

Submitted to Consultation on the setting of Northern Ireland's Fourth Carbon Budget (2038-2042)
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Introduction

What is your name?

Name:
Nichola Hughes

What is your email address?

Email address:
nichola@sustainableni.org

Is this submission your personal views or do you represent an organisation?

Organisation

If you selected representing an organisation, please provide the organisation's name.

Organisation:
Sustainable NI

Trajectory

1 Do you feel this would provide the necessary trajectory to reduce Northern Ireland emissions and meet the legislative requirements?

Strongly Agree

Please provide any additional comment together with any supporting evidence for your choice::

We strongly agree that an annual average reduction of 77% aligns with the legislative requirements and provides a clear trajectory toward achieving net zero by 2050. This ambitious target is essential to mitigate the impacts of climate change and ensure Northern Ireland contributes to global efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C.

Balancing Ambitions

2 Whilst DAERA must set carbon budgets in line with the targets in the Act, what considerations/factors are important to you?

Equity among sectors – this means ensuring that all sectors of our economy play their part and none are left behind., Fairness for citizens – including our children and young people and across regions and communities., Innovation and Technological readiness., Economic opportunities including green jobs., Environmental and public health benefits., Maintaining alignment with UK, Ireland, and global emissions reduction targets., Taking account of scientific advice and the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland., Fairness to future generations.

Other Factor:

Please provide any additional comment in support of your choices above::

We agree with all the considerations listed. The transition to a low-carbon economy must be fair and inclusive. Equity among sectors is critical to prevent disproportionate burdens being placed on specific industries. Investment in low-carbon innovation can drive economic growth and create green jobs while addressing climate change. Additionally, prioritising environmental and public health benefits will improve the quality of life for all citizens and could reduce the risk of public backlash to climate policies. Maintaining alignment with national and international targets will ensure Northern Ireland does its fair share to contribute to the national and global effort to combat climate change.

Impacts and Benefits

3 Do you have any views on the potential impacts (positive and negative) that will be realised in Northern Ireland reducing its emissions to meet the proposed Fourth Carbon Budget?

Please provide comments::

A) Financial Impacts: While there may be upfront costs associated with transitioning to low-carbon technologies (e.g. the electrification of home heating) these or other investments will lead to long-term savings for citizens (e.g. through energy efficiency) and reduced reliance on imported fossil fuels. It is expected that the long-term financial savings will offset the upfront investment costs. Additionally, research demonstrates that the economic costs of climate inaction and resulting damages substantially exceed the costs of decarbonising the economy (e.g. Stern, 2006; IPCC, 2022).

- B) Economic Impacts: The shift to a green economy presents significant opportunities for job creation in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and green infrastructure. Research suggests that investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency generally create more jobs than comparable investments in gas, oil or coal generation - including considerations of job quantity, quality, and required skillsets (Job creation in a low carbon transition to renewables and energy efficiency: a review of international evidence, 2024)
- C) Social Impacts: Reducing emissions will improve air quality and public health, particularly in urban areas. However, climate policies and supporting financial measures must ensure that vulnerable communities are supported during the transition.
- D) Rural Impacts: Rural areas can benefit from renewable energy projects, such as solar farms, but care must be taken to protect rural incomes from abrupt shifts in agricultural models, and preserve natural landscapes and biodiversity.
- E) Equality Impacts: Policies must address inequalities to ensure all communities, including low-income and marginalised groups, benefit from the transition and that the transition doesn't exacerbate any existing socio-economic tensions in Northern Ireland.
- F) Impact on Children and Young People: Achieving the Fourth Carbon Budget will safeguard the future for younger generations, ensuring they inherit a sustainable and liveable planet.

Other Comments

4 We appreciate your feedback on the previous questions. This comments box is to provide you with the opportunity to add anything further that you have not already had an opportunity to do so regarding the Fourth Carbon Budget. Please provide any additional comments you wish to make:

Other:

Sustainable NI would like to emphasises the importance of public engagement and education in achieving the Fourth Carbon Budget. Raising awareness about the benefits of emissions reductions and involving communities in decision-making will foster a sense of ownership and commitment to the targets, rather than viewing climate targets as a threat or burden.

We would also urge DAERA to prioritise nature-based solutions, such as peatland restoration and tree planting, which provide co-benefits for biodiversity and carbon sequestration as well as tourism and recreation. We note from the draft Climate Action Plan that DAERA will establish clear monitoring and reporting mechanisms to track progress. This is important as it will ensure accountability for each carbon budget.