

Minutes

All Party Group on Climate Action

28 October 2020 | 13:00pm

at Virtual

Members in attendance: Rachel Woods MLA, Andrew Muir MLA, Jim Wells MLA, John Blair MLA, Kellie Armstrong MLA, Philip McGuigan MLA, Cllr Billy Webb (A&NBC), Cllr Brian Smyth (BCC), Cllr Eddie Thompson (ANDBC), Cllr Gregg McKeen (MEABC), Cllr Martin Gregg (LCCC), Cllr Peter McReynolds (BCC), Cllr Mary Durkan (DCSDC), Cllr Siobhan Currie (FODC), Cllr Roisin Lynch (ANBC), Cllr Terry Andrews (NMDDC)

In attendance: Nichola Hughes (SNI), Allison Miller (SNI), Andrew Frew (NIHE), John Barry (QUB), Sarah Allan (Involve), Amanda Slevin (QUB), Andra Vladu (NICCY), Anna Kernahan (Fridays for Future), Anurag Deb (QUB), Arlene McGowan (DAERA), Charlotte Daly (FODC), Christine Watts (NI Assembly), Emma Adair (ANDBC), Geraldine Noe (BITC), Heather Pollock (Groundwork NI), Jacqueline Gibson (Belfast Harbour), Jade Berman (Climate NI), Jane McCullough (Climate NI), James Orr (Friends of the Earth), Johnny Stewart (Weber Shandwick), Jonathan Bell (RSPB NI), Joseph Ireland (QUB), Joseph Kilroy, Karen Smyth (NILGA), Kate Livingstone (Alliance Party), Kerry Melville (NIEL), Laura Neal (Friends of the Earth), Leo Strawbridge (DCSDC), Lorraine Whitmarsh (Climate Assembly UK), Malachy Campbell (NIEL), Margaret McMahon (FODC), Martin Campbell (CCGBC), Martin Hearty, Michael McCallion (DAERA), Nuala Flood (QUB), Rebekah McCabe (Involve), Richard McLernon (BCC), Robert Clements (NIHE), Shauna Doherty (Ulster University), Sophie Elder (National Trust), Steven Agnew (Renewables NI), Tracey (Climate Assembly UK), Victoria Magreehan (National Trust)

Apologies: Cllr Jill Macauley (ABCBC), Caitriona Mullan, Joanne Sherwood (RSPB), Barry McCarron (South West College)

1. Welcome	<p>Rachel Woods MLA (RW), Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were recorded.</p> <p>RW noted a technical issue in providing the minutes of the last meeting and proposed moving them at the next meeting. RW noted that she had written to all Ministers on behalf of the APG, requesting an update on departmental activity on climate change. Most of the responses have been received and the item will be picked up at the next meeting. It was noted that following a discussion on wind development at the August meeting, a summary of local council approaches to wind turbine development had been provided.</p>
2 Belfast Climate Commission Report – Pathways to Decarbonisation	<p>RW welcomed Prof. John Barry (JB) to provide an update on the Belfast Climate Commission and its report – Pathways to Decarbonisation.</p> <p>There was a short discussion around the recommendations of the report.</p>

	<p>John Blair (JB) highlighted the issue of commuter traffic in Belfast coming predominantly from outside the Belfast jurisdiction, and the importance of buy-in and coordination with other local authority areas. John Barry noted that Translink were represented on Belfast Climate Commission and accepted the need for a broader discussion around transport beyond the Belfast geographic boundary.</p> <p>Kellie Armstrong (KA) enquired if there is a preferred method or solution for low carbon retrofit and if the supply chain in Northern Ireland would be equipped to satisfy demand. JB said the technology and skills exist. He recommended that Members invite NI Housing Executive to present on the latest House Condition Survey for Northern Ireland and opportunities for retrofit. Members put forward suggested contacts for the APG including Paul McCormack (Belfast Metropolitan College) and John Armstrong (Construction Employers Federation NI) and the APG on Housing.</p>
3	Climate Assembly UK Report – Path to Net Zero
	<p>RW welcomed Sarah Allan and Lorraine Whitmarsh from Climate Assembly UK who give a presentation on the Assembly’s report – Path to Net Zero (full report available at: https://www.climateassembly.uk/report/). A resident, Tracey, gave a short testimony of her experience, as one of four residents selected to take part in the process.</p> <p>RW thanked the group for their presentation and welcomed a similar approach in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>There was a short Q&A.</p> <p>Jim Wells (JW) asked who else from Northern Ireland participated and how were they selected, noting very high levels of agreement by the Assembly on certain issues. Sarah Allan (SA) confirmed that four citizens from NI has participated and that a process of random stratified sampling had taken place from a representative population sample.</p> <p>Joseph Ireland (JI) enquired about the level of evidence presented to the Assembly on geothermal renewable energy. SA noted that it was considered but not in as much depth as wind and solar, which are considered to be established technologies and show greatest potential.</p> <p>RW asked how the report would be used by parliamentary committees in Westminster. SA noted the BEIS parliamentary select committee is launching an inquiry to regularly review the government's progress in implementing the assembly's recommendations. Also the Committee on Climate Change is using the report to inform the 6th Carbon Budget.</p>
4	Climate Change Bill
	<p>RW invited Amanda Slevin (AS), James Orr and Anurag Deb to speak on behalf of Climate Coalition NI on the Private Members Bill (Climate Change Bill for Northern Ireland). Following the presentation on the Bill, there was a Q&A.</p> <p>The speakers provided clarity on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> AS confirmed DUP MLAs were invited to participate in sponsoring the Bill but did not respond to emails sent, JW recommended further discussions with the DUP to ensure their support for the Bill

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In response to a query about a Bill being drafted by DAERA, AD confirmed there was no other Bill on the table when the Bill was submitted to the Speakers' Office • In response to a query about the weight of the legislation and whether it places a duty on statutory bodies, AD confirmed that the Bill would place a duty on the NI Assembly to achieve the overarching climate objective, not just contribute to achieving it. If the objective(s) is/are not met, sanctions could apply. He noted the legislation was a first step in fulfilling the totality of the commitments in New Decade, New Approach, and that a future independent EPA might eventually take over the role of enforcement. • In response to a query about social justice provisions, AD confirmed that the equivalent of Just Transition principles are included in the Bill, but it is not possible to prescribe how climate objectives should be met or how they are to be funded, as these are political matters not legal matters. • JO noted that some consultation had taken place in order to draft the Bill, through engagement with members of Climate Coalition NI. In order to submit legislation for consideration this mandate, it was not possible to carry out a full public consultation. JO acknowledged the importance of robust scrutiny and public consultation and welcomed a proposal for extended committee stage to ensure sufficient scrutiny of the Bill. <p>RW summarised actions / next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed there is an important role for the APG in providing further scrutiny and debate on the Bill • Agreed to invite key Housing groups to present evidence raised in relation to retrofit opportunities highlighted by the Belfast Climate Commission report • Climate Coalition NI to brief the DUP and DAERA on the Climate Change Bill
5	Date of Next Meeting
	The next meeting will be held on 11 December at 10.00 am.
6	Close
	Rachel thanked everyone for attending. Meeting closed at 15.10.