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### Subscription 2021/22

Dear Karen

I am writing to thank you for your continued support to Sustainable Northern Ireland and have pleasure in attaching our Annual Report<sup>1</sup> (2019/20) along with a brochure outlining the support available in 2021/22. With the pandemic impacting most aspects of public life, councils have faced unprecedented challenges this year. Yet there have been many silver linings, for example the renewed sense of community spirit and the environmental benefits that have resulted from lockdown, including temporary improvements in air quality, lower greenhouse gas emissions and lower levels of noise pollution.

Last year, the World Economic Forum ranked climate change as the **number one risk** facing the world. Local authorities realise that global risks require local action, and in Northern Ireland councils are increasingly ambitious in their plans to tackle climate change. As of February 2021, 6 councils in Northern Ireland had declared climate emergencies, most have established cross-departmental and cross-party working groups and are in the process of developing plans to deliver against ambitious goals and targets.

Councils have powers or influence over roughly a third of emissions in their local areas<sup>2</sup> and have a range of existing levers that can be used to deliver local action that reduces emissions and prepare local areas to a changing climate. However these levers alone are unlikely to be sufficient to deliver Net Zero ambitions, due to gaps in powers, policy and funding barriers, and a lack of capacity and skills at a local level. Additionally, without some level of coordination from Government, Northern Ireland risks pursuing a fragmented strategy towards Net Zero. Sustainable Northern Ireland helps to remedy this by acting as an intermediary body to **lobby** for ambitious policies that are conducive to a Net Zero sustainable economy, to provide **specialist support** when needed, and facilitate **cross-government dialogue** and collaboration to accelerate progress in this area.

#### 2020/21 Highlights

Sustainable Northern Ireland promoted the 'Build Back Better' message this year, appealing to all levels of government to ensure that lessons are learned from the Covid-19 crisis in terms of taking global threats seriously, and using the recovery as an opportunity to build a low-carbon, inclusive and resilient economy.

Our **campaign** for a Climate Change Act over the summer culminated in a joint Open Letter to the First and Deputy First Minister and the UK Prime Minister, calling for a green economic recovery. We also lobbied the Department of Finance on the inclusion of green recovery elements in City Region Deal funds, and more recently called on the Minister for Infrastructure

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.sustainableni.org/sites/default/files/reports/SNI%202020%20Annual%20Report%20%28v2%29.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/local-authorities-and-the-sixth-carbon-budget/>

to provide support to assist councils to avail of funding available through the On-street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS).

Other advocacy this year included the provision of **consultation responses** including: Discussion Document on a Climate Change Act for NI; Discussion Document on the Future of Recycling; Draft Transmission Development Plan 2020-2029; Consultation on Environmental Plans, Principles and Governance for Northern Ireland, Consultation on the EU PEACE PLUS Programme; and Discussion Document on a Clean Air Strategy for NI and the Programme for Government Framework Consultation.

Sustainable Northern Ireland also provides the secretariat for the **All-Party Group on Climate Action**. The Group provides a forum for discussion between politicians, NGOs, business leaders and academics, to drive progress on climate action and sustainable development. The Group met five times this year and meetings explored issues ranging from the role of local government in tackling climate change; the youth voice on climate change; and opportunities for decarbonising the housing sector.

We have provided ongoing **1-2-1 support** to officers and elected members throughout lockdown. This 'helpdesk' function was reinforced through the quarterly forums that we facilitate – the **Sustainable Development Forum** and **Tackling Plastic NI group**, each of which held four meetings this year. These forums continue to be an invaluable resource to officers, providing peer-to-peer support, collaboration and co-ordination of public sector activities in this field.

Detailed guidance was issued on **sustainable procurement**, including sharing of exemplar tenders, policies, advice and provision of training. In addition, we developed an exemplar **Sustainability Policy** (attached to this letter) designed to provide a practical road map for local authorities on the necessary policy changes that will be required to meet local net-zero carbon and sustainability goals. We have also developed a decision screening tool, due for consultation shortly. This should be an invaluable resource in ensuring corporate decisions are fully aligned to sustainability and climate goals.

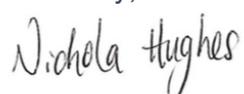
#### 2021/22 Membership

I attach a brochure outlining the support available in 2021/22. Membership will remain unchanged at £5,000 per year, and I have also included a list of additional bespoke services available on request. With a Public Body Reporting Duty likely as part of a NI Climate Change Bill, councils will need to develop their strategies and plans in preparation for statutory reporting. There is likely to be a high level of public scrutiny on councils to publish Climate Action Plans in the next 12 – 24 months.

Sustainable Northern Ireland is well placed to assist you in developing your climate action plan or strategy. With extensive knowledge and experience of the local government sector alongside our non-profit status, we may be able to offer more competitive rates than the private sector which could be beneficial at a time when council budgets are at full stretch. In addition to bespoke strategies and training, we can also assist Council in the development of funding applications, for example in the upcoming round of PEACE PLUS funding.

I hope the Council will continue to support Sustainable Northern Ireland, despite growing pressures on local authority budgets. If you decide to proceed with membership, an invoice will be sent in April along with payment terms (30 days). Members should be aware that services will cease in the event of non-payment. If you would like any additional information, or if you have any queries in relation to this request, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



**Nichola Hughes**

Executive Director