

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

**North West Regional Development Group
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.

Full paper can be viewed here: <https://www.nesc.ie/publications/shared-island-consultation-climate-and-biodiversity-challenges-and-opportunities/>

NESC invites contributions and submissions to help inform this work and provide insights as to which of the areas outlined should be incorporated into its next phase of this research. The deadline for response has been extended to 19th March 2021.

It should be noted that in addition to the consultation response the Climate Programme Manager is also involved in ongoing discussions with the Shared Island Unit exploring opportunities to further climate action in the North West.

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 and Donegal County Council have progressed a number of key climate action initiatives, these include:

- **North West Climate Action**

Current cross border initiatives will evolve into a wider North West Climate Action Plan. Led 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 lead 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.

Biodiversity

- All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. DCSDC have developed & implemented Council's pollinator plan, aligned to the All Ireland Pollinator Plan. DCSDC have invested in new machinery to manage over 30 ha of estate for pollinators. In addition DCSDC are working in partnership with adjacent local authorities to manage the estate for pollinators at a landscape scale approach, which is more impactful with a joined up approach across administrative boundaries 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.
- Donegal County Council has for the first time provided a dedicated ring fenced budget of €100,000 in 2021 to be spent solely on biodiversity measures between its own operations and community driven initiatives which will be matched by other funds.
- Buncrana through work of the Council, the Tidy Towns Committee and the local community has won a number of national pollinator awards over the past five years

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.

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 and biodiversity action