

**National Economic & Social Council  
Shared Island Consultation  
Climate & Biodiversity Challenges and Opportunities**

**Derry City & Strabane District Council  
Response**

**March 2021**

## **Background**

This Consultation Paper on climate and biodiversity forms part of a larger Shared Island Project in the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) for the Department of the Taoiseach.

The paper represents a synthesis of the current state of knowledge and prevailing policy approaches for climate and biodiversity, in Ireland and Northern Ireland, touching also on UK, EU and international policies.

Through the consultation the NESC will seek to incorporate the feedback from key stakeholders providing a basis for wider dialogue and engagement on the all-island dimensions of climate and biodiversity.

The paper focuses on five key areas:

- i. Climate Policy: Shared Focus on Increasing Ambition for 2030.
- ii. Resilience in Cities: Sharing Good Practice.
- iii. Valuing Nature: Biodiversity Accounting, Policy and Engagement.
- iv. Renewable Energy, Dialogue and Practice.
- v. Local Wealth Building, Resilience and a Just Transition in Rural Farming Communities.

## Questions to be considered:

- i. **Is there one of the 5 areas identified which should be prioritised for more detailed consideration in a shared island context? If so, which one and why?**

All themes listed in the consultation should be given equal weighting as they are inextricably linked. By only addressing one issue, it will exacerbate the other issues. The biodiversity crisis & climate crisis are both of equal importance & weighting.

- ii. **Is there another area not listed in the 5 identified areas that should be considered for further exploration on a shared island basis? If so, what is it and why?**

No

- iii. **Are there any points of clarification required in this paper or new issues which should be considered in relation to climate and biodiversity in a shared island context?**

## Climate Policy: Shared Focus on Increasing Ambition for 2030

It should be noted that Derry City & Strabane District Council have progressed a number of key climate action initiatives, these include:

- Council launched the first Northern Ireland local authority Climate Adaptation Plan in July 2020. This was part of the Council led Interreg funded CLIMATE project which created a model and toolkit to be shared across all NI councils by Climate Northern to support further local authority adaptation planning. This has successfully been launched with the NI Adapts initiative and is currently being followed by all NI councils.
- All Party Climate Emergency Working Group – established to lead and oversee climate action across Council.
- Council Emergency Declaration & Action Plan 2019
- Climate Emergency Pledge launched - 2020  
Shift to **net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045** while also ensuring that the Derry City and Strabane District Council area is as far as practically possible is prepared for and **resilient** to the effects of climate change.
- Draft Local Development Plan 2032 - General Development Principles;  
Development should demonstrate how they  
“mitigate against the effects of climate change, adapt to its impacts, and to ensure resilience.”
- Infrastructure & Regeneration –  
Detailed Climate Change Risk & Opportunity Assessments have been undertaken for major infrastructure projects as part of the City Deal portfolio.

- **Carbon Management Plan**  
A carbon management plan has been produced the scope of which is the operations and estate of the Council. The carbon footprint identified the main source of emissions produced by Council and associated scope for action including; heating, vehicle fuel, electricity, transmission losses, water, waste, material usage, business mileage, commuting, business travel.

- **Zero Waste Circular Economy Strategy**  
Developed in 2017 the strategy provides the way forward to achieving a zero waste circular economy for the city and district.

**Strategy Vision**

“resources are used for as long as possible, have maximum value extracted from them and are recovered and regenerated at the end of their service life to achieve a Zero Waste Circular Economy”.

The circular economy has a significant role to play in addressing climate change through reduced consumption, waste and emissions.

- **Acorn Farm Food Project**  
Funded through the Lottery this project will local food growing initiatives as well as analysis of the local food system.

- **North West Climate Action**

Current cross border initiatives will evolve into a wider North West Climate Action Plan. Lead by DCSDC and DCC the NWCAP will deliver transformation change through a strategic framework for climate action on a cross sectoral and regional basis. Focusing on landscape and functionality the NWCAP will deliver collaboration and shared approaches and actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change across the North West.

To affirm the region’s commitment to addressing the challenges posed, the North West Region will:

“Deliver climate action on a cross sectoral multi agency basis to achieve greater adaptation and resilience to the effects of climate change while leading by example to reduce emissions and mitigate against further global warming.”

As the region shares similar landscapes, climate threats, vulnerabilities and opportunities the NWCAP will ensure consistency of approach through working on a transboundary and collaborative basis.

It is also recognised that local authorities cannot address climate mitigation and adaptation in isolation, particularly as many issues and areas of vulnerability are beyond the remit of councils, therefore the NWCAP will work on a multi-agency and cross-sectoral basis to led and coordinate climate action across the region.

The NWCAP will seek to coordinate and deliver the following on a regional basis:

- Decarbonisation & emission reduction
  - Energy efficiency
  - Climate resilience and adaptation
  - Increased financial savings and economic benefits
  - Environmental and social resilience
- North West Green Transformation Joint Working Group – a local authority cross border working group has been established to lead on the climate and biodiversity agenda across the region. This has seen the development a Green Recovery Statement of Intent.
  - Additional issues which require further exploration in the paper include the following:
    - The need to achieve consistent and credible all island climate evidence, measurement and monitoring Systems (Including climate data, impact, baselines)
    - Ensure increased capacity to undertake climate action through coordinated training, communication and engagement programmes – ensure consistency of messages and information.
    - Emphasis on the role of all island nature based solutions in response to the climate crisis.
    - Emphasis on the need for greater adaptation collaboration beyond current emergency response arrangements and broaden the resilience agenda outside of the city context.
    - Analysis of food systems including vulnerability to the climate and biodiversity crisis and the need to address this on an all island basis.
    - Emphasis on the role of wider society in tackling the climate and biodiversity emergencies e.g. existing all island structures such as the GAA (Currently implementing a pilot green clubs initiatives), religious organisations etc
    - Increased central government support to local authorities to deliver climate action in local communities.
    - Coordinated financial and regulatory mechanisms are required to deliver climate action

### **Valuing Nature: Biodiversity Accounting, Policy & Engagement**

- The current *Valuing Nature: A Biodiversity Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2020* has been completed & the new strategy for Northern Ireland should include the development of stronger legislation & policy, to prevent any further biodiversity loss & to meet international targets. This should be aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- Derry City & Strabane District Council have created the first local authority Green Infrastructure Plan & associated action plan in Northern Ireland [www.derrystrabane.com/gi](http://www.derrystrabane.com/gi) This landscape scale approach should be considered throughout Northern Ireland, with the new powers & functions that local authorities have acquired since the Review of Public Administration in

2015. The Green Infrastructure Plan provided an evidence base for the development of the District's Local Development 2032, which includes a radical change in policy, to include green infrastructure, ecosystem services and biodiversity net gain. This approach can improve the multi-functionality of our natural capital assets and address a range of biodiversity issues.

- The consultation paper should make reference to the importance of ecosystem services and not separate this from biodiversity, as this provides a narrow view of the terminology. Biodiversity underpins ecosystem services provided by the natural capital, to include environmental, social & economic benefits.
- The top global threats to biodiversity loss are habitat loss / fragmentation and invasive alien species. These are the same top threats at a local level. Climate change & pollution have a lesser impact than the top two threats to biodiversity.
- Derry City & Strabane District Council have produced a Natural Capital Account of its 800 ha estate [www.derrystrabane.com/gi](http://www.derrystrabane.com/gi) This is currently being extended to include all public owned & accessible green & blue spaces within the District, to help manage the District at a landscape scale.
- Council are an official partner of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. We have developed & implemented Council's pollinator plan, aligned to the All Ireland Pollinator Plan. We have invested in new machinery to manage over 30 ha of our estate for pollinators. We are working in partnership with adjacent local authorities to manage our estate for pollinators at a landscape scale approach, which is more impactful with a joined up approach across administrative boundaries [www.derrystrabane.com/biodiversity](http://www.derrystrabane.com/biodiversity) This has been achieved with clear guidance on how to achieve actions & targets for biodiversity. This All-Ireland Approach can be replicated, to show the effectiveness of working across different sectors with partnership working to achieve international, national & local targets for biodiversity. This model demonstrates that a series of small scale local actions, repeated over a large area can meet biodiversity national & international targets & actions.
- The Northern Ireland Biodiversity Officer Forum, is comprised of the Biodiversity Officers from each local authority in Northern Ireland. To improve partnership working and move from policy to actions, this should be built upon to ensure wider delivery for biodiversity across the island.

## **Renewable Energy, Dialogue and Practice**

DCSDC and DCC are currently developing a North West Regional Energy Strategy. Funded by the North West Partnership. The strategy sets out local measures to achieve net zero emission by 2045 through decarbonisation, energy efficiency and renewable energy integration

The Regional Energy Strategy includes a roadmap of local measures aligned to central government and local carbon targets focused on five key themes:

- Smart Energy Management

- Energy Efficiency
- Low Carbon Heating
- Renewable Generation & Energy Storage
- Local Carbon Transport

The measures require further analysis and benchmarking and the strategy identifies a 2-year collaborative action plan across eight distinct work streams to begin the implementation process.