

**CALL FOR EVIDENCE AND VIEWS ON THE CLIMATE CHANGE BILL
RESPONSE**
2 July 2021

Introduction

Sustainable NI is a charity that works with Northern Ireland's public sector to inspire, influence and inform action on sustainability and climate change. Through our network, we support and empower public sector collaboration to accelerate action on climate change and deliver a sustainable future for all.

Summary

Sustainable NI would like to show support for the Climate Change Bill and respond to the consultation on it. We believe Northern Ireland needs this strong climate legislation because climate change is destabilising the planet, and life as we know it. There is only a small window available to act, we need to throw everything we've got at this challenge, later isn't good enough.

Northern Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions are higher than the UK average, and are falling more slowly. Northern Ireland is lagging behind and isn't pulling its weight in the fight against climate breakdown. A climate change law with strong and legally binding greenhouse gas reduction targets is needed if Northern Ireland is to do its fair share.

We support the Climate Change Bill for the following reasons:

1. A central theme is the principle of a just transition to a low-carbon future that ensures all sectors of Northern Ireland's society make sustained cuts in greenhouse gas emissions. A just transition will protect the vulnerable, create jobs, improve health and well-being, and make sure we all do our fair share.
2. The Bill sets a clear, strong, and achievable target in line with what is required to achieve the goal of the Paris Agreement. Net-zero carbon by 2045 is the minimum we should be aiming for. Anything less is shirking our responsibility to act decisively.
3. The proposed independent climate commissioner will ensure ministers and departments introduce policies and plans to reduce emissions. Without the scrutiny of the commission, it is likely Northern Ireland will continue to lag behind.
4. The current Assembly's declaration of a Climate Emergency will lapse when the next Assembly is elected. I support the Bill's declaration of a Climate Emergency, so that future Assemblies will have a responsibility to act until the emergency has passed.
5. The proposed Climate Action Plans are a key element of the Bill. The 2045 net-zero target establishes the direction of travel, but the Climate Action Plans will set out the route. If we are to keep global temperatures below dangerous levels we must make rapid cuts in emissions out to 2045 based on strict carbon budgets. The Climate Action Plans will set those emissions cuts. Without the guidance set by the Climate Action Plans there is a real risk Northern Ireland's response to the climate emergency will remain unfocused and inadequate.
6. Emissions reductions for specific sectors built into the Climate Action Plans will be crucial to driving effective and targeted emissions reductions policies. The sectors listed in the Bill are the most significant contributors of greenhouse gas emissions, so it makes sense to make particular reference to them.
7. The Climate Change Committee is a recognised expert body and its advice should be sought and taken into account. The advice and recommendations from the Committee may be limited by UK

Government policy, however, consideration should also be given to other scientific research, technical and technological developments, and policies of other countries, particularly Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

8. The Climate Change Bill recognises the interconnectedness of climate impacts and other environmental problems. The proposed guaranteed environmental protections are welcome.

9. Climate breakdown and environmental damage don't respect borders. Northern Ireland shares an island with the Republic of Ireland. Transboundary impacts must be included if our move to a low-carbon society is to be fair.

Call for evidence and views on the Climate Change Bill

Closes 15 July 2021

Opened 20 May 2021

Overview



Climate Change is one of the most important issues facing our society and how we address it could affect how we live, work and travel.

[The Climate Change Bill](#) that has recently come before the Northern Ireland (NI) Assembly sets out a framework to mitigate the effects of Climate Change in the coming years.

This includes reducing the amount of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere and balancing the amount removed by our industries and through energy use.

The Bill proposes several mechanisms to help achieve its aims including establishment of Climate Action Plans across various sectors and regular reporting to monitor progress in terms of delivering the net-zero target.

Why we are consulting

As part of the NI Assembly's normal legislative processes, the Climate Change Bill has been referred to the Assembly's Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (AERA) for scrutiny and evaluation.

The Committee is seeking views from stakeholders on the objectives, proposals and potential consequences of the Bill so it can understand how the legislation could affect different parts of society and how effective it may be in achieving its aims.

Your views will help to inform the AERA Committee's consideration of the Climate Change Bill and any recommendations it may suggest as the Bill moves to the next stage of the legislative process.

Consultation contents

You only need to answer the questions that are most relevant and important to you but we ask that you complete this response form in full, providing your views and making suggested amendments to the Bill where possible. If you are unsure as to how to answer a particular question, you may leave it blank.

Tips for completing your response

I'm not sure how to answer all of the questions.

To help inform your views before completing your response, we recommend reading the [Climate Change Bill document first](#).

Do I have to answer every question in the consultation?

You are required to answer the consent question for publishing your response. The rest of the survey questions are optional. Please answer the questions that are most important and relevant to you.

Introduction (Required Section)

Please note that in most cases **your written submissions will be published** on our website and may be quoted in the Committee's report or in Committee meetings (which are public and broadcast).

If you would like to request that your name not be included in what is published, or to request an alternative format to give comments, please contact the Clerk at the following email address: Committee.AgriEnvRural@niassembly.gov.uk. We will consider all requests for information to be treated anonymously.

Please provide comment on any or all parts of the template. If you do not agree with a particular clause of the Bill, please consider suggesting how it could be amended.

1. How would you like your response to be published?

I would like my response to be published

I would like to request my response not be published, and I understand this will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances

If my request is turned down I understand that I can choose to withdraw my submission or agree to my response being published in full or as amended by me.

2. What is your name?

Nichola Hughes

3. What is your email address?

nichola@sustainableni.org

4. Please indicate if you are providing a submission as:

An individual

On behalf of an organisation or business

If on behalf of an organisation or business, please state its name:

Sustainable Northern Ireland

And please tell us briefly how the organisation or business relates to the subject matter of the Bill:

Sustainable Northern Ireland is principally concerned with increasing ambition and action on sustainable development, including action to address climate change.

Question 1: The Policy Objectives

The policy objectives of the Bill are to:

- Enable the mitigation of the impact of climate change in Northern Ireland;
- Establish a legally binding net-zero carbon target for Northern Ireland;
- Provide for the establishment and powers of a Northern Ireland Climate Commissioner and Northern Ireland Climate Office;
- Guarantee existing environmental and climate protections

1. What are your views on the overall policy objectives?

Sustainable Northern Ireland (SNI) welcomes the introduction of the Climate Change Bill. The legislation fulfils the requirements of the NDNA agreement for the development of climate change legislation and targets for reducing carbon emissions in line with the Paris Climate Change Accord.

Since the introduction of the UK Climate Change Act in 2008, greenhouse gas emissions have only fallen by 9% in NI (2008-2016), compared to a 27% reduction for the whole of the UK, suggesting that voluntary contributions from Northern Ireland won't be enough. The proposed Bill will play a key role in closing the legislative gap.

We agree with the four policy objectives of the Bill. We note the legislation is deliberately broad in its mandate, enabling Government to decide the regulations and programmes that will deliver against the objectives of the Bill.

The statutory enforcement provisions are likely to be the most effective instruments in the Bill. These include setting a legally binding decarbonisation target for Northern Ireland, strengthening accountability for meeting targets, with Ministers required to report on progress in every sector, every year. There will also be a duty for 5 yearly carbon budgets (interim emission reduction targets) and action plans, as well as provision for independent scrutiny of national progress through reviews carried out by a Climate Commissioner.

There is some scope however to strengthen aspects of the Bill, such as:

- introduce sectoral decarbonisation targets
- introduce a Climate Change Duty on Public Authorities to set a date for zero emissions, develop a climate action plan and publish a progress report annually
- mandate a body that is fully independent of government to implement climate and environmental regulation and compliance systems and investigate those who don't comply.

2. Do you think that the Bill will meet these objectives?

Yes

No

Unsure

Please give us a reason for your answer:

Whilst the policy objectives are ambitious and challenging, they are commensurate to urgency of the crisis and reflect the willingness and capacity of key economic sectors to decarbonise.

There is no doubt that some sectors, such as agriculture, will be more difficult to decarbonise than others, and appropriate levels of financial support and assistance is needed to ensure a just transition in these sectors.

Nature-based solutions and changes in land use management are likely to play a key role in achieving carbon neutrality in Northern Ireland. It is vital therefore that farmers and landowners are financially incentivised through appropriate payment schemes to support carbon, nitrogen, soil, and air quality targets, to meet the objectives of the Bill.

Question 2. Declaration of a Climate Emergency

1. What are your views on this?

Tell us your views on declaring a Climate Emergency in Northern Ireland.

We support the declaration of a Climate Emergency in Northern Ireland, as set out in Section 1 of the Climate Change Bill. It demonstrates the need for urgent action to halt climate change and avoid potentially irreversible environmental damage resulting from it.

The UN Secretary General has urged all countries to declare a Climate Emergency, and Northern Ireland will be following in the footsteps of at least 38 other countries that have already declared a state of emergency. It is right that this is included in the Climate Change Bill.

Question 3: Net Zero Target

1. What are your views on the target set out in the Bill to achieve a Net Zero carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by the year 2045?

Sustainable Northern Ireland agrees with the overriding objective of the Bill, which is ‘the establishment in Northern Ireland of a net-zero carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by the year 2045’. The proposed target date is 5 years earlier the UK climate target. The IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C demonstrates that the international scientific community is in agreement that governments must commit to a net zero target by 2050, to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

Legislating to end our contribution to climate change by 2045 shows that Northern Ireland is committed to demonstrating leadership on climate action. The Climate Change Bill as proposed, demonstrates what international leadership on climate action means. Not only are we setting legally binding targets to reduce emissions to net-zero in direct response to the Paris Agreement, but we are also putting in place one of the most stringent frameworks of statutory targets anywhere in the world.

The end target is the maximum possible ambition based upon the best available science and requires the rest of the UK to take action to meet its targets if we are to meet ours. While there is some uncertainty over the precise route that can be taken, we believe it is right to be as ambitious as possible to drive the action required to make the changes needed.

There has been some debate about the advice provided by the Committee on Climate Change to DAERA to select a target of 82% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. It is important to note that this was in the context of a question about what a fair contribution would be for Northern Ireland to the UK Net Zero target. In the Sixth Carbon Budget, the Balanced Pathway was one of five different scenarios developed and the proposed 82% reduction by Northern Ireland was intended to be a minimum level of ambition. Lord Deben, in his letter to the Minister dated 1st April 2021, went on to say:

“Northern Ireland’s climate legislation should allow emissions reductions to go beyond our current assessment by requiring **at least** an 82% reduction and should contain clear provisions to tighten the target if there is evidence to support such a decision. We have already seen similar provisions used to increase climate targets for the UK, Scotland and Wales since 2019.”

The letter also stated, “there is no purely technical reason why net zero is not possible in Northern Ireland” provided policy is ramped up significantly, which this legislation aims to do.

2. Do you think that the Net Zero emissions target is achievable?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

3. Do you think that the timescale to deliver the Net Zero emissions target is achievable?

Yes

No

Unsure

4. Do you think that the timescale outlined in the Bill to achieve Net Zero should be revised if circumstances change?

Yes

No

Unsure

Please tell us why.

Climate change policy, and any targets set within it, needs take into consideration the best available and most up to date climate change science. The science on climate change is constantly evolving, therefore we would consider it prudent that the Bill incorporates the necessary flexibility to allow consideration of emerging evidence around, for example, changes in the rate of global warming and any new or revised targets at international and national level.

Question 4: Climate Action Plans

Clause 3 of the Bill requires the government to produce Climate Action Plans on a 5-yearly basis to achieve the Net Zero Target. The Climate Action Plans will:

- Have annual targets for net greenhouse gas emissions, water quality, soil quality and biodiversity
- Outline measures to achieve the target including carbon budgets and nitrogen budgets

1. Tell us your views on requiring the government to produce Climate Action Plans.

SNI supports the proposal to require government to produce a Climate Action Plans on a 5-yearly basis.

The scope of this plan is necessarily broad, including both environmental and nature objectives chiefly due to a lack of legislation, targets and measures on environmental protection here in Northern Ireland.

Whether or not these elements remain in the Climate Change Bill will depend on whether or not a separate Bill is passed aimed at protecting Environment and Nature, alongside an Environmental Improvement Plan. If this does happen, the Climate Action Plan can focus on climate pollutants and measures only. However, without appropriate environmental legislation and targets, we believe it is right that the Climate Action Plan captures these elements.

2. Do you think the proposed Climate Action Plans are an effective way of delivering the Net Zero target?

Yes

No

Unsure

Question 5: Office of a Climate Commissioner

Clauses 5 and 6 of the Bill provide for the establishment of an independent Office of a Climate Commissioner in Northern Ireland that will:

- Lay annual reports on progress made against the Climate Action Plans
- Make annual legislative reports on the effectiveness and appropriateness of the Bill
- Make recommendations about how the aims of the Bill are being achieved
- Have the power to request access to persons and documentation as required to discharge their duties

1. Tell us your views on the establishment of a Climate Commissioner.

We broadly welcome the introduction of a new independent body (a Commissioner and Climate Office) to provide independent scrutiny of government progress on climate targets and review the implementation of the legislation. A concern is that the proposed oversight function may not be enough.

The timescales of net-zero mean that much more significant government interventions on energy and climate impacting systems are required. We propose a broader role and function for the proposed Climate Commissioner, to oversee and implement the transition process as there is no strategic energy or climate body in Northern Ireland at present.

This body would work across government and build consensus but would also have the authority, delegated by ministers, to guide policy and direct the regulators to act on strategic issues.

2. What role and powers do you think the proposed Climate Commissioner should have?

We believe this new body would provide several functions:

- I. It would be a centre of independent energy and climate expertise, possibly linked to an academic institution, on which policy could be based. The Energy Research Centre of the Netherlands (ECN) would be a good example of this function.
- II. It would advise the NI government and Assembly on policy and progress against energy and climate goals working with the Committee on Climate Change. This would include making specific energy policy, governance, and regulatory recommendations to which the Executive Office must respond, publicly explaining how and when it is taking action or giving a reason why it is not.
- III. The new body could (with good governance) have a policy delivery function, working with the NIHE and local authorities where necessary. This deployment expertise could support its first function, increasing its energy and climate expertise.
- IV. It could provide a home for energy data and associated issues.
- V. The new body could also take a role in national citizen engagement and could consider distributional and equality issues associated with the energy and climate transition.

For reasons of coherence and leadership, we recommend that this body scrutinises and supports the new climate and energy transition department but reports to The Executive Office to raise the profile of energy and provide cross-party leadership.

There is the potential for this body to be associated with and even be part of a new independent Environmental Protection Agency, however without knowing the details of a future EPA, we cannot make a specific recommendation here. We would also expect this body to work closely with the Housing Executive around heat and building issues.

The functions that we suggest could be associated with the new body could be split across two bodies to reduce potential conflict. One new body could provide advice and scrutiny to the 'Executive Office', and another could support policy delivery. However, for reasons of simplicity and expertise sharing, subject to good governance, a single body may be more appropriate.

Question 6: Sectoral Plans

The Bill sets out that within the Climate Action Plans there will be specific policies and proposals in the following sectors to achieve the overall emissions target:

- energy production and supply (including for residential, public and district;
- heating and cooling purposes;
- transport (including shipping and aviation);
- infrastructure (including infrastructure for electric vehicular transport);
- business and industrial processes;
- residential and public (in relation to buildings in these sectors);
- waste management;
- land use and land-use change, including forestry; and
- agriculture

1. Do you agree with the proposal to have specific sectoral policies associated with the Climate Action Plans?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

2. What impact do you think that these sectoral plans will have in terms of helping to achieve the Net Zero target?

Mitigating climate change will require transformative measures and actions across all sectors and by individuals. Sectoral plans and targets help by breaking the net zero target up into individual greenhouse gas emission sectors, placing accountability on specific sectors and industries to act and encouraging collaboration and coherence within each of these sectors.

The sectoral plans are likely to take a data-led approach, looking at the contribution of individual sectors to the overall greenhouse gas inventory, and identify the most cost effective and carbon effective interventions in order to guide decision making. They are also likely to encourage investor confidence in zero-carbon industries, as they demonstrate a long-term commitment to decarbonisation of entire sectors.

3. How do you think the above sectors might be affected by the proposals?

All sectors will be affected, inevitably. There will need to be transformative change in all sectors and systems thinking is required to ensure the changes in individual sectors are complementary and cohesive. The impacts will overwhelmingly be positive for the economy and society, over a long term (30 year) time horizon, but there will be a need for government support to alleviate impacts of the transition in the short term.

Energy production and supply

- Emphasis on demand reduction by engaging consumers in strategies to reduce consumption patterns using smart meters, tariff incentives, insulation, and other mechanisms. A [report](#) by the Cabinet Office in 2002 said there is the potential to save approximately 30% of final energy demand across all sectors in the UK amounting to reduced costs to customers of £12.3 billion annually
- Energy networks will need to be strengthened (Decarbonised; Decentralised; Digitised; Democratised) with significant reduction in energy wastage
- Greater focus on smart power principally built around interconnection, storage, and demand flexibility helping save consumers money, meet NI's carbon targets, and secure NI's energy supply for generations
- Decommissioning of Northern Ireland's three fossil fuel generating plants at Ballylumford, Kilroot and Coolkeeragh by 2050, with any remaining facilities equipped with carbon capture, utilisation, and storage technology
- Ban on fracking and all other fossil fuel exploration and extraction activities

Transport

- Emphasis on reducing demand for transport, through less development in open countryside, regional office hubs and home working
- Less spending on new road infrastructure and parking
- More spending on infrastructure to make it easy for people to walk, cycle, and work remotely
- Priority given to cyclists and buses over cars in urban centres
- More local public transport options, including rail and bus, with greater focus on multi-modal transport patterns
- Clean air / low emission zones
- Access to reliable rapid EV chargers at all petrol stations, tourist attractions etc
- Access to reliable EV charge points on residential streets
- Cars and vans transition from diesel / petrol to electric
- HGVs & Ships transition from diesel / petrol to hydrogen or other zero-carbon fuel sources
- Levies on frequent flyers to discourage international travel by air

Infrastructure

- Large infrastructure projects such as bridges or new rail lines must consider embodied carbon and how to reduce it as well as extreme weather conditions likely under future climate scenarios (extreme heat, storms, heavy rainfall)
- Undergrounding of key telecommunication and electrical networks i.e. the replacement of overhead cables providing electrical power or telecommunications, with underground cables to make them less susceptible to outages during extreme weather
- Sustainable water infrastructure achieved by ensuring water and energy efficiency, and using the best, the newest, and the most innovative solutions when investing in water infrastructure to maximise the reuse of wastewater and reduce loss of water from the system

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- Undergrounding of key telecommunication and electrical networks i.e. the replacement of overhead cables providing electrical power or telecommunications, with underground cables to make them less susceptible to outages during extreme weather
- Sustainable water infrastructure achieved by ensuring water and energy efficiency, and using the best, the newest, and the most innovative solutions when investing in water infrastructure to maximise the reuse of wastewater and reduce loss of water from the system

Business and industrial processes

- Carbon taxation and participation in a domestic emissions trading scheme
- Economic opportunities for businesses poised to deliver low carbon goods and services e.g., insulation companies, clean-tech companies

- Hospitality industry and tourism will get a boost as Northern Ireland seen as green capital of Europe, attracting eco-conscious travellers. SMEs in hospitality industry save money as they save carbon, making their business more profitable.
- All large-scale industrial industries must move towards a carbon neutral fuel source, with zero air pollution. This will have a cost implication for heavy industries, but due to incremental increases in carbon taxes, green fuels will become the cheaper option
- Greater pedestrianisation of urban centres, with parking tariffs and clean air zones designed to discourage travel by car. With town centres designed for people instead of cars, there will be a benefit for local businesses as people shop and socialise longer, spending more money.

Residential and public buildings

- Jobs and energy savings will be delivered by retrofitting homes and buildings will be more energy efficient and use low-carbon heating, helping reduce fuel poverty and health problems over the winter caused by cold homes
- New buildings are fit for the future, efficient, resilient to extreme weather, more comfortable and cheaper to run
- Buildings become more self-sufficient through a combination of on-site renewable technology, smart controls, energy storage and rainwater harvesting
- Greater awareness about energy usage among the public leads to a change in consumption habits

Waste management

- Moving towards a circular zero-waste economy creates exciting new business opportunities and jobs while preventing and removing carbon from the atmosphere
- Carbon metrics guide waste management infrastructure decisions and residual waste facilities are mandated to have a carbon capture, utilisation, and storage (CCUS) technology to ensure no release of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere

Land use and land-use change

- Tree planting at scale, native broadleaf species prioritised where possible
- Green infrastructure and sustainable drainage integrated into all new and existing development
- Ban on commercial peat extraction and sales
- Large scale peatland restoration
- Significantly less development in the open countryside
- Creation of more protected sites for wildlife and conservation

Agriculture

- Likely to be heavily impacted, but there will be a long-term benefit to the sector.
- Supplementary financial support will be required to support sustainable land use management and protect farmers in the transition, through a NI Farm Welfare Bill for example
- Shift towards more regenerative (less-intensive) farming practices
- Diversification of farming income models from livestock towards the delivery of public goods e.g., green infrastructure, biofuels, compost
- Fewer farm waste bi-products due to greater circularity of resources
- Soybean meal for livestock replaced with microalgae-based protein
- More resilient farming sector
- Shorter food supply chains

Question 7: Resource Implications

1. What do you think the resource implications of the Bill will be for:

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

To achieve the ambitious targets in the Climate Change Bill, significant resourcing will be required for both the lead Department (whoever this is) and public bodies, businesses, and communities to deliver action on the ground.

A realistic budget should be identified by the Northern Ireland Executive for the lead Department on Climate Action, that is commensurate to Northern Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions as a proportion of the overall UK carbon burden. This can be calculated by benchmarking equivalent levels of government spending across the UK.

In 2019/20, the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) spent £187m on activities relating to 'Taking action on climate change and decarbonisation'.

Source:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/922625/CCS0320287242-001_BEIS_Annual_Report-V11.pdf

The Northern Ireland Executive

As stated above, overall spending to support climate action and decarbonisation by the Northern Ireland Executive should be benchmarked against equivalent budgets in Scotland, Wales, and England to give an indication of the minimum level of funding required.

A Green New Deal should be brought forward to provide long-term sustainable finance for the climate and energy transition. Government funds can be used to secure additional funds from the private sector and legacy EU funds (such as Peace Plus) for low-carbon infrastructure, skills, research and development.

Specific sectors of the Northern Ireland economy

We do not have access to cost projections to comment on this, however guidance from the UK Committee on Climate Change (CCC) is clear that the long-term benefits of decarbonisation to the economy outweigh any short-term costs. Economic modelling in the CCC Sixth Carbon Budget report suggests achieving net zero in the UK will give a boost to UK GDP overall, growing to around 2% of GDP by 2030, levelling off at around a 3% boost by 2050. Figures are not available for Northern Ireland, but it is assumed there will be a similar level of economic growth in Northern Ireland.

2. What do you think are the most important issues for the government when making funding plans to help achieve the aims of the Bill?

Taking a long-term approach to policies and funding is essential to provide assurance to investors and stakeholders. There will be a return on initial investment, but it will not happen overnight. It is vital that funding is not piecemeal, year to year, but available on a multi-year basis.

The Committee on Climate Change has been clear on the significant economic benefits that will be created by achieving net zero GHG emissions, stating that: “the costs of the transition (including upfront investment, ongoing running costs and costs of financing) will be less than 1% of GDP over the entirety of 2020-2050, with a net boost to GDP overall.”

Unconscious bias by decision makers can affect decisions about funding. It is important that the Government keeps an open mind to new and emerging technologies (e.g., geothermal energy and marine renewables) and alternative delivery mechanisms (community and local authority led schemes) and seeks to maximise the efficiency of delivery through economies of scale, wherever possible.

Historically, other countries have underestimated the magnitude of funding necessary to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Funding should be ambitious and commensurate with the level of risk that climate change presents, on a par with other global emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nature-based solutions should be given an equivalent weighting to engineered solutions. There should be a natural capital index for Northern Ireland, and the economic value of green/blue solutions accounted for, depending on ecosystem services provided.

Above all, funding must be ring fenced for the delivery of the Climate Action Plan and Sectoral Plans, including adequate revenue funding to support the delivery of capital projects. There should be a blended approach of grants and loans (e.g., green bonds), to de-risk new technologies. Government funding should be used to make private investments more attractive when a technology is new and not yet commercially viable.

Credible, long-term policy signals will over time unlock private investment in renewable energy, smart networks, energy efficiency and low carbon vehicles to significantly scale up government funded initiatives.

Question 8: Access to Specialist Advice

The Bill proposes that the UK Climate Change Committee (UK CCC) will provide advice to the Commissioner when they report annually against the Climate Action Plans.

1. Do you think that this is appropriate?

Yes

No

Unsure

2. Are there other sources of expertise that may be needed to inform progress to achieve the Net Zero target?

The Commission may also wish to consult with other expert bodies on the island of Ireland, e.g., the Climate Change Advisory Council, the Strategic Energy Authority of Ireland and the new All-Island Climate and Biodiversity Research Network in relation to transboundary matters such as air, soil, and water quality.

Question 9: Responsibility on Public Bodies

The Bill places obligations on a wide range of organisations to help achieve the emissions targets and it will influence policy across a number of public Departments. This includes introduction of a scheme to track carbon usage that will be overseen by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

1. What are your views on the roles and responsibilities placed on public bodies as set out in the Bill?

The legislation does not go far enough in placing a specific and direct obligation on Public Bodies to contribute to the achievement of the overarching climate objective.

Public bodies, such as the NI Housing Executive and local authorities, will be asked to help government achieve the policy objectives, but there is no specific legislative mandate for these bodies in relation to climate action.

As it stands, the Bill only requires reporting by public bodies (and others) which is the function of the Climate Commissioner (clause 6). Although Public Bodies will be among a wide range of organisations contributing to the proposed carbon usage scheme, it may become a reporting exercise without any real action.

Most importantly, the Bill does not include a mechanism to investigate and challenge non-compliance by individual Public Bodies. We believe there should be provision for Public Body Climate Change Duties within the Bill, in line with Section 4 of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009.

Climate change duties may include: -

- that a public body must, in exercising its functions, act in the way best calculated to contribute to the delivery of the decarbonisation targets set in or under this Bill; in the way best calculated to help deliver any adaptation programme laid before the NI Assembly; and in a way that it considers is most sustainable.
- requiring public bodies to develop a Climate Action Plan within a specified timeframe after the Bill receives Royal Assent
- requiring public bodies to prepare reports on compliance with climate change duties

Additionally, there must be provision of guidance to relevant public bodies in relation to climate change duties and those bodies must have regard to such guidance.

Furthermore, the Bill should enable Ministers, by order, to appoint a body to monitor and carry out any necessary investigations into whether relevant public bodies are:

- complying with climate change duties
- having regard to any guidance given under the climate change duties.

This could either be a function of the proposed Climate Commissioner or an independent Environmental Protection Agency (or equivalent body).

2. Do you think that there should be a lead responsible government Department for delivering the aims of the Bill?

Yes

No

Unsure

3. If you think there should be a lead Department, please tell us which one and why:

Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Department for Communities

Department for the Economy

Department of Education

The Executive Office

Department of Finance

Department for Health

Department for Infrastructure

Department for Justice

Why do you think this government Department should be responsible?

We support the recommendations of the [independent review](#) of energy governance in Northern Ireland by the University of Exeter, which argued that a new '**Department for Energy and Climate Transition**' should be created, amalgamating the existing climate and energy functions of DAERA and DfE to create a larger more cohesive unit and simplify decision making.

The new climate and energy transition department would be owned by, and report to The Executive Office to raise the profile of energy and climate issues and provide cross-party leadership.

DAERA is ill-equipped at present to lead on climate change mitigation activities across government. Most greenhouse emissions lie outside the scope of the Department's control. It also has fewer resources in comparison to the Department for Economy, for example.

Additionally, DAERA has an inherent conflict of interest between environmental regulation and agricultural regulation. If climate policy and delivery remain in the same department as agriculture, the regulator could enact rules in favour of the regulated industry (in this case the agriculture industry), diminishing its effectiveness as an environmental regulator.

4. What are your views on the implementation of a carbon usage-tracking scheme?

Please tell us your views.

We support the concept of a carbon usage-tracking scheme in principle, but reserve comment until the details of the scheme are consulted on.

It will be important that there is a requirement for any organisations that directly and indirectly contribute to greenhouse gas emissions to participate in the scheme, with an enforcement mechanism contained in the Bill to tackle non-compliance.

Question 10: Transboundary Considerations

1. What are your views on how the Bill addresses transboundary issues in relation to Climate Change?

The problem of climate change is obviously not one that Northern Ireland can solve alone. Northern Ireland may only produce 0.04% of global greenhouse gas emissions, but domestic consumption of imported products creates carbon emissions in other countries.

Adopting a transboundary view of climate contribution and risk, which explicitly recognises the interconnections between people, ecosystems, and economies in a globalised world, changes the scope and nature of the climate challenge, and creates opportunities to reinvigorate national and international cooperation on climate change.

The UNFCCC remains a critical space for coordinating global action on climate change, to ensure that the efforts of this region are connected to something bigger. It is vital that Northern Ireland engages in global negotiations on climate change, which have a key role to play in adopting and implementing a transboundary framing of climate risk.

Close working with the rest of the United Kingdom will be important for understanding progress on climate change mitigation and adaptation domestically, as well as for highlighting gaps, or framing and steering the conversation in new directions.

Northern Ireland emits an above average amount of greenhouse gases for its size and population. According to the figures from DAERA, NI per capita emissions are 10.77 tonnes CO₂ equivalent, 40% higher than the UK average which is 7.7 tonnes CO₂ equivalent. Northern Ireland must contribute its fair share the UK decarbonisation effort. The only way to ensure the UK reaches net zero is if all four administrations individually reach net zero in a similar timeframe, otherwise negative emissions will be required elsewhere which may not be possible or acceptable. It is therefore vital that the four nations work collectively to reach net zero and that legislation and policy is strategically aligned wherever possible.

Additionally, due to our shared land border with the Republic of Ireland, special consideration must be given to fiscal, economic, and social circumstances that are unique to Northern Ireland, current North/South governance arrangements, and the Integrated Single Electricity Market.

Climate policy alignment and sharing of data and information can be achieved through the establishment of a new independent body on energy and climate change, who would work closely with the UK Committee on Climate Change and Climate Change Advisory Council in the Republic of Ireland to ensure a joint up approach to climate policy and delivery in the region.

In summary, we believe the Bill does address transboundary issues in relation to Climate Change but could go further in terms of the scope and functions of the Climate Commissioner and who they work with, as outlined in our response to Question 5.

2. Do you think that there should be a transboundary approach to Climate Change?

Yes

No

Unsure

Question 11: Rural Impact Assessment

1. Do you think it is important to assess the impact on rural communities of the proposals provided for in the Bill?

Yes

No

Unsure

2. What do you think is the best way to consider the potential rural impacts?

The climate transition is not going to be straightforward. The Bill is proposing radical cuts in greenhouse gas emissions which will have both consequences and opportunities for our economy and society, and there are always going to be conflicts of interest.

For instance, there is a debate currently taking place within the farming community, with many farmers and rural communities concerned the legislation will impact on their industry and livelihoods. As such, a detailed rural needs impact assessment will have to be carried on the proposed Bill, under the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016, to identify the social and economic needs of people in rural areas.

Considering the Social and Economic Needs of Persons in Rural Areas identified in the assessment, adequate financial and social support may be required to mitigate any unintended negative consequences brought about by the introduction of the legislation. This could be means tested or weighted, whereby the level of support is proportionate to the impact of regulations introduced.

Northern Ireland could consider the introduction of a Just Transition Commissioner to ensure that climate regulations and programmes are fair, equitable and do not negatively affect rural communities or other marginal groups. It could be linked to the Climate Commissioner role or an equivalent oversight body.

Question 12: Additional Information

1. Are there any other measures not included in the Bill that you think should be included?

See previous comments under Section 9 recommending the introduction of public body climate change duties into the Bill and broadening the scope of the proposed Climate Commissioner.

2. Do you have any other comments you would like to make about the Climate Change Bill?

No additional comments.