysorb Project:

Mid and East Antrim Borough Council is pleased to express its interest in supporting and collaborating with Environmental Engineering Concepts Ltd (EEC Ltd) on the

Nano Plastics Detection and Remediation Project using advanced imaging and microbial technologies.

As a Council dedicated to environmental sustainability and water quality management, we recognize the significance of this project in addressing the emerging threat posed by nano plastics in our water bodies.

MEA has extensive experience in managing and monitoring local waterways, harbours and marinas, including Carrickfergus and Glenarm Marinas, and we see significant potential in leveraging this project to advance environmental protection initiatives in our Borough.

Our Council is committed to providing access to key testing sites, including harbours and coastal areas within our jurisdiction, and assisting in field testing and data validation.

Through this collaboration, we aim to work closely with EEC Ltd and its scientific partners, such as AFBI, to provide logistical support and contribute to the long-term success of this innovative solution for nano plastic detection and remediation.

MEA will also help facilitate engagement with local communities and regulatory bodies to ensure the smooth execution of field trials and ensure that all environmental and safety regulations are followed.

5) For Objective 2 are the proposed outcome actions sufficient to enable the elimination of plastic pollution?

Yes

6) Are there any further measures not identified that might also contribute to the Objective 2 and enable the elimination of plastic pollution? Please list any additional actions that you believe are required and provide evidence to show how this would contribute towards the elimination of plastic pollution.

Council welcomes the proposal to engage with the academic sector to undertake research and development, focussing on alternate materials to plastic in packaging use. Council would suggest research is undertaken in the three other devolved UK governments and in the Republic of Ireland, and also further afield, in order to understand the latest innovative solutions to this challenge.

Regarding Action E and J – Council welcomes the proposal for DAERA to continue implementing and reviewing legislative targets that enable measures towards the elimination of plastic pollution and DAERA will use the responses received on the recent recycling consultation, *"Rethinking Our Resources: Measures for Climate Action and a Circular Economy in NI"* to inform any future policy direction, subject to Ministerial and Executive approval.– Council would seek clarity on the specific interventions central government would propose to engage the NMH sector i.e. businesses and other organisations – we are aware the publication of the 'Rethinking our Resources' consultation is imminent and hope to see how direct links / pathways etc will be established to ensure this sector engages fully to achieve the 70% recycling target set out in the Climate Change (NI) Act 2022.

7) For Objective 3 are the proposed outcome actions sufficient to enable the elimination of plastic pollution?

No

8) Are there any further measures not identified that might also contribute to the Objective 3 and enable the elimination of plastic pollution? Please list any additional actions that you believe are required and provide evidence to show how this would contribute towards the elimination of plastic pollution.

Council welcomes the proposed actions set out under Objective 3, however, we would suggest that a more joined-up approach in effective education and awareness raising is required. KNIB has recently launched their myEARTH platform, which could be used to educate and raise awareness on plastic pollution. Indeed, KNIB are a funded eNGO who already have traction with NI public – this would seem like an ideal opportunity, as all NI Councils are now registered Delivery Partners on this platform – a consistent and shared message on plastic pollution would work well. WRAP could also be involved on this platform, as they have significant experience in behavioural change in relation to waste and recycling.

On the overall Plan:

9) Do you have any comments on the specific actions included in the Plan?

Overall, Council is supportive of the actions included in the consultation document, with the addition of the points raised above. Specific timeframes and targets will need to be included in order to understand if these policy interventions etc are being delivered.

An additional suggestion is for DAERA to speak with Council's Enforcement Officers directly, to understand the type of litter and frequency of littering events etc, in order to further support the work they do.

10) What challenges would there be in implementing the actions detailed in the Plan?

Financing and resourcing, with already constrained budgets.

11) Please detail 3 actions you consider to be most effective in eliminating plastic pollution.

1. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) – once this fully comes into effect, Council suggests this will see better full lifecycle management of packaging materials, which includes litter management.
2. Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) – once this comes into effect (2027), Council suggests it will see a marked decrease in the level of drinks containers littering across NI.

3. Better enforcement – although Council welcomed the increase in the fixed penalty notice fine costs, we would encourage even higher fine costs to people who decide to litter.

12) Do you have any other comments or contributions?

No.

13) Do you agree with the proposal for monitoring and reporting on the Plan?

Yes, however, the Environmental Resources Policy Division should work along with Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful (KNIB) who produce regular reports on littering and litter compositional analysis, Neighbourhood Cleanliness sampling etc. Their insights will help to demonstrate if the above proposed actions are having a positive outcome.

14) Are there any additional reporting requirements that should be included in the Plan?

As above.

15) Have you any other comments or contributions to the monitoring and reporting of the Plan?

No.



Council/Committee:	Environment and Economy Committee
Date:	15 September 2025
Report Title:	Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Update Report
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Catherine Hunter, Acting Climate & Sustainability Manager
Approver:	Shaun Morley, Director of Operations

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to update Members on the Council's climate mitigation and adaptation actions, progressed through the Climate & Sustainability Action Plan and the MEA Adaptation Plan over 2024/25.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 came into operation in June 2022 and includes requirements for local government. DAERA has also introduced new climate reporting regulations, which will require Council to report on climate mitigation every three years, first report due October 2025 and on climate adaptation every five years, first report due March 2026.
- 2.2. This reporting will be critical to aid the government in informing effective policy and enable timely and effective climate action across Northern Ireland, to achieve the ambitious carbon reduction targets set out in the Act and to reduce the adverse impact of climate change on the environment, economy and society.
- 2.3. To provide relevant data and evidence to deliver on these requirements, Council developed and is delivering actions within the Climate & Sustainability Action Plan (CSAP) 2023-27 and the MEA Adaptation Plan (MEAAP) 2023-27.
- 2.4. This report provides a 2024/25 summary of progress across the 93 actions set out in the CSAP and the 36 actions set out in the MEAAP.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

Climate & Sustainability Action Plan – 2023/24 mitigation update

3.1. Council's Climate and Sustainability Action Plan 2023-27 (Link 1) was approved by Council in March 2023. It sets out how we will address climate change in Mid and East Antrim over the next five years. It highlights our vision and commitment to meet 93 objectives across 6 themes to achieve our targets:

- 30% reduction in council operation emissions by 2030
- Decarbonize small vehicles in our fleet by 2030
- Council operation emissions to net zero by 2040
- Supporting the borough to net zero by 2050
- Climate resilience in our buildings, public spaces and infrastructure

It is aligned to the strategic priorities in Council's Community and Corporate Plans and the Programme for Government draft Outcomes.

3.2. The content below is a sample of progress updates across this Plan spanning the six key themes. Full report is available at Appendix 2.

3.3. Of the 93 actions within the Plan, 112 indicators are green (delivered/delivering), 15 are amber (progressing) and 7 are red (not yet delivered).

3.4. Examples of green and red indicators:

Theme	Green	Red
Good governance and community leadership	COM01: Implement a collaborative approach to delivering the climate change agenda to local communities Approx. 27 PR's issued throughout the year linking in with Council's awareness of climate and sustainability agenda. Communications continue to support projects across Council related to climate change, waste and key environmental issues. They are promoted through online social channels, PR's and the Council website. Stats can be provided as requested to monitor effectiveness.	FIN02: Investigate best practice to collate emissions from Council's supply chain. This KPI will also have to put back and as per our discussions with Energy Manager should be deleted as we are in no position to agree to this KPI due to capacity issues.
Protecting the Environment	PDV03: Develop a Tree and Woodland Management Strategy to include tree planting, tree health maintenance and woodland management to increase tree cover across the borough to enhance biodiversity, increase carbon store and support ecosystem services. Tree and Woodland Strategy developed over 2024/25. public consultation early 2025. Now approved. Tree Planting 2024/25: Private Individuals: 48,680 Community groups: 3,466 Schools: 1,035 TOTAL: 53,491	No red indicators, all actions being progressed. One amber: Achieve gold in Sustainable Food Places in medium term Although Council did not achieve Bronze level in 2023/24, works will progress to obtain this within the lifetime of this Plan. Following this, Council will hope to be in a position to achieve Gold level in the medium term (2025/25 - 27).
Economy	ED06: Provide business with opportunities to learn new skills and develop knowledge and education of opportunities within the Cleantech sector. x2 Training Courses and 18 participants receiving training courses over 2024/25. Hydrogen Academy (NRC – 1 intake) only started end March – 8 participants recruited (2024/25). 10 participants have been recruited to cleantech electrical (upskilling) and have completed 12 qualifications so far (2024/25): • Solar Panel Installation • Battery Storage	No red indicators, all actions being progressed. One amber: No. of hydrogen trial test-bed projects established. Outline Business Case being appraised by Invest NI. Funding decision expected in Autumn 2026. 3 hydrogen test bed projects being progressed for Ballymena.



	EV charging station installation	
Transport	WMO06: Implement route optimisation software across waste collection services. <i>% reduction in carbon emissions from Council fleet annually.</i> 2023/24 carbon = 1,773 tCO₂e 2024/25 carbon = 1,733 tCO₂e Overall, a total of 40 tonnes of CO₂e savings (2%) compared to previous year.	No red indicators, all actions being progressed. HVO trial ongoing – initial update report provided to EE committee in June 2025 – further report to be provided later in 2025. Initial results look promising, as carbon emissions at tail pipe greatly reduced.
Resource Management	CCS06: Develop cross-departmental collaborations and partnerships to assist with resources of funding for climate action. The Acting Climate and Sustainability Manager has developed 15+ cross-departmental collaborations and partnerships. Attached document updates between this officer and Director of Operations sets out the range of projects etc across most service areas in Council. This ranges from HVO trial, sustainability tyre contract (with Transport), waste harmonisation, Recycle Week 2024 (with Waste), net zero innovations and delivery (carbon-baselining across borough, Climate Essentials, net zero video, Collaborative Growth Network - all with Economic Development), Food for Thought (with Museum Team and Eco Dev), circular economy project (with Waste and Eco Dev), Sustainability training (with Capital Works), ArcPro Climate Project (with GIS team) etc. PUB03: Raise awareness of energy efficiency measures and other support to tackle fuel poverty in the borough. 292 Energy Efficiency referrals, 71 households referred for fuel poverty grant assistance, 319 households referred/signposted for general support and assistance, 251 home visits or 1:1 support, Almost 1,500 interactions, 40 – no. of events attended or talks given (not including cooking sessions), 6 social media posts, 4 community e-zines, Provided 376 keep warm packs to those struggling to keep warm. Provided low-cost energy efficiency measures to households	WMO10: Meet the 55% recycling rate target of municipal waste by 2025 within the Waste (Circular Economy) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2020. 2024/25 year end recycling = 50.67%. Council has responded to a significant DAERA-led consultation on Rethinking our Resources (June 2024) which included proposals for standardising kerbside waste/recycling collections. Council commissioned Waste Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to undertake a assessment of 4 models of kerbside collections including co-mingled, source-segregated options alongside restricting residual. Council officers hosted a special Waste Harmonisation meeting with Elected Members to present options. One, unified model was proposed in March 2025 and was approved by the Waste Harmonisation Sub Committee and Full Council. This model is the fully co-mingled blue bin (240L) to be collected by staff in-house. It is anticipated the full roll out will be completed over 2026/27. It is proposed with a harmonised recycling collection service, Councils recycling performance will improve through better engagement and participation.

	such as radiator foils, chimney balloons, heated throws, etc. Households receiving incentives: • Chimney balloons: 39 • Draught excluders: 29 • Radiator panels: 67 • Heated throws: 16 • Draught proofing: 7 • Rechargeable hot water bottle: 3 Provided efficient electric heaters on loan to households with broken boilers, no heating system or inability to afford oil/gas - 6 households benefitted. Administered the SVP oil stamp savings scheme within Carrick and Larne area – over £15,500 stamps sold. 3 slow cooker sessions: 36 attendees. 20 air fryer session - 5 interactive, 15 demonstrations: 357 attendees. 3 community-based groups borrowed our sewing machine resource. Energy Detectives: 3 schools with 92 pupils completed programme. Multiply: Energy efficiency within the kitchen highlighted as part of 3 x 2 session programmes developed under the Multiply initiative. These highlighted cost savings from switching to more energy efficient cooking appliances.	
Buildings and Energy	FAC04: Improve the energy efficiency of Council buildings to help deliver carbon reduction targets and reduce costs. <i>EMS Objective 1: Improve the energy efficiency of Council buildings to help deliver carbon reduction targets and reduce costs /Target: Deliver 10 LED lighting projects.</i> <i>Completed (2024/25):</i> Peoples Park external lighting, STLC – Pool areas completed (entire centre now upgraded), The Showgrounds – Internal lighting (high use areas) completed, The Showgrounds – External lighting (amenity, bulkheads etc.) completed, Carrick Civic Centre – Internal (suitable areas/ ceiling grid dependent), Carrick Town Hall – Internal (excluding conference room low burn), Carrick Civic Centre & Town Hall – External building and courtyard, Oakfield CC. <i>Planned (2025/26):</i>	No red indicators, all actions being progressed.



	Larne LC Pool area (completes). The Braid (various areas). Estate wide EE review including thermal performance investment opportunities- CWI & loft / void insulation. <i>EMS 2: Maximize the use of renewable energy sources to help deliver carbon reduction targets and reduce costs / Target: To deliver 3 solar projects.</i> <i>Completed:</i> Portglenone Marina, Waveney Rd HRC & Nursery, The Braid – put on hold for wider review of Net Zero opportunity - M&E system, 2 Solar PV arrays to get addition of co-located storage - Sullatober Transfer (20kWh) - Multi-story car pk (20kWh) 4 new solar systems & 4 new BESS arrays Still finalising sites but will continue with a focus on waste on decarbonisation of waste and possibly parks sites.	
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- 3.5. Council signed the Business in the Community NI Climate Action Pledge [Link 2] in 2022, to reduce its scope 1 and 2 (oil, gas, electricity and fleet fuel) gas emissions by 30% by 2030 from 2019/20 baseline and review its scope 3 emissions (water, business and commuter miles) with a view to improve upon monitoring and reporting. Council has already reduced scope 1 and 2 emissions by 19% compared to the baseline (2021/20), with further projects being delivered to meet the 2030 target.

MEA Adaptation Plan – 2023/24 adaptation update

- 3.6. Council's MEA Adaptation Plan 2023-27 was approved by Council in March 2024. It aims to:
- increase resilience of our services, people, operations, assets and estate to respond to the impacts from climate change.
 - lead by example and work collaboratively to ensure resilience and deliver effective climate adaptation.
 - raise awareness and empower local communities and businesses to respond to the impacts of climate change to deliver effective adaptation.

It is aligned to the strategic priorities in Council's Community and Corporate Plans and the Programme for Government Outcomes.

- 3.7. Of the 36 indicators within the Plan, 26 are green (delivered/delivering), 4 are amber (progressing, down from 5 in 2023/24) and 6 are red (not yet delivered, same as 2023/24).



3.8. The content below is a sample of progress updates across this Plan spanning the six key themes. Full report is available at Appendix 3.

Theme	Green	Red
Good governance and community leadership	HUM02: Continue to consider health and safety of the workforce when working out on site including appropriate information & PPE for increased risk of pest & disease & differing weather conditions. The PPE Policy had been approved April 2024 and rolled out with staff trained on the requirements and need to follow. An eLearning module as well as toolbox talks on PPE was provided for line managers also to share with their teams. Staff are advised of the arrangements to get replacement items. Individuals are also provided with PPE which suits them, and as the need arises. The H&S Manager has been involved with the procurement of the PPE provision ensuring items meet regulations and standards and offer staff the greatest protection. The Health and Safety Manager is a member of the EPIG group and supports the Corporate and Community Resilience Officer with Plans for Emergency weather, e.g. with Operational Managers who have been advised to complete their Emergency Plans relating to extreme weather and this includes preventative measures to protect life, property etc.	CSD01: Review staff working location, flexible working (in response to severe weather), with consideration - to reduce unnecessary commuting from home to an office location as part of the scheduled office rota. The Agile Working Group is no longer active which means this action is not being progressed.
Protecting the Environment	WMO01: Review and update grounds maintenance and public realm services to include climate change impacts. Our maintenance schedules are reflective of any extreme weather events as we monitor the forecasts ahead and adjust our schedules accordingly for example hot spells will require more regular watering of our plants, where as a sustained heavy rain period means we can reduce same. We also use a sustainable water source as we have two bore holes. If we have a storm event then staff would be restricted in their maintenance operating in safer sites and not tree areas where there may be a risk. Some of our higher risk sites would be closed if we get a severe weather warning and liaise with our Parks Development Staff re: same. We would also change our maintenance schedules to deal with any severe snow event and most of our team would be deployed to deal with same.	No red (or amber) indicators, all actions being progressed.



	in regard to evidence of work carried out staff timesheets record all work streams for any given week.	
Economy	ED01: Deliver a net zero innovation project to remove non-technical barriers to achieving net zero within the Council estate Project progressing as planned across a range of different workstreams – Insights and Dissemination Programme, Corporate Decarbonisation Projects, Industry Decarbonisation Projects and Future Ready Programme. 2-year funded project on target to be completed by June 2025.	No red (or amber) indicators, all actions being progressed.
Transport	Actions progressed captured in the Climate & Sustainability Action Plan (see above).	Actions progressed captured in the Climate & Sustainability Action Plan (see above).
Resource Management	WMO03: Ensure that waste collections are priority during heatwaves. Waste collections always take priority, plans in place to deal with a heatwave. Staff are issued with light-weight clothing, sunglasses, sun protection, hats and water, risk assessment for working in the sun in place.	WM002: Develop severe weather protocol for waste management, property & fleet. AMBER (not red): Council currently has a Winter Maintenance Schedule and extreme weather protocol for bin collections. Further work is required to develop this further, to incorporate all types of extreme weather-related impacts to service delivery. This will be reviewed in 2025/26.
Buildings and Energy	FAC05: Integrate climate change considerations into Premises Management Assessment templates. This action is being progressed. Council's Asset Manager is currently developing a new Assets Management Strategy which will take climate change implications into consideration.	FAC03: Maintain and refurbish existing buildings and assets to improve resilience to extreme weather events and longer-term effects of climate change using best practice guidance and research. Not yet begun. Discussion in relation to what resilience principles needs to occur. Then the integration of these principles can be considered.

4. General Considerations / Implications

- 4.1. **Legal Implications** – The Climate Change Act (NI) 2022 requires net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and requires local authorities to report on their progress. Climate Change (Reporting Bodies) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 place requirements on Council to report on climate mitigation and adaptation.
- 4.2. **Financial Implications** - delivering climate objectives will reduce Council's expenditure on operational resources and expenditure on repairs following extreme weather events.
- 4.3. **Human Resources** – environmental performance and reduction in carbon footprint is the responsibility of a set number of officers, however with increasing pressure, additional resource will be required.
- 4.4. **Alignment with Corporate Priorities and Link to Corporate Plan** - Planet - Council is leading by example to reduce the impact of services on the environment and protecting it for future generations.
- 4.5. **Rural Proofing and Environmental Impact** – delivery of this portfolio of work contributes to achieving net zero carbon emission targets set out in the Act.
- 4.6. **Political and Reputational** - there is significant political and community interest in and demand for action on climate change. Delivering on climate demonstrates good environmental, economic and social governance, reduces business risk and improves Council's reputation.
- 4.7. **Good Relations** - Council will build on already-established partnerships with key statutory and non-statutory stakeholders including local communities, to help shape the future, adapting to climate change and living in a more sustainable manner.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1. Continue delivery and report progress on the actions within the Climate and Sustainability Action Plan 2023-27.
- 5.2. Continue delivery and report on progress on the actions within the MEA Adaptation Plan 2023-27.

6. Recommendation or Decision

- 6.1. Elected Members are asked to note Council's role within the climate change legislation and to support ongoing work to provide a solid evidence and data base for climate reporting under the Climate Change (Reporting Bodies) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024.

7. Appendices / Links

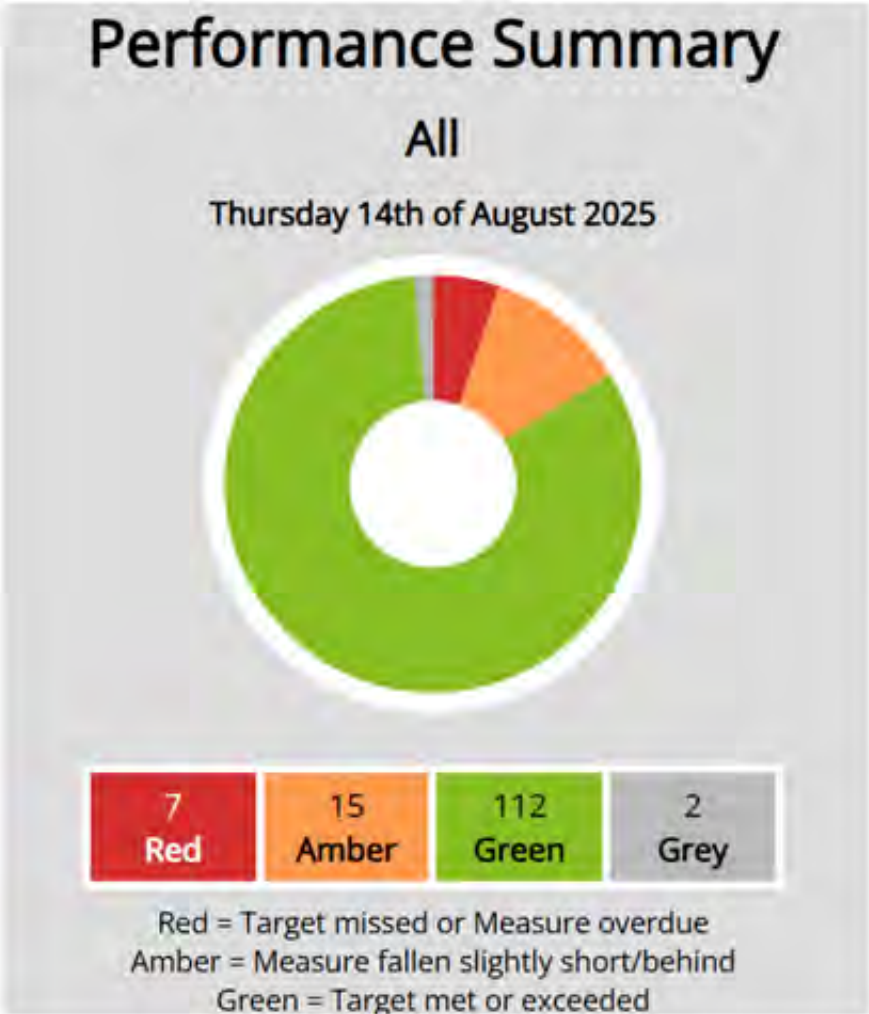
- Appendix 1 Climate & Sustainability Action Plan and MEA Adaptation 2024-54 Year End Action Progress Overview

- Appendix 2 Climate & Sustainability Action Plan – 2024/25 Year End Progress
- Appendix 3 MEA Adaptation Plan – 2024/25 Year End Progress

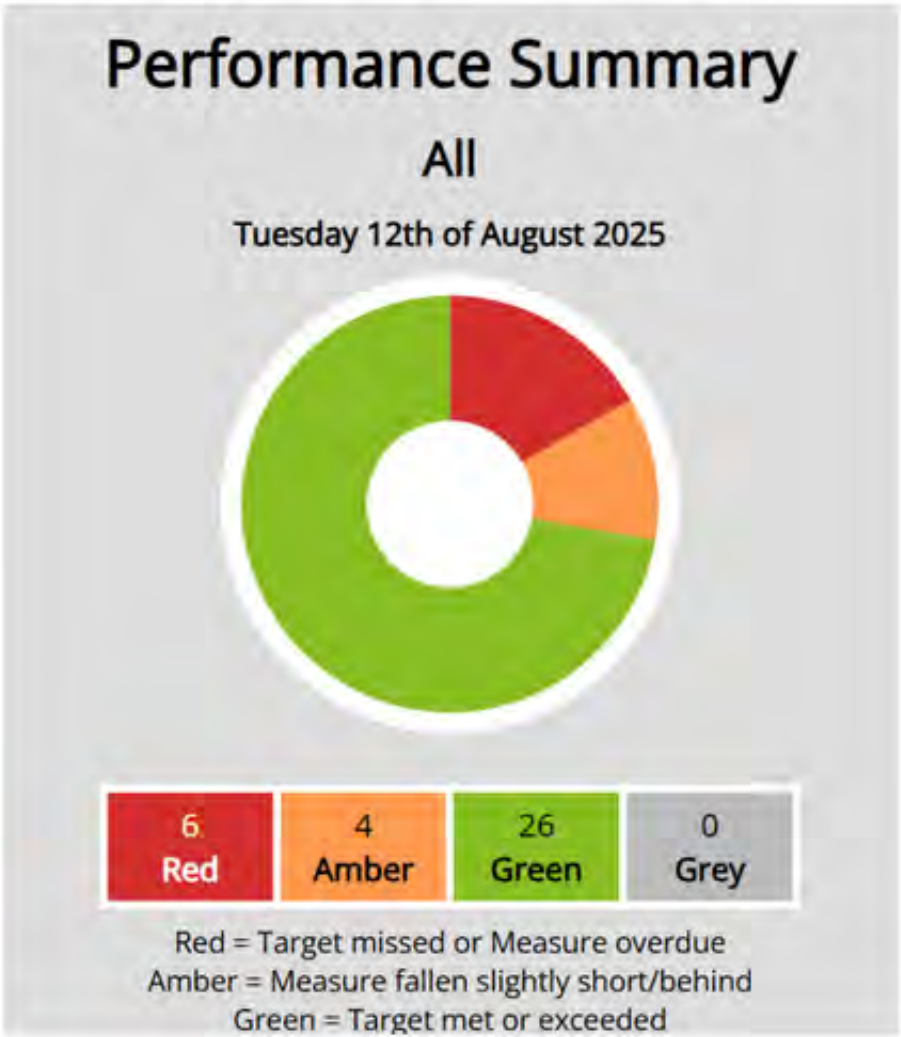
- Link 1 <https://www.midandeantrim.gov.uk/council/policies-and-documents/climate-change-sustainability/climate-sustainability-environment-reporting/>
- Link 2 <https://www.bitcni.org.uk/programmes/climate-action-pledge/>

Appendix 1 – Overview of Climate & Sustainability Action Plan action progress 2024/25 and MEA Adaptation Plan action progress 2024/25

Climate and Sustainability Action Plan 2024/25



MEA Adaptation Plan 2024/25



Department : All

Thursday 14th of August 2025

472

Community Planning and Development			
BRCD01 : BRCD - To establish I4C physical hub, supporting future innovation activity in the Borough and clean technology needs across NI. Targeting BREEAM 'Excellent' rating which will embed sustainability at all stages of proposal.			
Establishment of the I4C Innovation and CleanTech Centre	Target:	Progress with development of	Progress with development of
	Progress	Green	Green
Notes:		1 Funding - Department of Finance approval of Outline Business Case (OBC) received - November 2023 - Contract for Funding (CfF) is under development. Building Design - Procurement process for Integrated Consultant Team (ICT) completed in June 2024 and appointment pending. Building Operator - Consultant appointed to assist Council with procurement of operator for i4C building - December 2023 - Pre-Market Engagement process carried out and completed in February 2024. - Strategy for operator procurement prepared - March 2024 - Operator procurement process commenced - May 2024 (Due to complete December 2024) 2 Funding - Department of Finance approval of Outline Business Case (OBC) received - November 2023 - Contract for Funding (CfF) has been finalised awaiting sign off by the Department and Council Building Design - Integrated Consultant Team (ICT) appointed in June 2024 - RIBA Stage 2 designs being progressed (to be concluded July 2025) Building Operator - Procurement of operator process concluded pending formal Council approval of the Pre-Operations Phase appointment	
Achieving BREEAM 'Excellent' rating	Target:	Preparation for achieving	Achieving BREEAM 'Excellent'
	Progress	Green	Green
Notes:		1 Funding - Department of Finance approval of Outline Business Case (OBC) received - November 2023 - Contract for Funding (CfF) is under development. Building Design - Procurement process for Integrated Consultant Team (ICT) completed in June 2024 and appointment pending. Building Operator - Consultant appointed to assist Council with procurement of operator for i4C building - December 2023 - Pre-Market Engagement process carried out and completed in February 2024. - Strategy for operator procurement prepared - March 2024 - Operator procurement process commenced - May 2024 (Due to complete December 2024) 2 The ICT appointment scope of services requires that renewable technologies shall be incorporated into the design ethos and fabric of i4C Innovation and Cleantech building. The building must also achieve a BREEAM 'Excellent' Rating (with BREEAM Outstanding in Energy Sections) with the ICT including the services of a licensed BREEAM assessor throughout the life span of the project	
BRCD02 : BRCD - Expansion at the Gobbins proposal targeting BREEAM infrastructure 'Excellent' rating on the building development. Measures to improve sustainability will be included in design and delivery			
Achieving BREEAM 'Excellent' rating on the building development	Target:	Preparation for achieving	Achieving BREEAM 'Excellent'
	Progress	Green	Green
Notes:		1 BREEAM Excellent target included in ITC Tender Docs. Project registered for BREEAM Infrastructure. 2 The Gobbins Phase II project is aiming for BREEAM Infrastructure "Excellence" - Project Registration is BIA 1022. The ICT has recently submitted the RIBA Stage 2 Report and Cost Plan which includes BREEAM Infrastructure Tracker demonstrating that the principles of sustainable development have been considered in the planning, design and construction of the project.	
Development			
BRCD03 : BRCD - Carrickfergus Regeneration Project to regenerate, reposition and rebrand the town of Carrickfergus. Measures to improve sustainability will be included in design and delivery.			

No. of increased GVA and jobs for Northern Ireland	Target	No. of increased GVA and jobs	
	Progress	Green	Green
		1	2
Notes:	1 McAdam Design were appointed in November 2023 to lead the ICT for the design of the Carrickfergus Regeneration Project. Design proposals to date include: • Looking at options to better connect the castle with the town centre. • Consideration of various locations in and around the town centre as a the location for a visitor centre. • Adaption of the Civic Centre and Town Hall complex to provide an arts venue. • Development of the Castle as a world class visitor attraction • Interpretative plans around the historic walls including a lighting scheme. The Department for Infrastructure and Council's Planning team are working together on the Eastern Transport Plan which is being developed to ensure that there is adequate infrastructure capacity for the future. McAdam Design have undertaken topographical survey work and 3D modelling of the Carrickfergus town centre. This will create a baseline upon which accurate design work can be developed A Conservation Management Plan has now been completed. This plan indicates which interventions are acceptable to the heritage assets within the town. Public Engagement is ongoing with recent meetings held with Positive Carrickfergus, the North Street Traders, and the internal Council cross departmental working group to ensure a joined-up approach to any work planned to Carrickfergus. A public engagement strategy has been developed and a series of 6 workshops are planned for the next 12 months commencing in June 2024. The second engagement event is planned for the 28th of August 2024. The council team are working with BT to see how through the project digital infrastructure and connectivity within the town can be improved. This will not only benefit the City Deal project but the wider town. KPMG have been employed to assist council with the determining the Operator models. This work is currently being finalized.		
	2 The ICT is currently developing the scheme to deliver the following objectives: • Increase number of visitors to the Castle from 68,000 in 2018 to 210,000 in 2034 (i.e. 5 years after opening) • Increase the % of QoS (including GB and RoI) visitors to the Castle from 33% to 60% • To create 155 jobs in attractions and as result of net visitor spend • To create 145 construction jobs per year for two years during the construction phase • 20% of new jobs employed within attractions filled by people from priority groups • 100% of social benefit opportunities filled by people from priority groups		
No. of regeneration of Carrickfergus town centre.	Target	No. of regeneration	
	Progress	Green	Green
		1	2
Notes:	1 McAdam Design were appointed in November 2023 to lead the ICT for the design of the Carrickfergus Regeneration Project. Design proposals to date include: • Looking at options to better connect the castle with the town centre. • Consideration of various locations in and around the town centre as a the location for a visitor centre. • Adaption of the Civic Centre and Town Hall complex to provide an arts venue. • Development of the Castle as a world class visitor attraction • Interpretative plans around the historic walls including a lighting scheme. The Department for Infrastructure and Council's Planning team are working together on the Eastern Transport Plan which is being developed to ensure that there is adequate infrastructure capacity for the future. McAdam Design have undertaken topographical survey work and 3D modelling of the Carrickfergus town centre. This will create a baseline upon which accurate design work can be developed A Conservation Management Plan has now been completed. This plan indicates which interventions are acceptable to the heritage assets within the town. Public Engagement is ongoing with recent meetings held with Positive Carrickfergus, the North Street Traders, and the internal Council cross departmental working group to ensure a joined-up approach to any work planned to Carrickfergus. A public engagement strategy has been developed and a series of 6 workshops are planned for the next 12 months commencing in June 2024. The second engagement event is planned for the 28th of August 2024. The council team are working with BT to see how through the project digital infrastructure and connectivity within the town can be improved. This will not only benefit the City Deal project but the wider town. KPMG have been employed to assist council with the determining the Operator models. This work is currently being finalized.		
	2 The ICT is currently developing the scheme to deliver the following objectives: • Increase percentage of town centre businesses who say turnover has increased compared to previous year from 24% to 50% • Increase average weekly footfall in the town centre from 57,000 to 85,000 • Reduce vacancy rate in town centre by a third Through this scheme, the former Danske Bank building on High Street has been purchased by Council and is being developed as the new Visitor Centre for Carrickfergus – finding an alternative use for a vacant building on the High Street.		
No of wellbeing benefits for residents	Target	No of wellbeing benefits for residents	
	Progress	Green	Green
		1	2

- Notes:
- 1

McAdam Design were appointed in November 2023 to lead the ICT for the design of the Carrickfergus Regeneration Project. Design proposals to date include: • Looking at options to better connect the castle with the town centre. • Consideration of various locations in and around the town centre as a the location for a visitor centre. • Adaption of the Civic Centre and Town Hall complex to provide an arts venue. • Development of the Castle as a world class visitor attraction • Interpretative plans around the historic walls including a lighting scheme. The Department for Infrastructure and Council's Planning team are working together on the Eastern Transport Plan which is being developed to ensure that there is adequate infrastructure capacity for the future. McAdam Design have undertaken topographical survey work and 3D modelling of the Carrickfergus town centre. This will create a baseline upon which accurate design work can be developed A Conservation Management Plan has now been completed. This plan indicates which interventions are acceptable to the heritage assets within the town. Public Engagement is ongoing with recent meetings held with Positive Carrickfergus, the North Street Traders, and the Internal Council cross departmental working group to ensure a joined-up approach to any work planned to Carrickfergus. A public engagement strategy has been developed and a series of 6 workshops are planned for the next 12 months commencing in June 2024. The second engagement event is planned for the 28th of August 2024. The council team are working with BT to see how through the project digital infrastructure and connectivity within the town can be improved. This will not only benefit the City Deal project but the wider town. KPMG have been employed to assist council with the determining the Operator models. This work is currently being finalized.
- 2

The ICT is currently developing the scheme to deliver the following objectives: • To have 150 residents volunteering at attractions • 15% increase in the % of residents expressing positive perceptions of the town • 30% increase of the number of community events taking place in the Castle and in the town centre Through this scheme, the former Danske Bank building on High Street has been purchased by Council and is being developed as the new Visitor Centre for Carrickfergus. The redevelopment of this is a number of years away and Council is exploring meanwhile use options with Internal Departments and Community Groups

Regeneration

CAP01 : Develop opportunities for promoting and encouraging sustainable water management

No. of water diversion / holding proposals (green roofs, permeable paving, soakaways, tree planting, pond and wetlands) considered at design stage of new projects	Target	Total number of new projects	No. of water diversion / holding
	Progress	Amber	Green
		1	1
Notes:	1	No projects are applicable to date for water butts – however some Capital projects are benefiting from water saving technologies such as sensor taps and we are also looking into waterless urinals. We can review if this will be applicable to include as part of the designs for Browns Bay toilet block, Islandmagee. Tree planting, paving and green roofs considered for all projects where relevant.	
	2	There has been a number of projects incorporating the above principles within the design. Ballymena Showgrounds - additional tree planting included in the design and oversized drainage to meet green field run off rates. Carrunock Redevelopment - Section of green roofs, tree planting, waterless urinals included to reduce consumption. Browns Bay toilet block - Design phase proposals include for a green roof, consideration to be given to rainwater harvesting and soakaways if applicable.	

CAP02 : Ensure town centres regeneration contributes to climate action by reducing emissions, investing in low carbon transport and creating more greenspaces

No. of public realm improvements / regeneration projects delivered in partnership with Council, DFC and DFI	Target	Total number of projects	No. of public realm
	Progress	Green	Green
		1	2
Notes:	1	Castle St and Bridge St public realm improvements completed by February 2024	
	2	Castle St and Bridge St public realm improvements completed by February 2024 - now complete.	

CAP03 : Examine lighting approaches in design of public & civic space which contributes to a low carbon environment

Lighting upgrades complete across town centres	Target	1	Lighting upgrades complete
	Progress	Green	Amber
		1	2
Notes:	1	Castle St and Bridge St street lighting upgraded to LED	
	2	No lighting upgrades completed through regeneration, however several projects delivered by the Facilities team.	

Capital Plan

CAP04 : Ensure sustainable principles are integrate into all major construction and refurbishment projects (over £3m) at the design phase, incorporating it into both the business case and project specification

Evidence of sustainable principles included in design phase

Target	Yes	Yes
Actual	Yes	Yes

Notes:

- 1 Carnfunnock Country Park Levelling-Up project is currently working towards Passivehaus accreditation and this will be monitored at each RIBA Stage.
- 2 This is ongoing and included in the ICT appointment specification for all Capital Projects to consider sustainability. Highlights to note: Broughshane Community Centre - passivhaus principles to be follow and hopefully work towards certification. Browns Bay toilet block - principles to be followed and pilot scheme for a smaller scheme certification model. M&E remedial projects - inclusion for renewables at The Braid for ground source heat pump and heat recovery in Carrick Amphitheatre pool.

Evidence of whole life carbon assessments to costing and evaluating build and retrofit options.

Target	Evidence of whole life carbon
Progress	Amber

Notes:

- 1 There are no other projects applicable to date for whole life carbon assessments. We will continue to develop Carnfunnock Country Park to PassiveHaus accredited standard. (This is difficult to incorporate in a project and not something we have completed before – unsure of the benefit outside of Passivehaus accreditation.)
- 2 There are no other projects applicable to date for whole life carbon assessments. We will continue to develop Carnfunnock Country Park to PassiveHaus accredited standard. (This is difficult to incorporate in a project and not something we have completed before – unsure of the benefit outside of Passivehaus accreditation.)

CAP05 : New build extensions or refurbishment projects in excess of £1,000,000 and 1,000m2 will be subject to a formal assessment and will be expected to achieve Plus certification, where appropriate. All other new build, extensions or refurbishment projects will adopt key sustainable practices and wider sustainability requirements.

No. of projects achieving Plus certification

Target	No. of projects achieving Plus	No. of projects achieving Plus
Progress	Amber	Amber

Notes:

- 1 The delivery of Carnfunnock Country Park Levelling up project is incorporating Passivhaus design and certification in the delivery of the new visitor centre and caravan amenity block. The project is currently at detailed design stage. Any new projects on the Capital Plan going forward that meet the criteria will be considered for certification going forward.
- 2 Carnfunnock is ongoing and is currently at contractor tender stage. It is anticipated after completion the visitor Centre will achieve passivhaus plus and the amenity block passivhaus classic accreditation. The project will be due for completion in 2026/27 FY

No. of projects adopting sustainable practices

Target	Total number of projects	No. of projects adopting
Progress	Amber	Amber

Notes:

- 1 There are currently 13 projects within the FY24/25 Capital Plan that will be adopting sustainable principles in the delivery. This will range from improved thermal performance of buildings, renewable energy and sustainable materials. This will remain under review and maximised where feasible.
- 2 This is ongoing and included in the ICT appointment specification for all Capital Projects to consider sustainability. Highlights to note: Broughshane Community Centre - passivhaus principles to be follow and hopefully work towards certification. Browns Bay toilet block - principles to be followed and pilot scheme for a smaller scheme certification model. M&E remedial projects - inclusion for renewables at The Braid for ground source heat pump and heat recovery in Carrick Amphitheatre pool.

CAP06 : Construction Stage: Manage construction waste in line with the waste hierarchy of reduce, re-use and recycle through sustainable design

Number of projects incorporating reused and recycled construction material

Target	5	5
Actual	5	5

Notes:		1 2 MUGAs - recycled plastics 3 Play parks - recycled materials including recycled rubber and equipment contains recycled plastics	
Notes:		2 Greenisland and Larne Town Park MUGA, specified to used recycled rubber infill, Sunnylands MUGA trialing a new sustainable cork infill. Oakfield, Bardic and Fisherwick play parks incorporating recycled rubber wet pour.	
Use of locally sourced and recovered materials		Target	Yes
		Actual	Yes
Notes:		1 The specifications for the delivery of projects within the FY24/25 Capital Plan will include where possible the use of locally sourced and sustainable materials.	
Notes:		2 Ballymena showgrounds new entrance, incorporated the specification of locally sourced stone cladding for the feature entrance. The wider specification with the Capital Plan projects calls for locally sourced and recovered materials where possible.	
CAP07 : Require the design of buildings to incorporate climate resilience and flood proofing measures in at risk locations			
Reduction in development within flood risk locations		Target	Yes
		Actual	Yes
Notes:		1 As part of the due diligence checks and as part of the design process, where possible development will be minimised in areas deemed a flood risk location. This will be mitigated through good design principles, planning and liaison with statutory bodies.	
Notes:		2 As part of the due diligence checks and as part of the design process, where possible development will be minimised in areas deemed a flood risk location. This will be mitigated through good design principles, planning and liaison with statutory bodies.	
Increase in use of sustainable drainage		Target	Yes
		Actual	Yes
Notes:		1 Sustainable drainage is included in the Greenisland FC new car park project. This will also be included where possible in other Capital Projects with the FY24/25 Capital Plan.	
Notes:		2 Greenisland FC car park was completed with sustainable drainage. Browns Bay toilet block is in design development and this will be incorporated where possible.	
CAP08 : Design Stage: incorporation of increased greening e.g., through installation of green walls/roofs etc, use of SuDS, where possible			
No. of designs incorporating green walls/roofs, use of SuDS		Target	Total number of designs
		Progress	Green
Notes:		1 3no projects completed by Regeneration in Ballymena, Larne and Carrick which incorporated green walls under the DfC Covid recovery scheme. SuDS drainage included in Greenisland FC car park. Small portion of green roofs included in the Carnfunnock LUP Project.	
Notes:		2 Greenisland FC car park completed with SuDS drainage. Carnfunnock Roof design of the visitor Centre includes a green roof provision and Browns Bay toilet block initial proposal includes for a green roof.	
CAP09 : Deliver a flagfish project which maximises sustainable design principles and use of sustainable construction materials			
Delivery of Carnfunnock Country Park refurbishment		Target	Progression of design and
		Progress	Amber
Notes:		1 The delivery of this project is ongoing, it is currently in detailed design phase and the specification is following sustainable and passivhaus principles.	
Notes:		2 Carnfunnock is currently at Contractor tender stage, with the works anticipated to begin in Summer 2025, anticipated completion, late 2026.	

Climate Change Sustainability

CCS01 : Further realise the efficiencies and sustainable benefits of agile working, encouraging virtual meetings and effective journey management

% reduction in business miles annually



Notes:

- 1 Council officers have established a baseline of business miles in 2022/23. 2023/24 saw a slight decrease in the total miles travelled due to agile working, digital online meetings etc. 2022/23 = 291,256 business miles 2023/24 = 283,436.2 business miles
- 2 Council officers have established a baseline of business miles in 2022/23. 2023/24 saw a slight decrease in the total miles travelled due to agile working, digital online meetings etc. 2024/25 saw a further reduction in business miles to 265,176 miles. 2022/23 = 291,256 business miles 2023/24 = 283,436.2 business miles 2024/25 = 265,175.9 business miles

% reduction in commuting miles annually



Notes:

- 1 Council adopted a new Agile Working Policy for all employees from September 2020 reflecting the change of work/home working balance due to covid-19. This provided employees with more flexibility to work from home, therefore reducing commuting miles. From April 2023, all employees were required to work a minimum of 2 days in-office. From April 2024, all employees are required to work a minimum of 3 days in-office. Due to the changes in the Agile Working Policy, commuting miles have increased between 2022/23 and 2023/24. 2023/24 will be the baseline year for this Plan.
- 2 Council adopted a new Agile Working Policy for all employees from September 2020 reflecting the change of work/home working balance due to covid-19. This provided employees with more flexibility to work from home, therefore reducing commuting miles. From April 2023, all employees were required to work a minimum of 2 days in-office. From April 2024, all employees are required to work a minimum of 3 days in-office. Due to the changes in the Agile Working Policy, commuting miles have increased between 2022/23 and 2023/24, and again between 2023/24. 2024/25 total commuting mileage estimate was 43,153.5 miles.

CCS02 : Ensure that climate change risks are appropriately addressed within our risk management and business continuity process

Climate change risks are included in the risk register



Notes:

- 1 Climate Change Risks were reviewed in March 2024 by the Environmental Education Officer, including specific updates on what has been delivered to mitigate these.
- 2 Climate Change Risks were reviewed in March 2025 by the Acting Climate and Sustainability Manager, including specific updates on what has been delivered to mitigate these. Looking forward, climate-related risks will be captured in the Operations Directorate Risk Register and managed appropriately. The Acting Climate and Sustainability Manager undertook Risk Management Training on 8 April 2025 - this will help to develop new climate-related risks for 2025/26.

Every service area's Business Continuity Plan includes climate change threats.

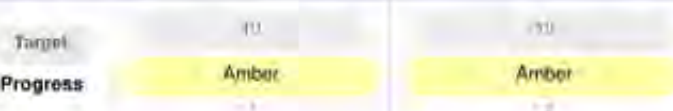


Notes:

- 1 Due to Council's Corporate Risk Manager leaving Council, and no officer taking over this position, risks in general in Council are not being reviewed adequately. This includes climate-related risks.
- 2 Climate Change threats are incorporated into Business Continuity Planning in two ways. 1) EPIG has introduced a discussion framework to ensure MEABC is prepared for response and recovery and 2) Climate Change and Severe Weather is one of the threats contained in the Business Impact Assessment process.

CCS03 : Engage and influence the pension scheme provider on fossil fuel divestment

Report from pension scheme on % fossil fuel divestment



- Notes:
- 1

Discussions are ongoing within Council between finance, Elected Members and SMT on pension fund investments. Whilst officers and Elected Members are open to discussions, the general agreement is to continue with investments, part of which include fossil fuel-derived returns. Further research and discussion is required as more evidence and return of investment data is provided for alternate pension portfolios.
- 2

Discussions are ongoing within Council between finance, Elected Members and SMT on pension fund investments. Whilst officers and Elected Members are open to discussions, the general agreement is to continue with investments, part of which include fossil fuel-derived returns. Further research and discussion is required as more evidence and return of investment data is provided for alternate pension portfolios.

CCS04 : Investigate best practice to collate emissions from Council's supply chain

Evidence of engagement with supply chain	Target	Evidence of materials	Evidence of measures to assist
	Progress	Green	Amber
		1	2
Notes:	1 This stage for Council to collect carbon emissions from the Supply chain has been postponed indefinitely 2 Council has been in discussions with Climate Essentials on their Supply Chain add-on module. The Energy Manager and the Acting Climate and Sustainability Manager are in discussions to determine the best method / platform to capture these emissions, as the proposed financial method is based on estimates.		

CCS05 : Implement actions within Council's Adaptation Plan to reduce the impacts of extreme weather and improve health and well being

No. of initiatives to enhance and promote the benefits of green open spaces and the landscape quality	Target	Total number of measures	Number of initiatives to enhance and
	Progress	Green	Green
		1	2
Notes:	1 Over 2023/24 a number of initiatives were delivered to enhance and promote the benefits of green, open spaces and landscape quality, in collaboration with the Parks Development Team, including: • 58,610 trees planted on public land 2023/24, • Support for red squirrel conservation programmes at Carnfunnock Country Park, • Fairtrade status for the Borough retained, • Total of 5 community hedges providing important resource for those who need it and a facility for businesses and local growers to reduce food waste, • 3 x Green Flag awards retained (Eden Allotments Gardens, Carnfunnock Country Park, Ecos Nature Park), • 1 x Green Flag community award retained for Shellinghill Park & Millennium Walk in Cullybackey, • 3 x Seaside awards retained (Carnlough, Ballygally, Browns Bay), • Success at Ulster in Bloom 2023 with Cullybackey securing first prize in the large village category and selected for entry into Britain in Bloom 2024, • 3 x schools completed Forest School programme (6 sessions per school = 18, approximately 80 pupils engaged), • 3 x schools completed Schools Growing Club programme (6 sessions per school = 18, approximately 80 pupils engaged), • 3 programmes ran to engage people with their local environment involving 194 participants: o Natural connections Photography o Health oceans, healthy minds o Plot to plate o 79 events held engaging with over 2000 participants, • 218 active allotment holders. 2 Over 2024/25 there have been a number of initiatives to enhance and promote the benefits of green open spaces and the landscape quality, including: • Conservation grazing programme continues at Keeran Moss peatland as per conservation management plan. The enables sustainable management of this important habitat and reduces the need for mechanical management, • 1 x Green Flag community award retained for Shellinghill Park & Millennium Walk in Cullybackey, • 3 x schools completed Schools Growing Club programme (6 sessions per school = 18, approximately 80 pupils engaged), • Over 200 active allotment holders on our 3 allotments sites, • Over 6000 participants attending events across the borough and throughout the year. [Tree Planting: Private Individuals – 48,680 Community groups – 3,466 Schools– 1,035 TOTAL – 53,491 Community group sessions with tree-based themes – 28 (18 different groups), Around 700 unique individuals were worked with. The above included all types of tree-based themes such as woodland creation, woodland management including coppicing, ancient woodland walk, willow weaving, orchard creation plus orchard management and tree I.D.		
No. of Community Resilience Groups / Initiatives	Target	Total number of	No. of Community Resilience
	Progress	Amber	Green

- Notes:
- 1

The Community Resilience Toolkit was developed from funding from the Regional Community Resilience Group (RCRG) in partnership with Derry and Strabane District Council. This toolkit will be shared with not only already-established MEA Community Resilience Groups (primarily Ballymena area), but also general MEA Community Groups. Council has a database of known community groups and we will contact them in 2024/25 to make them aware of the toolkit. This work will be supported by a number of stakeholders including RCRG, Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful (via Community Group Carbon Literacy Training etc) and Council officers.
- 2

Plans are being developed to bring together a broader Community Resilience Network across the borough based on the MEA Community Resilience Toolkit and the experience and knowledge of the existing Community Resilience Groups.

CCS06 : Develop cross departmental collaborations and partnerships to assist with resources of funding for climate action

No. of cross-departmental collaborations and partnerships	Target	Track number of collaborations	No. of cross-departmental
	Progress	Green	Green

- 1 Council officers continue to collaborate on a range of carbon emission reduction projects including: • The HyTech NI Project represents a collaboration between Mid & East Antrim Borough Council, Queen's University Belfast, Ulster University and industry underpinned by £15million funding leverage from the NI Complementary Fund. The Outline Business Case for the project has been submitted to InvestNI for appraisal and the partners are expecting an approval decision in late 2024. The Universities are leading on the creation of a hydrogen technology accelerator to support NI companies to innovate and expand in the emerging hydrogen economy, while Council and its local industry partners plan to implement a series of hydrogen testbed demonstrators in Ballymena around the themes of mobility/transport, gas blending and skills training over a four-year funded period. These demonstrators will serve as pathway finder projects in the transition to net zero and position the Borough as a hub for manufacturing and supports in the future hydrogen economy. • The Hydrogen Training Academy (HTA) continued to be operational in 2023/24 with accredited training delivery being led by Northern Regional College throughout 2023/24. The pilot project finished in March 2023 but Council continues to work in partnership with NRC and other HTA partners on delivery of the OCN accredited Level 3 in Hydrogen Technologies and Applications, providing the H2 Gas Safe Lab and equipment for the H2 Fuel Cell Skills Lab to support the training delivery. There have now been more than 200 trainees accredited through the Hydrogen Training Academy including 70 at Level 5 and more than 130 at Level 3. More than 200 organisations and 500 people have engaged in the HTA project since November 2021, and the HTA partners continue to develop the offering and provide access to the bespoke training labs for stakeholders from both public and private sector. • In April 2023, Council secured £294,454 from Innovate UK under the Fast Follower strand of the Net Zero Living Programme to deliver a two year 'MEANZ' Business project from 1 July 2023 30 June 2025. This 'MEANZ Business' project provides an additional staff resource and full programme of activity which includes social, economic and technical support. The project supports both Council and businesses to achieve a higher level of net zero readiness and increased capacity, helping to realise organisational sustainability targets faster and support the national transition towards net zero. To date, the project has included delivery of a tailored programme of engagement, support and dissemination on net zero to a range of stakeholders, with a focus on targeting c400 relevant businesses in the Borough and will continue until June 2025 with activities such as: A Net Zero Insights webinar series, best practice visits, a consumer engagement and customer behaviour research exercise, a Council led data and digitalisation project focusing on emissions reporting, a NZ skills mapping exercise, a capacity building programme for Council Planning Officers in relation to net zero and renewables and finally, support for the CleanTech Collaborative Growth Network and implementation of a joint decarbonisation project with a group of local companies. • Plans to regenerate, reposition and rebrand the town of Carrickfergus have moved a step closer after a funding agreement was sealed for the rollout of the £42m project. A key strand within the Belfast Region City Deal under the 'Tourism and Regeneration' pillar, the Carrickfergus Regeneration is one of three projects in Mid and East Antrim that will collectively benefit from more than £80m investment as part of the City Deal. The Carrickfergus project will firmly place the town on the map as an authentic, heritage-led, tourism hub, and a 'must-visit' starting point to the internationally acclaimed Causeway Coastal Route. This project will be delivered to BREAAAM 'Excellent' standard for sustainability. • Over £8million has been allocated to Carnfunnock Country Park from the UK government's Levelling Up Fund. Levelling up is a UK government regional development plan. It is aimed at improving economic performance outside the south-east of England. The scheme is most closely associated with the north of England but is funding projects throughout the UK. The key components of the project will include construction of a new visitor centre which will house a retail shop, café, meeting rooms and bathroom facilities, overlooking the coastline. Works commence in September 2024. • Conservation grazing programme implemented at Keeran Moss peatland as per conservation management plan. The enables sustainable management of this important habitat and reduces the need for mechanical management. • 58,610 trees planted on public land 2023/24. Waste Reduction Schemes including MEA School Uniform Scheme, MEA Christmas Toy Container Scheme, MEA Community RePaint Scheme etc which has reduced carbon emissions. Council also works through the Emergency Planning Implementation Group (EPIG) to consider climate-related risks to both Council services and local communities and has co-designed a Community Resilience Toolkit to educate residents on potential risks, to identify gaps in knowledge/access to equipment e.g. snow shovels and to bring communities together to help them help themselves.
- 2 The Acting Climate and Sustainability Manager has developed 15+ cross-departmental collaborations and partnerships. Attached document updates between this officer and Shaun Morley: Director of Operations sets out the range of projects etc across most service areas in Council. This ranges from HVO trial, sustainability tyre contract (with Transport), waste harmonisation, Recycle Week 2024 (with Waste), net zero innovations and delivery (carbon-baselining across borough, Climate Essentials, net zero video, Collaborative Growth Network - all with Economic Development), Food for Thought (with Museum Team and Eco Dev), circular economy project (with Waste and Eco Dev), Sustainability training (with Capital Works), ArcPro Climate Project (with GIS team) etc.

Notes:

CCS07 : Engage with schools and community groups to increase knowledge and support the waste hierarchy and circular economy to meet our waste and climate targets

No. of events run by council to promote reduce, re-use, recycling and circular economy	Target	Total number of events	Total number of events
	Progress	Green	Green
		-1	-2

	Notes:	1 4 Waste Reduction Schemes MEA School Uniform Scheme MEA Christmas Toy Container Scheme MEA Community RePaint Habitat for Humanity - DIY products sold on at low cost Northern Ireland Resource Network Lunchtime seminar on local reuse/repair opportunities (March 2024).		
	Notes:	2 5 Waste Reduction Schemes MEA School Uniform Scheme MEA Christmas Toy Container Scheme MEA Community RePaint Habitat for Humanity - DIY products sold on at low cost Reading Glass reuse scheme (from Dec 2024) Hosted Circular Economy workshops with Economic Development team in September. The Showgrounds engaging local start up businesses and social enterprises. Hosted a similar event with local tourism businesses in collaboration with Tourism team in November 2024.		
No. of communications campaigns to increase re-use, repair and recycling		Target	Total number of campaigns	Total number of campaigns
		Progress	Green	Green
			-1	-2
Notes:		1 Range of communication campaigns delivered throughout 2023/23: Recycle Week 2023 (October) Food Waste Recycling Campaign 2024 (February) Food Waste Action Week 2024 (March) Reuse campaign comms around School Uniform Scheme, Christmas Toy Container, Community RePaint etc. Continual campaigns throughout the year on promoting recycling of dry recycling and food waste streams.		
		2 Range of communication campaigns delivered throughout 2024/25: Recycle Week 2024 (September) Food Waste Recycling Campaign 2025 (February) Food Waste Action Week 2025 (March) Reuse campaign comms around School Uniform Scheme, Christmas Toy Container, Community RePaint etc. Continual campaigns throughout the year on promoting recycling of dry recycling and food waste streams.		
CCS08 : Encourage communities to engage in climate education and participate in sustainable initiatives				
No. of climate education programmes promoted		Target	Total number of climate	No. of climate education
		Progress	Green	Green
			-1	-2
Notes:		1 Climate and Sustainability educational programme delivered throughout 2023/24 with in-schools talks and community group presentations. Financial support to Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful to deliver Eco Schools within MEA primary/secondary schools which includes topic of 'Climate'. Hosted Eco Schools Cluster Meeting in October 2023 to engage schools early on to become involved / continue involvement in Eco Schools programme. Hosted Eco Schools Awards 2023 in The Showgrounds in June 2023 - Elected Members and Mayor presence. Range of stakeholder engagement presentations to a wide range of audiences including The Carson Project, IESE, SOLACE, APSE, the Inner Wheel, U3A, Rotary Clubs etc.		
		2 Climate and Sustainability educational programme delivered throughout 2024/25 with in-schools talks and community group presentations. Financial support to Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful to deliver Eco Schools within MEA primary/secondary schools which includes topic of 'Climate'. Hosted Eco Schools Cluster Meeting in October 2024 to engage schools early on to become involved / continue involvement in Eco Schools programme. Hosted Eco Schools Awards in June 2024 in The Showgrounds - Elected Members and Mayor presence. Range of stakeholder engagement presentations to a wide range of audiences including The Carson Project, IESE, SOLACE, APSE, the Inner Wheel, U3A, Rotary Clubs etc. The Acting Climate and Sustainability Manager has also been assisting in the co-design of the new MyEarth hub (formerly EARTHHub) hosted and administered by Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful. Council will provide content on ScoreCards for upload onto this platform, elevating the awareness of climate-related issues/opportunities etc. It is anticipated this platform will be accessible by a range of MEA officers so they can upload relevant content, training, events etc, to promote environmental / climate / sustainability awareness.		
No. of sustainable initiatives delivered		Target	Total number of sustainable	No. of sustainable initiatives
		Progress	Green	Green
			-1	-2
Notes:		1 Financial support to Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful Live Here Love Here Small Grants Scheme 2023 - 10 projects supported to deliver environmental improvement projects including sustainability themes.		
		2 Financial support to Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful Live Here Love Here Small Grants Scheme 2024 - 10 projects supported to deliver environmental improvement projects including sustainability themes - see attached report and projects funded.		
CCS09 : Upskill our workforce on climate change and encourage an agile corporate culture of resource efficiency in the workplace				
No. of employees who have received Carbon Literacy Training		Target	800	800
		Actual	250	300
			-1	-2

1 Funding for training is not available to roll out further Carbon Literacy Training. Key staff and Elected Members undertook training from March 2023 until September 2023. 2024/25 training budget may be possible.			
Notes:	2 Funding for training is not available to roll out further Carbon Literacy Training. Key staff and Elected Members undertook training from March 2023 until September 2023. The 2025/26 will ringfence funding for further Carbon Literacy training roll out. It is anticipated a refresher training module will be developed with an external provider and offered to staff who already received the training in 2023.		
Communications			
COM01 : Implement a collaborative approach to delivering the climate change agenda to local communities			
No. of communications and PR to raise awareness of climate and sustainability agenda	Target	Total number of communications	No. of communications and PR to
	Progress	Green	Green
		1	2
	Notes:	1 Approx. 20 PR's issued throughout the year linking in with Council's awareness of climate and sustainability agenda. 2 Approx. 27 PR's issued throughout the year linking in with Council's awareness of climate and sustainability agenda.	
Monitor the effectiveness of climate change engagement through digital platforms	Target	Ongoing monitoring of	Monitor the effectiveness of
	Progress	Green	Green
		1	2
	Notes:	1 Communications continue to support projects across Council related to climate change, waste and key environmental issues. They are promoted through online social channels, PR's and the Council website. Stats can be provided as requested to monitor effectiveness. 2 Communications continue to support projects across Council related to climate change, waste and key environmental issues. They are promoted through online social channels, PR's and the Council website. Stats can be provided as requested to monitor effectiveness.	
Events			
CPD01 : Improve promotion, marketing, and communication of sustainability-themed procurement activities, policies and processes as appropriate			
No. of sustainability and climate themed events	Target	Total number of sustainability	No. of sustainability and climate
	Progress	Green	Green
		1	2
	Notes:	1 sustainability is built into each event without the being the main theme. There are fewer single use plastics on site. Recycling waste points 2 at all events suppliers are required to demonstrate what steps they are taking to address environmental impact and sustainability	
CPD02 : Reduce consumption of single-use plastic (SUP) within Council and events			
% reduction in single-use plastic	Target	10%	10%
	Actual	10%	10%
		1	2
	Notes:	1 The Events Team uses a minimum number of plastic cable ties and laminate signage. Everything else is reused. Food trader applications have a criterion which favours compostable materials to serve food. 2 The Events Team uses a minimum number of plastic cable ties and laminate signage. Everything else is reused. Food trader applications have a criterion which favours compostable materials to serve food.	
CPD03 : Improve promotion marketing and communication of sustainability themed events			
Evidence of sustainability criteria used in events	Target	Yes	Yes
	Actual	Yes	Yes
		1	2
	Notes:	1 Public transport is a priority. We no longer print glossy flyers (all digital). Recycling points. Traders selected by their environmental attitude (compostable items, cooking oil deposit, packaging etc) 2 All suppliers are required to demonstrate the steps they take to reduce environmental impact	

Community Planning and Development			
CPD04 : Support communities to access funding for climate action projects to sustainably manage their environment e.g., environment grant			
No. of funded climate action projects delivered	Target	Total number of funded	No. of funded climate action
	Progress	Green	Green
Notes: 1 The DEA Staff team continue to support the CVS groups to develop and deliver projects primarily through the Cluster Programme. 2 The DEA Staff team continue to support the CVS groups to develop and deliver projects primarily through the Cluster Programme.			
Policy			
CS01 : Ensure that sustainable development and climate change are used as a guiding principle in Council plans, policies and strategies			
100% of new or reviewed policies screened for sustainability	Target	100%	100%
	Actual	19%	12%
Notes: 1 16 policies in total went through Committees during Q1 of 2024/2025 – 3 (19%) had Climate & Sustainability screening attached. Policy Name C&S Screening attached, Review of Bentra Golf Course and Mini-Golf - Financial Review No Draft Personal Protective Equipment Policy No Draft Council Events Policy & Programme Yes Waste Efficiencies No Corporate Plan 2024-2028 Yes Performance Improvement Plan 2024-25 Yes Update on Review of Good Governance: Transforming Mid and East Antrim Borough Council No Policy Briefing No Update on Council Events No Debt Management Policy No Fixed Penalty Notices for Litter and Dog Fouling Offences No Mid and East Antrim Tourism, Arts and Culture Interim Plan 2024 - 2027 No Review of Pricing for Booking Parks and Open Spaces No Review of Pricing for Pitch Bookings No Organic Waste Collection – Limitations and Charges No Policies - Raising Concerns Policy, Fraud Policy, Fraud Response Plan No 2 12% of policies developed in 2024/25 had screening completed			
Economic Development			
ED01 : Support the business community to adopt energy efficiency practices and progress towards net zero carbon emissions by 2050			
No. of business mentoring/information/education sessions delivered	Target	Total number of business	No. of business
	Progress	Green	Green

Notes:	1	7 total business engagement sessions completed under MEANZ Business activity between 1 July 2023 and 31 March 2024.	
	2	The MEANZ Business Project, a Fast Followers project funded as part of the Innovate UK Net Zero Living Programme, has been ongoing since July 2023 and is due to be completed in June 2025. This 'MEANZ Business' project has supported both Council and businesses to achieve a higher level of net zero readiness and increased capacity, helping to realise organisational sustainability targets faster and support the national transition towards net zero. The project has included delivery of a tailored programme of information and best practice sharing, including a best practice visit to Birmingham for local SMEs, an eight part Net Zero Insights webinar series with subject experts and company case studies with more than 180 attendees to date, and a six part Net Zero Insights video series, highlighting the work which local companies are doing on their journey to net zero. The project has also delivered on a range of Council led decarbonisation projects including a net zero skills mapping exercise internally, a data and digitalisation pilot project to help inform Council's sustainability efforts and a bespoke renewable technologies capacity building programme for Council's Planning Department. A Carbon Baseline exercise has also been carried out to provide a comprehensive, data-led report on carbon emissions across the Borough, with a particular focus on key industrial sectors such as manufacturing, engineering, construction and energy. This report provides baseline data to help inform future business support programmes delivered by Council as part of our wider integrated Economic Development strategy. A Communication and Engagement Plan has also been developed for the HyTech NI gas blending demonstration project, to inform how best to communicate the project to residents, off-takers and stakeholders. This plan will help to ensure effective engagement and communication throughout the project and has been informed by similar gas blending demonstration projects in Great Britain, building on lessons learned in Keele and Winterton. Finally, a range of industry facing decarbonisation projects have also been supported by the MEANZ Business project, including supporting the CleanTech Collaborative Growth Network companies on their emissions reporting, carbon accounting and decarbonisation challenges and delivery of facilitated training on environmental, social and governance challenges which they are facing. A bespoke Emissions Reporting Toolkit has also been developed and a capacity building programme delivered for local companies on Carbon Awareness and Business Sustainability Essentials, with more than 80 trainees completing training. A best practice visit to Birmingham was undertaken in October 2025 where members of Council's Collaborative Growth Network (CGN) visited four businesses to understand their solutions to decarbonisation, including JCB, SteamHouse, HyDeploy at Keele University and Tyseley Energy Park. This group also met in January 2025 where Council's Acting Climate & Sustainability Manager provided a presentation on developing and Climate & Sustainability Action Plan.	

ED02 : Work in partnership with academia and employers to help shape future Cleantech skills interventions.			
Development of course materials in partnership with academia partners and employers	Target	Production of course	Development of course materials
	Progress	Green	Green
Notes:			
1. L2 and L3 accredited hydrogen course materials developed by NRC. Funded by DIC under MEA LMP. 2. Already completed			
ED03 : Using the Belfast Regional City Deal to drive low carbon growth and transformational change			
Secure funding for i4C innovation and cleantech centre	Target	Yes	Yes
	Actual	Yes	Yes
Notes:			
1. Funding approved by funder for £20m, still awaiting contract for funding, ICT team being appointed and PPQE 2. Contract for Funding received from funder.			
No. of hydrogen trial test-bed projects established	Target	Total number of hydrogen	No. of hydrogen trial testbed
	Progress	Amber	Amber
Notes:			
1. OBC for Hytech project still under appraisal, approval expected late 2024, 3 test bed projects in the process of being established. 2. OBC being appraised by Invest NI. Funding decision expected in Autumn 2026, 3 hydrogen test bed projects being progressed for Ballymena			
ED04 : Explore low carbon initiatives for town centre business/property owners to introduce low carbon practices			
Deliver successful introductions of low carbon initiatives	Target	Number of low carbon	Number of low carbon initiatives
	Progress	Green	Green

Notes:

- 1 Creation of an energy savings guide with useful tips, guidance and support with links to relevant sites and contacts, the guide was disseminated to town centre businesses and also available on pdf format. Roll out of revitalise shop grants, applicants could apply for new efficient external lighting, replacement windows/doors for energy efficiency, Reusable shopping bags given out at town centre events.
- 2 A second phase of shop front improvement grants was rolled out during December 2024 to April 2025, businesses availed of grant support of up to £4999 to introduce energy saving measures in their properties and could apply for new windows and doors. Several businesses took up the opportunity. As part of the town centre marketing campaign, shoppers were issued with reusable shopping bags.

ED05 : Work in partnership with academia and employers to promote career opportunities in the Cleantech sector through a series of school engagement activities

No. of schools engagement events to promote the Cleantech/environment/science sector to schools

Target	Total number of schools	Total number of schools
Progress	Green	Green

Notes:

- 1 Wide programme of schools and company engagement events undertaken including Science Summer School, 13 engagement events delivered relating to sustainability, science, cleantech and environmental aspects.
- 2 30 school engagement events to promote STEAM pathways delivered in 24-25 to 2014 students.

ED06 : Provide business with opportunities to learn new skills and develop a knowledge and education of opportunities within the Cleantech sector

No. of training courses/practical training delivered

Target	15	3
Progress	Green	Green

Notes:

- 1 1 hydrogen training course delivered by NRC in qtr 1 to 10 participants
- 2 2 Training Courses and 18 participants receiving training courses 1. Hydrogen Academy (NRC – 1 intake) only started end March – 8 participants recruited 2. 10 participants have been recruited to cleantech electrical (upskilling) and have completed 12 qualifications so far; Solar Panel Installation Battery Storage EV charging station installation

No. of businesses participating in clean tech initiatives

Target	15	15
Progress	Green	Green

Notes:

- 1 Collaborative Growth Network Meetings held on 12 April, 17 May and 28 June 2024 - attendees included Smiths Engineering, TST, IPC, Ryobi, Moore Concrete, GES, Firmus, Dowds, Clarke, Hydrogen Innovation Initiative event/IDNI Workshop/HyTech NI Board Meeting - Jans Group, Dinsmore, RJ Kerr, TopGlass, Kilwaughter, Port of Larne, Translink. TOTAL = 16.
- 2 Collaborative Growth Network Meetings held on 16 January and 6 March 2025 - attendees included Smiths Engineering, TST, Translink, IPC, Ryobi, Moore Concrete, GES, Firmus, Dowds, Clarke, McCue Fit. Total industry attendees = 19

ED07 : Examine town centre incentives for business/property owners to introduce low carbon practices

No. of successful introductions of low carbon incentives and uptake

Target	Total number of successful	Total number of successful
Progress	Green	Green

Notes:

- 1 • An energy efficiency booklet with top tips for cost saving was disseminated to the town centre businesses in Carrickfergus, Larne and Ballymena. • In addition, under the Town Centre Shop Improvement Grant scheme the town centre businesses were able to avail of grant support of up to £4999 for shop front improvements that included introducing energy saving measures. • 5 applicants availed of the grant support to introduce energy saving measures; 1 business from Larne and 4 from Ballymena. Measures included new windows and new doors
- 2 A second phase of shop front improvement grants for town centre businesses was rolled out during December 2024 to April 2025. Businesses availed of the grant opportunity to introduce energy saving measures, this included double glazing doors and windows.

Harbours and Marinas			
FAC01 : Work in partnership with Ulster Wildlife to re-introduce native oyster beds to Glenarm and Carrickfergus marinas			
No. of oyster beds introduced	Target	Total number of oyster beds	No. of oyster beds introduced
	Progress	Green	Green
Notes:			
1 Oyster nursery in Glenarm Marina developing well and being monitored by Ulster Wildlife. Plans now taking place to replicate this project in Carrickfergus Marina. 2 In addition to the Glenarm Marina Oyster Nursery, Ulster Wildlife also installed a Nursery at Carrickfergus Harbour in			
FAC02 : Introduce natural solutions for oil spills in Harbours and Marinas			
No. of oil spills cleared with polysorb (target 0)	Target	5	2
	Progress	Green	Green
Notes:			
1 Polysorb microbes used on 5 (total) very small oil spills at Carrickfergus Marina, Carrickfergus Harbour and Glenarm Marina. Product very effective when given adequate time. In process of agreeing a contract with Polysorb whereby they will provide a Tier 1 Spill Response for MEA at no upfront cost and at pre-agreed prices. Polysorb were also nominated for an award (see attached email from Andrew Brines). 2 Polysorb microbes used on 2 small oil spills. Currently in conversation with Polysorb Group regarding a framework agreement for their assistance at any large spills in the future.			
Facilities Management and Maintenance			
FAC03 : Support the roll out of the EV infrastructure in the Council estate and across the Borough			
No. of new EV charge points	Target	Total number of EV	No. of new EV charge points
	Progress	Green	Green
Notes:			
1 MEA Energy Manager serving as chair on procurement team for ORCS public charging infrastructure project bringing 127 double chargers across 10 council areas 12 of which to MEA. Has also secured upgrades to 6 ESB double chargers with planning for a further 3. This is on track to deliver 42 public charge points to MEA residents before the end of the next financial year. ORCS tender has now been completed with appointment of contractors to roll out install 25/26. ESB eCar project delivered with addition of a supercharger hub in Larne adding an additional 6 200kWh charge points. 2 18 delivered to date with a further 24 being installed in 25/26			
FAC04 : Improve the energy efficiency of Council buildings to help deliver carbon reduction targets and reduce costs			
Reduction in Carbon Emissions	Target	Total carbon emissions	Reduction in Carbon Emissions
	Progress	Green	Green

- Notes:
- 1

Energy Efficiency projects delivered 23/24 LED lighting - Amphitheatre, Sullatober HRC, all carparks in Larne & all carparks Ballymena, Ballymena HRC & Nursery Energy Projects 2024-25 LED lighting - Seven Towers Leisure Centre, The Showgrounds, People's Park, Carrickfergus car parks
- 2

Objective 1: Improve the energy efficiency of Council buildings to help deliver carbon reduction targets and reduce costs. Target: Deliver 10 LED lighting projects. Completed: Peoples Park external lighting STLC – Pool areas completed (entire centre now upgraded) Showgrounds – Internal lighting (high use areas) completed Showgrounds – External lighting (amenity, bulkheads etc.) completed Carrick Civic centre – Internal (suitable areas) ceiling grid dependant) Carrick Town Hall – Internal (excluding conference room low burn) Civic & Town Hall – External building and courtyard Oakfield CC Planned: Larne LC Pool area (completes) The Braid (various areas) Estate wide EE review including thermal performance investment opportunities- CWI & loft / void insulation. Objective 2: Maximize the use of renewable energy sources to help deliver carbon reduction targets and reduce costs. Target: To deliver 3 solar projects Projects delivered: Portglenone Marina Waveney Rd HRC & Nursery The Braid – put on hold for wider review of Net Zero opportunity - M&E system 2 Solar PV arrays to get addition of co-located storage - Sullatober Transfer (20kWh) – Multi-story car pk (20kWh) 4 new solar systems & 4 new BESS arrays Still finalising sites but will continue with a focus on waste on decarbonisation of waste and possibly parks sites.

FAC05 : Maximise the use of renewable energy sources to help deliver carbon reduction targets and reduce costs

Reduction in Carbon Emissions	Target	Yes	Yes
	Actual	Yes	Yes
		-1	-2
Notes:			
1 Renewable projects delivered 23/24: 200kWp total Solar Arrays - Springwell multi-storey car park, Sullatober Waste Transfer, Larne LC, Carrick LC 24/25 - Solar PV - The Braid, Waveney Rd Household Recycling Centre (HRC) & Nursery, Portglenone Marina, Battery Storage - Sullatober HRC, Springwell St.			
2 all planned projects delivered			

Facilities: M & M and Harbours & Marinas

FAC06 : Embed good practice energy management approaches into facility and building management decisions

Evidence of use of good practice energy management approaches in decision making	Target	Embed all good practice	Evidence of use of good practice
	Progress	Green	Green
		-1	-2
Notes:			
1 Council continues to monitor electricity and energy usage across the estate. In 2023/24 Council has reduced its energy consumption by 9% compared to previous year (and by 18% compared to 2019/20 baseline year) due to energy efficiency measures. 2023/24 energy usage was 21,102,645 kWh compared to 2022/23 energy use of 22,840,333 kWh. Council also continues to use an Invest to Save budget to roll out energy efficiency programmes including LED lighting upgrades and also installation of renewable technologies including solar PV. Battery storage options are also being researched e.g. ECOS Sustainability Hub. Overview: Energy Projects 2023-24 LED lighting - Amphitheatre, Sullatober HRC, all carparks in Larne & all carparks Ballymena, Ballymena HRC & Nursery Solar PV - Springwell multi-storey car park, Sullatober Waste Transfer, Larne LC, Carrick LC Energy Projects 2024-25 LED lighting - Seven Towers Leisure Centre, The Showgrounds, People's Park, Carrickfergus car parks Solar PV - The Braid, Waveney Rd Household Recycling Centre (HRC) & Nursery, Portglenone Marina, Battery Storage - Sullatober HRC, Springwell St. ECOS Sustainability Hub & Ballymacvea Landfill will possibly go into the next year.			
2 Council continues to monitor electricity and energy usage across the estate. In 2024/25 Council has reduced its energy consumption by 2% compared to previous year (and by 16% compared to 2019/20 baseline year) due to energy efficiency measures. 2024/25 energy usage was 20,790,645 kWh compared to 2023/24 energy usage of 21,102,645 kWh. Council also continues to use an Invest to Save budget to roll out energy efficiency programmes including LED lighting upgrades and also installation of renewable technologies including solar PV. Battery storage options are also being researched e.g. ECOS Sustainability Hub.			

FAC07 : Ringfence an 'Invest to Save' budget to ensure sufficient investment in energy efficiency / renewable technologies which in turn reduces financial and carbon costs

No. of projects within 'Invest to Save' portfolio	Target	Total number of projects in	No. of projects which saved in
	Progress	Green	Green
		-1	-3

- Notes:
- 1 £350k secured 23/24 with a further £250k investment for 24/25 further resourcing being considered in 24/25 with Planned increased budget being required as interim and final Net zero targets are approached. 24/25 budget secured with a further £250k for 25/26
 - 2 24/25 - 14 projects delivered

FAC08 : Reduce water consumption

Water usage per square metre of Council estate

Target	Water usage per square metre (m ³ /m ²)	
Progress	Green	Green
	1	2

- Notes:
- 1 Records have been created to inform consumption, which can inform rate of usage per building with extrapolated daily average consumption. This can be broken down to m² but not the best metric to compare buildings due to differing service provision. Consumption trends are falling as a whole across council estate with notable savings when compared to baseline.
 - 2 Water consumption data is incomplete as some of 24/25 billing still to be received but on track to reduce consumption over baseline

No. of measures to reduce water consumption

Target	Total number of measures	Total number of measures
Progress	Green	Green
	1	2

- Notes:
- 1 Water saving technology is now being introduced in capital and minor works projects. Actual number is unknown at this time as being specified as projects arise, but becoming a standard that will be imbedded in policy / strategy
 - 2 4 connections de-energized, 8 water loss events resolved, 2 water saving projects integrated new water saving technologies

Desktop review of water consumption across the estate

Target	Yes	Yes
Actual	Yes	Yes
	1	2

- Notes:
- 1 Desktop review completed, with accompanying report. Recommendation's being considered and acted upon
 - 2 Review completed recommendations being implemented in a phased approach

FAC09 : Deliver an energy efficiency education programme to Council Staff

No. of staff attending online energy efficiency module

Target	Total number of staff	No. of staff attending module
Progress	Green	Green
	1	2

- Notes:
- 1 Training rolled out across online platform with good staff engagement, follow up invites to proceed to pick up remaining staff as mandatory training - cyclical with further reminders planned. Course was designated as compulsory so will continue until all staff have completed training.
 - 2 training mandatory so 100% compliance expected

FAC10 : Asset efficiency - identify Council buildings with poor thermal performance and/or occupancy and propose recommendations for efficiency

No. of buildings identified having poor thermal performance

Target	Total number of buildings with	Total number of buildings with
Progress	Green	Green
	1	2

- Notes:
- 1 All occupied buildings efficiency assessed both in terms of fabric and performance. Analysis of energy consumption and performance scored with building rated in terms of energy and carbon costs.
 - 2 32 building with an energy rating D-F

Reduction in Carbon Emissions

Target	Total carbon emission	Total carbon emissions reduction
Progress	Green	Green
	1	2

		Notes:		1 Carbon reduction in buildings has been achieved through investment in both energy efficiency measures and renewable technology solutions. The resulting carbon reduction over baseline is significant in not only baseline comparison but also year on year comparison.	
				2 Carbon reduction in buildings has been achieved through investment in both energy efficiency measures and renewable technology solutions. The resulting carbon reduction over baseline is significant in not only baseline comparison but also year on year comparison.	
Harbours and Marinas					
FAC11 : Work in partnership with Ulster Wildlife to re-introduce native oyster bed to Glenarm and Carrickfergus marinas					
No. of educational programmes	Target	Total number of educational	No. of educational programmes		
	Progress	Green	Green		
		1	2		
		Notes:			
		1 Ulster Wildlife team have educated volunteers once per week during the weekly clean, count and measurement of the oysters. They have also involved the local Primary School in Glenarm as well as some local Environmental Groups.			
		2 Ulster Wildlife promoted the new Oyster Nursery at Carrickfergus Harbour heavily on Social Media. Ulster Wildlife have various groups at Glenarm Marina and Carrickfergus Harbour on a weekly basis for education, training and to measure and check oysters.			
Number of oyster beds introduced.	Target	Total number of oyster beds	Number of oyster beds		
	Progress	Green	Green		
		1	2		
		Notes:			
		1 1 Oyster Nursery in place and thriving at Glenarm Marina. Location for 2nd Nursery has been decided as Carrickfergus Harbour instead of the Marina. Cages have been fitted but there was an issue with importing the Oyster Larvae from mainland UK. This is now planned for April 2025.			
		2 In addition to the Glenarm Marina Oyster Nursery, Ulster Wildlife also installed a Nursery at Carrickfergus Harbour in February 2025.			
Procurement					
FIN01 : Include environmental and social value weightings in procurement policy					
Employ a social value officer	Target	Yes	Yes		
	Actual	Yes	Yes		
		1			
		Notes:			
		1 A social value officer is has now been employed in Council.			
Evidence of environmental and social value weightings in awards	Target	Yes	Yes		
	Actual	Yes	Yes		
		1			
		Notes:			
		1 This KPI has been put back to 31/03/2025 for 2024/2025.			
FIN02 : Investigate best practice to collate emissions from Council's supply chain					
Evidence of engagement with supply chain	Target	Yes	Yes		
	Actual	No	No		
		1	2		
		Notes:			
		1 This KPI will also have to put back and as per our discussions with Energy Manager should be deleted as we are in no position to agree to this KPI.			
		2 This KPI will also have to put back and as per our discussions with Energy Manager should be deleted as we are in no position to agree to this KPI.			
Building Control					
PBC01 : Administer and enforce relevant building regulations as they relate to fitness of materials and conservation of fuel and power					

No. of inspections of commencement of works in relation to new/replacement boilers/heating systems to all building types	Target Progress Total number of inspections Green Total number of inspections Green	
Notes:	1 992 Building Regulation application commencement inspections for projects with 'heating' or 'boiler' in description fields in the period 2023/2024. 2 864 Building Regulation application commencement inspections for projects with 'heating' or 'boiler' in description fields in the period 2024/2025.	
No. of inspections of commencement of works in relation to upgraded loft insulation/cavity wall insulation to building types	Target Progress Total number of inspections Green Total number of inspections Green	
Notes:	1 767 Building Regulation application commencement inspections for projects with 'insulation' in description fields in the period 2023/2024. 2 942 Building Regulation application commencement inspections for projects with 'insulation' in description fields in the period 2024/2025.	
PBC02 : Actively participate within Northern Ireland Building Control, Building Standards and the Regulations Advisory Committee to lobby for proportionate minimum acceptable standards in respect of energy efficiency, sustainability of building materials and implementation of energy from renewable sources in new, altered or extended building projects.		
Attendance record for Council Building Control Staff	Target Actual 3 3	Target Actual 3 3
Notes:	1 Although participation in 23/24 was minimal due to management personnel changes, Building Control staff have now committed in 24/25 to participate in NI wide forums of BCNI (managers monthly meetings), Property Services Liaison Group meetings (bi-monthly) and a recent working group for the review of Building regulation fees. 2 Engagement with NI wide forums has increased in 2024-2025 with officers actively attending BCNI, addressing (PSLG), postal numbering (LPS) and Building Safety Programme (DfC) meetings throughout the year. Attendance at all of the above is due to continue during 2025-2026. Although the target was to attend 3 meetings, Council officers have attended 12 over this period.	
Log improvements to Building Regulations implemented over time as they relate to energy efficiency, sustainability of building materials and implementation of energy from renewable sources where building work is carried out under Building Regulations	Target Actual Yes Yes	Target Actual Yes Yes
Notes:	1 Although no new Building Regulations have been forthcoming in 23/24 in relation to energy efficiency, a consultation on same was published in late 2023 with a view to issuing new guidance late 2024. This new guidance would be moving NI more in line with GB. Monitoring of the introduction of the new guidance is on-going and when produced, this will be communicated to officers and included in this report next year. 2 There has been no further updates on the information given last year although the Department of Finance (regulation writers) have advised they intend to release some new guidance on updated thermal standards in late 2025. Council has no control over the speed of this legislative amendment other than to encourage The Department when the opportunity arises.	
PBC03 : Utilise the knowledge and experience of Building Control Staff as a consultee in capital projects and facilities maintenance proposals as they relate to Councils building portfolio to reduce energy use		
Numbers of consultation requests made by Council stakeholders e.g., Assets, Capital works, Facilities Maintenance	Target Progress Total number of consultation Green Total number of consultation Green	Target Progress Total number of consultation Green Total number of consultation Green
Notes:	1 3 requests made Capital works - Glenarm Barn & conversion of WCs at Wellington Court Facilities Team - Alterations to GRO building in Larne 2 2 requests made Capital works - Glenarm Whiting Mill, The Braid	
Planning		
PBC04 : Ensure the planning system protects the natural environment, biodiversity and ecosystems (LDP Natural Heritage policies)		

Number of planning applications approved in International, National or Local Sites			
	Target	Total number of applications	Total number of decisions
	Progress	Green	Green
		1	2
Notes:			
1 The LDP was adopted on 16 October 2023, as a result the policies have only been in place for 5 months of this monitoring year and accurate figures for the 23/24 monitoring year cannot be calculated.			
2 No relevant planning applications approved.			
PBC05 : Preserve carbon storage in peatland by applying a presumption against commercial peat extraction (Policy MIN7)			
Number of planning applications approved for commercial peat extraction (target 0)			
	Target	0	0
	Actual	0	0
		0	0
Notes:			
1 The LDP was adopted on 16 October 2023, as a result the policies have only been in place for 5 months of this monitoring year and accurate figures for the 23/24 monitoring year cannot be calculated.			
2 No relevant application approved			
PBC06 : Use the planning system to prevent new developments locking residents into car dependency			
Evidence of established practice			
	Target	1	Evidence of established practice
	Progress	Amber	Green
		1	2
Notes:			
1 The LDP was adopted on 16 October 2023, as a result the policies have only been in place for 5 months of this monitoring year and accurate figures/evidence for the 23/24 monitoring year cannot be calculated.			
2 Planning policy TR5 Active Travel has been adopted through the LDP- Plan Strategy. Without the adoption of the Local Transport Plan which will include details of active travel routes it is not possible to determine the success of this measure.			
PBC07 : Ensure the needs of pedestrians and cyclists are considered in development			
Evidence of established practice			
	Target	1	Evidence of established practice
	Progress	Amber	Green
		1	2
Notes:			
1 The LDP was adopted on 16 October 2023, as a result the policies have only been in place for 5 months of this monitoring year and accurate figures/evidence for the 23/24 monitoring year cannot be calculated.			
2 Policy TR6 requires a new development proposal within an urban area should ensure the needs of pedestrians and cyclists are taken into account. This policy is actively considered in the determination of planning applications.			
PBC08 : Ensure proposals for car parks provide secure, direct and safe access and movement for pedestrians and cyclists (Policy TR7)			
Evidence of established practice			
	Target	1	Evidence of established practice
	Progress	Amber	Green
		1	2
Notes:			
1 The LDP was adopted on 16 October 2023, as a result the policies have only been in place for 5 months of this monitoring year and accurate figures/evidence for the 23/24 monitoring year cannot be calculated.			
2 No applications were approved for stand alone car parks.			
PBC09 : Ensure development proposals have taken account of the efficient use of energy, water and other resources, and where feasible and practicable integrate micro-generation and passive solar design. (Policy GP1e v.)			
Include in draft Plan strategy. and upon adoption in late 2023, become establish practice			
	Target	1	Evidence of established practice
	Progress	Amber	Green
		1	2

- Notes:
- 1 The LDP was adopted on 16 October 2023, as a result the policies have only been in place for 5 months of this monitoring year and accurate figures/evidence for the 23/24 monitoring year cannot be calculated.
 - 2 Policy GP1 e/v. requires proposed development to take account of the efficient use of energy, water and other resources, where feasible and practicable, integrates micro-generation and passive solar design, in order to mitigate against the adverse impacts of climate change. This policy is being considered in the determination of planning applications.

PBC10 : Reduce dependence on fossil fuels and encourage a renewable energy mix (Policy RE1)

Include in draft Plan strategy, and upon adoption in late 2023, monitor the megawatts of renewable energy development approved by Planning Department in reporting year (by renewable energy type).

Target	1	Evidence in combined period
Progress	Amber	Green
	1	2

- Notes:
- 1 The LDP was adopted on 16 October 2023, as a result the policies have only been in place for 5 months of this monitoring year and accurate figures/evidence for the 23/24 monitoring year cannot be calculated.
 - 2 10 planning applications for Solar PV, wind energy and battery storage have been approved. Battery storage has been included, although it may not always be from renewable sources. It is still useful to consider under this measure. Solar PV: 35.5 MW Wind Turbines: 0.725MW Battery Storage: 150MW

PBC11 : Encourage sustainable drainage systems to be included in all development proposals, where feasible and practicable (Policy GP1e v.)

Include in draft Plan strategy, and upon adoption in late 2023, become established practice

Target	1	Evidence in combined period
Progress	Amber	Green
	1	2

- Notes:
- 1 The LDP was adopted on 16 October 2023, as a result the policies have only been in place for 5 months of this monitoring year and accurate figures/evidence for the 23/24 monitoring year cannot be calculated.
 - 2 The adoption of policy GP1e v has encouraged the use of sustainable drainage in development proposals. To date this is mainly through hard SuDS.

PBC12 : Ensure development proposals within areas of surface water flood risk include sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) as the preferred means of drainage (Policy FRD4)

% Planning permissions granted within areas of surface water flood risk which include SuDS measures

Target	Total % of planning	Total % of planning permissions
Progress	Amber	Green
	1	2

- Notes:
- 1 The LDP was adopted on 16 October 2023, as a result the policies have only been in place for 5 months of this monitoring year and accurate figures/evidence for the 23/24 monitoring year cannot be calculated.
 - 2 Of planning permissions where FRD4 is engaged 91% incorporate sustainable drainage (SuDS) measures in development proposals.

PBC13 : Ensure proposals for surface level car parks include sustainable drainage (SuDS) (Policy TR7)

% Planning permissions granted for surface level car parks which include SuDS measures

Target	Total % of planning	Total % of planning permissions
Progress	Amber	Green
	1	2

- Notes:
- 1 The LDP was adopted on 16 October 2023, as a result the policies have only been in place for 5 months of this monitoring year and accurate figures/evidence for the 23/24 monitoring year cannot be calculated.
 - 2 No standalone applications for surface level car parks were approved.

PBC14 : Identify opportunities for 'soft SuDS' solutions to be included as Key Site Requirements in housing and economic zonings in the LPP

On adoption of the Local Policies Plan, monitor % planning permissions granted on zonings in line with the Key Site Requirement to include soft SuDS measures

Target	Total % of permissions	Total % planning permissions
Progress	—	Green
	1	2

- Notes: 1 This target relates to LPP zonings - it cannot be monitored until the LPP has been adopted.
- 2 On adoption of the Local Policies Plan, monitor % planning permissions granted on zonings in line with the Key Site Requirement to include soft SuDS measures

PBC15 : Ensure no development on a site at risk from flooding or where it would cause or exacerbate flooding elsewhere (Policy GP1d v.)

Include in draft Plan strategy, and upon adoption in late 2023, become established practice

Target	Yes	Yes
Actual	Yes	Yes

- Notes: 1 PBC12 considers this to some extent under planning policy FRD4. Policy GP1 d) is considered in the assessment of planning applications and PMC15 has been met.

PBC16 : Consider development proposals on floodplains only by exception (Policy FRD1)

No. of Planning permissions granted on floodplains against policy (target 0)

Target	0	0
Progress	Green	Green

- Notes: 1 No Planning applications were granted on floodplains against the policy. 8 planning applications approved where the site boundary intersects the flood plain. There were considered by Council to meet an exception to policy, were considered acceptable by Rivers Agency or were allowed at appeal by the PAC due to location of built development outside the flood plain.

PBC17 : Require development proposals >1ha or >25 units to provide public open space as an integral part of the development (at least 10% of site area) (Policy OSL4)

The number of planning permissions granted that meet the public open space requirements of Policy OSL4

Target	Total planning permissions	Total planning permissions
Progress	Amber	Green

- Notes: 1 The LDP was adopted on 16 October 2023, as a result the policies have only been in place for 5 months of this monitoring year and accurate figures for the 23/24 monitoring year cannot be calculated.
- 2 5 qualifying planning applications were approved - all meeting the open space requirement.

Parks Development

PDV01 : Invest in nature-based solutions that work for towns making the council estate and public realm more climate change ready through enhancing green spaces, urban greening and adaptable planting regimes.

Increase hectares of publicly accessible land managed sustainably

Target	Total hectares increased	Total hectares increased
Progress	Green	Green

- Notes: 1 Conservation Grazing Plan implemented for Ecos Nature park (19ha) to allow for ongoing sustainable management of this flood plain site. Ahoghill Nature Park - regeneration of wet woodland 0.1ha Creation of Urban Forest - Ballymena involving local volunteers 0.1ha
- 2 Larne town Park - Nature recovery Plan developed.

No. of community projects supported

Target	Total number of community	Total number of community
Progress	Green	Green

- Notes: 1 1 Community project supported - Ballymena Urban forest
- 2 2 schools guided through the Schools Growing club.

PDV02 : Protect and restore, where possible, peatlands and degraded soils on the Council estate or in partnership across the Borough

No. of hectares of peatland restored

Target	Total hectares of peatland	Total hectares of peatland
Progress	Green	Green

Notes:		1 8ha restored at Keeran moss 2 No further opportunities for peatland restoration.	
Carbon emissions reduction from peatland and restored soils	Target	Total carbon emission	Total carbon emission reduced
	Progress	Green	Green
Notes:		1 Keeran Moss is the Council's only peatland site. Works have been completed to restore this habitat however calculations are not yet available to measure carbon store. 2 as above	
PDV03 : Develop a Tree and Woodland Management Strategy to include tree planting, tree health maintenance and woodland management to increase tree cover across the borough to enhance biodiversity, increase carbon store and support ecosystem services			
No. of trees planted on Council land	Target	2000	1001
	Actual	2000	1001
Notes:		1 Total of 2000 trees planted on council land. 2 Tree Planting: Private Individuals – 48,680 Community groups – 3,466 Schools – 1,035 TOTAL – 53,491	
No. of trees planted on public & private land through MEABC support	Target	58010	18591
	Actual	58510	18591
Notes:		1 Tree Planting: Private Individuals – 48,680 Community groups – 3,466 Schools – 1,035 TOTAL – 53,491	
PDV04 : Support local communities to implement sustainable projects in local areas.			
No. of achieved bronze level sustainable food places across borough	Target	Total number of achieved	Any further updates
	Progress	Amber	Green
Notes:		1 While the Council have made significant progress in terms of sustainable food, with community fridges across the borough, the bronze level award was not achieved. However, it is hoped that there will be scope to achieve this within the Plan lifetime. Opportunities may exist with Council's Economic Development team through Peace Plus funding to deliver a new 'Plot to Plate' programme. 2 Project now completed.	
Achieve gold in medium term	Target	1	Any further updates
	Progress	Amber	Amber
Notes:		1 Although Council did not achieve Bronze level in 2023/24, works will progress to obtain this within the lifetime of this Plan. Following this, Council will hope to be in a position to achieve Gold level in the medium term (2025/25 - 27). 2 Although Council did not achieve Bronze level in 2023/24, works will progress to obtain this within the lifetime of this Plan. Following this, Council will hope to be in a position to achieve Gold level in the medium term (2025/25 - 27).	
No. of community fridges across the Borough	Target	Total number of community	Total number of community
	Progress	Green	Green
Notes:		1 5 fridges 2 5 fridges still operating.	
No. of supported opportunities for sustainable community projects.	Target	Total number of opportunities	Total number of opportunities
	Progress	Green	Green
Notes:		1 allotments in Larne, Carrick and Greenisland. community garden at Harryville. 2 New community opportunity established in Glynri	

PDV05 : Work in partnership with DfI to encourage walking and cycling through investment in additional infrastructure and creation of linkage opportunities

No. of km of new multi-trails

Target

Total km of new greenways

Total km of new greenway

Progress

Green

Green

Notes:

- 1 Bracknamuckley Multi-use trail opened encouraging local outdoor recreation opportunities.
- 2 Funding secured and planning prepared for Cullybackey to Galgorm greenway. When completed the path will provide a greenway of 3km to link to existing paths at 1.5km at each end.

PDV06 : Update the Cycle Routes Masterplan and include walking routes to promote walking and cycling and promoting this across the Borough

Delivery of update Masterplan.

Target

Total km of new greenway

Total km of new greenway

Progress

Green

Green

Notes:

- 1 bracknamuckley Multi-use trails

PDV07 : Identify funding opportunities and grants available for outdoor activities to improve health and wellbeing of residents within the Borough

No. of outdoor initiatives

Target

Total number of outdoor

Total number of outdoor

Progress

Green

Green

Notes:

- 1 • Support for red squirrel conservation programmes at Carnfunnock Country Park. • Fairtrade status for the Borough retained. • Total of 5 community fridges providing important resource for those who need it and a facility for businesses and local growers to reduce food waste. • 3 x Green Flag awards retained (Eden Allotments Gardens, Carnfunnock Country Park, Ecos Nature Park). • 1 x Green Flag community award retained for Shellinghill Park & Millennium Walk in Cullybackey. • 3 x Seaside awards retained (Carnlough, Ballygally, Browns Bay). • Success at Ulster in Bloom 2023 with Cullybackey securing first prize in the large village category and selected for entry into Britain in Bloom 2024. • 3 x schools completed Forest School programme (6 sessions per school = 18, approximately 80 pupils engaged). • 3 x schools completed Schools Growing Club programme (6 sessions per school = 18, approximately 80 pupils engaged). • 3 programmes ran to engage people with their local environment involving 194 participants: o Natural connections Photography o Health oceans, healthy minds o Plot to plate o 79 events held engaging with over 2000 participants. • 218 active allotment holders.
- 2 149 outdoor events

Number of playpark investment projects

Target

1

4

Actual

1

4

Notes:

- 1 5 replacement play parks completed
- 2 2 refurbished play parks, 1 partial refurb and 1 new play park installed.

Number of events of held to increase usage of parks, open space and walks.

Target

Total number of events

Total number of events

Progress

Green

Green

Notes:

- 1 Bracknamuckley forest
- 2 149 events engaging with 6666 participants

PDV08 : Work with Translink, Sustrans and other key stakeholders to provide education and participation initiatives to encourage active, public and shared modes of transport

No. of educational initiatives to encourage cycling

Target

Total number of educational

Total number of educational

Progress

Green

Green

Notes:

- 1 Council officers have continual, ongoing engagement with DfI, Sustrans etc to identify opportunities to deliver education initiatives. Plans are being prepared for engagement opportunities in 2024/25, which will be dependent on resource and budget.

Environmental Health

PUB01 : Air quality - monitor and review air quality in accordance with the NI Air Quality Strategy

Compliance through an updated Air Quality Action Plan	Target	Yes	Yes
	Actual	Yes	Yes

Notes:

1

Air Quality was monitored across the Borough and reviewed against NI Air Quality Objectives for 2023/2024 period.

2

Air Quality was monitored across the Borough and reviewed against NI Air Quality Objectives for 2024/2025 period.

PUB02 : Cleanliness - continue to deliver and shape effective enforcement and education on Clean Neighbourhood matters through collaborative practices

No. of complaints received in relation to litter, fly tipping and dog foul each year.	Target	Total number of complaints	Total number of complaints
	Progress	Green	Green

Notes:

1

Litter complaints 41 , Fly Tipping complaints 323 and Dog Foul complaints 217. These figures may contain duplicate reports of the same incident and not all complaints will be validated upon investigation.

2

In terms of resident complaint reporting re: fly-tipping and littering, we've seen a steady decrease in levels (2024-25 = Reports of fly tipping: 294, Complaint substantiated on investigation: 143, Reports of Litter: 48, Complaint substantiated on investigation: 16).

PUB03 : Raise awareness of energy efficiency measures and other support to tackle fuel poverty in the borough

No. of initiatives to promote energy efficiency and address fuel poverty	Target	Total number of initiatives to	Total number of initiatives to
	Progress	Green	Green

Notes:

1

The EH Service delivered 37 awareness talks/events(@ 630 attendees), 6 slow cooker sessions (124 attendees), 13 air fryer sessions (263 attendees) and 4 schools (96 pupils) completed the Energy Detectives Programme. In addition energy efficiency information was provided in each quarterly ezine, circulated widely throughout the borough.

2

292 Energy Efficiency referrals, 71 households referred for fuel poverty grant assistance, 319 households referred/signposted for general support and assistance. 251 home visits or 1:1 support, Almost 1500 interactions. 40 – no. of events attended or talks given (not including cooking sessions), 6 social media posts, 4 community e-zines. Provided 376 keep warm packs to those struggling to keep warm. Provided low cost energy efficiency measures to households such as radiator foils, chimney balloons, heated throws, etc. Households receiving incentives: Chimney balloons 39 Draught excluders 29 Radiator panels 67 Heated throws 16 Draught proofing 7 Rechargeable hot water bottle 3 Provided efficient electric heaters on loan to households with broken boilers, no heating system or inability to afford oil/gas - 6 households benefited. Administered the SVP oil stamp savings scheme within Carrick and Larne area – over £15,500 stamps sold, 3 slow cooker sessions: 36 attendees. 20 air fryer session - 5 interactive, 15 demonstrations: 357 attendees. 3 community based groups borrowed our sewing machine resource. Energy Detectives: 3 schools with 92 pupils completed programme. Multiply: Energy efficiency within the kitchen highlighted as part of 3 x 2 session programmes developed under the Multiply initiative. These highlighted cost savings from switching to more energy efficient cooking appliances.

Public Protection, Health and Wellbeing

PUB04 : Implement actions within Council's Adaptation Plan to reduce the impacts of extreme weather and improve health and well being

No. of initiatives to enhance and promote the benefits of green open spaces and the landscape quality	Target	Total number of initiatives to enhance and promote the benefits of
	Progress	Green

Notes:	1 • Conservation grazing programme implemented at Keeran Moss peatland as per conservation management plan. The enables sustainable management of this important habitat and reduces the need for mechanical management. • 58,610 trees planted on public land 2023/24. • Support for red squirrel conservation programmes at Carnfunnock Country Park. • Fairtrade status for the Borough retained. • Total of 5 community bridges providing important resource for those who need it and a facility for businesses and local growers to reduce food waste. • 3 x Green Flag awards retained (Eden Allotments Gardens, Carnfunnock Country Park, Ecos Nature Park). • 1 x Green Flag community award retained for Shellinghill Park & Millennium Walk in Cullybackey. • 3 x Seaside awards retained (Camlough, Ballygally, Browns Bay). • Success at Ulster in Bloom 2023 with Cullybackey securing first prize in the large village category and selected for entry into Britain in Bloom 2024. • 3 x schools completed Forest School programme (6 sessions per school = 18, approximately 80 pupils engaged). • 3 x schools completed Schools Growing Club programme (6 sessions per school = 18, approximately 80 pupils engaged). • 3 programmes ran to engage people with their local environment involving 194 participants: o Natural connections Photography o Health oceans, healthy minds o Plot to plate o 79 events held engaging with over 2000 participants. • 218 active allotment holders.		
No. of community Resilience Groups / Initiatives			
	Target	Total number of community	Total number of community
	Progress	Green	Green
Notes:	1 There are currently 4 CRGs in the borough supported by officers. During the period, reference to the CR pilot helped to broaden the concept of CR with these groups beyond extremer weather, which had been the initial focus.		
	2 Plans are being developed to bring together a broader Community Resilience Network across the borough based on the MEA Community Resilience Toolkit and the experience and knowledge of the existing Community Resilience Groups. This will increase the number of Groups/initiatives focused on resilience across MEABC.		
PUB05 : Work with multi-agency partners to increase capacity to respond to severe weather events and to increase community resilience			
No. of multi-agency response interventions delivered as a result of severe weather			
	Target	Total number of multi-agency	Total number of multi-agency
	Progress	Green	Green
Notes:	1 Whilst there were no requirement for a multi-agency response over the past 12 months (zero incidents) the EH Service responded to reports of flooding in line with the SEFA scheme. Council was advised that the SEFA was open on 7 occasions over the period. NB. One of these relates to period 15.03.23 to 24.04.23. Officers completed 60 flooding assessments of which 9 were deemed to be eligible.		
	2 The year 2024/25 saw 7 named storms. Kathleen (6 - 7 April 2024); Lillian (22 - 23 August 2024); Ashley (20-21 October 2024); Bert (22-25 November 2024); Conall (27 November 2024); Darragh (6-7 December 2024) and Eowyn (24 January 2025). NI Civil Contingencies Severe Weather Framework (revised December 2024) sets out the activation triggers for a multi agency response. Medium to High impact warnings represent risk to life situations and call for a range of meetings – LIAC (Local Impact Assessment Call); TCG (Tactical Co-ordinating Group x 3 local areas) and SCG (Strategic Co-ordinating Group – regional) and RCGs (Recovery Co-ordinating Group). 4 of the 7 storms reached the medium or high impact (risk to life) threshold activating the full Multi Agency Response. The response begins with meetings in the run up to the storm, during and for some time after depending on the impact eg Power outages, clean up, trees down etc. Council staff play key roles in the all of the response groups as well as internal MEA response plans and activities. Storm Eowyn was described by the Met Office as an historic event with a mix of yellow, amber and red warnings with medium and high impacts. Peak wind gusts of 70-80mph inland and 106mph on Rathlin Island were recorded causing very dangerous conditions with widespread disruption and significant impacts. For the first time since its inception a Government Alert warning was issued to all mobile phones. In total 285,000 households and businesses were impacted by power cuts over a protracted time period of up to and over 10 days. NIE deployed over 1550 staff and contractors, bringing in additional support from other countries. Department for Infrastructure cleared over 2,300 reported obstructions, including hundreds on motorways and class A, B and C roads. Fibris reported about 6,000 customers out of service due to confirmed fibre faults affecting internet and connectivity. NI Water reported 7321 customers with no water. Council staff worked tirelessly clearing and making safe parks and open spaces as well as humanitarian assistance centres and visits as residents were impacted by lack of power and some cases water.		
PUB06 : Support communities to build local resilience through the creation of community lead resilience hubs including the ability to respond to climate change risks			
Complete the RCRG Resilience Pilot with selected communities			
	Target	Yes	Yes
	Actual	Yes	Yes

Notes:		1 This work was facilitated by consultants and concluded successfully.	
		2 This work was facilitated by consultants and concluded successfully.	
Contribute learning to Regional Resilience Toolkit	Target	Yes	Yes
	Actual	Yes	Yes
Notes:		1 Regular updates on the MEA pilot were provided to both the second pilot and the wider Regional Group. This resulted in requests for presentations to RCRG and the All Ireland Conference.	
		2 Regular updates on the MEA pilot were provided to both the second pilot and the wider Regional Group. This resulted in requests for presentations to RCRG and the All Ireland Conference.	
Implementation of RCRG Regional Resilience Toolkit across the Borough and linking with multi-agency partners	Target	Yes	Yes
	Actual	No	Yes
Notes:		1 There was not been sufficient time in the period to undertaken anything other than development and community engagement. Implementation needs to take account of ongoing developments in wider policy direction and funding.	
		2 Funding has been secured to develop a Community Resilience Network. This will involve at least 4 workshops based around the community resilience model and toolkit to carried out on a co-production basis with communities across the borough.	
PUB07 : Ensure that climate change risks are appropriately addressed within our risk management and business continuity process			
Every services area's Business Continuity Plan includes climate change threats	Target	Yes	Yes
	Actual	No	Yes
Notes:		1 Ongoing engagement with all service areas to continually review Business Continuity Plans. Captured during Emergency Planning Implementation Group (EPIG) meetings throughout the year. Further attention needed to ensure plans reflect climate change threats. ArcPro Climate Project work ongoing between Environmental Education Officer and GIS Officer to identify assets / facilities most at risk from extreme weather-related impacts. Ongoing learnings from regional group RCRG and review of recent case studies e.g. Newry flooding.	
		2 Climate Change threats have been incorporated into Business Continuity Planning in two ways. 1) EPIG has introduced a discussion framework to ensure MEABC is prepared for response and recovery and 2) Climate Change and Severe Weather is one of the threats contained in the Business Impact Assessment process completed by each Service area and Department. Through EPIG the GIS ArcPro Climate system has been used to facilitate scenario based exercises using the Ecos Park and Centre as a basis for the development of Council's Severe Weather Plan. A task and finish group has been set up to explore the risks and ensure resilience measures are incorporated into the Severe Weather, Business Continuity and Emergency Plans.	
Tourism			
TOUR01 : Develop a localised Sustainable Tourism Strategy based on Tourism NI's new strategy			
Delivery of new strategy	Target	Preparation of new strategy	Preparation of new strategy
	Progress	Green	Green
Notes:		1 Interim Plan developed in-house by the Tourism, Arts & Culture team with approval from SMT and the Neighbourhood & Communities Committee in May 2024	
		2 Budget secured through rate setting for 2025/26 to develop a new sustainable Tourism Strategy. DfE have now launched the 10 Year Tourism Vision & Action Plan which will be used to develop the MEA approach. The strategy will be developed in 2025/2026 with a view to launching in 2027.	
TOUR02 : Complete an audit of local businesses to assess sustainability credentials and share best practice			
No. of businesses engaged	Target	Total number of businesses	Total number of businesses
	Progress	Amber	Amber

Notes:	Target	Total number of businesses	Total number of businesses
	Progress	Amber	Amber
1 The audit of businesses was delayed as the new Tourism NI sustainability programme has not yet been launched and any audit would need to capture detail relevant to the proposed accreditation / approach. This will be developed further in 2024/25 and is an ongoing process.			
2 Pilot scheme from TNI is currently on hold. Questionnaire for MEA businesses has been developed by remains in draft until the wider direction of travel and key priorities have been agreed.			

TOUR03 : Develop a new outreach and support programme to engage with local businesses to promote sustainability			
No. of businesses engaged in the programme	Target	Total number of businesses	Total number of businesses
	Progress	Amber	Amber
1 Business support will be developed around learnings gathered from the audit to ensure support is meaningful. This is being developed in 2024/25 and therefore the process is ongoing.			
2 Audit on hold pending Tourism NI outcomes. MEA Tourism Officers continue to promote sustainable business practices and industry tool kits via the quarterly ezine updates to industry.			

TOUR04 : Increase awareness of free to use sustainability tool kits			
No. of communications about the sustainable toolkit	Target	Total number of comm.	Total number of comm.
	Progress	Green	Green
1 Regular ezine content is issued to the Tourism and Hospitality database, promoting sustainable events, toolkits and webinars.			
2 Quarterly updates are issued to database, sustainable news is shared through this platform as it becomes available.			

TOUR05 : Encourage the hospitality industry by encouraging compostable packaging, reducing single-use plastic			
No. of initiatives to promote awareness and provide information on alternatives to single-use plastics	Target	Total number of initiatives	Total number of initiatives
	Progress	Green	Green
1 Ongoing communication through business database.			
2 Any new or updated industry guidance shared through the industry ezine issued quarterly by the Tourism Marketing Team.			

Waste Management, Parks, Cemeteries and Open Spaces

WMO01 : Invest in nature-base solutions that work for towns making the council estate and public realm more climate change ready through enhancing green spaces, urban greening, and adaptable planting regimes			
Removal of use of peat compost from parks and open spaces	Target	Yes	Yes
	Actual	Yes	Yes
1 Peat compost only being used in the Nursery plant production, there are no current alternatives for this.			
% reduction use in pesticides	Target	Total % reduction, annually	Total % reduction, annually
	Progress	Green	Green
1 Ongoing reduction year on year. Use of chemicals limited to cemeteries. Cemetery sprays reduced from 3 to 2 per year. In 2024, introducing sustainable land management pilot alongside DfL. Pollinator pilot will extend into sustainable management of verges.			

Parks, Cemeteries and Open Spaces

WMO02 : In house growing of plants (nursery) to allow sustainable planting			
All plants grown in house	Target	Yes	Yes
	Actual	Yes	Yes

Notes: 1 All bedding, Trough and basket plants grown inhouse for Mid Antrim. We also supply plants to Carrick and Lame

Waste Management, Parks, Cemeteries and Open Spaces

500

WMO03 : Develop opportunities for promoting and encouraging sustainable water management

No. of reduction of water schedules and water intensive planting schemes across parks and green spaces

Target	Total number of reduction of	Total number of (reduction) of
Progress	Green	Green
	1	

Notes: 1 Watering scheme brought back in-house to ensure greater control over watering schedules and practices to conserve resources. Planting schemes reviewed annually and reduced year on year.

Investigate alternative sustainable water supply opportunities

Target	Yes	Yes
Actual	Yes	Yes
	1	

Notes: 1 Use of water butts to supply rain water on sites where there is no water supply.

Operations

WMO04 : Decarbonise small fleet (<7.5 T) by 2030

Completion of pilot scheme, trialing leasing options

Target	Completion of HVO trial over	Completion of an HVO trial
Progress	Amber	Amber
	1	2

Notes: 1 Council is running an HVO trial over Summer/Autumn 2024. Nat Woodside, Transport Manager, has secured testing equipment from Belfast City Council, so pre, during and post-testing of tail pipe emissions can be undertaken. Following the trial, a report will be taken to the Environment and Economy Committee to present results.
2 Council started a trial of HVO in November 2024 and to date have used 9,272 litres in various Council vehicles. Figures provided by Nicholl Fuels would suggest that conventional gas oil (white diesel) would produce an average 2.3kg of carbon per litre, whereas HVO will reduce this figure by 90%. In essence, Council have reduced fuel-derived carbon emissions from 21,235.6kg (ie using diesel) to 2,123.5kg through the use of 9,272 litres of HVO used this financial year. Unfortunately, the emissions testing equipment was stolen from Sullatobier Waste Depot in December 2024 and the trial stopped. These figures are based on industry standards and statistics.

% reduction in carbon emissions from Council fleet annually

Target	Total carbon emission	Total carbon emission reduction
Progress	Green	Green
	1	2

Notes: 1 Fleet fuel emissions for 2022/23 were 723,504 litres, 7220570 kWh and therefore 1,754.3 CO2e emissions. Fleet fuel emissions for 2023/24 were 698,433 litres, 6906953 kWh and therefore 1,852.8 CO2e emissions. This demonstrates a 3.6% reduction in fuel usage and overall a 4.3% reduction in carbon emissions (CO2e).
2 Fleet fuel emissions for 2023/24 were 698,433 litres, 6906953 kWh and therefore 1,852.8 tCO2e emissions. Fleet fuel emissions for 2024/25 were 688,922 litres and 1,731 tCO2e emissions. Council also trialed 9,272 litres of HVO fuel which saved Council 2,123.5kg of carbon. Overall, for 2024/25 Council's fleet fuel-derived carbon emissions = 1,733 tCO2e emissions. This demonstrates a 239 litres reduction in fuel usage and overall a 40 tonnes (or 2%) reduction in carbon emissions (CO2e).

WMO05 : Trialing new technology to decarbonise the fleet

No. of completed trials

Target	Total number of trials/trials	Total number of completed trials
Progress	Amber	Amber
	1	2

Notes: 1 Council is currently undertaking a HVO trial across a range of fleet (Summer/Autumn 2024). Results will be presented to Elected Members. Based on the success, the aim will be to procure HVO for all vehicles, going forward. This will require a budget allocation in the 2025/25 budget. Council is also in discussions with Michelin regarding Connected Fleet telematics. See attached report.
2 Council have procured a gas analyser and are in the process of getting it commissioned, and staff trained to be ready for use May 2025. The aim would be to have a suite data available for large HGV vehicles November and to have a comparative data on HVO for May.

No. of new technology rolled out	Target	Total number of new	Total number of new
	Progress	Green	Green
		-1	-1
Notes:	1 In October 2023, Council rolled out Route Optimisation. This rationalised the existing bin collections route with the aim to reduce the total number of vehicles / staff needed, and to reduce both fuel and carbon emissions. Route optimisation was successfully rolled out. Ongoing research is being undertaken by the Transport Manager to see what other technologies are available to help decarbonise the fleet. Hydrogen, hybrid and EV are being considered. The Transport Manager recently joined a new Fleet Decarbonisation Working Group made up of representatives from all NI Councils.		
	2 Ongoing research is being undertaken by the Transport Manager to see what other technologies are available to help decarbonise the fleet. Hydrogen, hybrid and EV are being considered. The Transport Manager continues to attend a Fleet Decarbonisation Working Group made up of representatives from all NI Councils. The Transport Manager and Acting Climate and Sustainability Manager met with H2Aberdeen 28.01.2025 to understand how Aberdeen Council have rolled out hydrogen options for Council fleet. They adopted a hybrid approach which means fleet can operate on diesel or hydrogen. Further discussions are being held post-Easter 2025 to progress this further.		
% in reduction in carbon emissions from Council fleet annually	Target	Total carbon emission	Total carbon emission reduction
	Progress	Green	Green
		-1	-1
Notes:	1 Council is working with DfI on the development of the new Eastern Transport Plan, which incorporates MEA. This is the ground-level delivery plan which stems from the DfI Transport Strategy 2035. From this Strategy, the Transport Manager and the Environmental Education Officer are developing a new MEA Transport Strategy, which will incorporate elements of the existing MEA Fleet Strategy 2023-2027. Through the Baltor system, officers are able to interrogate fleet fuel usage throughout the year. 2019/20 (baseline) = 714,228 litres, 7,120,853 kWh, 1,853 tCO2e 2020/21 = 713,089 litres, 7,102,366 kWh, 1,816 tCO2e 2021/22 = 766,639 litres, 7,651,057 kWh, 1,926 tCO2e 2022/23 = 723,504 litres, 7,220,570 kWh, 1,851 tCO2e 2023/24 = 698,433 litres, 6,906,953 kWh, 1,773 tCO2e Council set an objective within the ISO14001 Environmental Management System in 2023/24 to reduce fleet fuel by 5% each year. 2023/24 saw a 3.6% reduction, so further savings will be needed in 2024/25 and 2025/26.		
	2 Fleet fuel emissions for 2023/24 were 698,433 litres, 6,906,953 kWh and therefore 1,852.8 tCO2e emissions. Fleet fuel emissions for 2024/25 were 688,922 litres and 1,731 tCO2e emissions. Council also trialled 9,272 litres of HVO fuel which saved Council 2,123.5kg of carbon. Overall, for 2024/25 Councils fleet fuel-derived carbon emissions = 1,733 tCO2e emissions. This demonstrates a 239 litres reduction in fuel usage and overall a 40 tonnes (or 2%) reduction in carbon emissions (CO2e).		

Waste Management			
WMO06 : Implement route optimisation software across waste collection services			
% reduction in carbon emissions from Council fleet annually	Target	Total carbon emission	Total carbon emission reduction
	Progress	Green	Green
		-1	-1
Notes:	1 Through the Baltor system, officers are able to interrogate fleet fuel usage throughout the year, 2019/20 (baseline) = 714,228 litres, 7,120,853 kWh, 1,853 tCO2e 2020/21 = 713,089 litres, 7,102,366 kWh, 1,816 tCO2e 2021/22 = 766,639 litres, 7,651,057 kWh, 1,926 tCO2e 2022/23 = 723,504 litres, 7,220,570 kWh, 1,851 tCO2e 2023/24 = 698,433 litres, 6,906,953 kWh, 1,773 tCO2e Council set an objective within the ISO14001 Environmental Management System in 2023/24 to reduce fleet fuel by 5% each year. 2023/24 saw a 3.6% reduction, so further savings will be needed in 2024/25 and 2025/26. 2 2023/24 carbon = 1,773 tCO2e 2024/25 carbon = 1,733 tCO2e Overall, a total of 40 tonnes of CO2e savings (2%) compared to previous year.		
No. of drivers trained in Eco Driving	Target	Total number of drivers	Total number of drivers trained in
	Progress	Green	Green
		-1	-1
Notes:	1 Eco Driver Training (as part of CPC training modules): 2023/24 74 staff trained, 2024/24 61 staff trained, with 9 remaining (before end of August 2024) – see attached CPC Module outline (spreadsheet and PDF). 2 Eco Driver Training continues to be rolled out. 190 drivers through CPC have completed over 2024/25. Telematics – now rolled out across all MEA fleet.		
Operations			

WMO07 : Implement circular economy principles in tyre management

% reduction in carbon emissions from responsible tyre management

Target	Total carbon emission	Total carbon emission savings
Progress	Green	Green

Notes:

- 1 Over 2023/24 Council has reduced carbon emissions through the Michelin tyre contract by 9.6 tonnes CO2e.
- 2 Over the calendar year of 2024, Council saved 10 tonnes of carbon through the Michelin Sustainable Tyre contract - see attached certificate.

% reduction in tyre purchase

Target	Total % reduction (t) tyre	Total % reduction (t) tyre
Progress	Green	Green

Notes:

- 1 Through the Michelin Sustainable Tyre Contract, Council reduced the amount of new tyre material purchase by 4.4 tonnes.
- 2 Through this contract, Council has reduced tyre purchase by 4.5 tonnes of rubber.

Waste Management**WMO08 : Ensure the sustainable management of waste including the promotion of the waste hierarchy and circular economy**

% increase of recycling rate of municipal waste

Target	Total % change in recycling municipal waste
Progress	Amber

Notes:

- 1 2023-24 year end recycling performance = 50.64%. Council continues to promote reuse (via a range of waste initiatives including the MEA School Uniform Scheme, MEA Christmas Toy Container, MEA Community Re-Paint Scheme, contract with Habitat for Humanity who sell on low-cost DIY items diverted from landfill). Council also promotes recycling through dedicated communication campaigns, in-school talks, community group talks etc. Council also responded to a range of DAERA-led consultations on the circular economy and waste minimisation.

WMO09 : Standardise household waste and recycling collection models and commit to making recycling easier for our community

% increase of recycling rate of municipal waste

Target	Total % change in recycling	Total % change in recycling rate
Progress	Amber	Amber

Notes:

- 1 2023/24 year end recycling = 50.64%. Council has responded to a significant DAERA-led consultation on Rethinking our Resources (June 2024) which included proposals for standardising kerbside waste/recycling collections. Council commissioned Waste Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to undertake a assessment of 4 models of kerbside collections including co-mingled, source-segregated options alongside restricting residual. Council officers hosted a special Waste Harmonisation meeting with Elected Members to present options. Director of Operations advises to wait until publication of consultation response to inform decision on which option to adopt.
- 2 2024/25 year end recycling = 50.67%. Council has responded to a significant DAERA-led consultation on Rethinking our Resources (June 2024) which included proposals for standardising kerbside waste/recycling collections. Council commissioned Waste Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to undertake a assessment of 4 models of kerbside collections including co-mingled, source-segregated options alongside restricting residual. Council officers hosted a special Waste Harmonisation meeting with Elected Members to present options. One, unified model was proposed in March 2025 and was approved by the Waste Harmonisation Sub Committee and Full Council. This model is the fully co-mingled blue bin (240L) to be collected by staff in-house. It is anticipated the full roll out will be completed over 2026/27.

WMO10 : Meet the 55% recycling rate target of municipal waste by 2025 within the Waste (Circular Economy) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2020

% increase in the recycling rate of municipal waste

Target	55%	55%
Actual	50.64%	50.67%

Notes:

- 1 2023/24 year end recycling = 50.64%. However without a major waste service change/intervention, it is unlikely that 55% by 2025 will be achieved. Recycling performance has increased gradually over the last number of years, however incremental increases will be harder to achieve without a policy reform / change e.g. review of Food Waste Regulations, adoption of Common Collections Guidance with a core set of materials, and the implementation at waste harmonisation for waste/recycling collections. This is being progressed with DAERA.
- 2 2024/25 year end recycling = 50.67%. Council has responded to a significant DAERA-led consultation on Rethinking our Resources (June 2024) which included proposals for standardising kerbside waste/recycling collections. Council commissioned Waste Resources Action Programme (WRAP) to undertake a assessment of 4 models of kerbside collections including co-mingled, source-segregated options alongside restricting residual. Council officers hosted a special Waste Harmonisation meeting with Elected Members to present options. One, unified model was proposed in March 2025 and was approved by the Waste Harmonisation Sub Committee and Full Council. This model is the fully co-mingled blue bin (240L) to be collected by staff in-house. It is anticipated the full roll out will be completed over 2026/27. It is proposed with a harmonised recycling collection service, Councils recycling performance will improve through better engagement and participation.

WMO11 : Meet 60% recycling target of municipal waste by 2030 within the Waste (Circular Economy) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2020

% increase in the recycling rate of municipal waste	Target	55%	50%
	Actual	50.64%	50.67%

Notes:

1 Council has achieved 50.64% recycling at year-end 2023/24. However without a major waste service change/intervention, it is unlikely that 60% by 2030 will be achieved. Recycling performance has increased gradually over the last number of years, however incremental increases will be harder to achieve without a policy reform / change e.g. review of Food Waste Regulations, adoption of Common Collections Guidance with a core set of materials, and the implementation of waste harmonisation for waste/recycling collections. This is being progressed with DAERA. Should waste harmonisation be rolled out, Council could achieve 60% by 2030, provided a strong communication campaign is delivered alongside informing residents of the recycling requirements.

2 Council has achieved 50.67% recycling at year-end 2024/25. However without a major waste service change/intervention, it is unlikely that 60% by 2030 will be achieved. Recycling performance has increased gradually over the last number of years, however incremental increases will be harder to achieve without a policy reform / change e.g. review of Food Waste Regulations, adoption of Common Collections Guidance with a core set of materials, and the implementation of waste harmonisation for waste/recycling collections. This is being progressed with DAERA. Should waste harmonisation be rolled out, Council could achieve 60% by 2030, provided a strong communication campaign is delivered alongside informing residents of the recycling requirements. Update: an agreed waste harmonisation model has been approved - 240L fully co-mingle blue bin recycling collection service - anticipated roll out is 2026/27.

WMO12 : Cleanliness - continue to deliver and shape effective enforcement and education on Clean Neighbourhood matters though collaborative practices

No. of litter talks given in schools and community groups each year	Target	Total number of talks	Total number of talks presented
	Progress	Green	Green

Notes:

1 Council officers (Enforcement Officers and Environmental Education Officer) along with Arc21 have delivered 45 in-schools talks and 6 community group presentations over 2023/24.

2 Council officers (Enforcement Officers and Acting Climate and Sustainability Manager) along with Arc21's Education Officer Noel Lyons have delivered 40 in-schools talks and 5 community group presentations over 2024/25.

Department : All

Tuesday 12th of August 2025

504

Climate Change Sustainability				
CCS01 : Liaise with Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL) to help develop a bi-annual survey of public perception of risk, resilience and preparedness of climate impact.				
Bi-annual Survey	Target	Collaboration with	Collaboration with	
	Progress	Green	Amber	
Notes: 1 Council's Environmental Education Officer continues to liaise with NIEL on a range of climate-related issues including engagement with the agri-sector. NIEL are aware Council would like involvement in the design of the next RESIL Risk Survey for NI. 2 The Acting Climate and Sustainability Manager continues to liaise with NIEL, specifically through Climate NI team. There are no current plans to develop a new RESIL Risk Survey however Council officers are using data and information from the NICCRA4 report to inform climate mitigation and adaptation projects.				
CCS02 : Development of a new climate Adaptation Plan using the NI Adapts Planning toolkit (Climate NI)				
Production of Adaptation Plan	Target	Yes	Yes	
	Actual	Yes	Yes	
Notes: 1 Council's Environmental Education Officer developed the MEA Adaptation Plan in partnership with Climate NI using their NI Adapts Planning toolkit. This was approved by Elected Members in March 2024. Actions have been uploaded onto the Decision Time platform. 2 Completed.				
Corporate Services Directorate				
CSD01 : Review staff working location, flexible working (In response to severe weather), with consideration - to reduce unnecessary commuting from home to an office location as part of the scheduled office rota.				
Fixed Agenda item at Agile Working Group Meetings.	Target	Yes	Yes	
	Actual	No	No	
Notes: 1 The Agile Working Group is no longer operational. 2 The Agile Working Group is no longer active.				
New process of formal review carried out by Line Managers to advise staff who can work from home, do so on those days for H&S reasons, reducing unnecessary commuting in difficult situations.	Target	Processed	Processed	
	Progress	Amber	—	
Notes: 1 A new process has not yet been established. Line Managers currently use discretion when assessing extreme weather conditions and permitting staff to work from home (where possible). A new process will be considered within the lifetime of this Plan. 2 A new process has not yet been established. Line Managers currently use discretion when assessing extreme weather conditions and permitting staff to work from home (where possible). A new process will be considered within the lifetime of this Plan.				
CSD02 : Include climate change impacts and severe weather events in Risk Assessments (RA) for festivals & events.				
Regular review of Risk Assessments for events.	Target	Yes	Yes	
	Actual	Yes	Yes	

Notes: 1 Risk assessments are updated for each event, every year
2 Risk assessment are up to date and the team has regular contact with the Corporate Resilience Officer

Digital Innovation & Procurement

DIP01 : Undertake risk assessment of ICT systems / equipment and develop business case for virtual servers, generators and relocation, where necessary.

Development of the Risk Assessment (RA).

Target	Yes	Yes
Actual	—	No

Notes: 1 This action has not yet progressed.

DIP02 : Include weighting mechanism in service contracts valued above £138,760 and construction contracts valued above £5,336,937

Number of contracts with this weighting mechanism included (p/year).

Target	Total number of	Total number of
Progress	Green	Green

Notes: 1 Included in Gov funded projects only

Economic Development

ED01 : Deliver a net zero innovation project to remove non-technical barriers to achieving net zero within the Council estate

Delivery of the Innovate UK-funded MEANZ Business Project

Target	Yes	Yes
Actual	Yes	Yes

Notes: 1 Project progressing as planned across 4 different workstreams – Industry Insights Programme, Corporate Decarbonisation Programme, Industry Decarbonisation Programme and Future Ready Programme. 2 year funded project to be completed by June 2025
2 Project progressing as planned across a range of different workstreams – Insights and Dissemination Programme, Corporate Decarbonisation Projects, Industry Decarbonisation Projects and Future Ready Programme. 2 year funded project on target to be completed by June 2025

Facilities M & M and Harbours & Marinas

FAC01 : Embed climate adaptation in plans, policy and asset management, to improve the climate resilience of buildings and infrastructure

Reduction in extreme weather-related repairs / clean ups

Target	Evidenced	Evidenced
Progress	Red	Red

Notes: 1 A mechanism to capture data and evidence on extreme weather-related repairs/clean ups has not yet been established. A cost code to log these costs was suggested, however as no budget assigned to the code, officers unlikely to use this. Ongoing discussions with Finance team on how best to capture the financial aspects of repairs/clean ups attributed to extreme weather-related impacts. Checks would take place in larger sites but possibly not documented.
2 A mechanism to capture data and evidence on extreme weather-related repairs/clean ups has not yet been established. A cost code to log these costs was suggested, however as no budget assigned to the code, officers unlikely to use this. Ongoing discussions with Finance team on how best to capture the financial aspects of repairs/clean ups attributed to extreme weather-related impacts. Checks would take place in larger sites but possibly not documented. It was noted that this action should be progressed immediately to align with proposals set out in the draft NICCAP3.

FAC02 : Continue premises inspections; roof inspections, or reactive inspections after a strong wind event, on all or prone buildings & consider strengthening the roof on any buildings that are prone to damage

Regular reporting on building inspections following storm events	Target Yes Yes Actual Yes Yes
Notes:	1 Checks would take place in larger sites but possibly not documented - need to develop mechanism to capture this data/evidence properly. 2 Checks would take place in larger sites but possibly not documented - need to develop mechanism to capture this data/evidence properly.
FAC03 : Maintain and refurbish existing buildings and assets to improve resilience to extreme weather events and longer-term effects of climate change using best practice guidance and research	
Ongoing programme of maintenance works incorporating resilience principles.	Target Yes Yes Actual No No
Notes:	1 Not yet begun. Discussion in relation to what resilience principles are needs to occur. Then integration of these principles can be considered. 2 Not yet begun. Discussion in relation to what resilience principles are needs to occur. Then integration of these principles can be considered.
FAC04 : Improve ventilation, cooling and shading in Council-owned properties, where possible.	
No. of new ventilation cooling and shading interventions within Council buildings	Target Total number of Total number of Progress Amber Amber
Notes:	1 Facilities are currently reviewing existing ventilation cooling and shading interventions to determine their effectiveness. Going forward, these learnings will inform future installations across our estate. Facilities are continually reviewing new products and will consider the most effective products for future installations. 2 Facilities are currently reviewing existing ventilation cooling and shading interventions to determine their effectiveness. Going forward, these learnings will inform future installations across our estate. Facilities are continually reviewing new products and will consider the most effective products for future installations.
FAC05 : Integrate climate change considerations into Premises Management Assessment templates	
Review and update of templates	Target Yes Yes Actual No Yes
Notes:	1 This action has not yet been progressed. This will be considered in the 2024/25 workstream. 2 This action is being progressed. Council's Asset Manager is currently developing a new Assets Management Strategy which will take climate change implications into consideration.
FAC06 : Ensure air conditioning servicing on a regular basis. Review provisions of air conditioning units	
Annual conditioning servicing	Target Yes Yes Actual Yes Yes
Notes:	1 Council's Facility Maintenance team have a detailed programme of works which includes annual air conditioning servicing. Certificate evidence is available on the P drive / Facilities Maintenance / Certificates. 2 Council's Facility Maintenance team have a detailed programme of works which includes annual air conditioning servicing. Certificate evidence is available on the P drive / Facilities Maintenance / Certificates.
FAC07 : Undertake a review of Council self generation, the capacity and the opportunity of use across multiple sites.	

Log of renewable energy (self dependency).	Target Actual Yes Yes Yes Yes	
Notes: 1 A review of all existing renewable generation assets has been completed, with recommendations made on repair or replacement. When completed this would bring councils solar generation assets to 9 arrays, with planned delivery of a further 4 generation / storage projects in 24/25. Council also generate energy from Combined Heat and Power (CHP) units at leisure centre sites, a ongoing review has highlighted opportunity for replacement of one of the existing assets, with planned maintenance of other units ensuring future performance. Council are also exploring investment opportunities in new heat pumps, or replacement where generation capacity was lost due to mechanical failure. 2 A review of all existing renewable generation assets has been completed, with recommendations made on repair or replacement. When completed, this would bring Councils solar generation assets to 13 arrays, with planned delivery of a further 3 generation / storage projects in 25/26. Council also generate energy from Combined Heat and Power (CHP) units at leisure centre sites, a ongoing review has highlighted opportunity for replacement of one of the existing assets, with planned maintenance of other units ensuring future performance. Council are also exploring investment opportunities in new heat pumps, or replacement where generation capacity was lost due to mechanical failure.		
FAC08 : Research advice and opportunities provided by NISEP		
Number of energy efficiency schemes considering overheating and ventilation needs	Target Progress Total number of Green Total number of —	
Notes: 1 Two buildings at design stage are being specified as passive house premium, which has a significant focus on overheating / ventilation needs. To achieve Passive House certification, These pilot projects will inform future design, and be considered all in future renovation projects.		
FAC09 : Identify projects for water resource management e.g., water management systems in Council buildings (retrofit water butts, incorporation into future plans).		
No. of Council buildings incorporating water management systems.	Target Progress Number of buildings Green Number of buildings Green	
Notes: 1 Council are incorporating water management systems, including rain water harvesting, waterless urinals, flow reducers, and sensor taps in all future build projects. Each if not all of these systems are being specified in current design works. 2 Varying degrees of water management across the estate. Most significant being bore holes at STLC & Waveney Nursery, and large rainwater harvesting systems at the braid and Eden community center. New projects are all incorporating water saving technologies such as sensor taps, green roofs and the most significant being the new passive house standard building at Camfunnock with a particular focus on water management integrating each of these technologies with the addition of waterless urinals which will serve as a pilot project for expansion to public toilets if post project evaluation supports further roll-out		
FAC10 : Identify projects for water resource management systems for new & existing developments and security of supply during drought periods, for example, for storing rainwater for re-use (rainwater harvesting, infiltration, attenuation).		
No. of projects using a resource management system for water supply security.	Target Progress Total number of Green Total number of Green	

- Notes:
- 1 Council have a substantive rainwater harvesting system supplying the majority of demand of one of its community centers. There has also been significant investment in boreholes to supply ground water to nursery's, leisure centers and sports facilities. Very minimal network supply is needed at those sites and is currently viewed as back-up mains supply only.

2 Council have a substantive rainwater harvesting system supplying the majority of demand of one of its community centres. There has also been significant investment in boreholes to supply ground water to nursery's, leisure centres and sports facilities. Very minimal network supply is needed at these sites and is currently viewed as back-up mains supply only.

Finance

FIN01 : Continual review of Council's insurance arrangements to ensure adequate insurance in place (where available) to deal with extreme weather events and climate impacts.

Annual review of insurance arrangements in relation to extreme weather and climate impacts.	Target	Yes	Yes
	Actual	Yes	Yes
Notes:	1 Insurance is in place for for all such eventualities relating to extreme weather where possible i.e. wind, flooding with some exemption as is normal in such policies. Insurance is in place now and we are covered for the next 12 months (until 31 March 2025) 2 Insurance is in place for for all such eventualities relating to extreme weather where possible i.e. wind, flooding with some exemption as is normal in such policies. Insurance is in place now and we are covered for the next 12 months (until 31 March 2026)		

Human Resources and Organisational Development

HUM01 : Review relevant Risk Assessments (RA) and safe systems of work to include consideration of climate impacts.

Annual review of Risk Assessments (RAs)	Target	Yes	Yes
	Actual	Yes	Yes
Notes:	1 Annual Review of Risk Assessments including SSOWs is an ongoing process between Health and Safety and Managers. A number of training sessions took place over the winter for line managers and supervisors to improve processes. 2 Risk assessments reviews and updates are an ongoing process and line managers are encouraged to ensure their processes are in line with industry best practice and which reduce the risk of harm or injury employees are exposed to. This year health and safety has coordinated an occupational health surveillance programme for operatives in those work areas deemed high risk and which fall under the requirements of legislation. The OH programme covers hearing checks for those who use equipment which could be noisy, hand / arm checks looking for evidence of vibration from tools/equipment as well as use of harmful chemicals, respiratory checks to consider any damage to lungs from exposure to dust or harmful chemicals, and an overall health check eg back pain. The Council receives feedback from the OH nurse after each of these clinics and provides advice with H&S ensuring control measures are updated such as change of hearing protection. In addition a number of inspections had been undertaken throughout the year in workshops to identify improvements to working conditions such as impact from dust and how working arrangements can be improved. Also Parks teams are making improvements to work equipment by bringing in new items which which are battery operated and this has health and well being benefits for their operatives through reducing air pollution, are quieter reducing noise pollution, no risk of fuel or oil spills which reduces soil and water contamination too etc. All services are looking at ways to improve the workplace for everyone.		

HUM02 : Continue to consider health and safety of the workforce when working out on site including appropriate information & PPE for increased risk of pest & disease & differing weather conditions.

Ongoing review of Risk Assessments (RAs) related to extreme weather	Target Yes Yes Actual Yes Yes
Notes:	1 New draft PPE Policy has just been drafted and will be approved in April 2024 and covers a number of high risk areas including asbestos, weather etc. This is also considered during health and safety inspections. 2 The PPE Policy had been approved April 2024 and rolled out with staff trained on the requirements and need to follow. An eLearning module as well as TBT on PPE was provided for line managers also to share with their teams. Staff are advised of the arrangements to get replacement items, Individuals are also provided with PPE which suits them, and as the need arises. The H&S Manager has been involved with the procurement of the PPE provision ensuring items meet regulations and standards and offer staff the greatest protection. The Health and Safety Manager is a member of the EPIG group and supports the Corporate and Community Resilience Officer with Plans for Emergency weather. Eg with Operational Managers who have been advised to complete their Emergency Plans relating to extreme weather and this includes preventative measures to protect life, property etc.
Parks Development	
PDV01 : Integrate climate adaptation into management and maintenance plans for key public parks and cemeteries to acknowledge: death of trees, varying growing seasons - affecting mowing season, planting schedule, shift/seasonal working hours, increase risk of pests and other invasive species.	
Integration into Carnfunnock Country Park, People's Park, ECOS Nature Park and cemetery management and maintenance plans.	Target Evidence of Evidence of Progress Green Green
Notes:	1 Conservation Grazing plan in place at Ecos, Reduced cutting regime Carnfunnock Country Park reducing emissions and creating habitat. Invasive species mapping and eradication programme underway. 2 Minimised mowing regimes in Ecos and Carnfunnock has been replicated in Larne Town Park through the development of a nature recovery plan for this site. Integration of tree planting at key sites Ecos Nature Park to support the ecosystem services.
PDV02 : Identify opportunities / sites to address climate action and build natural capital resilience using GIS: - based on climate audit & data analysis. - Develop projects and funding / finance proposals	
Spatial dataset identifying natural capital within Council estate	Target Evidence of natural Evidence of natural Progress Green Green
Notes:	1 tree risk surveys uploaded on GIS, Nature recovery plan uploaded on GIS.
PDV03 : Review of invasive species across the Council estate.	
Development of GIS spatial dataset mapping known invasive species to inform new Invasive Species Management Plan	Target Evidence of Evidence of Progress Green Green
Notes:	1 Invasive species recorded, monitored and treated.
Public Protection, Health and Wellbeing	
PUB01 : Ensure EPIG training performance includes emergency response & recovery exercise and emergency planning	
Undertake emergency response exercise	Target Yes Yes Actual Yes Yes

Notes:

- 1 EPIG adopted a new approach to exercising for 2024 which centres on a discussion framework, gap analysis and action escalation protocol to SMT. Within the 2024/25 plan this approach will be used for extreme weather events and cyber attack. In addition to prompting review & improvement of BCPs, the approach makes it possible to report through to SMT the inherent gaps (knowledge, resources, training) from which a decision as to when and how an exercise would benefit Council most. The first topic explored has been extreme weather. This has led to the GIS mapping of all council facilities against flood risk data initially, to be continued for other extreme weather scenarios.
- 2 Through EPIG the GIS ArcPro Climate system has been used to facilitate scenario based exercises using the Ecos. Park and Centre as a basis for the development of Council's Severe Weather Plan. A task and finish group has been set up to explore the risks and ensure resilience measures are incorporated into the Severe Weather, Business Continuity and Emergency Plans.

PUB02 : Annual summary of impacts including costs, arising from extreme weather on Council assets and local communities

Annual summary report	Target	Summary Report	Summary Report
	Progress	Amber	Green
		1.1	1.2
	Notes:	1 A framework to establish how an annual summary report will be collated has yet to be established. This will include a wide range of metrics, with data collation from multiple sources, both within Council and with external partners. Council is currently seeking advice from Sustainable NI on how best to structure this report, and to ensure the correct metrics are included. 2 A draft report has been compiled using existing metrics. This will be developed as additional indicators are identified and sourced.	

PUB03 : Ensure effective communication to personnel during severe weather events to ensure safety and appropriate continuation to service delivery.

Regular communications to all staff on extreme weather-related events.	Target	Yes	Yes
	Actual	Yes	Yes
		1.1	1.2
	Notes:	1 At least 20 staff communications were prepared and sent throughout the 12 months to advise of Met Office Weather Alerts or Situational Awareness Updates. Community Clusters were also advised on occasions. 2 All staff have been encouraged to sign up with Met Office to receive weather warnings to their own email accounts. A consultation/distribution group has been set up for circulation of additional information received from Civil Contingencies Networks. This includes Met Office NI briefings for example 3 Month Outlooks, additional information in times of severe weather events. This is linked to the Emergency Plan and Communications Plan.	

Tourism

TOUR01 : Review management plans for museum collections and ensure integrations of climate change impacts.

Regular review of management plans - MEACO - Environmental Monitoring System and gallery storage provision.	Target	Yes	Yes
	Actual	Yes	Yes
		1.1	1.2
	Notes:	1 The Museum Service Collections Mangement Plans have been updated to reflect new MEACO cloud based environmental monitoring equipment across the three Council museum galleries, and collection stores (to include the off site store at LEDCOM business estate). The updated Policy will be taken to the September 2025 Neighbourhoods and Communities Committee for approval. 2 A good housekeeping review was carried out on the off-site museum store at LEDCOM on 14 April 2025 which included checking the environmental monitoring system and heating system with heating only being activated if the store falls below 10 degrees C.	

TOUR02 : Continue duty of care provision through good policies and procedures of museum collections.

Continued accreditation to UK Museums Accreditation Standard (collections, organisation health and audiences and users).

Target	Yes	Yes
Actual	Yes	Yes
	1.0	1.0

- Notes:
- 1 Mid-Antrim Museum has under gone the renewal process to retain full accreditation status with an outcome expected by August 2024. Carrickfergus Museum will be invited to renew full accreditation status in July 2024 with a submission required by December 2024. Arthur Cottage and Interpretative Centre has been deemed eligible to apply for accreditation, which must be completed by January 2027.
 - 2 Mid-Antrim Museum secured Full Accreditation status in July 2024 for a five year period until 2029. An Accreditation return was submitted for Carrickfergus Museum in November 2024 with an outcome expected from the Accreditation panel at Arts Council England via Northern Ireland Museums Council by August 2025. An application for Arthur Cottage and Interpretative Centre is underway.

TOUR03 : Undertake any necessary adaptation and protection measures for collections assets.

Continued insurance provision of cover for up to 10 Council sites - salvage of collection items.

Target	Yes	Yes
Actual	Yes	Yes
	1.0	1.0

- Notes:
- 1 Hatwell Restoration Services emergency salvage cover has been renewed for: Carrickfergus Museum; Larne Museum; Mid-Antrim Museum; Arthur Cottage and Interpretative Centre; Andrew Jackson Cottage; US Rangers Museum; LEDCOM off site museum store; The Gobbins Visitor Centre; The Braid (including Ballymena Town Hall); Larne Town Hall and Carrickfergus Town Hall effective from 1 March 2024 to 28 February 2025.
 - 2 Hatwell Restoration Services cover has been renewed for all ten sites for the period 1 March 2025 - 28 February 2026. Council's Insurance Officer has been updated.

Continued update of the heritage asset register (for valuation of collections)

Target	Yes	Yes
Actual	Yes	Yes
	1.0	1.0

- Notes:
- 1 Updated information on new acquisitions and their value (of Council museums artefacts) was provided to Council's Finance team on 30 March 2024 to ensure that Council's heritage asset register remains up to date.
 - 2 The Finance team were updated that there had been no new acquisitions in the financial year 2024 - 2025. Council's Insurance Officer was updated in April 2025 with a schedule of current loans to Council museums from lending institutions.

TOUR04 : Identify high pressure visitor locations and develop plans to mitigate against damage to natural environment, anti-social behaviour etc.

Development of Sustainable Tourism Strategy to include e.g. promotion of alternative locations, visitor experience design and management (Sustainable Tourism and Visitor Management)

Target	Preparation of work	Preparation of work
Progress	Amber	Amber
	1.0	1.0

- Notes:
- 1 Council is awaiting the launch of the new Tourism NI Sustainable Tourism Strategy which will then inform the MEA Sustainable Tourism Strategy. This will be considered within 2024/25.
 - 2 Budget has been secured to commence development of the Tourism strategy in 2025/26.

Waste Management, Parks, Cemeteries and Open Spaces

WMO01 : Review and update grounds maintenance and public realm services to include climate change impacts.

Regular review of maintenance schedules in line with extreme weather events.

Target	Yes	Yes
Actual	Yes	Yes
	1.0	1.0

- Notes:
- 1

Our maintenance schedules are reflective of any extreme weather events as we monitor the forecasts ahead and adjust our schedules accordingly for example hot spells will require more regular watering of our plants, where as a sustained heavy rain period means we can reduce same. We also use a sustainable water source as we have two bore holes . If we have a storm event then staff would be restricted in their maintenance operating in safer sites and not tree areas where there may be a risk. Some of our higher risk sites would be closed if we get a severe weather warning and liaise with our Parks Development Staff re same. We would also change our maintenance schedules to deal with any severe snow event and most of our team would be deployed to deal with same, in regards to evidence of work carried out staff timesheets record all work streams for any given week.
- 2

Our maintenance schedules are reflective of any extreme weather events as we monitor the forecasts ahead and adjust our schedules accordingly for example hot spells will require more regular watering of our plants, where as a sustained heavy rain period means we can reduce same. We also use a sustainable water source as we have two bore holes . If we have a storm event then staff would be restricted in their maintenance operating in safer sites and not tree areas where there may be a risk. Some of our higher risk sites would be closed if we get a severe weather warning and liaise with our Parks Development Staff re same. We would also change our maintenance schedules to deal with any severe snow event and most of our team would be deployed to deal with same, in regards to evidence of work carried out staff timesheets record all work streams for any given week.

WMO02 : Develop severe weather protocol for waste management, property & fleet

Development of protocol	Target Progress	Evidence protocol Amber	Evidence protocol Amber
	Notes:	1 Council currently has a Winter Maintenance Schedule and extreme weather protocol for bin collections. Further work is required to develop this further, to incorporate all types of extreme weather-related impacts to service delivery. This will be reviewed in 2024/25. 2 Council currently has a Winter Maintenance Schedule and extreme weather protocol for bin collections. Further work is required to develop this further, to incorporate all types of extreme weather-related impacts to service delivery. This will be reviewed in 2025/26.	

WMO03 : Ensure that waste collections are priority during heatwaves

No. of heatwaves incidents impacting waste collections	Target Progress	Total number of Green	Total number of Green
	Notes:	1 Waste collections always take priority, plans to place to deal with a heatwave. Staff are issued with light weight clothing, sun glasses, sun protection, hats and water. risk assessment for working in the sun in place. 2 Waste collections always take priority, plans to place to deal with a heatwave. Staff are issued with light weight clothing, sun glasses, sun protection, hats and water. risk assessment for working in the sun in place.	

WMO04 : Ensure effective Risk Assessments (RAs) for periods of prolonged heat in relation to fire risk at Household Recycling Centres (HRCs).

Review and update of Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) Risk Assessments (RAs)	Target Actual	Yes Yes	Yes Yes

Notes:

- 1 All risk assessment are reviewed annually, we have recently reviewed all HRC risk and created a new simplified format, some of the previous risk assessments have been combined that would of mirrored each other. These are all currently with Harri Moffet to ratify, see attached reviewed risk assessments which we will be using once ratified.
- 2 All risk assessment are reviewed annually, we have recently reviewed all HRC risk and created a new simplified format, some of the previous risk assessments have been combined that would of mirrored each other. These are all currently with Harri Moffet to ratify, see attached reviewed risk assessments which we will be using once ratified.

Council/Committee:	Economy and Environment
Date:	15 September 2025
Report Title:	Northern Ireland Local Authority Municipal Waste Management Statistics
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Donna Carey, Waste Manager
Approver:	Shaun Morley, Director of Operations

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This report is to update Elected Members on the quarterly NI Local Authority Municipal Waste Management Statistics issued on 31 July 2025 relating to waste collected during January to March 2025.

2. Background

- 2.1. This publication provides information on the quantities of Local Authority Collected (LAC) municipal waste managed in Northern Ireland between January and March 2025.
- 2.2. The data in the report is based on quarterly returns made on Wastedataflow, a web-based system, used by all local authorities throughout the UK to report on local authority collected municipal waste. It provides information on the quantities of waste arising, sent for preparing for reuse, dry recycling, composting, energy recovery and sent to landfill. This is used to assess progress towards achieving waste strategy targets in Northern Ireland.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

- 3.1. Mid and East Antrim Borough Council collected 17,474 tonnes of municipal waste during January – March 2025, a 1.4% increase compared to January – March 2024. Factors influencing waste arisings, the majority of which is household waste, include individual household behaviours, the advice and collection services provided by councils, the state of the economy and weather conditions during the specific quarter. Additionally, waste arisings are affected by the number of households in the Borough, which has increased by approximately 575 since this time last year.
- 3.2. During January to March 2025, the recycling rate for Council was 44.3%, similar to the same period in 2024, but below the NI average of 46.4%. Mid and East Antrim were ranked number nine out of the eleven NI Councils for our household waste recycling rate. This statistic shows seasonal variation

driven by the quantities of garden waste sent for composting. Greater amounts of garden waste are collected and sent for composting during the spring and summer quarters.



- 3.3. Between January - March 2025, Mid and East Antrim recorded a landfill rate of 19.3%, representing a 31.25% decrease compared to 50.55% during the same period in 2024. This significant decrease is attributed to the commencement of a new residual waste contract in February 2025, under which residual waste is now sent for further processing rather than being sent directly to landfill. The NI average landfill rate for waste collected by councils was 8.3%.
- 3.4. A detailed look at municipal waste collection in Mid and East Antrim Borough from January to March 2025, shows that out of 17,474 tonnes collected, 4,072 tonnes (23.3%) was dry recycling; 3,492 tonnes (20%) composting; 6,445 (36.9%) waste energy recovery; giving an overall municipal recycling rate of 43.6%. The amount sent to landfill was 3,374 tonnes (19.3%),

Mid and East Antrim	Municipal Dry Recycling Rate %	Municipal Composting Rate %	Municipal Recycling & Composting Rate %	Municipal Waste Energy Recovery Rate %	Municipal Landfill Rate %
Jan-Mar 2024	20.1	21.3	41.8	7.3	50.6
Jan-Mar 2025	23.3	20.0	43.6	36.9	19.3

- 3.5. In terms of capture rate, the following table shows the percentage captured from the household waste stream in Mid and East Antrim in January to March 2025 compared to NI Councils and top performing Council.

Material	Mid and East Antrim	NI Average	Top Performing Council
Glass	56.3	49.6%	Mid Ulster 63.0%
Paper and Card	37.3%	53.0%	Mid Ulster 63.2%
Metals	33.0%	32.1%	Mid Ulster 47.6%
Plastic	20.1%	22.6%	Mid Ulster 31.8% Armagh, Banbridge & Craigavon 31.8%
Organics	65.0%	59.4%	Antrim & Newtownabbey 67%

4. General Considerations / Implications

- 4.1. Legal implications - Our rolling 12-month average recycling rate for 2024-25 is 50.73%, which is similar to the 50.67% recorded in 2023-24. This remains above the statutory minimum of 50%, but falls short of the new legislative targets set for councils under the Circular Economy Package:
- Recycling 65% of municipal waste by 2035
 - Interim targets of 55% recycling rate by 2025 and 60% by 2030
 - Maximum of 10% of municipal waste to be landfilled by 2035.
- 4.2. **Financial Implications** - The diversion of waste from landfill to recycling provides a more cost-effective manner to manage waste. Failure to meet waste targets could result in fines.
- 4.3. **Environmental Implications** - The diversion of waste from landfill contributes to the reduction of greenhouse gases and the production of leachates, both of which negatively impact the environment. Failure to meet waste targets would result in reputational damage.
- 4.4. **Alignment with Corporate Priorities and Link to Corporate Plan** - The statistics met the targets as outlined in Mid and East Antrim's Corporate Plan and Performance Improvement Plan.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1. Council has approved a new collection model for waste harmonisation of Waste Services. The impact of any changes will be measured and monitored with a view to meeting waste targets in 2025 and beyond.



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6. Recommendation

- 6.1. Elected Members are asked to note the quarterly NI Local Authority Municipal Waste Management Statistics issued on 31 July 2025 relating to waste collected during January to March 2025.

7. Links / Appendices

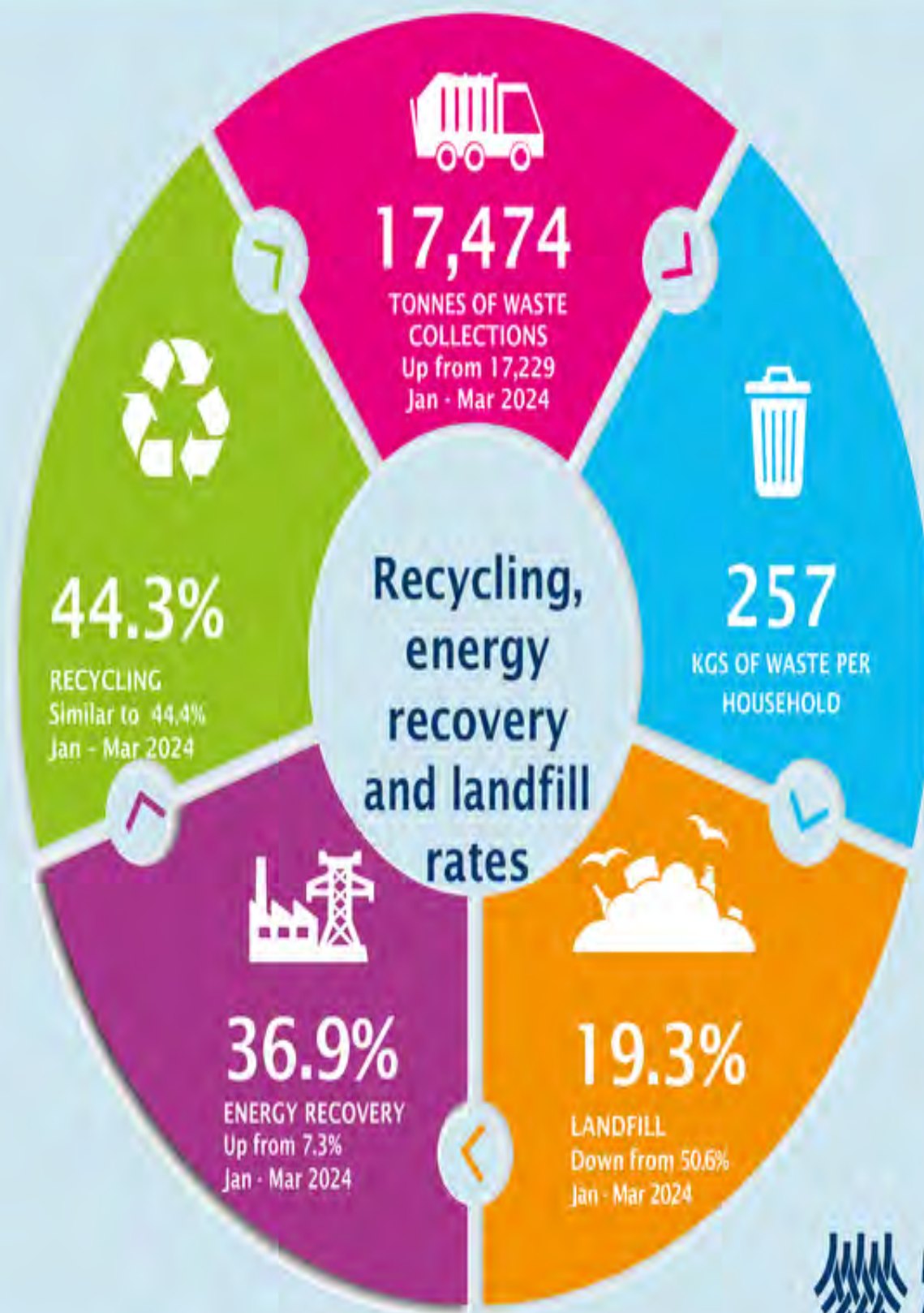
Appendix 1 – Waste Infographic January – March 2025

Link 1

[Northern Ireland local authority collected municipal waste management statistics January to March 2025 | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

What happens to our waste? 518

Mid and East Antrim January to March 2025



Council/Committee:	Environment and Economy Committee
Date:	15 September 2025
Report Title:	Reservoirs Act Consultation Response on Proposals for a Grant Scheme
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Steven Bailie, Facilities Management & Maintenance Manager
Approver:	Shaun Morley, Director of Operations

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Elected Member approval on the draft MEA response to the "Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015, Consultation on a Grant Scheme to support reservoir managers with the initial supervision and inspection requirements of the Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015.

2. Background

- 2.1 This consultation is seeking your views on proposals for a grant scheme to help those managers of controlled reservoirs who need it to meet their initial supervision and inspection costs following the further commencement of The Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 ('the Act').
- 2.2 In particular, the consultation aims to give those who are involved with, or have an interest in, reservoirs an opportunity to provide comments in relation to the Department's proposals for a grant scheme to support with the initial costs arising from the Act. The Department is especially interested in obtaining the views of reservoir managers and others with an interest in the management of reservoirs. (Appendix1)
- 2.3 A targeted consultation on the commencement of the secondary orders and regulations, including regulations to provide powers to allow the Department to introduce a grant scheme launched in November 2021. A total of 19 responses were received and the consultation response report was published on 27 October 2022.
- 2.4 The main issues raised in the consultation included concerns regarding the costs associated with the introduction of the legislation and the potential for abandonment of reservoirs. There was general support for the making of regulations to provide for a grant scheme.



- 2.5. The consultation response has been provided to the Committee for Infrastructure, with the Department also providing oral evidence to the Committee. Following the Executive agreeing to the progressing of the five pieces of secondary legislation at its meeting on 17 October 2024, the Department recognised the concerns raised by some during the consultation process, and that initial costs will be incurred for supervision and inspection by specialised engineers.
- 2.6. Given that this initial inspection process is needed to assess the condition of the reservoir and identify matters in the interest of safety, the Minister wants consideration given to introducing a grant scheme for those who need it, thereby assisting reservoir managers to meet their obligations under the Act. The Department is now in a position to commence further sections of the Act, including Section 114, which provides the Department with a permissive power to pay grants to reservoir managers to assist them with their obligations under the Act.
- 2.7. The Department is now consulting on proposals to provide a grant scheme in relation to the initial costs to help Reservoir Managers who need it to comply with the further commencement of the Act.
- 2.8. Whilst the Department acknowledges the concerns around costs that were raised in the consultation in 2021/22, and more recently during Committee for Infrastructure briefings held in 2024/25, the Department is required to ensure that public expenditure processes are followed and that any grant scheme demonstrates value for money, in line with the requirements of Managing Public Money NI (MPMNI).
- 2.9. Therefore, the Department is intending to provide grant support to those reservoirs managers who need it. The provision of any grant scheme is subject to affordability considerations in the context of budget allocations in future years.

3. General Considerations / Implications

- 3.1. **Financial Implications** – The yearly reservoir inspections are currently funding from the Facilities budget. Failure to comply with the Reservoirs Act would place the council at risk of fines and prosecutions.
- 3.2. **Human Resources** – Currently management of reservoirs fall under the Facilities Management & Maintenance Manager.
- 3.3. **Equality Screening / Rural Proofing and Environmental Impact** – this consultation has been screened Section 75 and is detailed in Appendix 2.



- 3.4. **Alignment with Corporate Priorities and Link to Corporate Plan** – The Management and Inspection of reservoirs is part of the Compliance requirements of the Facilities Department and MEABC.
- 3.5. **Reputation** - there is significant political and community interest in reservoir management as they are an area of recreation and beauty. If not managed in line with the Reservoirs Act council would be subject to fines and reputational damage.
- 3.6. **Legal** – The further commencement of the Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 will place statutory duties on reservoir managers to make their reservoirs safe and comply with the Act. Details of the legislative requirements of Act are:
- Section 10 provides that a reservoir manager of a controlled reservoir must register their reservoir with the Department; generally, this will be within six months in accordance with Section 11 of the Act;
 - Section 17 then requires the Department to give the reservoir a designation as soon as is reasonably practicable after registration;
 - Section 25 provides that a reservoir manager must commission a supervising engineer within six months of designation if their reservoir is 'high-consequence' or 'medium-consequence';
 - Section 26 sets out the duties in relation to supervision for the supervising engineer;
 - Section 30 provides that the reservoir manager must secure an inspection by an inspecting engineer within one year of the designation if their reservoir is high-consequence or medium-consequence;
 - Sections 35 and 36 provide details in relation to the duties and compliance around inspection;
 - Section 35 (1) requires the inspecting engineer to provide the inspection report to the reservoir manager within six months of completing the inspection;
 - Section 35 (5) requires the inspecting engineer to provide a copy of the inspection report to the Department within 28 days after the report has been given to the reservoir manager.

4. Proposed Way Forward

- 4.1. It is proposed to seek approval of the draft response at Appendix 3 to this consultation and submit it to DFI before the deadline of 16 September 2025.

5. Recommendation or Decision

- 5.1. It is recommended that Elected Members approve the draft response (Appendix 3) to this consultation.



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6. Appendices / Links

- Appendix 1 DFI Reservoirs Act (NI) 2015 Consultation on a Grant Scheme
- Appendix 2 Screening Form
- Appendix 3 MEA Consultation Response

Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015

Consultation on a Grant Scheme to support reservoir managers with the initial supervision and inspection requirements of the Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015.

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Ministerial Foreword

The Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 ("the Act") provides a proportionate regulatory framework for reservoir safety that will mitigate against the potential harm that may arise in the event of an uncontrolled release of water or flooding as a result of reservoir failure.

The Act sets out the fundamental components of the Assembly's reservoir safety policy, which is based on industry best practice, for the safety of reservoirs. The implementation of the Act will mean that those reservoirs within the scope of the Act, are subject to a regulated system, which in turn will provide assurance in terms of the protection of people, property, the environment and economic activity.

In advance of the further commencement of the Act, this consultation provides information on how the Department seeks to support those reservoir managers who are deemed to need financial support, to comply with the initial supervision and inspection requirements of the Act.

In line with the concerns raised in the consultation on the further implementation of the Reservoirs Act (NI) 2015 I acknowledge that the further commencement of the Act will place further legislative requirements on managers of controlled reservoirs who will incur initial supervision and inspection costs in order to comply with the Act. That is why I am keen that the Department supports those reservoir managers who need help with these initial supervision and inspection costs.

It is recognised that until reservoir managers undertake the required inspections following registration and designation of their reservoirs the scale of any potential capital costs will not be fully known. Therefore, a further consultation on potential grant support for those who need it in relation to capital costs to address matters in the interests of safety will be required once inspections and costings have been completed.

This consultation is targeted at those on whom the legislation will impact and those with an interest in the management and maintenance of reservoirs to ensure reservoir safety. However, views are welcomed from all interested parties.

It is therefore important that you have an opportunity to consider the proposals and express your views and I would therefore encourage you to respond to the consultation.

Liz Kimmins MLA

Minister for Infrastructure

1. Consultation Arrangements

Timetable

This consultation document will be available for response, and comment for a period of 12 weeks from 23 June to 16 September 2025.

How to respond

We would welcome your views on the proposed grant scheme to support with the initial costs arising to comply with the Act.

Responses should be submitted using the online survey. However, we will also accept responses emailed to:

FloodingandDrainagePolicy@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

or

Flooding & Drainage Policy Team
Water and Drainage Policy Division
Department for Infrastructure

1st Floor James House,
2-4 Cromac Avenue,
Belfast.
BT7 2JA.

We will acknowledge receipt of your submission.

If you choose to email/post your response, please use the list of questions at Section 5.

When you respond, tell us whether you are doing this for yourself or for an organisation.

If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please tell us,

- ☐ Who the organisation represents.
- ☐ How the information was gathered.

Please note that responses to the consultation must be received by 5.00pm on 16 September 2025.

Alternative Formats

The consultation document can also be made available in alternative formats.

Requests should be made to FloodingandDrainagePolicy@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Impact Assessments

The following impact assessments have been completed:

Equality Impact Assessment

A section 75 screening has been carried out as part of the preparations for the further commencement of the Act, which includes the grant scheme.

No impacts were identified for any specific group. The Department recognises that equality screening is a live process that will be considered alongside the consultation process as it evolves.

Further s75 screening (and, if deemed appropriate) Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out as decisions are made and policies developed in response to this consultation.

Human Rights Impact Assessment

The Department has carried out a draft Human Rights Impact Assessment as part of the preparations for the further commencement of the Act, which includes the grant scheme and considers the options laid out in this document are fully compliant with the Human Rights Act 1998.

Rural Needs Impact Assessment

The Department has carried out a draft Rural Needs Impact Assessment as part of the preparations for the further commencement of the Act, which includes the grant scheme, to assess any impacts on those in rural areas.

Regulatory Impact Assessment

A screening exercise has been undertaken for the five pieces of secondary legislation, including the grant scheme, which concludes that a Regulatory Impact Assessment is not required. Reservoir owners/managers are already responsible for reservoir safety under common law and therefore should already be incurring many of the associated costs. A grant scheme would further mitigate any costs.

Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Confidentiality of Responses

UK General Data Protection Regulation

The Department may publish a summary of responses following the closing date for receipt of comments. Your response, and all other responses to this publication, may be disclosed on request and/or made available on the DfI website (redacted). The Department can only refuse to disclose information in exceptional circumstances. Before you submit your response, please read the paragraphs below on the confidentiality of responses as this will give you guidance on the legal position about any information given by you in response to this publication.

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Regulations 2004 give the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely, the Department in this case. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation.

The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this publication should be made public or treated as confidential.

The information you provide in your response, excluding personal information, may be published, or disclosed in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR). **Any personal information you provide will be handled in accordance with the UK-GDPR and will not be published.**

If you want the non-personal information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please tell us why, but be aware that, under the FOIA or EIR, we cannot guarantee confidentiality.

For information regarding your personal data, please refer to the DfI Privacy Notice at www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/dfi-privacy. For further details on confidentiality, the FOIA and the EIR please refer to www.ico.org.uk.

Next Steps

After consideration of all the responses received by the deadline, a Consultation Responses Report will be prepared and published.

2. Background and Context

This consultation is seeking your views on proposals for a grant scheme to help those managers of controlled reservoirs who need it to meet their initial supervision and inspection costs following the further commencement of **The Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015** ('the Act').

In particular, the consultation aims to give those who are involved with, or have an interest in, reservoirs an opportunity to provide comments in relation to the Department's proposals for a grant scheme to support with the initial costs arising from the Act. The Department is especially interested in obtaining the views of reservoir managers and others with an interest in the management of reservoirs.

The Department is seeking views from:

- a) the reservoir managers of controlled reservoirs;
- b) the Institution of Civil Engineers; and
- c) any members of the public who have an interest in this matter.

The Department has also sent a copy of this consultation to those listed in **Annex A** whom we believe will have a particular interest in this scheme.

A list of the consultation questions is provided in chapter 5. The closing date for responses is 16 September 2025. All responses received by this date will be considered by the Department.

Background

The Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015

The Reservoirs Bill for Northern Ireland received Royal Assent on 24 July 2015 and is known as the Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015. The Department for Infrastructure received statutory responsibility for the Act on 2 June 2021, following a Transfer of Functions Order being made by The Executive Office. Only a few of the provisions of the Act came into operation on the day following Royal Assent covering the definition of a controlled reservoir, who is the reservoir manager, and powers of entry for the Department. While the Act provides the policy framework for the reservoir safety management and maintenance regime, the Department is required to make secondary legislation to further implement the Act and ensure reservoir managers comply with the Act.

The Act introduces a proportionate regulatory and management framework for reservoir safety in Northern Ireland. It aims to mitigate the flood risk from an uncontrolled release of water due to reservoir failure from reservoirs capable of holding 10,000 cubic metres of water above the natural level of any part of the surrounding land. These reservoirs are known as "controlled reservoirs".

The reservoir safety framework is based on industry best practice. It requires reservoir managers to register their reservoir with the Department and for the Department to give each controlled reservoir a designation of High, or Medium, or Low consequence. The reservoir designation will determine the level of regulation and management required for each reservoir.

The key elements of the management and maintenance regime include registration, designation, supervision of a reservoir, inspections of reservoirs and a requirement to address matters in the interest of safety. Integral to the management framework is the supervision and inspection of reservoirs by specialist civil engineers known as Reservoir Panel Engineers.

The Department will establish panels of engineers and appoint engineers to these panels who are suitably qualified and experienced. Reservoir managers will commission engineers from these panels to supervise, inspect, construct or alter a controlled reservoir, or undertake other duties as required by the Act.

Reservoir Safety

Reservoirs are structures and areas that have been artificially created to hold and store water above the natural level of the surrounding land. They have been created for a variety of purposes including public water supply, transportation, energy production, flood risk management and recreation. The majority of impounding structures are considered to be in excess of 100 years old.

The safety of reservoirs in Great Britain (GB) has been regulated since 1930. In the Republic of Ireland there is no legislative provision for reservoir safety and, as in Northern Ireland currently, common law applies. Under common law the owner or the reservoir manager is responsible for reservoir safety.

No fatalities have been reported due to dam failure in Northern Ireland unlike in England, Scotland and Wales. The most recent incidents in Northern Ireland were a breach in the bank of Wolfhill Millrace, North Belfast in 1995 which resulted in a number of dwellings being flooded. Flooding in the Doagh area in 1998 was attributed to the collapse of a spill weir at Tildarg Dam and a number of houses were flooded.

The policy objective of the Act is to introduce a robust regime for the regulation of reservoirs to protect the public from the significant risk of flooding. It is proposed that reservoirs should be managed and operated to minimise the risk of flooding due to an uncontrolled release of water resulting from dam failure thereby protecting people, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activity. The Department is responsible for administering and enforcing the legislation.

The Act provides for a reservoir safety regime, based on industry best practice, that includes:

- Registration;
- Designation;
- Supervision of a Reservoir;
- Inspections of reservoirs; and
- A requirement to address Matters in the Interests of Safety.

Consultation

A targeted consultation on the commencement of the secondary orders and regulations, including regulations to provide powers to allow the Department to introduce a grant scheme launched in November 2021. A total of 19 responses were received and the consultation response report was published on 27 October 2022.

The main issues raised in the consultation included concerns regarding the costs associated with the introduction of the legislation and the potential for abandonment of reservoirs. There was general support for the making of regulations to provide for a grant scheme. The consultation response has been provided to the Committee for Infrastructure, with the Department also providing oral evidence to the Committee.

Following the Executive agreeing to the progressing of the five pieces of secondary legislation at its meeting on 17 October 2024, the Department recognised the concerns raised by some during the consultation process, and that initial costs will be incurred for supervision and inspection by specialised engineers. Given that this initial inspection process is needed to assess the condition of the reservoir and identify matters in the interest of safety, the Minister wants consideration given to introducing a grant scheme for those who need it, thereby assisting reservoir managers to meet their obligations under the Act.

The Department is now in a position to commence further sections of the Act, including Section 114, which provides the Department with a permissive power to pay grants to reservoir managers to assist them with their obligations under the Act.

The Act and Explanatory Notes are available [here](#).

Legislative Requirements of the Act

The further commencement of the Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 will place statutory duties on reservoir managers to make their reservoirs safe and comply with the Act.

Details of the legislative requirements of Act are:

- **Section 10** provides that a **reservoir manager** of a controlled reservoir must **register** their reservoir with the Department; generally, this will be within six months in accordance with Section 11 of the Act;
- **Section 17** then requires the **Department** to give the reservoir a **designation** as soon as is reasonably practicable after registration;
- **Section 25** provides that a **reservoir manager** must commission a **supervising engineer** within six months of designation if their reservoir is 'high-consequence' or 'medium-consequence';
- **Section 26** sets out the duties in relation to supervision for the **supervising engineer**;

- **Section 30** provides that the **reservoir manager** must secure an inspection by an **inspecting engineer** within one year of the designation if their reservoir is high-consequence or medium-consequence;
- **Sections 35 and 36** provide details in relation to the duties and compliance around inspection;
- **Section 35 (1)** requires the **inspecting engineer** to provide the inspection report to the **reservoir manager** within six months of completing the inspection; and
- **Section 35 (5)** requires the **inspecting engineer** to provide a copy of the inspection report to **the Department** within 28 days after the report has been given to the **reservoir manager**.

3. Why is a Grant Needed?

During the passage of the Act through the Assembly between 2014-2016, the then Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development raised concerns related to the costs being placed on reservoir managers, particularly those in the private and not for profit sectors, the absence of authoritative information on the condition of reservoirs falling under the Act and the cost of works to bring them to an acceptable safety standard.

This resulted in the Assembly agreeing to include section 114 of the Act which provides a permissive power for the Department to enable the payment of grants to reservoir managers of controlled reservoirs to assist them in complying with their obligations under this Act.

This proposed grant scheme is designed to help those eligible reservoirs managers that need it with the initial costs of appointing both a supervising engineer and an inspecting engineer to obtain an inspection report, which is a vital first step in implementing the reservoir safety framework provided by the Act. This initial inspection process will assess the condition of controlled reservoirs and identify matters in the interest of safety.

This grant scheme will therefore only support the costs of appointing a supervising engineer and an inspecting engineer, to provide an initial inspection.

It should be noted that any grant scheme cannot be established until such times as the legislation giving the Department the powers to establish the grant scheme is approved by the NI Assembly.

4. Proposals

The Department is now consulting on proposals to provide a grant scheme in relation to the initial costs to help Reservoir Managers who need it to comply with the further commencement of the Act.

Whilst the Department acknowledges the concerns around costs that were raised in the consultation in 2021/22, and more recently during Committee for Infrastructure briefings held in 2024/25, the Department is required to ensure that public expenditure processes are followed and that any grant scheme demonstrates value for money, in line with the requirements of Managing Public Money NI (MPMNI). Therefore, the Department is intending to provide grant support to those reservoir managers who need it.

The provision of any grant scheme is subject to affordability considerations in the context of budget allocations in future years.

Key Considerations

Legislation

Currently, the Department does not have the powers to enable a grant scheme, but when the Act is further commenced, Section 114 will provide the permissive power for the Department to enable the payment of grants to reservoir managers of controlled reservoirs to assist them in complying with their obligations under this Act.

The legislation specifies who the reservoir manager of a controlled reservoir is. A reservoir manager is responsible for reservoir safety. The reservoir manager has a number of obligations under the Act (specifically sections 10, 25 and 30 relate to registration, supervision and inspection requirements).

Looking at the requirements of the Act the diagram below sets out an indicative example timeline for supervision and inspection requirements: It will be incumbent on the reservoir manager to ensure that an application for grant assistance is made in a timely fashion to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Act.

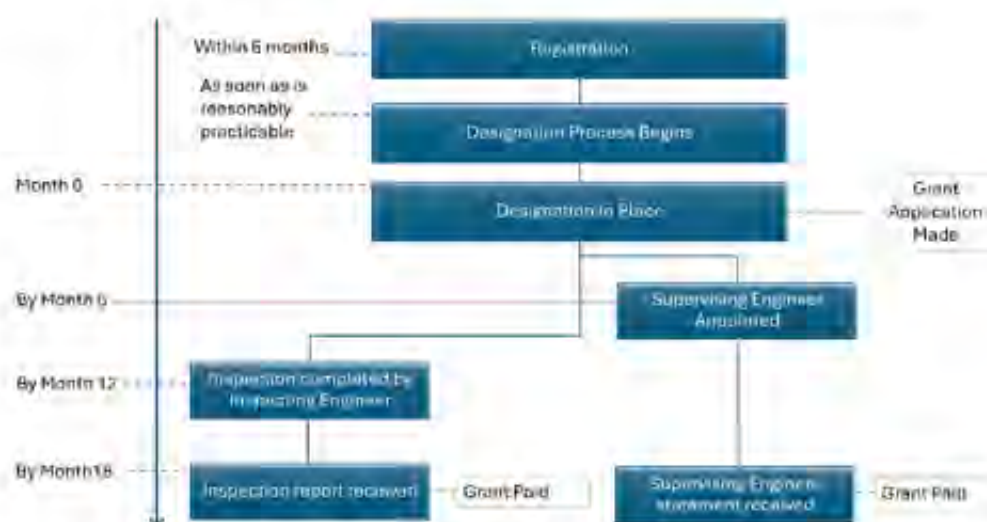


Figure 1 – Indicative Timeline for Supervision and Inspection Requirements

Financial

The Department is proposing to provide up to £10,000 (reviewed annually) to eligible reservoir managers to help with the costs of the initial supervision and inspection requirements arising by virtue of the Act.

This proposed amount of funding is based on an examination of the potential amount required to pay for the initial costs involved in complying with the Act, (following discussions with the Environment Agency in GB and locally with NI Water) with an indication that the initial costs of supervision and inspection are likely to be up to £10,000. The Department will review these costs every 12 months to ensure they remain in line with market values.

If the initial costs are more than £10,000, the Reservoir Manager will have to fund any costs above this amount.

The Department would welcome views on the level of funding being proposed.

It should be noted that the grant will only be provided to cover the costs of appointing a supervising engineer and an inspecting engineer, to provide an initial inspection. The reservoir manager must ensure that the reservoir is in a suitable condition to facilitate an inspection prior to the reservoir engineer arriving on site.

The Department is considering 2 options for the payment of grant:

- (i) Make payments directly to the supervising and inspecting engineers on receipt of the respective reports (as set out in the Act), up to a combined value of £10,000; or
- (ii) Make payments to reservoir managers in arrears on receipt of respective reports (as set out in the Act), allowing them to then pay the engineers.

The Department would welcome views on these payment options.

Eligibility Criteria

In order to ensure those eligible reservoir managers who need it receive help with the initial costs of complying with the Act, the Department proposes a number of criteria as follows:

Criterion 1 – The reservoir must be registered with the Department.

Only reservoirs capable of holding 10,000 cubic metres or more of water and registered with the Department will be eligible for the grant.

Criterion 2 – The reservoir is not managed by a public sector organisation.

The Department is not proposing grant support for reservoirs managed by the public sector such as Government Departments, Local Authorities and NI Water, as these public sector organisations have established mechanisms for securing budget to maintain their assets.

Criterion 3 – The reservoir must be designated as ‘High’ or ‘Medium’ consequence.

A ‘High’ consequence reservoir is when a reservoir failure could result in a loss of 1 or more lives, or the significant impact on economic activity.

A ‘Medium’ consequence reservoir is when a reservoir failure could impact on people but no loss of life can be foreseen or may result in significant damage to environment / heritage.

It is important to remember that the consequence designation is not a reflection on the current management or condition of the reservoir. Instead, it considers the potential impact on the surrounding area if an uncontrolled release of water were to occur.

Grant support for the initial supervision and inspection requirements will only be provided for reservoirs that have been designated high and medium consequence by the Department’s Rivers Directorate.

The Department is not proposing grant support for reservoirs with a low consequence given they are not subject to the same level of regulation and obligations (as set out in the Act) as high and medium consequence reservoirs and subsequently will not incur the initial costs this grant scheme covers.

High and medium consequence reservoirs that have undertaken a pre-commencement inspection report not more than 8 years before the commencement date, as set out in Section 33 (1) are not required to undertake a further inspection report but are still required to meet the requirements in relation to supervising requirements.

Criterion 4 – Reservoir Manager must demonstrate a clear financial need for grant support for initial inspection costs.

The Department is proposing that grant funding will only be provided to those reservoir managers who are deemed to need it to pay the initial costs of supervision and inspection.

The Department is proposing to assess the financial need through the bank statements of the reservoir manager.

The reservoir manager will therefore be required to supply:

- Their previous 6 months bank statements related to the management of the reservoir; and

- Details of the monthly income and outgoings related to the management of the reservoir.

It is assumed that the threshold for need to qualify for a grant is met if the bank statements demonstrate that there have been insufficient funds over the last 6 months to meet the costs of inspection (i.e.£10,000) once all other operating costs have been taken into account.

Application process

The Department proposes to develop terms and conditions and guidance on the application process for the grant scheme and to publish these once the legislation has commenced.

Applications for grant support can only be made once a designation is in place.

5. Consultation Questions

Eligibility Criteria

Question 1 – Do you agree with eligibility criterion 2 that only reservoirs not managed by a public sector organisation are eligible?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If no, please provide information on your suggested changes to the above proposal.

Question 2 – Do you agree with eligibility criterion 3 that the reservoir must be designated as 'High' or 'Medium' consequence?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If no, please provide information on your suggested changes to the above proposal.

Question 3 – Do you agree with eligibility criterion 4 that Reservoir Managers must demonstrate a financial need for grant support for initial inspection costs?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If no, please provide information on your suggested changes to the above proposal.

Assessing Affordability

Question 4 – Do you agree with the Department's method for assessing affordability?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If no, please provide information on your suggested changes to the above proposal.

Level of Funding

Question 5 – Do you agree with the level of funding ie up to a maximum of £10,000?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If no, please provide information on your suggested changes to the above proposal.

Payment of Grant

Question 6 – Which of the Department's proposals for payment of grant do you prefer?

☐ Department pays engineers directly?

☐ Department pays reservoir manager?

Please provide any additional relevant information below.

General

Question 7 - If you any further comments on the potential grant scheme for initial supervision and inspection requirements please provide any relevant information below.

Draft Impact Assessments

Question 8 – Do you have any comments to make on any of the draft impact assessments that accompany this consultation?

The link to all the impact assessments is available on page 5 of this consultation.

☐ Yes – please use the comment box below

☐ No

Please explain:

Annex A – Targeted Consultees

Groups that the Department has provided a copy of this Consultation to:

- Reservoir managers/owners of reservoirs in Northern Ireland;
- Institution of Civil Engineers;
- British Dam Society;
- Engineers Ireland;
- Office of Public Works (ROI);
- District /Borough Councils;
- Ulster Farmers Union;
- Ulster Angling Federation;
- CIWEM;
- NIAPA;
- Ulster Coarse Fishing Federation;
- UK Government Departments with responsibility for reservoirs – Defra, Welsh Government, Scottish Government; and
- UK Reservoir Safety Regulators – SEPA, EA, NRW.

DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

SECTION 75 EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY SCREENING ANALYSIS FORM

The purpose of this form is to help you to consider whether a new policy (either internal or external) or legislation will require a full equality impact assessment (EQIA). Those policies identified as having significant implications for equality of opportunity must be subject to full EQIA.

The form will provide a record of the factors taken into account if a policy is screened out, or excluded for EQIA. It will provide a basis for quarterly consultation on the outcome of the screening exercise, and will be referenced in the biannual review of progress made to the Minister and in the Annual Report to the Equality Commission.

Further advice on completion of this form and the screening process including relevant contact information can be accessed via the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) Intranet site ([Equality Intranet page](#)).

HUMAN RIGHTS ACT - refer to the [Equality Intranet page](#)

When considering the impact of this policy you should also consider if there would be any Human Rights implications. Guidance is at:

- <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/articles/human-rights-and-public-authorities>

Should this be appropriate you will need to complete a Human Rights Impact Assessment. A template is at:

- <https://www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/publications/human-rights-impact-assessment-proforma>

Don't forget to RURAL PROOF - refer to the [Equality Intranet page](#).

Part 1. Policy scoping

The first stage of the screening process involves scoping the policy under consideration. The purpose of policy scoping is to help prepare the background and context and set out the aims and objectives for the policy, being screened. At this stage, scoping the policy will help identify potential constraints as well as opportunities and will help the policy maker work through the screening process on a step by step basis.

Public authorities should remember that the Section 75 statutory duties apply to internal policies (relating to people who work for the authority), as well as external policies (relating to those who are, or could be, served by the authority).

Information about the policy

Name of the policy

Provision of a Grant Scheme to support reservoir managers with the initial costs of the Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015.

Is this an existing, revised or a new policy?

The Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 ("the Act") is an existing piece of legislation. Section 114 (Grants) of the Act is part of a suite of secondary legislation that has yet to be commenced. It is expected to be commenced following passage through the NI Assembly in 2025.

What is it trying to achieve? (intended aims/outcomes)

The Act will establish a proportionate regulatory framework for the management and maintenance of reservoirs capable of holding 10,000 cubic metres, or more, of water above the natural level of the surrounding land and defined as controlled reservoirs. This will place reservoir safety duties on Reservoir Managers to help protect people and property and seek to mitigate the risk of flooding from an uncontrolled release of water due to dam failure.

Specifically, when commenced, Section 114 of the Act provides the Department with the permissive power to pay a grant for the purposes of providing financial support to assist Reservoir Managers comply with their statutory obligations under the Act.

Are there any Section 75 categories which might be expected to benefit from the intended policy?
If so, explain how.

Yes, all categories will benefit from further commencement of the Act as it provides for the regulation of reservoir safety in Northern Ireland.

When commenced, it will establish a proportionate regulatory framework for the management and maintenance of controlled reservoirs and will benefit all of society by ensuring reservoirs are inspected regularly and safety standards maintained, with reservoir safety duties placed on reservoir managers to help protect people and property. This will seek to mitigate the risk of flooding from an uncontrolled release of water due to reservoir failure protecting all categories of people as well as the economy, the environment and cultural heritage.

Specific to Section 114 of the Act, Grants, all Section 75 groups will benefit due to the Department administering a grant scheme and funding those Reservoir Managers who need financial support.

Who initiated or wrote the policy?

The Department for Agriculture and Rural Development, which became the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, brought forward the primary legislation, however statutory responsibility for the Act was transferred to the Department for Infrastructure under the Department (Transfer of Functions) Order 2021 on 2 June 2021. The Department for Infrastructure consulted on the further implementation of the Act which includes Section 114, Grants.

Who owns and who implements the policy?

The Department for Infrastructure.

Background

The Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 provides for the regulation of reservoir safety in Northern Ireland. A small number of Sections of the Act Commenced following Royal Assent on 24th July 2015. The remaining Sections, which cover the main provisions of the Act, can only Commence through secondary legislation in the form of Commencement Orders and associated regulations, with the approval of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The Department (Transfer of Functions) Order 2021 transferred statutory responsibility for the Act from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to the Department for Infrastructure with effect from 2 June 2021.

Secondary legislation is now required to further implement the reservoir safety regime provided by the Act. When the Act is further commenced, the Department will have the permissive power to provide a grant scheme to support Reservoir Managers in complying with the Act.

It is acknowledged that the further commencement of the Act will place further legislative requirements on managers of controlled reservoirs who will incur initial supervision and inspection costs in order to comply with the Act. That is why the Department is keen to support those reservoir managers who need help with these initial supervision and inspection costs.

A Reservoirs Audit, undertaken in 2015-2016, provided the Department with information on the condition of 105 of the 132 impounding controlled reservoirs (80% of them). It found that 45 reservoirs were in either very poor or poor condition at that time.

Implementation factors

Are there any factors which could contribute to/detract from the intended aim/outcome of the policy/decision?

Financial

In line with the concerns raised in the consultation on the further implementation of the Reservoirs Act (NI) 2015 the Department acknowledges that the further commencement of the Act will place further legislative requirements on managers of controlled reservoirs who will incur initial supervision and inspection costs in order to comply with the Act.

The Department's proposal is to provide support to those who need it using powers under Section 114 of the Act. The Department is proposing to use criteria to ensure the funding is targeted to those in need. Any grant scheme

must demonstrate value for money, in line with the requirements of Managing Public Money NI (MPMNI) and will be subject to affordability considerations in the context of budget allocations in future years.

Legislative

The Department will require the secondary legislation to be approved by the NI Assembly prior to being able to pay Grants.

The Department expects the secondary legislation to be approved during 2025.

Main stakeholders affected

Who are the internal and external stakeholders (actual or potential) that the policy will impact upon? (please delete as appropriate)

Staff

Water and Drainage Policy Division and Rivers Directorate

Service users

Reservoir Managers. Anglers, recreational users of public reservoirs.

Other public sector organisations

The Department for Communities (DfC), Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), NI Water and local authorities all managed controlled reservoirs which will require supervision and inspections to comply with the further commencement of the Act.

Voluntary & community groups, trade unions, angling clubs and Charities such as the National Trust and Historic Royal Palaces manage controlled reservoirs which will require supervision and inspections to comply with the further commencement of the Act.

other, please specify _____

Other policies with a bearing on this policy

What are they?

- The Water Environment (Floods Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009
- Flood Risk Management Plan 2021-2027

- Sustainable Water - A Long-Term Water Strategy for Northern Ireland (2015-2040)
- The Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2017

Who owns them?

DfI and DAERA

Available evidence

Evidence to help inform the screening process may take many forms. Public authorities should ensure that their screening decision is informed by relevant data. The Commission has produced this guide to [signpost to S75 data](#). Also refer to the [Equality Intranet page](#) for some evidence sources.

What evidence/information (both qualitative and quantitative) have you gathered to inform this policy? Specify details for each of the Section 75 categories.

Religious belief evidence / information:

The Department conducted a targeted eight-week consultation on a legislative framework for reservoir safety in the Northern Ireland from 29 November 2021 to 23 January 2022. This provided the public, as well as partners and stakeholders in the management and safety of reservoirs with an opportunity to respond to the Department's proposals in relation to the further introduction of the Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015.

A targeted consultee list included reservoir managers/owners of reservoirs in Northern Ireland, NI Water, local Councils, Angling Clubs and others. A total of 19 responses were received.

In general, there was support for the Commencement and implementation of the Act with the majority of respondents agreeing with the sections to be commenced.

All categories will benefit from the improved safety due to further commencement of the Act (including s114 – Grants) as it provides for the regulation of reservoir safety in Northern Ireland. When Commenced, it will establish a proportionate regulatory framework for the management and maintenance of controlled reservoirs. It will place reservoir safety duties on reservoir managers to help protect all categories of people and property, and seek to mitigate the risk of flooding from an uncontrolled release of water due to reservoir failure.

The 2021 Census provides a breakdown of religion in NI. Of all usual residents (1,903,178), 42.31% were from a Catholic background, 37.36% from a

Protestant background and 20.34% were classified as Other/ No religion/ Not stated.

Political Opinion evidence / information:

As above, all categories will benefit from the improved safety due to further commencement of the Act (including s114 – Grants) as it provides for the regulation of reservoir safety in Northern Ireland. When Commenced, it will establish a proportionate regulatory framework for the management and maintenance of controlled reservoirs. It will place reservoir safety duties on reservoir managers to help protect all categories of people and property, seeking to mitigate the risk of flooding from an uncontrolled release of water due to reservoir failure.

The 2021 Census provides a national identity breakdown of the NI population. The 2021 Census finds that of all usual residents (1,903,175), 31.86% identified themselves as British only, 29.13% identified as Irish only, 19.78% identified as Northern Irish only and 19.23% identified within more than one of these categories, or as Other.

Racial Group evidence / information:

As above, all categories will benefit from the improved safety due to further Commencement of the Act (including s114 – Grants) as it provides for the regulation of reservoir safety in Northern Ireland. When Commenced, it will establish a proportionate regulatory framework for the management and maintenance of controlled reservoirs. It will place reservoir safety duties on reservoir managers to help protect all categories of people and property, seeking to mitigate the risk of flooding from an uncontrolled release of water due to reservoir failure.

The 2021 Census provides an ethnicity breakdown of the NI population as follows:

White 96.55%; Irish Traveller 0.14%; Roma 0.08%; Indian 0.52%; Chinese 0.50%; Filipino 0.23%; Pakistani 0.08%; Arab 0.10%; Other Asian 0.28%; Black African 0.42%; Black Other 0.16%; Mixed 0.76%; and Other ethnicities 0.19%.

Age evidence / information:

As above, all categories will benefit from the improved safety due to further Commencement of the Act (including s114 – Grants) as it provides for the

regulation of reservoir safety in Northern Ireland. When Commenced, it will establish a proportionate regulatory framework for the management and maintenance of controlled reservoirs. It will place reservoir safety duties on reservoir managers to help protect all categories of people and property, seeking to mitigate the risk of flooding from an uncontrolled release of water due to reservoir failure.

The 2021 Census provides an age breakdown on all usual residents. A total of 19.19% were between 0-14 years old, 31.23% were between 15-39 years old, 32.43% were between 40-64 years old, whilst 17.15% were 65+.

Marital Status evidence / information:

As above, all categories will benefit from the improved safety due to further Commencement of the Act (including s114 – Grants) as it provides for the regulation of reservoir safety in Northern Ireland. When Commenced, it will establish a proportionate regulatory framework for the management and maintenance of controlled reservoirs. It will place reservoir safety duties on reservoir managers to help protect all categories of people and property, seeking to mitigate the risk of flooding from an uncontrolled release of water due to reservoir failure.

The 2021 Census provides a breakdown of marital and civil partnership status. Of the 1,514,743 usual residents aged 16 and over, 38.07% were single, 45.59% were married, 0.18% were in a civil partnership, 3.78% were separated, 6.02% were divorced/formerly in a civil partnership which was legally dissolved and 6.36% were widowed/surviving partner from a civil partnership.

Sexual Orientation evidence / information:

As above, all categories will benefit from the improved safety due to further Commencement of the Act (including s114 – Grants) as it provides for the regulation of reservoir safety in Northern Ireland. When Commenced, it will establish a proportionate regulatory framework for the management and maintenance of controlled reservoirs. It will place reservoir safety duties on reservoir managers to help protect all categories of people and property, seeking to mitigate the risk of flooding from an uncontrolled release of water due to reservoir failure.

The 2021 Census provides a breakdown of sexual orientation of all usual residents aged 16 and over. A total of 90.04% stated they were straight or

heterosexual, 1.17% stated they were gay or lesbian, 0.75% stated they were bisexual, 0.17% stated other sexual orientation, whilst 7.87% preferred not to say/not stated.

Men & Women generally evidence / information:

As above, all categories will benefit from the improved safety due to Commencement of the Act (including s114 – Grants) as it provides for the regulation of reservoir safety in Northern Ireland. When Commenced, it will establish a proportionate regulatory framework for the management and maintenance of controlled reservoirs. It will place reservoir safety duties on reservoir managers to help protect all categories of people and property, seeking to mitigate the risk of flooding from an uncontrolled release of water due to reservoir failure.

The 2021 Census provides a breakdown of all usual residents by sex. There was a total of 50.81% female and 49.19% male.

Disability evidence / information:

As above, all categories will benefit from the improved safety due to further Commencement of the Act (including s114 – Grants) as it provides for the regulation of reservoir safety in Northern Ireland. When Commenced, it will establish a proportionate regulatory framework for the management and maintenance of controlled reservoirs. It will place reservoir safety duties on reservoir managers to help protect all categories of people and property, seeking to mitigate the risk of flooding from an uncontrolled release of water due to reservoir failure.

The 2021 Census provides a breakdown of long-term health problems/disabilities. Of all the usual residents, 11.45% stated that their day-to-day activities were limited a lot, 12.88% stated their day-to-day activities were limited a little, whilst 75.67% stated their day-to-day activities were not limited.

Dependants evidence / information:

As above, all categories will benefit from the improved safety due to further Commencement of the Act (including s114 – Grants) as it provides for the regulation of reservoir safety in Northern Ireland. When Commenced, it will establish a proportionate regulatory framework for the management and maintenance of controlled reservoirs. It will place reservoir safety duties on reservoir managers to help protect all categories of people and property,

seeking to mitigate the risk of flooding from an uncontrolled release of water due to reservoir failure.

The 2021 census of Northern Ireland reveals that Over 2,500 children across Northern Ireland are providing unpaid care to a friend or relative. Overall, the data showed one person in eight (222,200) people currently provided unpaid care to a relative or friend with a health condition or illness.

Of those 222,200, one in 25 provided 50 or more hours of unpaid care per week, amounting to 68,700 people in total.

The figure marks a rise of 22% on the 2011 Census data, which recorded 56,300 people as providing over 50 hours of weekly unpaid care. Although people of all ages provided unpaid care, it was most common among those aged 40 to 64. On census day, there were 365,200 children (aged 0 to 14) or 19% of the population. Those aged 65 and over represented 17% (326,500) of the population. The remaining 64% of the population, or 1,211,400 people, were aged between 15 and 64 years.

This policy will not impact on people because of their status with regards to dependants but, as everyone has multiple S75 identities, it will impact generally on each person.

Needs, experiences and priorities

Taking into account the information referred to above, what are the different needs, experiences and priorities of each of the following categories, in relation to the particular policy/decision?

(Specify details of the needs, experiences and priorities for each of the Section 75 categories below).

Religious belief

All categories will benefit from the improved safety due to further Commencement of the Act (including s114 – Grants) as it provides for the regulation of reservoir safety in Northern Ireland. When Commenced, it will establish a proportionate regulatory framework for the management and maintenance of controlled reservoirs. This will place reservoir safety duties on reservoir managers and seek to mitigate the risk of flooding from an uncontrolled release of water due to reservoir failure, protecting all categories of people and as such there are no specific needs, experiences or priorities for this group.

Political Opinion

As above

Racial Group

As above

Age

As above

Marital status

As above

Sexual orientation

As above

Men and Women Generally

As above

Disability

As above

Dependants

As above

Part 2. Screening questions

Introduction

In making a decision as to whether or not there is a need to carry out an equality impact assessment, the public authority should consider its answers to the questions 1-4 which are given on pages 66-68 of this Guide.

If the public authority's conclusion is **none** in respect of all of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then the public authority may decide to screen the policy out. If a policy is 'screened out' as having no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations, a public authority should give details of the reasons for the decision taken.

If the public authority's conclusion is **major** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, then consideration should be given to subjecting the policy to the equality impact assessment procedure.

If the public authority's conclusion is **minor** in respect of one or more of the Section 75 equality categories and/or good relations categories, then consideration should still be given to proceeding with an equality impact assessment, or to:

- measures to mitigate the adverse impact; or
- the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

In favour of a 'major' impact

- a) The policy is significant in terms of its strategic importance;
- b) Potential equality impacts are unknown, because, for example, there is insufficient data upon which to make an assessment or because they are

complex, and it would be appropriate to conduct an equality impact assessment in order to better assess them;

- c) Potential equality and/or good relations impacts are likely to be adverse or are likely to be experienced disproportionately by groups of people including those who are marginalised or disadvantaged;
- d) Further assessment offers a valuable way to examine the evidence and develop recommendations in respect of a policy about which there are concerns amongst affected individuals and representative groups, for example in respect of multiple identities;
- e) The policy is likely to be challenged by way of judicial review;
- f) The policy is significant in terms of expenditure.

In favour of 'minor' impact

- a) The policy is not unlawfully discriminatory and any residual potential impacts on people are judged to be negligible;
- b) The policy, or certain proposals within it, are potentially unlawfully discriminatory, but this possibility can readily and easily be eliminated by making appropriate changes to the policy or by adopting appropriate mitigating measures;
- c) Any asymmetrical equality impacts caused by the policy are intentional because they are specifically designed to promote equality of opportunity for particular groups of disadvantaged people;
- d) By amending the policy there are better opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

In favour of none

- a) The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations.
- b) The policy is purely technical in nature and will have no bearing in terms of its likely impact on equality of opportunity or good relations for people within the equality and good relations categories.

Taking into account the evidence presented above, consider and comment on the likely impact on equality of opportunity and good relations for those affected by this policy, in any way, for each of the equality and good relations categories, by applying the screening questions given overleaf and indicate the level of impact on the group i.e. minor, major or none.

Screening questions

1. **What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories?**

(Please provide details of the likely policy impacts and determine the level of impact for each S75 categories below i.e. either minor, major or none).

This proposal for grants to be paid to reservoir managers will have a positive impact for all Section 75 categories. The provision of a grant scheme is not intended to impact on equality of opportunity.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious belief**:

The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations.

What is the level of impact? **None**

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**:

The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations.

What is the level of impact? **None**

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**:

The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations.

What is the level of impact? **None**

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Age**:

The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations.

What is the level of impact? **None**

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Marital Status**:

The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations.

What is the level of impact? **None**

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Sexual Orientation**:

The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations.

What is the level of impact? **None**

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Men and Women**:

The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations.

What is the level of impact? **None**

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Disability**:

The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations.

What is the level of impact? [None](#)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Dependants**:

The policy has no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations.

What is the level of impact? [None](#)

2. Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equalities categories?

The use of Section 114 of the Act when it is further Commenced will positively contribute towards reservoir safety in NI. This policy allows the Department to provide funding to those reservoir managers who need it. There are no opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for any of the Section 75 groups. The provision of a grant scheme is not intended to provide opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity.

Religious Belief - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons: [As above](#)

Political Opinion - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons: [As above](#)

Racial Group - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons: [As above](#)

Age - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons: [As above](#)

Marital Status - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons: [As above](#)

Sexual Orientation - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons: [As above](#)

Men and Women generally - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons: [As above](#)

Disability - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons: [As above](#)

Dependants - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons: [As above](#)

3. To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Please provide details of the likely policy impact and determine the level of impact for each of the categories below i.e. either minor, major or none. Further commencement of the Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015 (including s114 – Grants) provides for the regulation of reservoir safety in Northern Ireland. The provision of a grant scheme is not intended to impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Religious belief**:

Policy is not likely to have any impact on good relations.

What is the level of impact? [None](#)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Political Opinion**:

Policy is not likely to have any impact on good relations.

What is the level of impact? [None](#)

Details of the likely policy impacts on **Racial Group**:

Policy is not likely to have any impact on good relations.

What is the level of impact? [None](#)

4. Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

Detail opportunities of how this policy could better promote good relations for people within each of the Section 75 Categories below:

Religious Belief - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons:

[The use of Section 114 of the Act when it is further Commenced will contribute positively to reservoir safety in NI.](#)

There will be no differential impact on good relations between people of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

Political Opinion - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons: [As above](#)

Racial Group - If Yes, provide details:

If No, provide reasons: [As above](#)

Additional considerations

Multiple identity

Generally speaking, people can fall into more than one Section 75 category. Taking this into consideration, are there any potential impacts of the policy/decision on people with multiple identities?

(Every citizen belongs to more than one group - For example: disabled minority ethnic people; disabled women; young Protestant men; and young lesbians, gay and bisexual people).

There are no potential impacts from this policy on any of the Section 75 Groups, including those with multiple identities.

Provide details of data on the impact of the policy on people with multiple identities. Specify relevant Section 75 categories concerned.

N/A

Part 3. Screening decision

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

Section 114 of the Act provides the Department with the power to pay a grant for the purposes of assisting Reservoir Managers comply with their obligations under the Act. The proposed Section 114 of the Reservoirs Act (NI) 2015 has not yet been Commenced. It is expected to be Commenced, following its passage through the NI Assembly, in 2025.

Consideration has been given to all of the Section 75 Groups as part of the Screening process, but no S75 Groups will be affected disproportionately. This policy will bring a benefit to the whole population of NI.

If the decision is not to conduct an equality impact assessment the public authority should consider if the policy should be mitigated or an alternative policy be introduced - please provide details of this consideration.

The aim of the policy is to support those Reservoir Managers who need it. There are no aspects of the policy that could be mitigated as this policy is not considered to be negatively impacting on anyone. The requirements for supervision and inspection when the Act is further Commenced will lead to improved reservoir safety for all of NI.

If the decision is to subject the policy to an equality impact assessment, please provide details of the reasons.

N/A

All public authorities' equality schemes must state the authority's arrangements for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted by the authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity. The Commission recommends screening and equality impact assessment as the tools to be utilised for such assessments. Further advice on equality impact assessment may be found in a separate Commission publication: Practical Guidance on Equality Impact Assessment.

The proposed policy will be Consulted on. The Consultation document will give the public the opportunity to comment on the Equality screening document.

Mitigation

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When the public authority concludes that the likely impact is 'minor' and an equality impact assessment is not to be conducted, the public authority may consider mitigation to lessen the severity of any equality impact, or the introduction of an alternative policy to better promote equality of opportunity or good relations.

Can the policy/decision be amended or changed or an alternative policy introduced to better promote equality of opportunity and/or good relations?

If so, **give the reasons** to support your decision, together with the proposed changes/amendments or alternative policy.

No impact is expected therefore no mitigation is required.

Timetabling and prioritising

Factors to be considered in timetabling and prioritising policies for equality impact assessment.

If the policy has been '**screened in**' for equality impact assessment, then please answer the following questions to determine its priority for timetabling the equality impact assessment.

On a scale of 1-3, with 1 being the lowest priority and 3 being the highest, assess the policy in terms of its priority for equality impact assessment.

Priority criterion [choose 1 2 or 3 if a full EQIA is to take place]

Effect on equality of opportunity and good relations **Rating 1, 2 or 3**

Social need **Rating 1, 2 or 3**

Effect on people's daily lives **Rating 1, 2 or 3**

Relevance to a public authority's functions **Rating 1, 2 or 3**

Note: The Total Rating Score should be used to prioritise the policy in rank order with other policies screened in for equality impact assessment. This list of priorities will assist the public authority in timetabling. Details of the Public Authority's Equality Impact Assessment Timetable should be included in the quarterly Screening Report.

Is the policy affected by timetables established by other relevant public authorities?

If yes, please provide details.

Not applicable for this proposed policy.

Part 4. Monitoring

Public authorities should consider the guidance contained in the Commission's Monitoring Guidance for Use by Public Authorities (July 2007).

The Commission recommends that where the policy has been amended or an alternative policy introduced, the public authority should monitor more broadly than for adverse impact (See Benefits, P.9-10, paras 2.13 – 2.20 of the Monitoring Guidance).

Effective monitoring will help the public authority identify any future adverse impact arising from the policy which may lead the public authority to conduct an equality impact assessment, as well as help with future planning and policy development.

Part 5 - Approval and authorisation

Screened by: Stuart McDougall
 Position/Job Title: Deputy Principal, Reservoirs Team, Water and Drainage Policy Division.
 Date: 31 March 2025

Approved by: Ryan Robinson
 Position/Job Title: G7 WDPD
 Date: 19/6/25

Note: A copy of the Screening Template, for each policy screened should be 'signed off' and approved by a senior manager responsible for the policy, made easily accessible on the public authority's website as soon as possible following completion and made available on request.

For Equality Team Completion:

Date Received:

Amendments Requested: Yes / No

Date Returned to Business Area: 4/4/25

Date Final Version Received / Agreed: 9/5/25

Date Published on DfI's Section 75 webpage:

Are you responding as:

- an individual ☐
- business ☐
- on behalf of an organisation ☒

Please provide the name of the organisation / business: Mid and East Antrim Borough Council.

Eligibility Criteria

Question 1 – Do you agree with eligibility criterion 2 that only reservoirs not managed by a public sector organisation are eligible?

- ☐ Yes
- ☒ No

If no, please provide information on your suggested changes to the above proposal.

The grant scheme is to support the costs of appointing a supervising engineer and an inspecting engineer, to provide an initial inspection to determine the condition of the Reservoir. As this is part of the further development of legislation and regulatory requirements relating to the management of reservoirs I feel that the grant should apply to public sector organisations. It's unfair to pass this additional cost/outlaw onto the rate payers.

Question 2 – Do you agree with eligibility criterion 3 that the reservoir must be designated as 'High' or 'Medium' consequence?

- ☐ Yes
- ☒ No

If no, please provide information on your suggested changes to the above proposal.

I feel that it would be good practice for all designations of Reservoirs to be inspected regularly. What is classified as "low" consequence today could fall into "medium" or "high" consequence due to bad weather conditions or lack of proper inspection and maintenance

Question 3 – Do you agree with eligibility criterion 4 that Reservoir Managers must demonstrate a financial need for grant support for initial inspection costs?

☐ Yes

☒ No

If no, please provide information on your suggested changes to the above proposal.

The purpose of the Reservoirs Act is public safety and making grant support conditional on proof of financial need could act as a barrier for the inspection of reservoirs. I would suggest a tiered approach. E.G. Full grant where genuine financial need is demonstrated and 50% for all other reservoir managers to erase the financial barriers towards compliance.

Assessing Affordability

Question 4 – Do you agree with the Department's method for assessing affordability?

☐ Yes

☒ No

If no, please provide information on your suggested changes to the above proposal.

The consultation paper doesn't explain the method of assessing affordability or how financial need will be evidenced.

The method should be easy to understand, clear and transparent so that all managers know what's required.

Level of Funding

Question 5 – Do you agree with the level of funding ie up to a maximum of £10,000?

☐ Yes

☒ No

If no, please provide information on your suggested changes to the above proposal.

I agree that the level of funding should be capped, however the level of funding given on the consultation paper is only for illustrative purposes and therefore I am unable to agree.

Payment of Grant

Question 6 – Which of the Department's proposals for payment of grant do you prefer?

☒ Department pays engineers directly.

☐ Department pays reservoir manager.

Please provide any additional relevant information below.

This would ensure consistency and standardisation for the inspection engineer carrying out the onsite surveys and reports throughout the province. I would recommend the Department carry out a tender process which would ensure the correctly qualified engineers are employed whilst ensuring value for money.

General

Question 7 - If you any further comments on the potential grant scheme for initial supervision and inspection requirements please provide any relevant information below.

I support the Department's proposal to establish a grant scheme to aid reservoir managers to meet the regulatory obligations of the reservoirs act , however until my questions are clarified it's difficult for me to determine whether the approach is fair and workable in practice.

Draft Impact Assessments

Question 8 – Do you have any comments to make on any of the draft impact assessments that accompany this consultation?

The link to all the impact assessments is available on page 5 of this consultation.

- ☐ Yes – please use the comment box below
- ☒ No

Please explain:

Council/Committee:	Environment and Economy Committee
Date:	15 September 2025
Report Title:	Greenisland Recreational Facility – Outcome of Consultation
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Lindsay Houston, Parks Development Manager
Approver:	Shaun Morley, Director of Operations

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This report is to update Members and seek the next steps regarding the Greenisland Recreational Facility proposal.

2. Background

- 2.1. The concept of a recreational running/walking track in Greenisland within the Football Club grounds has been proposed to Council by Greenisland Regeneration Group.
- 2.2. Representatives from DfC have indicated that following successful consultation and Economic Appraisal, funding may be available to the Council.
- 2.3. The Greenisland Regeneration Group indicated that the proposal had been discussed and welcomed by local residents. Therefore, an extended consultation was required to ensure the proposal met with the demands from the local area.
- 2.4. A concept design (appendix 1) was developed and consultation plan instigated (appendix 2). The consultation was carried out by way of survey and telephone interviews.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

- 3.1. The outcome of the consultation (appendix 3) demonstrates that while an additional recreational facility in the area would be welcome, the key features of the facility need to be carefully considered to ensure that the Council provide a facility fit for purpose for the majority of potential users.



3.2. The consultation report outlines 3 potential options: -

Option	Pros	Cons
Option 1 Proceed with economic appraisal for current design – 520m athletic style running track.	Will provide a recreational resource. Running clubs have indicated they would be keen to use the track for winter training.	Will not meet the needs of the athletic community. May be intimidating for non-athletic community for general fitness/recreational value eg dog walking etc.
Option 2 Re-design for 400m track	Will provide a quality resource for athletic training. May provide for the local community?	Does not provide training for other athletics eg field events. Impacts on football provision – no support from club for this option. May be limited in range of users – specifically for athletics or would general public enjoy walking a 400m track?
Option 3 Re-design to create a trim trail option.	Makes full use of the land available with no negative impact on football provision. Lighting will provide safety particularly in winter months. Football club have also indicated that if design was appropriate, it would enable increased use of grass pitches. Non-intimidating facility for general recreation – eg walking, running, kids on bikes etc.	Will not provide running track which has been originally considered.

4. General Considerations / Implications

- 4.1. **Financial Implications** – Council currently have no budget to develop this facility, and any re-designs would require support from the department or re-allocation of capital funds.

If Council were to proceed with a bookable space, this could provide income. The Football Club has indicated that they would be interested in managing this facility.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1. Officers seek to secure funding to redesign the current proposal to meet the demands from the public consultation and proceed with option 3.

6. Recommendation or Decision

- 6.1. Elected Members are asked to consider the outcome of the consultation process and advise on the preferred option to proceed.

7. Appendices / Links

Appendix 1 – Running Track Consultation Plan

Appendix 2 – Proposed Site Layout

Appendix 3 – Greenisland Recreational Track Consultation Report 2025

Appendix 1

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Running Track Consultation Plan

1. Objectives

- Assess community interest and demand for a running track
- Identify potential challenges or concerns.
- Gather feedback and provide report/recommendations

2. Stakeholder Identification

Action	Outcomes
Internal background Desktop Research/Internal review Review of previous research carried out either in relation to this project or similar Meeting with Council Sports Development Officer	- Previous research into this project has highlighted lack of need in the province with track sports well provided with both Mary Peters and Antrim Forum. - University of Ulster Sports centre close by providing similar provision (10min drive).
Meeting with Elected Members	EM have indicated cross party support and confirmed they can provide all local consultation required representing a range of groups in the area eg <i>Greenisland regeneration Group</i>
Communicate with Sport NI	See consultation report
Communicate with Athletics NI	See consultation report

- Schools/colleges/youth groups in the area – both in MEA and neighbouring boroughs
3min survey to be circulated

1	Belfast High School
2	Abbey Community College
3	norther regional college
4	Hazelwood college
5	carrickfergus grammar school
6	Carrickfergus academy
7	Ulidia integrated college
8	Belfast met
9	University of ulster
10	Hollybank primary school
11	Greenisland primary school
12	Whiteabbey primary school
13	Mossley ps
14	Carrickfergus model PS

Appendix 1

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15	St Nicholas PS
16	Carrickfergus central integrated PS
17	Woodburn PS
18	Woodlawn PS
19	Sunnylands PS
20	Victoria PS
21	Acorn Integrated PS
22	Oakfield PS
23	Eden PS
24	Silverstream PS
25	Bridge youth club
26	YMCA

- Running clubs (affiliated to Athletics NI) - both in MEA and neighbouring boroughs
 - monkstownspartans@yahoo.com
 - universityofulsterathletics@gmail.com
 - secretary@seaparkac.com
 - caharriers.info@gmail.com
 - eastantrimharriersac@gmail.com
 - malluskharriers@outlook.com
 - ballymenarunners@hotmail.com
- Whitehead Running Club
- Park Run
- Hi Elbow Triathlon Club
- East Coast Athletics Club
- Larne Athletics Club
- Larne Parkrun
- Glenlough Running Club
- Larne Junior Parkrun

3. Methods of Engagement

Survey, Format: Online, Distribution: Direct Email to Relevant parties

Elected Member engagement with Local Residents

4. Data Collection & Analysis

- Compile quantitative data from surveys
- Thematic analysis of qualitative data from meetings and interviews

5. Reporting & Feedback

- Prepare a consultation summary report

Appendix 1

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- Share results with the community through newsletters, public meetings, and websites
- Outline next steps and how feedback influenced decisions

6. Timeline

- Planning Identify stakeholders, develop materials Week 1
- Engagement Surveys, meetings, interviews Weeks 2–4
- Analysis Review and synthesize data Week 5
- Reporting & Feedback Share results, next steps Week 6



**Mid & East
Antrim**
Borough Council

Consultation Report – Proposed Recreational Walking/Running Track, Greenisland

July 2025

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Context

The concept of a recreational running/walking track in Greenisland within the Football Club grounds, has been proposed by the Greenisland Regeneration Group. As such, the Council have committed to progressing a consultation process to ascertain demand for this facility in the area.

Planning has already been sought and secured for this project; however, funding has not been secured. This consultation has been carried out as a first step prior to the development of an Economic Appraisal as part of the process for application to potential external funders.

The approx. area of open space (including current pitches) is 6ha at this site.

Greenisland Population

Area	Population (2021 consensus)	Population Comparison (estimates)
Mid and East Antrim Borough Council	139,840	134 people per sq km Approx NI average
Knockagh DEA	17,480	299 people per sq km 2 times the NI average
Knockagh H (proposed location)	2,020	4,391 people per sq km 31 times the NI average

Site Location



Figure 1 Map of Greenisland showing location of potential recreation track (red)

National Context

Local Provision

A review of facilities in the area open to the public has been undertaken (**Appendix 1**).

Outscape (formerly Outdoor Recreation NI)

A not-for-profit organization who makes it easier for people to responsibly enjoy the outdoors.

Vision

A more active and healthy society appreciate the outdoors.

Associated Targets

- The target of “an annual increase of households within a 5minute (400m) walk of quality greenspace (greater than 2 hectares).
- Public bodies, community groups and landowners to design an build in accessible quality greenspace into local place shaping through identifying priority areas for greenspace access and enhancement.



[GreenspaceNI Map Viewer](#)

Woman in Sports

Founded in 1984, Women in Sport is the longest-standing charity in its field with a proud history of securing change for women and girls. At its heart lies a deep understanding of the needs of women and girls in relation to sport and a passion to address the stubborn gender inequalities that still exist.

Based on expert insight, Women in Sport challenges the system, offers solutions and inspires change. Not only do we believe in girls and women having access to fair and safe sport for the joy, fulfilment and lifelong benefits it offers, but we care about this because it can address health inequalities and help society to thrive.

Fields in Trust Standards

Fields in Trust standard provides a consistent, instructive guide to be used alongside local standards and expectations to create appropriate outdoor leisure facilities.

Outdoor sports

Outdoor sport pitches, courts and greens, tracks and trails

- minimum of 1.6 hectares per 1000 people (16 metres squared per person) (consisting of 1.2 hectares sport pitches, 0.4 hectares courts, greens, tracks, trails or sports equipment) within 1200 metres walking distance from homes



Methodology

The engagement process included:

General Public

The proposal has been brought to Council by the Greenisland Regeneration Group indicating significant local interest in this facility. The Memorandum of Understand for the Greenisland Regeneration Group (the partnership) are summarised as follows:-

The Partnership is established for the benefit of the inhabitants of Greenisland (hereinafter described as 'the area of benefit') without distinction of age, sex, race, disability, political, religious or other opinion, by associating the Statutory Authorities, Private Sector, Voluntary and Community Organisations and inhabitants in a common effort to progress the delivery of the Development Framework with the objective of increasing the vitality and prosperity of Greenisland through a co-ordinated and sustainable approach to redevelopment.

The consultation plan associated with this proposal was presented to the Greenisland Regeneration Group on 26th June 2025. The partnership reenforced ongoing support and community by in and x letters of support have been provided (see appendix 2).

With local buy in for this proposal already in place, this consultation aimed to ascertain the wider impact and utilisation of this facility.

Survey

Given that initial work has been undertaken by the Greenisland Regeneration Group about the interest in this facility, a survey was carried out focusing organisations situated outside of the immediate vicinity with a particular interest in the proposed facility.

A focus survey (**Appendix 2**) was carried out focusing on clubs in the geographic area, both within and outside the Mid and East Antrim boundary, which could potentially have an interest in this facility.

1	Belfast High School
2	Abbey Community College
3	Northern Regional College
4	Hazelwood College
5	Carrickfergus Grammar School
6	Carrickfergus Academy
7	Ulidia Integrated College
8	Belfast Met
9	University of Ulster
10	Hollybank Primary School
11	Greenisland Primary School
12	Whiteabbey Primary School
13	Mossley Primary School
14	Carrickfergus model Primary School
15	St Nicholas Primary School
16	Carrickfergus Central integrated Primary School
17	Woodburn Primary School

18	Woodlawn Primary School
19	Sunnylands Primary School
20	Victoria Primary School
21	Acorn Integrated Primary School
22	Oakfield Primary School
23	Eden Primary School
24	Silverstream Primary School
25	Bridge Youth Club
26	YMCA, Carrickfergus
1	Monkstown Spartans
2	University of Ulster Athletics
3	Seapark Athletics Club
4	Co. Antrim Harriers
5	East Antrim harriers
6	Mallusk Harriers
7	Ballymena Runners
8	Whitehead Running Club
9	Park Run, Carrickfergus
10	Hi Elbow Triathlon Club
11	East Coast Athletics Club
12	Larne Athletics Club
13	Larne Parkrun
14	Glenlough Running Club
15	Larne Junior Parkrun
16	Carnfunnock Parkrun

Professional Bodies

Telephone interviews with key players in relation to this proposal were carried out.

Participation

Engagement Numbers

- 141 responses to public survey
- 8 attendees at Greenisland Regeneration Group meeting
- 4 Letters of Support from local organisations.
- Telephone interviews with Athletics NI, Sport NI and Greenisland Football Club
- Informal discussions 3 running club members.

Survey Responses

A total of 141 survey responses were received – a summary of the responses outlined below.

	Yes (%)	No (%)
Is your organisation located close to or in MEA?	91	9
	Respondents listed Ballyclare, Larne, Carrickfergus, Belfast, Antrim and Newtownabbey, Whitehead, Newtownabbey, North Belfast, Greenisland, Jordanstown, Monkstown, South Belfast, Mallusk, Glengormley	
Does your organisation take part in athletic activities	96	4
Would your organisation be able to travel to use a running track in Greenisland	96	4
If yes, how often	Weekly – 69% Monthly – 22% Occasionally – 9%	
If you would travel, how would you intend to get to the facility.	Private transport – 87% Bus – 2% Hired bus – 4% Other – 6%	
Where does your organisation currently train?	Local park – 61% Local roads – 71% Local sports – 19% Other – 10%	Answers included:- Local roads, parks and open spaces, school grounds.
Does your organisation pay for use of training facility?	24% Prices ranged from £30 - £100 per hour	76%

Interview Response

Athletics NI

Athletics NI welcomed potential additional training facility in the area. The Athletics community need more facilities and require a safe enclosed space to utilise the space specifically for athletics.

The proposal could be used by clubs (both athletic clubs and general running clubs) but wouldn't be used for competitions as it would not meet the standards required. Currently the only site in Northern Ireland suitable for competitive athletics is Mary Peters Track in Belfast. There are other sites which can be used for training and small, local competitions in Northern Ireland.

As way of example, Mary Peters track is owned by Belfast City Council and leased by Athletics NI and it at capacity and booked every night seeing over 300 users each evening and at weekends. This facility is at capacity, and it caters not only for athletic clubs but also businesses, sports days and other sports clubs for training.

The proposal would not replicate the provision at Mary Peters however it could provide an important training facility for local clubs. If the facility is provided and is open to all it will be used. If it is closed to athletics only it will be underutilised as it would not meet the standard required for the competitive side of the sport.

Greenisland Football Club

Representative from Greenisland Football Club welcomed the proposals and any opportunity to improve and increase the opportunities for local and visitors to the area to be more active. Key issues include lighting and no reduction in football provision on site which is already at peak use.

The priority for the football club was car parking and the increased car park is currently meeting demand and preventing issues with regard to traffic congestion and impact on neighbouring community.

The club facilitate 40 teams with over 500 players and their support network (parents etc).

Track length

The proposed track length of 520m ensures retention of the current grass pitches on site. Reduction of the track length to 400m to meet the athletic specifications would result in a removal of one pitch which the club would not welcome.

If the proposal was to proceed with a track which was bookable, the club would be keen to work with the Council to manage the bookings for this facility.

The club do not feel strongly whether the proposal is a traditional track or a trail utilising the land available but are supportive of any facility to increase opportunity for parents and the local community to stay active. The club suggested that neither a track or trail would be necessarily used by the youth members for training but could be used for senior teams for fitness and/or pre-season training.

Lighting

Any provision of lighting in this area would result in increased usage and safety. Lighting of a track could provide lighting of the grass pitches resulting in increased facility usage particularly through winter months when the club currently use other facilities (eg Valley Park, UUJ).

Sport NI

Sport NI representative welcomed the opportunity to discuss this proposal and stated first and foremost that any development or redevelopment which improves the provision of facilities for the provision of sport would be welcome. Key points to consider: -

- Length of track

The current design proposal features a 520m running track. It was highlighted that if the aim of the project was to provide additional athletic training provision in the area, it would be more appropriate to have a traditional 400m track. This would be better received by the athletic community and would provide sound training provision.

- Audience/Aim of Project

Sport NI highlighted that a key decision needs to be made regarding the target audience and consideration to the number of users for a standard athletic track versus a more casual sport facility. Are the Council aiming to provide an athletic focused training facility or a facility to encourage more active participation?

- Lighting

A key recommendation would be the need to light any facility to ensure year-round use and perception of safety.

- Shared Path

There could be consideration of a shared path with a section of J shaped athletics style track to provide training facility (Havlock Park, Banbridge) and to cater to as many people as possible.

Summary

If the aim of the project is less focused on the athletic community and more to create opportunities for people to get active in different ways eg running, walking, kids on bikes etc a trim trail type facility would be more beneficial ensuring that the facility was available and welcoming to all. It was suggested that a trail utilising the perimeter of the site would provide additional interest for users, could include calisthenic type exercise equipment which would appeal to a wide range of users (eg St Patricks GAC, Saul, Downpatrick). It has been suggested that a trim trail type provision provides a wider community asset, creating vibrancy in the local community and can be more cost effective however it is noted that this facility would have no or very limited revenue generation.

This style of path would be more cost effective.

Conclusion

Following the consultation process the following key points should be considered.

- The current track length does not meet the requirements for athletic training. To facilitate a 400m track (traditional athletics track) would impact on grass pitches and the football club would not support that proposal.
- If the Council wanted to provide an athletics style training facility consideration should be given to provision of extended athletics facilities eg track and field training facilities.
- The provision of a track facility may limit wider community participation in exercise as it could be viewed as intimidating/primarily for athletics.
- A trim trail style facility would open up the site to accommodate a wider range of abilities and could provide a more interesting experience for the user.
- Generation of revenue could only be considered for the track option where it could be booked by groups for training. The football club have indicated that they would be willing to manage this booking system.

Option 1	Pros	Cons
Proceed with economic appraisal for current design – 520m athletic style running track.	Will provide a recreational resource. Running clubs have indicated they would be keen to use the track for winter training.	Will not meet the needs of the athletic community. May be intimidating for non-athletic community for general fitness/recreational value eg dog walking etc.
Re-design for 400m track	Will provide a quality resource for athletic training. May provide for the local community?	Does not provide training for other athletics eg field events. Impacts on football provision – no support from club for this option. May be limited in range of users – specifically for athletics or would general public enjoy walking a 400m track?
Re-design to create a trim trail option.	Makes full use of the land available with no negative impact on football provision. Lighting will provide safety particularly in winter months. Football club have also indicated that if design was appropriate, it would enable increased use of grass pitches. Non-intimating facility for general recreation – eg walking, running, kids on bikes etc.	Will not provide running track which has been originally considered.

Appendix 1 – Comparison of similar facilities

Site	Owned/Managed	
Mary Peters	Owned by Belfast City Council Lease and managed by Athletics NI	Full athletics provision including safe, secure 400m track facilitating all elements of athletic competitions eg track and field. Site at capacity, fully booked by clubs, schools, business etc 5 evenings per week and at weekends. Utilised through summer holiday for Summer Schemes. Key (only) facility for athletic competitions in NI.
Antrim Forum	Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council	8-lane athletic track designed to meet international standards offering perfect environment for training and competitions. Equipped for field events including long jump, triple jump, high jump, pole jump and shot put. Throwing cage to be installed. Can be booked by groups and casual users (running option only).
Bangor Sportsplex	Ards and North Down Borough Council	All round venue with grass pitches, astro tur pitch and 8 lane athletics track. Earmarked for closure?
Meadowbank, Magherafelf	Mid Ulster District Council	Meadowbank Sports Arena has a six-lane athletic track with full field facilities. The field is also used for soccer matches. The track can be booked as a group, or an individual can turn up and pay subject to bookings. Soccer cannot be played when the track is in use and vice versa. Adult group booking - £45.50 Adult individual - £2.80 Junior group booking - £22.80 Junior individual - £1.40

Appendix 2 – Survey (see attached)

DRAFT

Appendix 3 – Letters of Support



**Housing
Executive**

LANDOWNERS SERVICES
Mid & East Antrim Area

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Lindsay Houston
Parks and Open Spaces Manager (Development)
Museum & Civic Centre
11 Antrim Street
Carrickfergus
BT38 7DG

Date: 27 June 2025

Dear Lindsay

Re: Greenisland Walking / Running Track

I refer to the Greenisland Regeneration Group Meeting last night in The Jubilee Hall, Greenisland.

I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed Greenisland Walking / Running Track, which I believe will have a significant impact on improving the health and wellbeing of the Greenisland area and the wider community.

The proposed track, based on the high return of consultation questionnaires to date, shows the keen interest from the tenants and residents of Greenisland for this track to be created.

The track has the potential to transform the lives of hundreds of adults and children alike in the community.

I urge support for this vital program and invest in the future health and wellbeing of our community.

Yours sincerely,

Roy McClean
Assistant Area Manager
Mid & East Antrim Area

From: T FALLS [REDACTED]
Date: 27 June 2025 at 11:26:10 BST
To: Cllr.Hadden@midandeantrim.gov.uk
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Greenisland Primary School

Dear Bobby,

I am writing to express our delight in Greenisland primary School at the proposed plans for a community walking and running track. This initiative is a fantastic step forward for the Greenisland community and promises to bring lasting benefits to people of all ages.

For our children, it offers a safe and accessible space to stay active, develop healthy habits, and enjoy life outdoors. Our parents and adult friends will have a convenient option for free exercise, stress relief, and social interaction. The wider community stands to gain a shared space that fosters connection, improves wellbeing and encourages a more active lifestyle for everyone.

Thank you for prioritising our community's health and togetherness through this vital project. I fully support it and look forward to seeing it come to life.

With best wishes;

*Mrs T Falls
Principal*

DRY

On behalf of Silverstream Primary School and Nursery Unit, I would like to express our delight upon hearing about the proposals for the new walking and running track in Greenisland.

As a school committed to promoting health and well-being among our pupils and staff, we are very excited about this proposal. This is a facility we would love to avail of, and we believe it would be a fantastic asset to the wider community as well.

Thank you for your continued efforts to enhance local amenities. We look forward to seeing this project progress.

Kind regards,

Louise

Mrs L. Stewart

Principal of Silverstream Primary School and Nursery Unit



Support for Greenisland Walking and Running Track



Aaron Skinner
To: [Lindsay Houston](#)
Cc: [Cllr Peter Johnston](#); [Ald Andrew Wilson](#); [Cllr Bobby Madden](#); [Cllr Marc Collins](#)
You replied to this message on 06/07/2025 16:25

  Reply  Reply All  Forward  

From: 07/07/2025 13:15

Hi Lindsay

The five Knockagh councillors, representing the Greenisland Regeneration Group, are pleased to submit this letter of support as part of the public consultation for the proposed development of a new walking and running track in Greenisland.

As elected representatives and active members of the Greenisland community, we recognise the significant potential of this project to enhance the health and well-being of our residents. The Greenisland Regeneration Group has long championed this initiative and has wide support throughout the Greenisland community and beyond.

The proposed walking and running track would provide a safe, traffic-free space for residents of all ages to exercise and enjoy the outdoors, contributing to the physical and mental well-being of our community. It would also complement existing efforts to improve local infrastructure, which Greenisland is in desperate need of.

We believe this track will serve as a valuable asset, encouraging active lifestyles and supporting the broader goals of the Greenisland Masterplan, which prioritises investment in community facilities.

Furthermore, it has the potential to attract visitors, local schools and running clubs to visit the area.

Thank you for your attendance at the last meeting and as always, we are happy to discuss this with you in more details.

Regards,
Greenisland Regeneration Group

DRAFT



**Mid & East
Antrim**
Borough Council

595

Council/Committee: Environment and Economy Committee
Date: 15 September 2025

Report Title: Operations Sub-Committee
Publication Status: Open

Author: Shaun Morley, Director of Operations

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This report is to obtain Elected Member approval to adopt the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the former Waste Harmonisation Sub-Committee and to approve the sequence of workstreams identified by the Director of Operations in terms of priority.

2. Background

- 2.1. On 30 July 2025, Members of the Waste Harmonisation Sub-Committee met to agree to a new TOR (appendix 1) and to discuss the options for the Sub-Committee now that approval had been obtained for a new recycling collection service.
- 2.2. During the meeting, the Director of Operations outlined some of the emerging issues and challenges within the department, highlighting the benefits that the Sub-Committee had demonstrated in the lead up to approval being granted to progress with a new harmonised recycling collection regime.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

- 3.1. The Operation Directorate manages the majority of the front-facing services that impact on the residents and businesses in Mid & East Antrim and generates the most comments and complaints for Elected Members.
- 3.2. Set out in the TOR is a high-level snapshot of key services that would benefit from a political input at the Sub-Committee, prior to being brought before the Environment and Economy Committee for a wider discussion and approval.
- 3.3. In terms of priority it is recommended that the sequence should be as follows:
 - Waste Harmonisation Implementation.
 - Street Cleansing.
 - Household Recycling Centres.
 - Cemetery Service.
 - Parks & Open Spaces Development.

- 3.4 It is anticipated that some of these workstreams/projects can be run sequentially given they fall under different management teams.

4. General Considerations / Implications

- 4.1. **Financial Implications** – Frontline services are considered a priority for Elected Members, the purpose of these workstreams is to maximise productivity without compromising quality. In some instances, there may be opportunities for efficiencies and savings but generally improvements come with a cost implication.
- 4.2. **Human Resources** – These will be presented in future reports, if and when proposals for change are presented to Elected Members.
- 4.3. **Equality Screening / Rural Proofing and Environmental Impact** – These will be presented in future reports, if and when proposals for change are presented to Elected Members.
- 4.4. **Alignment with Corporate Priorities and Link to Corporate Plan** – the services delivered by the Operations Directorate will help Council deliver on strategic priorities in all four pillars of the Corporate Plan.
- 4.5. **Reputation** – frontline service are of significant public interest – by reviewing these workstreams with the aim of improving delivery we are demonstrating our commitment to the residents and businesses of Mid & East Antrim that we want the borough to be a place of destination to live, work and visit.
- 4.6. **Legal** – A significant number of the services delivered in the Operations Directorate have a statutory function.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1. To seek approval for the adoption of the TOR and to agree the priorities in terms of workstreams as set out in para 3.3.

6. Recommendation or Decision

- 6.1. It is recommended that Elected Members approve the Terms of Reference and priorities.

7. Appendices / Links

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| Appendix 1: | Draft Operations Sub Committee Terms of Reference - amended |
| Appendix 2 | Draft Waste Harmonisation Sub Committee Action Notes (30.07.25) |

Operations Sub-Committee

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

The purpose of the Sub-Committee is to plan the future service delivery of the operations directive including but not limited to:

- Waste and Recycling Collection
 - Waste Contracts
 - Supporting the waste hierarchy
 - Supporting circular Economy initiatives
 - Policy development and review
 - Waste and Recycling Communications / Engagement
- Street Cleansing
- Parks and Open Spaces
- Parks Development
- Cemetery Services
- Harbours & Marina
- Fleet Services
- Household Recycling Centres

2. Objectives

- To identify new opportunities and to learn from best practice to improve the quality of services delivered in the Operations Directive.
- To identify and to bring forward suggestions to maximise the resources used to deliver services in the borough – where appropriate making use of mechanical and technological advances to improve efficiencies without compromising on quality.
- To research best practice in relation to meeting future legislative requirements.
- To make recommendations to Environment & Economy Committee as to how best to address proposals and implement any changes.

3. Membership

Elected Members

Ald T Gordon

Ald A Wilson

Cllr G McKeen

Cllr A Skinner

Cllr M Warwick

(Arc 21 Representatives – Ald M Morrow and Cllr R Quigley)

Council Officers

S Morley, Director of Operations
N Patrick, Waste Manager
D Carey, Waste Manager
A Millar, Support Services Manager
C Hunter, Acting Climate & Sustainability Manager
L Houston, Parks and Open Spaces Manager (Parks Development)
A Carmichael, Parks and Open Spaces Manager
T Law, Cemeteries Manager

Chair & Vice Chair

The Chair and Vice Chair will be appointed at the first meeting and ideally should remain in post for the duration of one year.

4. Meeting arrangements

The Sub-Committee will meet as and when required and at least once per year.

The Sub-Committee quorum will be 50% of the active membership i.e. 3 Members.

If the quorum fails to be achieved at two consecutive meetings, the future of the Sub-Committee will be reviewed by the sponsor Committee.

5. Reporting structure

A brief note of any actions agreed at the meeting will be taken by an officer in attendance.

The Sub-Committee will report and make recommendations to the Environment & Economy Committee.

Waste Harmonisation Workshop Action Notes – Wednesday 30 July 2025 at 3.00pm – Hybrid Meeting

Attendees: Cllr G McKeen (Chair), Cllr A Skinner, Ald Mrs M Morrow, Cllr M Warwick, Shaun Morley (Director of Operations)

Apologies: Ald T Gordon, Donna Carey, Neil Patrick, Catherine Hunter, Amy Millar

Agenda Item	Action Required	By
1.	Welcome & Apologies Chair Cllr G McKeen welcomed everyone to the sub-committee. Apologies received from Ald T Gordon.	
2.	Declarations of Interest There were no Declarations of Interest.	
3.	Items for Decision / Update 3.1 Appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair Chair Appointed: Cllr G McKeen <i>Proposed by:</i> Cllr A Skinner <i>Seconded by:</i> Cllr M Warwick Vice-Chair Appointed: Cllr M Warwick <i>Proposed by:</i> Cllr G McKeen <i>Seconded by:</i> Cllr A Skinner	

3.2 Terms of Reference

Overview:

- Director of Operations presented proposed amendments.
- Subcommittee to be used as a forum to steer officers and gauge political appetite on operational matters.
- It will not have decision-making powers but will focus on key operational challenges.

Discussion:

- Cllr A Skinner raised concerns about the limited membership and suggested wider party and DEA representation.
- Cllr M Warwick supported increasing representation and emphasized the subcommittee's importance.
- Cllr G McKeen suggested holding workshops for all members on major issues similar to Waste Harmonisation Workshops
- Any changes in member numbers would require D'Hondt recalculation.

Actions Agreed:

- A report on the proposed changes to Terms of Reference to be brought to the next E&E Committee (*Action by SM*).
- Workshops for all members to be arranged for major issues (e.g., as done for Waste Harmonisation).
- Maintain current membership for the next 6 months, then consider D'Hondt allocation for expanding membership.
 - *Proposed by:* Cllr G McKeen
 - *Seconded by:* Ald M Morrow

3.3 Sequence of Work Items

Noted: This item may be more appropriate for full E&E Committee.

Initial Priorities Suggested by SM:

1. Street Cleansing
2. Cemeteries
3. Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) – including commercial waste management
4. Parks & Open Spaces

4.	Next Waste Harmonisation Sub-Committee Meeting Tuesday 7 October at 2pm Tuesday 6 January at 2pm Wednesday 18 March at 2pm	
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Meeting ended 15:35

DRAFT

Council/Committee:	Environment & Economy Committee
Date:	15 September 2025
Report Title:	Economic Development Activity Report
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Ursula O'Loughlin, Head of Economic Development
Approver:	Jonathan McGrandle, Acting Director of Development

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on current Economic Development activity,

2. Background

- 2.1. The Economic Development Function includes five key strategic areas including:
- Skills and Entrepreneurship
 - Business Growth
 - Investment and Funding
 - Investment and Place
 - Town Centre Development

3. Key Issues for Consideration

The following update is to provide Members with an overview across the five key operational areas within the Economic Development Team

NAME OF ACTIVITY:	UPDATE:
Investment and Funding	
PEACEPLUS Programme	As previously reported PEACEPLUS Measure 1:1 Co-Designed Local Action Plan has been approved. Project Officers have completed the pre commencement and project implementation conditions. On 8 July 2025 Council were issued with a PEACEPLUS Letter of Offer for funding of up to €5,848,008 with a 28 day deadline to return the signed Letter of Offer. The Letter of Offer including data sharing agreement was reviewed by Councils Legal Team. These documents were signed and returned to SEUPB on 05 August 2025. The last PEACEPLUS Partnership Board Meeting took place on 25 June 2025 in LEDCOM, Larne to provide members with a progress update. The next meeting is scheduled to take place on 24 September 2025 at Carrickfergus Town Hall
Skills and Entrepreneurship	

Go Succeed Make It Programme	Officers worked with Harmony Studio (the retail element of Triangle) to co-create the 'Make It' Programme to promote inclusive entrepreneurship. Harmony Studio is a social enterprise that produces and sells a range of fragranced products. All products are handmade by adults with a learning disability/Autism to develop new skills and explore pathways to employment goals. The programme included a Content Creation and Social Media workshop, a Retail and Visual Merchandise workshop and a Meet the Entrepreneurship session. The programme concluded with a two day 'test trade' session in the Tower Centre. 24 participants benefited from the programme, enhancing their visual merchandising, confidence, promotion and customer service skills.
Go Succeed – Get Started in Business and Enterprise Pathways	'Get Started in Business' is a bespoke programme (funded by Go Succeed) which provides enhanced support for 'economically inactive' residents interested in self-employment. Registration has commenced for workshops in: • Ballymena Library 11 Sept • Carrickfergus Civic Centre 12 Sept • The Braid 23 Sept • Larne Town Hall 25 Sept Interested residents should visit Get Started in Business - Go Succeed to express their interest and Officers will follow up to arrange support. Recruitment has also commenced for Enterprise Pathways which provides enhanced support to unemployed residents who wish to work for themselves with 5 of the 16 available places now filled. Interested individuals can 'sign up' at Go Succeed by including 'Enterprise Pathways' on their online form or by emailing venturefolk@gmail.com.
Clanmil	Officers met with Clanmil, Carrickfergus in August 2025 to discuss potential collaboration on four skills and employment projects. The initiatives will be delivered across MEA and part funded by the Labour Market Partnership, MEABC and Clanmil Housing for additional places in Carrickfergus. The interventions proposed are: • IT for All - Aimed at improving digital inclusion, building essential IT skills and enhancing employability opportunities for digitally excluded individuals. • Numeracy Bootcamps - a range of community skills workshops including Number Ninjas, Crafts and Energy Efficient Cooking. • Built Heritage Conservation Event – To be held in Carrickfergus as part of NI Apprenticeship Week, February 2026. Aimed at Years 11/12 this event will

	include a range of activities around built heritage conservation and construction careers. • Hospitality Taster Programme - will include a series of inspire and insight sessions for 10 participants to explore opportunities in the sector, workshops to build skills and enhance employability and support to take the next steps into employment and further training. The in-person training element will be provided in Carrickfergus.
Labour Market Partnership – currently recruiting <u>MEA LMP</u>	Start Out and Insight Youth procurement has been completed, and recruitment will commence in September for October start dates. Community Youth Work is currently recruiting and will commence on 16 September. Work Connections has been awarded to NOW Group and commenced recruitment in August 2025 Adult Health and Social Care Upskilling is currently recruiting participants, and the Level 4 qualification will commence late September. Classroom Assistant Entry and Upskilling are both open for recruitment and classes will commence mid-September. LMP Celebration Event was held on 9 September at Harbourview Hotel, Carnlough Larne Employer Event will take place in Larne Jobs and Benefits Office on 16 September 2025. Ballymena Outreach Event will be held in Ballymena Jobs and Benefits Office on 18 September 2025. Carrickfergus28 Job Fair is scheduled for 21 October in Carrickfergus Civic Centre 11am – 1pm.
Investment and Place	
Manufacturing Task Force (MTF)	A separate update report has been tabled at this Committee.
MEANZ Business Project	A separate update report has been tabled at this Committee.
i4C Innovation and CleanTech Project	Progress on the design and planning phase for i4C has faced delay due to a 'value engineering' review. Members have approved the appointment of the PPOE to manage the Centre and the planning process and applications are underway.
HyTech NI Project	The final Outline Business Case for the £20m Hytech NI project was submitted to Invest NI in March 2025 who appointed an independent project appraiser in July 2025. Officers and key industry leads are working together to respond to queries and a casework approval meeting has been scheduled for October/November 2025.
Investment Opportunities	Officers recently met with Invest NI representatives to discuss Invest NI owned lands currently available across the Borough.

	including Trooperslane, Carrickfergus (11.7 acres), Millbrook, Larne (3.8 acres), and Woodside Road, Ballymena (28.5 acres). The site at Woodside Road has remained undeveloped for many years despite a number of enquiries from businesses. Invest NI advised that a large portion of the site is on a flood plain, with a significant cost estimate to alleviate this and have agreed to look at options to maximise usage of all Invest NI lands across the Borough.
International Relations	The Chinese Consul General in Belfast Li Nan paid an official visit to the Borough in July 2025 and met with the Mayor and Officers. Discussions included strengthening economic and trade collaboration with MEA and promotion of more practical outcomes with the sister-city relationship between MEA and Donghai, China. The delegation visited the Ecos Hub, Hydrogen Training Lab and Slemish Market Garden.
Ecos Hub	Room bookings for the remainder of the year and for 2026 are steady with a promotional campaign planned for Q4. The building remains at 97% occupancy with one single vacant unit being converted to a hot desking facility.
Business Growth	
Go Succeed Grow & Scale	The blended delivery model will support 97 businesses via Council's Client Managers. Additional support will be offered to 24 businesses across Retail and Social Enterprise, the MEA Food & Drink Network and Masterclasses. In addition, Business Client Managers have designed three bespoke programmes to further support local companies on their sustainability, growth and digitalisation journeys. Green to Grow (Phase 2) will support up to 15 businesses on their sustainability journey to understand energy efficiency and how to implement green practices. Programme duration is September 2025 – February 2026. Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) Opportunities Programme, developed in partnership with NIHE to help MEA construction sector businesses gain insights and hands on support to win new contracts and expand their income sources. Supporting up to 10 businesses, offering access to contracts backed by a total funding pool of £1.78 million. The programme will open to applications in September 2025 with all delivery completed by February 2026. Digital Edge (Phase 2) will support up to 15 businesses to enhance their digital marketing strategies, harness the power

	of AI technologies, and refine their online presence. The programme will run from September 2025 – January 2026.
Go Succeed Grants	Go Succeed Grants closed at 12 noon on 30 May with £33,694.08 awarded. Call 2 will open 1 October and close 12 noon on 5 November.
Augmenting Business' Growth potential via Stakeholder Supports	Council's Client Managers continue to work with local and regional Economic Development Partners and Stakeholders to make referrals to relevant supports on behalf of our local businesses. A review has commenced on the existing stakeholder relationships. Officers will conduct stakeholder visits over the next 6 months to further develop relationships and gain an understanding of new and emerging initiatives as well as identifying and meeting new stakeholders as we look to ensure our local business base is accessing as much relevant support as possible. An update on value of stakeholder supports levered for local businesses will be advised in October.
Invest NI Partnership Working <i>Update on Council's local level partnership work to increase the pipeline of businesses capable of access Invest NI financial assistance.</i>	Business Innovation Grant (BIG): Current call closed on 3 June 2025. Invest NI have confirmed that 4 MEA businesses were successful. Details of grant awarded and business names to be confirmed. Ambition to Grow: Officers await confirmation from Invest NI, once date and focus is confirmed Business Client Managers will be engaging with businesses to encourage applications.
Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF)	Call 5 of the fund is currently at application assessment stage with outcomes expected early October. In a bid to attract more applications from the Carrickfergus and Larne areas and provide further support to those who may wish to apply or reapply to call 6, Officers organised two workshops. These workshops have been widely promoted via Council's Business Client Managers, E-zine, Council social media and Carrickfergus Enterprise & LEDOM. It is hoped these efforts will generate an uplift in applications and success rates for businesses based in these areas. Tuesday 16 September Carrickfergus Enterprise Registration Link: Future-Proof your Business - Digital Transformation Flexible Fund Workshop Tickets, Tue 16 Sep 2025 at 10:00 Eventbrite Thursday 18 September LEDCOM Willowbank Business Park, Larne – Registration Link: Future-Proof Your Business – Digital Transformation Flexible Fund Workshop Tickets, Thu 18 Sep 2025 at 10:00 Eventbrite

	Call 6 Expressions of Interest (EOI) will open soon with an indicative closing date of 24 October. An in person briefing session will take place on Thursday 9 October at 2-4 pm in LEDCOM, Larne. Potential applicants can be notified directly when the window for EOI submission and application are open by registering here: https://dtff.co.uk/e-zine/
Town Centre Development	
Footfall	Footfall comparisons (July 2025 monthly report) The total number of visitors for the year to date in Larne is up +0.6% on the previous year. The total number of visitors for the year to date in Ballymena is slightly down on the previous year –1.6%. The social unrest in June may have impacted on footfall to the town. The total number of visitors for the year to date in Carrickfergus is now up +2.5% on the previous year. Several summer events have taken place in June and July including, Learning Disability Pride, Royal Landing event, Fun Fair and Artisan Market.
Carrickfergus Artisan Market	The August Artisan Market took place on Saturday 2 August in Market Place with 9 traders in attendance. The number of traders usually fluctuates during the summer months due to holidays and other vendor commitments. Footfall was steady throughout the day with the weather staying dry and warm. Traders reported a great day of sales. In addition, the regular artisan traders were given the opportunity to trade at the Carrick Coastal Vibes event on Bank Holiday Monday and reported a fantastic day. The September Artisan Market also took place on Saturday 6 September with 12 traders in attendance. The next market will take place on Saturday 4 October and will now move indoors to the Town Hall during the autumn/winter months.
Business Support	Ongoing business engagement via the Town Centre Newsletter, this e-zine is disseminated to the Town Centre businesses at the beginning of each month. Each newsletter is bespoke to each Town Centre and includes upcoming events, updates and opportunities from stakeholders and Council Departments. The business engagement officer has been reaching out to the new businesses in the Town Centres. Toddler Sense, Northeast NI is opening on West Street, Carrickfergus in September.

	The Food Safety Training and Health & Safety at work accredited training began on Monday 8 September in the 3 Towns with over 40 participants taking part. Based on the expressions of interest, 3 training sessions ran in Carrick and 1 in each of Ballymena and Larne.
Town Centre Activity	A range of activity has taken place in each Town Centre throughout the summer months; • Cirque du Carrickfergus event took place on Saturday 5 July. • Support to Around the Town Music festival, Carrickfergus • Carrick Coastal Vibe Artisan Market took place on the 25 August • Broadway Summer Carnival (Larne) took place on Friday 25 July • Feel Good Friday music sessions in Broadway started on Friday 18 July and ran for 6 weeks. • Ballymena Summer Carnival event took place on Saturday 16 August as a joint venture with Ballymena BID in Wellington Court. The activity for September/October is currently being planned, and the following has been scheduled: • Ballymena Fall Fashion show on Friday 26 September in The Braid. This is a joint venture with Ballymena BID. • Principal sponsor of Ballymena Business Excellence Awards 23 October • Fun & Fright Carnival in Broadway, Larne on Thursday 30 October • Halloween silent Disco in Carrickfergus Town Hall on Thursday 30 October
Shop Front Improvement Grants	The Shop Front Grant scheme (phase 2) is now complete 74 Town Centre Businesses completed their project and received a Total Grant amount of £224,187.19 Officers are developing a further programme that is envisaged to be rolled out in the Autumn.
Pavement Cafe Support	11 hospitality businesses have availed of outdoor furniture including, tables, chairs and hedging.
Town Centre CCTV	An application for funding has been made to the Department for Communities for the provision of CCTV in Carrickfergus and Larne Town Centre and the upgrading of the CCTV cameras and monitoring equipment in Ballymena.
Revitalise Steering Group	Officers from the Town Centre and the Regeneration team continue to support the Revitalise Steering Group to develop and roll out regeneration projects and initiatives for each of the

	Town Centres as prioritised in the Investment Plans and Town Centre strategies.
Encouraging Footfall	Cross Departmental development work is ongoing to identify opportunities to encourage footfall and rejuvenate the Town Centres.
Post Project Evaluation	A requirement of the DfC funded projects is to carry out surveys with businesses and shoppers in each town. This work concluded on 21 August 2025 in Ballymena.
Sound System for Carrickfergus & Ballymena	Officers are working to install the new sound system in Ballymena and Carrickfergus, this will be a similar set up to the Larne system.

4. General Considerations / Implications

No implications relating to this update report.

5. Proposed Way Forward

The report is presented for noting.

6. Recommendation or Decision

Elected Members are asked to note the updated Economic Development Activity report.



Council/Committee:	Environment and Economy Committee
Date:	15 September 2025
Report Title:	MEANZ Business Update
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Ursula O'Loughlin, Head of Economic Development
Approver:	Jonathan McGrandle, Acting Director of Development

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the Innovate UK funded MEANZ (Mid & East Antrim Net Zero) project which aimed to demonstrate how local authorities can act as effective enablers of Net Zero transformation across both the public and private sectors.

2. Background

- 2.1. In May 2023, Mid & East Antrim Borough Council (MEABC) were awarded £299,454 from Innovate UK's prestigious Fast Followers Programme. This was a two-year initiative (July 2023 to June 2025) with MEABC one of 21 local authorities across the UK, and just one of 3 from Northern Ireland to secure funding, standing out for our innovative vision, commitment to collaboration, and potential to accelerate clean growth within the region.
- 2.2. The MEANZ Business project developed by MEABC under this programme aligned with the programme criteria and objectives which were to address non-technical obstacles to achieving net zero, including challenges around data access and digitalisation, regulatory and planning system bottlenecks, and widespread business capacity and capability gaps.
- 2.3. The funding awarded included costs towards the appointment of a full-time Net Zero Innovation and Delivery Manager to manage and deliver the project, foster cross-sectoral partnerships and act as a central convenor and catalyst for Net Zero, embedding lasting capability within the region.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

- 3.1 Between July 2023 and June 2025, the MEANZ Business project developed and delivered initiatives designed to increase awareness and understanding of Net Zero both within Council and across the local business network and build the capacity and capability in the area to help tackle a range of non-technical barriers to achieving Net Zero.
- 3.2 Programme activity included a range of best practice and information sharing opportunities designed to dispel myths relating to Net Zero, increase visibility of good practice and demonstrate our Net Zero capabilities in the area.

- 3.3 The project also included delivery of a range of practical initiatives designed to increase capacity and capability in relation to Net Zero, address non-technical barriers such as data, digitalisation, finance and community engagement, and help Council and local industry make progress on their decarbonisation journeys. These activities included:

Activity	Description	Desired Outcomes
Best Practice Sharing	A series of Net Zero Insights webinars, best practice visits and Technical Assistance Partner workshops.	Increased knowledge, awareness, understanding and visibility of a wide range of Net Zero and sustainability initiatives, approaches or supports. Benefitting both Council staff and industry representative across the Borough, this activity helps to create a culture of innovation, develop a willingness to be pro-active among companies and stakeholders and provides confidence that we have the capability, the opportunity and the resources required to make positive change.
CleanTech CGN Support	Support for technical facilitation of the CleanTech Collaborative Growth Network, bringing companies together to work collectively on their decarbonisation and sustainability journeys.	Increased knowledge, awareness, understanding and practical implementation of Net Zero initiatives. Collaboration and joint working opportunities facilitated, including knowledge and information sharing. Develop a more knowledgeable, informed and capable group of leading industry representatives across Mid & East Antrim in relation to Net Zero, sustainability and decarbonisation.
Emissions Reporting Toolkit	A bespoke and practical emissions reporting toolkit software solution developed for companies, by companies.	A bespoke emissions reporting software toolkit, user guide and information pamphlet developed for companies within the Borough wishing to understand, calculate and report their carbon emissions. Companies now have access to a toolkit, which is relevant across different sectors, to help them calculate and analyse emissions and help them report in future.



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Capacity Building Courses	Business Sustainability Essentials course and a series of Carbon Awareness training sessions for employees within local companies.	A wide range of employees across companies and organisations within Mid & East Antrim, at various levels and in various different sectors, with a better knowledge and understanding of how to make their businesses more sustainable and how carbon impacts their environment, job roles, organisations and sectors. This results in a more capable, informed and Net Zero ready workforce and industry in Mid & East Antrim, positioning the area to take full advantage of opportunities related to Net Zero, decarbonisation and sustainability initiatives.
Communication and Engagement Plan	A Communication and Engagement Planning exercise to guide communication strategies and engagement activities in preparation for the Gas Blending Demonstration project as part of HyTech NI project.	A comprehensive plan now developed and in place to help guide the important communication and engagement activity which will be associated with the HyTech NI Gas Blending Demonstration project at St Patrick's Barracks. This will help project delivery agents to manage risk and reputation, reduce the potential for misinformation, create opportunities for engagement with all stakeholders and the public and ultimately ensure that the project runs smoothly from a communications and public relations perspective.
MEA Carbon Baseline Report	Development of a comprehensive carbon baseline report for the Mid & East Antrim Council area, taking in emissions from across various sectors and industries.	A comprehensive report for the Borough as a whole, increasing staff awareness and understanding of where carbon emissions are coming from, the industries which are most impactful and where we should be focusing our future supports.
Renewables Capacity Building Programme	A bespoke capacity building programme designed for Council's Planning Department to increase knowledge and capability in relation to new and	Increased knowledge and understanding of the impact of renewables and Net Zero technologies on the planning process, creating a more informed and knowledgeable team to deal with planning applications which include new or emerging renewable technologies. Positions the

	emerging renewable technologies and their impact on the planning process.	Council as a leading planning authority in relation to dealing with new or emerging renewable technologies, allowing us to process applications more effectively and efficiently.
Alternative Fuels Trial	A Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) trial in Council Fleet as an alternative to fossil fuels in Waste vehicles.	Better understanding of HVO as an alternative fuel in Council waste vehicles, allowing staff to analyse and compare data and performance to inform future decision making.
Emissions Reporting Software Trial	Trialling the Climate Essentials a software tool to help with carbon data on Council estate.	Better understanding and ability to collate, analyse and report on carbon data for a range of Council sites and facilities. Increasing the availability, accuracy and appropriateness of data at our disposal to make more informed and effective decisions.

3.4. An overview of outputs, participation levels and key beneficiaries is included below:

Activity	Beneficiary	Outputs and Participation
Best Practice Sharing	Council and Industry	• 8 x Net Zero Insights webinars • 3 x best practice visits • 3 x Technical Assistance Partner workshops • 250+ participants engaged
CleanTech CGN Support	Industry	• 11 x SMEs • 5 x large companies • 5 x stakeholders • 18+ individuals engaging in 20+ hours of collaborative working • 1 x technical consultant • 2 x practical project developed • Launch of the CleanTech Collaborative Growth Network Phase 2 • Funding of £55,000 for lead SME under Invest NI's Invest NI Cluster Acceleration Programme to keep network activity going and for a technical consultant to advise, guide and facilitate collaborative opportunities for CGN members as the network continues to expand.

Emissions Reporting Toolkit	Industry	• 21 CleanTech CGN companies and stakeholders • 1 x software developer • 1 x Emissions Reporting Toolkit
Capacity Building Courses	Industry	• 2 x capacity building courses • 16 x Business Sustainability Essentials trainees • 62 x Carbon Awareness Basics trainees
Communication and Engagement Plan	Council and Industry	• 10+ consultees/organisations • 3 x key project stakeholders • 1 x technical consultant • 1 x Communications and Engagement Plan
MEA Carbon Baseline Report	Council	• 1 x carbon baseline report • 1 x technical consultant
Renewables Capacity Building Programme	Council	• 25+ Council Planning Staff • 4 x online sessions • 1 x training partner • 1 x renewables capacity building programme
HVO and Carbon Emissions Reporting Trials	Council	• 1 x HVO trial in Council Fleet • 1 x Emissions Reporting Software trial on Council sites

3.5. Key non-tangible benefits from the MEANZ Business project have included:

- Increased awareness, understanding, capacity and capability in relation to Net Zero across Council staff and within local industry sectors;
- The elevation of Mid & East Antrim's profile as a growing CleanTech hub, increasing visibility by demonstrating ability to deliver Net Zero Initiatives;
- Sustained and meaningful stakeholder engagement across Council and local industry networks, with Council and industry collaborating to deliver joint Net Zero projects;
- The establishment of strategic alliances with key public and private sector organisations, laying the groundwork for a vibrant, collaborative innovation ecosystem; and
- Development of a strong track record and a good reputation with Innovate UK demonstrating capability in delivering and managing significant innovation projects which could potentially help in securing additional funding in future.

3.6. The MEANZ Business project has been delivered successfully, utilising all the allocated Innovate UK budget and successfully delivering all of the proposed activities set out in the initial application. Feedback received from

Innovate UK as part of the monitoring and evaluation process commended the important contribution which Council's Net Zero Innovation and Delivery Manager made to the Future Ready cohort as an active participant throughout the programme.

3.7. In order to ensure the benefits derived to date continue and to maximise impacts of the project Officers will:

- Continue to liaise across various Council departments internally to build on the success of the Corporate dissemination and practical decarbonisation projects established under the programme
- Engage with local industry through various networks such as the ongoing support for the CleanTech CGN and the MTF to identify and develop further opportunities to address Net Zero challenges to support business and economic growth in the Borough; and
- Regularly engage with contacts established in Innovate UK regarding future funding opportunities.

4. General Considerations / Implications

4.1. No implications relating to this update report

5. Proposed Way Forward

5.1. This report is presented for noting.

6. Recommendation or Decision

6.1. Elected Members are asked to note the successful delivery and impacts from the MEANZ Business Project under the Innovate UK Fast Followers strand of the Net Zero Living Programme.

7. Appendices / Links

N/A

Council/Committee:	Environment & Economy Committee
Date:	15 September 2025
Report Title:	MTF Network Update
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Ursula O'Loughlin, Head of Economic Development
Approver:	Jonathan McGrandle, Acting Director of Development

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Members on current and future plans for the MTF Network.

2. Background

- 2.1. The MTF Network (formerly known as the Manufacturing Task Force) is an industry-led collaborative network focused on supporting advanced manufacturing in Mid & East Antrim.
- 2.2. The MTF was originally established by Council in 2018 in response to major manufacturing sector job losses from the JTI Gallaher and Michelin closures and has evolved as a proactive network which aims to drive growth in the manufacturing sector through collaborative actions to tackle common issues.
- 2.3. With approximately 65 members, including 35 local companies and 30 public and private sector stakeholders, MTF brings together expertise and skills from manufacturing companies, industry bodies, education and other sectors to support companies in three strategic areas: Skills, Productivity and Sustainability through Cleantech.
- 2.4. Although administered through the Council, MTF has been industry-led since inception, originally chaired by Rose Mary Stalker from 2018 to January 2019, then by Graham Whitehurst MBE from March 2019 to March 2025. Members approved the continuation of MTF at Committee on 20 January 2025 and the appointment of David Watson, former MD of Ryobi Aluminum Castings in Carrickfergus as the new MTF Chair at Committee on 3 March 2025. David took up the role in April 2025 on a pro-bono basis in service to the local manufacturing community.
- 2.5. The MTF Chair is supported by an industry-led steering team which meets bi-annually to set strategic direction and to discuss challenges and opportunities based on three key priorities:
 - Skills - to address the evolving needs of the workforce and ensure access to a pipeline of talent;

- Productivity - to include areas such as Digitalisation, and LEAN to improve competitiveness;
- CleanTech - to support the transition towards sustainable and environmentally conscious manufacturing practices.

There are three active subgroups aligned to deliver these three priority pillars, who meet and collaborate regularly throughout the year.

- 2.6. Strategic projects that have been supported by the MTF include the Belfast Region City Deal funded i4C Innovation and CleanTech Centre, the MEA Science School 'Activate Your Curiosity' programme, the Hydrogen Training Academy (HTA), HyTech NI – a hydrogen test beds project and the CleanTech Collaborative Growth Network (CGN).

- 2.7. MTF's key statistics and notable achievements to-date are as follows:

- **65 industry members** from companies and stakeholders.
- **9000+ employees** in the borough represented from both large companies and SMEs.
- **£600k in-kind** contribution in time and expertise from MTF members since the network commenced.
- **20+ network meetings** and workshops held in 2024/25.
- **£800k funding** secured from five funding partners in 2020 for development of the Hydrogen Training Academy.
- **£300k funding** secured for the MEANZ Business project from Innovate UK's Net Zero Living Programme.
- **£100k+ funding** from three funding sources for Collaborative Growth Network (CGN) programming and technical assistance.
- **£55k funding** secured in 2025 from Invest NI's Cluster Acceleration Programme (CAP) for feasibility of the MTF and a Northern Ireland advanced manufacturing super cluster.
- **75 people** gaining employment from 2021 through industry focused academies, such as Transport (includes coachbuilding and forklift), Welding, Female Manufacturing, and Larne and Carrickfergus Manufacturing Skills supported by the Labour Market Partnership, and the Manufacturing Academy supported by the Gallaher Trust.
- **300+ people** trained through the HTA, **40+ H² Gas Lab demonstrations** delivered, **5 UK-wide awards** for the collaborative delivery of the HTA.
- **2000+ school pupils engaged** throughout 2024/25 with the MEA Science School 'Activate Your Curiosity'.
- **500 pupils** engaged in two large in-school STEM events and **400 Year 10** pupils attended the flagship event in the Braid Arts Centre in January 2025.
- **20 local companies and 8 stakeholders** including academia and government involved in the MEA Science School programme.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

- 3.1. In April 2025, MTF was awarded Invest NI's CAP funding to assess the feasibility of the MTF's future and the potential to form a NI-wide Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Super Cluster with MEGA in Mid Ulster and GEMX in the Northwest.
- 3.2. Clarke Facades, a successful family-owned construction business based in Ballymena, are the lead SME company who received and will administer the CAP funding (only Invest NI client company SMEs are eligible for funding under this programme). The funding of £55,000 will cover the appointment of an MTF Facilitator to define MTF's ongoing feasibility, a Shared Facilitator to carry out a feasibility study on the potential for establishment of an Advanced Manufacturing Super Cluster, appointment of a CleanTech Technical Assistant and a number of international best practice visits.
- 3.3. The MTF Facilitator has commenced work on the feasibility study with a completion target set for September 2026. To date the MTF Chair, MTF Facilitator and Officers have conducted visits to 18 member companies and a visit with Council's Interim Chief Executive to provide an update on the MTF and CAP funding, as well as gain insights to inform the feasibility study. Each company provided valuable insight on business plans, industry challenges and opportunities, and the benefits the MTF has brought to their businesses. Ahead of the MTF Steering meeting on Wednesday 24 September, a total of 22 visits will have been completed.
- 3.4. Although industry-led by the Chair and Steering team, the MTF is administered by Council and until this year, has been primarily funded by Council. Last year funding of £15,000 was provided by the Michell Development Fund to support the costs of the MTF Chair.
- 3.5. One of the key objectives of the feasibility study is to formally establish MTF as a charity or a Community Interest Company (CIC) to leverage further funding to maximise its impact and longevity. The Facilitator is reviewing the funding and governance models utilised by the established NI based cluster partners and from best practice clusters in the UK, Europe and North America.
- 3.6. In line with the feasibility study, MTF is undergoing a rebrand which will keep the established MTF acronym but will now be formally known as the MTF Network with the letters standing for 'Making the Future'. The new brand allows for potential expansion into new network sub-sectors such as energy and logistics and reflects the focus on the future and movement beyond a time-bound "taskforce" initiative.

4. General Considerations / Implications

- 4.1. MTF is an important lever for economic growth programming and strategic projects in the Mid & East Antrim area and the CAP funding is set to



reinforce and expand this further. With Council's current strong support and with the establishment of a new operating model, MTF is set to maximise opportunities in attracting further funding and investment to support business growth.

- 4.2. Throughout the feasibility phase, local business leaders will be identified as potential board members to lead the MTF forward, similar to the governance structure for the MEGA and GEMX advanced manufacturing networks.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1. Officers will continue to administer and support MTF, will engage with the MTF Facilitator and Shared Facilitator over the next year, and attend relevant meetings, activities and training in relation to CAP to provide valuable insight to MTF Members and maximise opportunities for economic growth.

6. Recommendation or Decision

- 6.1. Committee are asked to note the success of MTF to-date and the opportunity and benefit to Council in being actively involved in this pivotal phase for MTF and to support the work of the feasibility study in achieving the best economic outcome for the advanced manufacturing community in Mid & East Antrim.

7. Appendices / Links

N/A

Council/Committee:	Environment & Economy Committee
Date:	15 September 2025
Report Title:	Hospitality World of Work Programme
Publication Status:	Open
Author:	Ursula O'Loughlin, Head of Economic Development
Approver:	Jonathan McGrandle, Acting Director of Development

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the success and activities delivered under the Primary Hospitality "World of Work" Programme and to request approval to deliver a further Primary Programme and a new Secondary Hospitality and Tourism Programme during the Academic Year 2025/26.

2. Background

- 2.1. Through ongoing employment/skills academies and school hospitality takeover days, officers have been collaborating closely with local businesses to showcase and raise awareness of the jobs and career opportunities available within the Hospitality and Tourism sector. The Primary Hospitality "World of Work" Programme was the first of its kind, designed to introduce young learners to the sector, inspire their curiosity, build foundational skills and promote the careers opportunities available.
- 2.2. Over the course of the 6-month programme, 300 pupils across 9 primary schools (Braidside Integrated Primary School, St Colmcille's Primary School, Cairncastle Primary School, Seaview Integrated Primary School, Buick Memorial Primary School, Gracehill Primary School, Castle Tower School, St Brigid's Primary School and Central Integrated Primary School) participated in a wide range of interactive and engaging activities that combined practical learning and bringing the hospitality sector to life. Local hospitality providers including Galgorm Resort, Adair Arms, Tullyglass Hotel, Papa Browns and Ballygally Castle Hotel, provided 27 external school visits focused on industry learning and facilitated a further 9 visits within the venues, allowing the students to see careers in action and engage in practical, hands-on activities.
- 2.3. In preparing for the pilot, officers reported that through extensive discussions with local school Principals, there was a limited level of business and education links at primary school level. Primary careers provision is also a key action of the Mid & East Antrim Community Plan's Progress in Education thematic groups. This programme was able to promote career pathways and enhance the teachers' knowledge of how school-based skills are used in the workplace.

- 2.4. The students were excited with the company's engagement, which sparked their curiosity in hospitality careers and helped gain diverse job knowledge, improved pay perception and enhanced their openness to hospitality careers. The teachers feedback noted that they really valued the opportunity to work with Council and local businesses in exposing the pupils to real world experiences which they could then intertwine within their curriculum.
- 2.5. Business in the Community facilitated this initial development and delivery of the pilot programme which was instigated by Galgorm Resort, Tourism NI, Hospitality Ulster, NI Hospitality School (comprising Galgorm, Tullyglass and Adair Arms) and Mid & East Antrim Borough Council showcasing great public/private sector partnership working and collaboration in promoting the wide range of opportunities available. Officers then sought additional hospitality providers across the Borough for this pilot.
- 2.6. Officers are keen to develop and expand this programme further to post-primary students throughout the Borough and have reached out to all secondary schools in Borough. Officers have reached out to all secondary schools in the Borough by emails and follow up phone calls. The following would like to be involved: Ballymena Academy, St. Killian's College, Roddensvale School, St Louis' Grammar School, Dunclug College, St Patrick's College, Castle Tower School and Carrickfergus Academy.
- 2.7. Secondary schools have helped to shape the delivery with some focusing on Year 10 students due to the selection of GCSE options at this stage and some focusing on older Year 11/12 students. This project is just one of many MEA school involvement initiatives designed to connect local talent with businesses and guarantee a skills pipeline for the future. The programme fits with the community plan's ambitions around skills development and to ensure residents reach their full potential.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

- 3.1. The aims of the "World of Work" programme are:
 - Raise awareness of Hospitality and Tourism industries and the opportunities available in Mid & East Antrim.
 - Increase aspirations with a minimum of 500 young people from primary, secondary and SEN (Special Educational Needs) schools about a future career within the Hospitality and Tourism sector.
 - Enhance pupils and teachers' knowledge of how school-based skills are used within the workplace and provide an enhanced understanding of career progression pathways.
 - Develop greater links between the local hospitality and tourism employers, primary and post primary schools.

- Build upon current curriculum delivered within schools and provide experiences surrounding thinking skills and personal capabilities.
 - Develop important inter-personal skills that are increasingly in demand from employers.
- 3.2. The programme will be promoted to all primary, secondary and SEN schools across the Borough. A number of primary, secondary and SEN schools from Ballymena, Carrickfergus and Larne took part in initial co-design workshops in August 2025 to shape the intervention in line with the needs of their young people and their parents.
- 3.3. Officers will also work with the primary schools who participated in the pilot to build upon the success of the pilot programme and integrate any feedback that can help to further improve the delivery. Council's Tourism team will also be involved, providing an overview of tourist attractions within Northern Ireland and Mid & East Antrim, the career opportunities within the sector and insight into what tourists are looking for when they come here. Activities will be built into both primary and secondary programmes for example: role explorer, developing a tourism itinerary, menu development, food prep skills, local food sourcing, developing social media marketing and video tools.

4. General Considerations / Implications

- 4.1. Financial implications – a contribution of £10,000 is requested from Council which has been built into the Economic Development budget for 2025-2026. A number of partners have also committed funding as below:

Funder	Breakdown
MEABC	£10,000 – to be agreed
Tourism NI	£4,000
Hospitality Ulster	£2,000
NI Hospitality School	£2,000
Galgorm Group	£2,000
TOTAL	£20,000

- 4.2. Discussions are in place with partner hotels and restaurants across the borough who will provide in-kind support or further financial assistance. This budget includes all aspects of delivery including session resources and facilitation, guest speakers, visits, competitions and transport (buses). This amount requested has been budgeted within the Economic Development budget.
- 4.3. The programme will be coordinated and delivered by the Skills and Entrepreneurship Team in partnership with the Tourism Team, local hoteliers and restaurants. The primary programme in 2024-2025 was

delivered by Business in the Community at a total cost of £24,000. Council will be able to deliver two programmes for the investment outlined above with a minimum of 17 schools (9 primary, 8 secondary schools) proposed to take part, 53 external school visits and approximately 17 venue visits accommodated.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1. Following on from the successful delivery of the Programme during 2024/25, Officers would like to develop and deliver further targeted initiatives to collaborate closely with local businesses to showcase and raise awareness of the jobs and career opportunities available within the Hospitality and Tourism sector to both Primary and Secondary Schools across the Borough.
- 5.2. Planning and development of the project will continue from September – December 2025 for the Secondary schools and January – May 2026 for the Primary schools within the Borough. Council Officers will take the lead in collaborating with all partners involved and delivering the programme. A recognition event will be held for participating schools, volunteers, pupils, parents and funders on the completion of the pilot to celebrate their success and any impacts or outcomes achieved.

6. Recommendation or Decision

Elected Members are asked to –

- 6.1 Note the update provided on the successful delivery of the pilot Primary Hospitality “World of Work” Programme in 2024/25; and
- 6.2 Approve the funding of a further programme with Primary and Secondary schools at a cost to Council of £10,000.00; and
- 6.3 Note that an evaluation report will be brought back to Council in due course.

7. Appendices / Links

N/A



**Mid & East
Antrim**
Borough Council

624

Council/Committee: Environment & Economy Committee
Date: 15 Sept 2025

Report Title: Retail Small Grants Programme
Publication Status: Open

Author: Ursula O'Loughlin, Head of Economic Development
Approver: Jonathan McGrandle, Acting Director of Development

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Elected Members for the costs associated with running a Retail Small Grants Programme (Revamp & Refresh) within Town Centers.

2. Background

- 2.1. In March 2021, The Town Centre Team in partnership with Creating Retail Magic, provided hands on support for Town Centre businesses to Revamp, Refresh and Reopen their retail business following the effects of Covid-19 on businesses. This support programme included a baseline audit followed by recommendations on how to revitalise various elements of their business. This included shop windows, store layout, product displays, seasonal merchandising and lighting to maximise its kerb appeal and entice shoppers through the door. A small grant of £300 was available at the end of the programme for businesses to purchase items that would help businesses merchandise or improve the look of their business to enhance kerb appeal. Some of items purchased by businesses included:

- Visual Display Stands
- Artificial trees and plants for shop windows
- Room Dividers
- Shutter Art
- Flower Arch
- Foliage for Shop Front
- Display Lighting for Window
- Vinyl Window Graphics
- Merchandising Stands

In total 31 businesses took part and availed of this support programme and grant.

- 2.2. Council, through funding secured from the Department for Communities has delivered 2 revitalise shop front grant schemes during the past 2 years with a total of £474,900 funding delivered across Town Centres. The grant includes funding for eligible works such as external painting, new external

signage, new shop fronts and awnings. The grant covers 80% of costs to a maximum of £4999. To date this scheme has awarded over 150 grants to improve shopfronts within our Town Centres.

- 2.3. Council are currently delivering the Boost Your Business Growth Support initiative in partnership with the Go Succeed Programme. It is a fully funded support package to help Town Centre businesses thrive. Businesses can avail of mentoring support in areas such as Visual Merchandising, Customer Service Training & Specialist One-One Mentoring. Retailers can access a grant of up to £3000 that can fund items which can be linked to creating new jobs, and/or introducing approaches leading to boosting productivity, to access new markets and improve business performance. There are limitations in what is eligible for grant support and the intervention is set at 50%. Any applicants who have received previous Go Succeed Support are not eligible to apply.
- 2.4. Elected Members will be familiar with the challenges facing Town Centre businesses. The increase in National Living Wage, the increase in National Insurance contributions, coupled with high running costs are presenting a financial burden to many businesses. Several of the Town Centre hospitality businesses have reduced their opening hours to save on costs.

3. Key Issues for Consideration

- 3.1 Building on the success of previous business support programmes, reviewing feedback from the businesses and identifying gaps in support for Town Centre businesses, Council Officers have developed a proposal for a Retail Small Grants Programme (Revamp & Refresh) to be rolled out from January to March 2026.
- 3.2 Whilst the shop front grant scheme is open to both landlords and businesses the Retail Small Grants Programme (Revamp & Refresh) will only be open for applications from Town Centre businesses currently trading. Businesses who have received support under other Council programmes will still be eligible to apply.
- 3.3 Grant support can be used for purchasing equipment that will help boost sales, including internal improvements such as painting, shelving, and merchandising stands. Equipment can also be purchased to allow business owners to diversify and expand their business offering. In addition, branding (marketing materials, uniforms, internal signage) will also be considered as an eligible activity.
- 3.4 A maximum grant of £1000 per business will be available with 20% match funding required from the applicant. It is envisaged that a minimum of 40 Town Centre businesses will avail of the opportunity, totaling a maximum budget request of £40,000. It should be noted that if the demand for the

scheme exceeds the total budget allocated a further report will be presented to Committee seeking further funds.

- 3.5 As part of the application process applicants will be notified of the aligned mentoring support under the Boost Your Business Growth Support initiative and will be encouraged to register.

4. General Considerations / Implications

- 4.1. Financial implications - a maximum budget of £40,000 will be required to deliver the scheme and is available within Economic Development budget.
- 4.2. Human Resources – The project will be managed and delivered by the Town Centre Team staff working in partnership with the Councils Grants Officer.
- 4.3. Alignment with Corporate Priorities and Link to Corporate Plan – the corporate plan prioritises the need to help grow, support and sustain new and existing businesses in the Borough.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1. Officers to work up the programme details, including application form, guidance notes, governance and communications plan.
- 5.2. Officers to develop a programme of evaluation to measure the uptake and success of the project.

6. Recommendation or Decision

Elected Members are asked to:

Approve the costs of £40,000 for the delivery of a Retail Small Grants Programme (Revamp & Refresh) across the three towns in Mid & East Antrim.

7. Appendices / Links

N/A

Draft Forward Plan – Environment & Economy Committee (v20)

1. Planned Agenda Items Next meeting

Items		Purpose
27 Oct 2025	- Global Enterprise Week - Economic Development Activity Report - Go Succeed Update - City Deal Quarterly Update - St Patricks Barracks Quarterly Update - DAERA NI Fourth Carbon Budget Consultation - I4C Update	- Report for Noting - Report for Noting - Report for Noting - Report for Noting - Report for Noting - Report for Approval - Report for Noting

2. Future Meetings

Meeting Date	Item	Purpose
08 Dec 2025	- Glenarm Regen Sub Committee - Capital Plan Quarterly Update	- Report for Noting - Report for Noting

3. Items to be programmed

Item	Purpose
Business Cases (DC)	Report for Approval
Business Cases for Fleet for year ahead	Report for Approval
Tenders	Report for Approval
Potential Award of Funding for THI Phase 2	Report for Approval
Greenisland Regeneration Work	Report for Update