

Minutes

All Party Group on Climate Action

26 November 2021 | 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

At: Virtual

Members in attendance: Rachel Woods MLA, John Blair MLA, Cllr Maeve O'Neill, Cllr Siobhan Currie

In attendance: Nichola Hughes, Nathan Fairley, Hannah Toner, Alex Tennant, Amy Bell, Andy Frew, Anne Forde, Barry McCarron, Bob Hanna, Charlotte Daly, Christine Watts, Ciaran McGrath, David Rooney, Debbie Caldwell, Emma Adair, Fiona Gallon, Ian Gordon, Jade Berman, Jamie Rea, Jayanta Mondol, Jim Mairs, Johnny Stewart, Kerry Watton, Marcella Kinsella, Margaret McMahon, Tom Woolley, Maeve O'Neill, Cathy Burns, Stephanie McEvoy, Rebekah Corbett.

Attendees: 34

Apologies: Cllr Brian Smyth, Cllr Donal McPeake, Cllr Lauren Kendall, Cllr Terry Andrews

1	Opening Remarks
	Rachel Woods MLA (RW), Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting.
1.1	Apologies
	Apologies were recorded.
1.2	Chair's Business
	<p>RW noted her personal experience of Cop26 and her thoughts on its impact following her trip to Glasgow for the conference.</p> <p>She noted that as the Energy Strategy has not yet been published the item had been removed from the agenda, and an updated agenda had been circulated.</p> <p>Action: RW to write to Minister Lyons for an updated timeline of the publication of the Energy Strategy.</p> <p>RW noted that the schedule of future APG meetings is under review due to the volume of business in the Assembly. She asked members of the group to note the planned dates of future meetings (10 December, 28 January).</p>
2	Meeting Admin
2.1	Minutes of meeting on 29 October 2021
	Minutes of the meeting on 29 October were approved: proposed by Debbie Caldwell and seconded by Cllr Siobhan Currie.

3	Presentation: ‘The Clean Green Energy Machine’
	<p>RW welcomed youth representatives Hannah Toner (HT) and Nathan Fairly (NF) from ‘Northern Ireland 2035’ which is part of a Legacy Campaign run by Common Purpose which invests in young people across the world so they can become a connected generation of leaders with a clear vision for the future.</p> <p>View presentation here.</p> <p>Contact: maria.mcconville@commonpurpose.org</p> <p>Q&A followed.</p> <p>Belfast Climate Commissioner Debbie Caldwell (DC) thanked youth representatives for their ideas, noting it was the culmination of just four days work. She offered to link the representatives with Belfast City Council and its climate working groups to facilitate sharing of Legacy Programme ideas at city level.</p> <p>RW highlighted local funding streams such as Live Here Love Here and suggested contacting local councils to request funding to demonstrate their ideas.</p> <p>RW asked the youth representatives if they think eco anxiety is growing issue in their age group?</p> <p>HT said she is seeing it becoming an issue in children as young as primary school age who worry the earth is on fire. Some of the underlying anxiety is fuelled by the fact that climate change a major threat but appears to be ignored by mainstream media and is therefore perceived to be not an urgent issue. The solution is to convert this anxiety into practical action. NF said there is generally a sense of anxiety among young people about what the future will look like. He takes hope in the fact that China have now set out a plan for Net Zero. Also the innovative solutions showcased in the Earth Shot Prize were encouraging.</p> <p>Andy Frew (AF) noted the decarbonisation of transport is a significant challenge for Northern Ireland. He asked how young people get around these days?</p> <p>NF said he uses a petrol car for the most part. He would like to drive an EV, but they are too expensive for most young people. HT said that during the week when at university in Belfast she walks but relies on a car at the weekend.</p> <p>John Blair MLA (JB) noted that he is working with others to promote active travel and park and ride solutions to relieve greater Belfast congestion issues stemming from commuting. He noted progress to date to extend and connect cycle paths along the North Foreshore. The next phase of work will add safe crossings for cyclists.</p> <p>Cllr Maeve O’Neill (MON) asked the young people how they feel the transformational change needed to avert climate breakdown will come about?</p> <p>NF said the youth climate strikes have done a great job in getting climate breakdown on the political agenda. He thinks change will be very slow in Northern Ireland given the fact there are two competing Climate Change Bills. They both think it will be up to people to start making changes. We shouldn’t wait for legislation.</p> <p>HT added that the first step in progress is the willingness of those in power to listen. They thanked the Group for listening to their presentation today.</p> <p>RW thanked HT and NF for their engagement with the All Party Group.</p>

4	Presentation: COP26 / UK Climate Change Risk Assessment Update
	<p>RW welcomed Jade Berman from Climate NI to give a brief overview of the Cop26 conference outcomes and key findings of the Climate Change Risk Assessment for Northern Ireland.</p> <p>View presentation here.</p> <p>Contact: jade@climatenorthernireland.org.uk</p> <p>Q&A followed.</p> <p>RW thanked JB for her presentation, noting that it was extremely informative. She asked what are the principles of a good climate change mitigation plan?</p> <p>JB noted that mitigation and adaptation measures should be integrated in a single plan if possible. They should be addressed in tandem. Features of a good plan include a clear understanding of the baseline situation, seek input from a range of stakeholders, set out a clear vision, what the evidence gaps are, and use best practice where possible.</p> <p>RW asked how well NI is doing at the minute in terms of mitigation?</p> <p>JB noted that there was only a 1% reduction in CO2e emissions in the 2019 annual greenhouse gas emissions report, which is not good enough. We need to do much more.</p> <p>JB noted that a range of land management issues appear to be treated in isolation, e.g., peatland management, transport, housing. He asked how government should tie them together – should there be an overarching Land Management Strategy?</p> <p>JB said that whilst it was positive there are so many strategies being developed, it is important that they work cohesively. She highlighted gaps in terms of shoreline management. Any land use strategy should be cross-sectoral and include natural and built heritage. It should look at how to use land more effectively.</p> <p>MON noted that it would be the poorest in society that will be most affected by climate change. She noted climate finance commitments should be in the trillions, not the billions, which is the case at present. She thanked JB for her presentation.</p> <p>Stephanie McEvoy (SME) discussed ‘Farming Carbon’ - a local initiative to develop a more regenerative model of farming and help local businesses offset their environmental impact. She noted that fields on the farm that had better soil quality are more porous and less likely to flood. She is keen to introduce resilience measures onto her farm and requested more information on this.</p> <p>Cllr Siobhan Currie (SC) requested more information on the farming carbon, as Fermanagh and Omagh is a rural district, and she is keen to promote and share good practice. SC highlighted the fact that FODC is the first Council to launch its Sustainable Development and Climate Change Plan. It includes adaptation and mitigation measures for the Council, its partners, and the wider community. Flooding is a key issue for the district. She encouraged stakeholders to encourage ambitious planning policies in the LDP when it goes out for consultation in the new year, following independent examination.</p> <p>JB highlighted the TalX project (Transboundary Adaptation Learning Exchange) as an example of best practice. TalX aims to establish an innovative learning network to enable a cohesive approach for measuring and acting on climate change</p>

	<p>adaptation across boundaries.</p> <p>Action: NH to share details of Farming Carbon with members of the group.</p>
5	AOB
	JB noted that there was no further business.
6	Summary and close
	<p>JB thanked all the speakers for their informative presentations.</p> <p>He summarised action points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RW to write to Minister Lyons requesting an update on the status of the Energy Strategy • NH to circulate details of Farming Carbon <p>He noted that next APG meeting was due to take place on Friday 10 December at 10:00am but is under review subject to Member availability. The date of the next meeting will be confirmed following the meeting.</p> <p>JB thanked members for attending. Meeting closed at 11.30.</p>