



SEPT 2020

A Case for Growth of Community Energy

Northern Ireland



12 kW array YMCA Londonderry

Northern Ireland Community Energy (NICE)

A COMMUNITY ENERGY BENEFIT SOCIETY (BenCom)

- Est Dec 2014
- FREE Solar PV Installations
 - 18 N.I. community organisations
 - 4 -15 kW arrays totalling 190 kW
- Community Shares
- 100 members
- Recycling community investment
 - Reduced energy bills for community organisations
 - Up to 4% return on investment to NICE members
 - **COMMUNITY FUND** -> further community energy/energy efficiency initiatives

and so the cycle continues.....

Drumlin Co-Op

- Six 250 kW Turbines
- Operational 5 years
- Community shares
- Over 900 members
- Stakeholders
- Community Fund
- Investing in the future -
education



REALISING THE FULL POTENTIAL OF COMMUNITY ENERGY IN N.I.

Recognition of the vital
role community energy
can play by...

2020

- **ADOPTING** a community energy definition
‘Community energy refers to the delivery of community-led renewable energy, energy demand reduction and energy supply projects, whether wholly owned and/or controlled by geographical communities and/or communities ‘of interest’ or through partnership with public sector or commercial partners.’
- **AFFIRMING** the additional economic, environmental, societal and educational **benefits of community energy**
- **FOCUS** on **enabling citizens to develop, own and operate community energy projects in their entirety.**

Community Energy BENEFITS

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Economic

- **Develop new renewable energy capacity in the region**
- Deliver (often local) **sustainable employment, education and training** opportunities
- Provide a **financial return on citizens' investments** and therefore build citizens' resilience to energy price fluctuations
- **Increase the use of alternative sources of funding** e.g. the community investor, partnership/match funding
- **Create steady income streams to fund community development** projects over a period of time
- **Provide an economic benefit** reinvestment/community fund

Environmental

- **Reduce greenhouse emissions**
- **Engage more people** with energy issues and environmental values
- **Increase the use of renewable technologies and energy efficiencies**
- **Help the transition** to a low carbon economy, increase renewables
- **Increase energy security/self-sufficiency**

Social

- **Increase citizens' active participation and engagement**
- **Increase public support** for renewable energy
- Build **community confidence, resilience and social cohesion**
- Build **empowerment** and pride in/for the place we live
- Increase **local regeneration** of community spaces, buildings or services
- Reduce fuel poverty
- Increase energy self-sufficiency

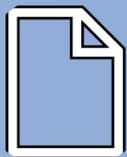
Educational

- **Raise citizens' awareness of the need to reduce negative impacts on the environment to help avert the climate emergency**
- **Increase knowledge** of renewable energy and relevant technologies among communities
- **Build understanding of alternative forms of energy production and consumption**



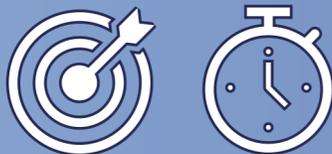
SUMMARY OF KEY ASKS

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Community Policy Energy Policy & Strategy

Ensuring growth complemented by investment within the N.I. Energy Strategy



Targets

AMBITIOUS targets for Community Energy



Community Energy Development Body

Investment & resource a locally based Community Energy development body.



Community Energy Enterprise Programme

Resource a Community Energy Enterprise Programme



Financial Mechanisms

Develop appropriate financial mechanisms (e.g. Community ROCs, FiT etc)



Interdepartmental Support

Interdepartmental support & policy alignment facilitating growth of Community Energy enterprises & initiatives.

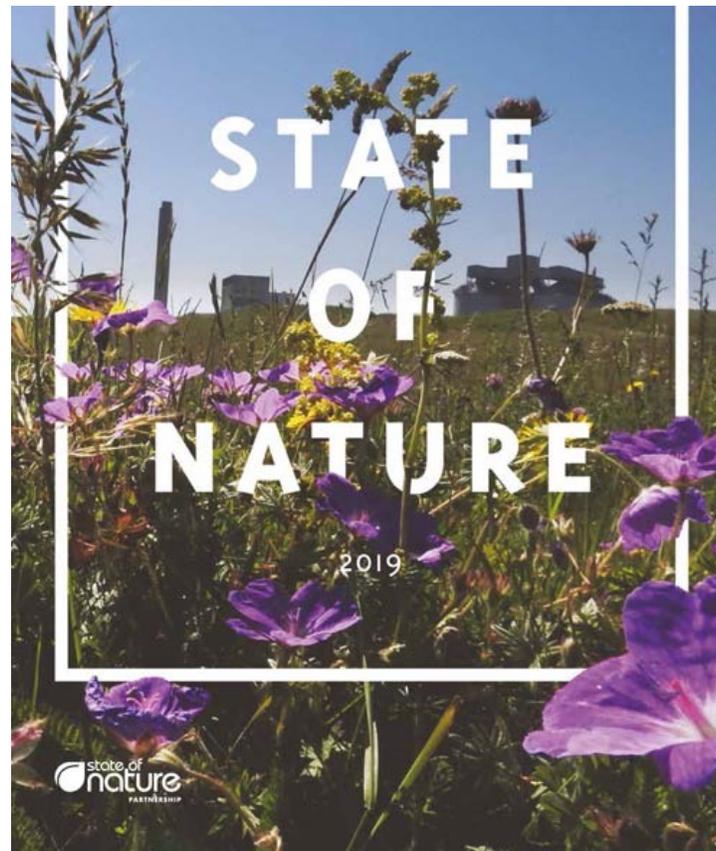
Proposed Private Members Bill: The Environment and Nature Restoration Bill



Presentation to All Party Group on Climate Action
26th March 2021

Dolores Kelly MLA

Nature is in crisis



- **Globally:** wildlife populations have plummeted by 68% since 1970.
- **UK:** 41% species in decline since 1970.
- **Northern Ireland:**
 - 11% of species at risk from extinction.
 - Butterfly numbers- decreased by 43% since 2006.
 - Bees declined by half since 1980.
 - Wintering bird numbers: declined by 24% since 2009.
 - 97% wildflower meadows are gone.
 - 1 out of 21 lakes in good quality.
- **We must act on joint crises.**

It's not just nature that is suffering

- Air Pollution: linked to over 800 premature deaths a year in NI with particulate matter pollution (PM2.5) a major contributor
- Outdoor Recreation NI: health benefits of the outdoors are not being enjoyed equally across society.
- Recent polling shows that 74% people across NI want stronger laws to protect nature.

Outdoor Recreation: People, Nature and Health

March 2021



Legislative and policy context

- **COP15: UN Convention on Biological Diversity**
 - Post-2020 framework.
- **Westminster Environment Bill**
 - Governance: Office for Environmental Protection.
 - Environmental principles: significant weakening.
 - Environmental Improvement Plans: no target setting framework.
- **Wildlife and Natural Environment Act 2011**
 - Biodiversity Strategy: failed to address loss of nature.
- **Draft Clean Air Strategy**
 - Pollution limits: The draft strategy highlights the importance of WHO air pollution limits, but there is no timeline for legislation.

Valuing Nature

A Biodiversity Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2020



1 JULY 2015

Environment Bill

PART 2

ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE: NORTHERN IRELAND

- 47 Improving the natural environment: Northern Ireland
- 48 The Office for Environmental Protection: Northern Ireland



Clean Air Strategy
for Northern Ireland

Part 1: Environmental Governance

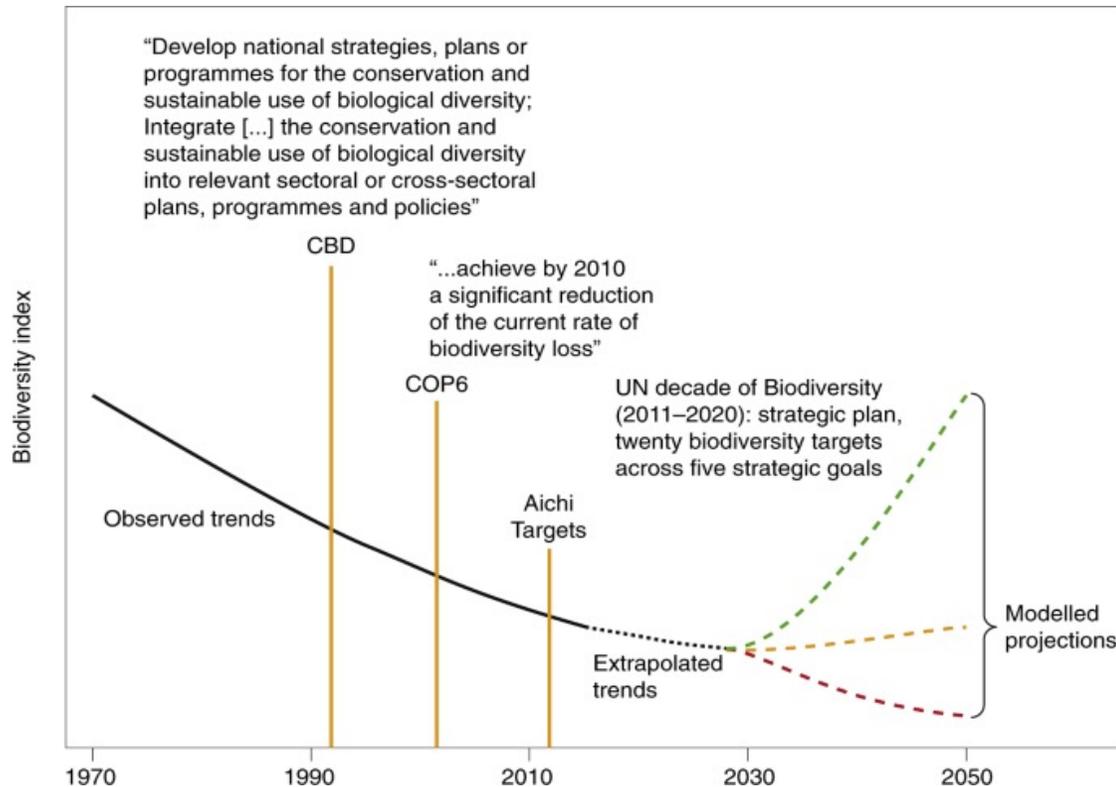
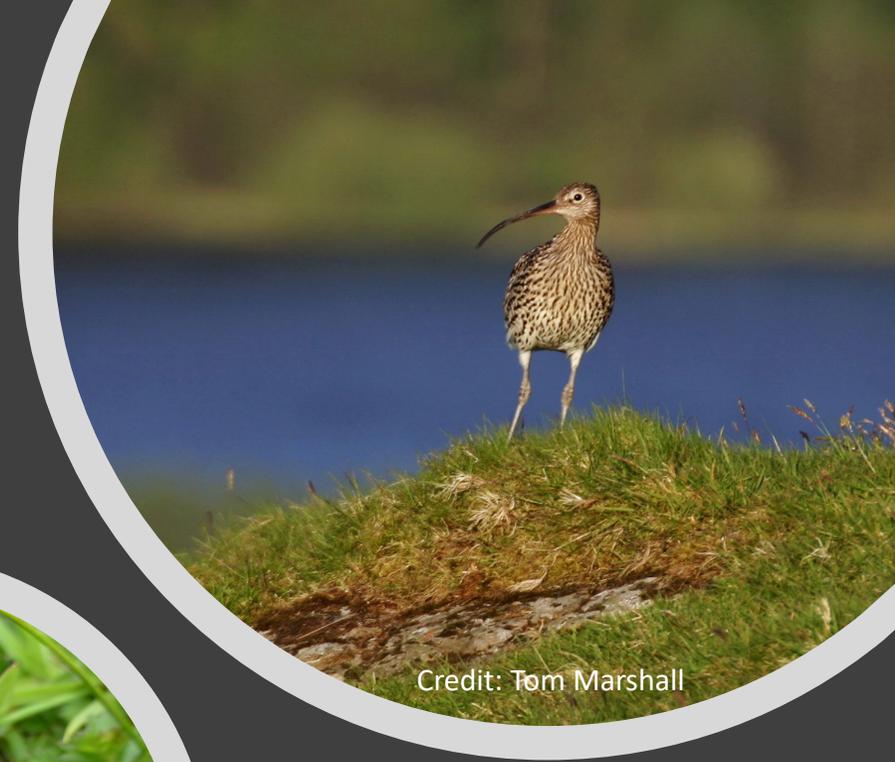
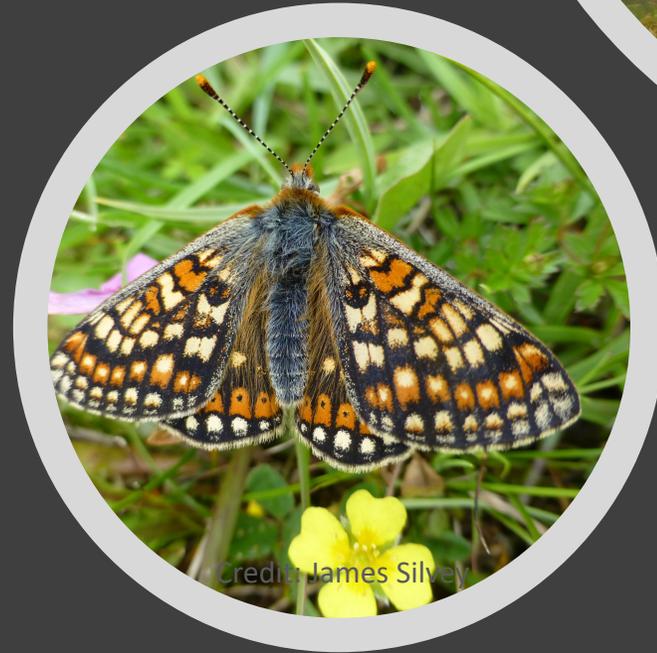


Fig 1. Observed trends of biodiversity loss. The black line shows currently observed trends, while projections for 2030 are modelled as either recovering (green), stabilising (orange) or declining (red). (Mace et al. 2018)

- **Independent Environmental Protection Agency**
 - Commitment in New Decade New Approach Deal.
 - Distinct but complementary role and remit to the OEP.
- **Targets for nature recovery and people's enjoyment**
 - Long-term and interim targets needed for air quality, biodiversity, marine, resource efficiency and waste, and water.
 - Duty on all departments and public authorities to meet targets.
- **Environment Principles**
 - Secure the status and application of key environmental legal principles.
 - Would replace provision in Environment Bill.

Part 2: Nature and Biodiversity

- **Duty to conserve biodiversity**
 - Amend the Wildlife and Natural Environment Act 2011.
 - Public authorities must act to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- **Mandate biodiversity net gain through planning**
 - require new development to provide overall benefits for wildlife.
- **Nature Recovery Networks (NRNs)**
 - Requirement for development and implementation of NRNs.
 - NRNs will create wildlife rich places to increase and restore nature.
 - aim to put space for nature at the heart of our farming and planning systems, and bring nature into the places where most people live their daily lives.



Consultation response

- 8-week consultation ended 7th March 2021
- 661 responses (628: individuals, 27: on behalf of organisations)
- Need for stronger laws to protect nature: 657
- Strong support of provisions in Bill
- Alternative to proposal: calls for more action to tackle climate emergency, need to ensure robust enforcement, need for all-island cooperation.
- Real opportunity for partnership working across government, sectors and the wider public.



Thank you for your time, any questions?



The Environment and Nature Restoration Bill

Dolores Kelly MLA

