



Subject:	Consultation on – Support for Low Carbon Heating in Residential Buildings
Date:	13 th December 2024
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director Organisational and City Strategy
Contact Officers:	Debbie Caldwell, Belfast Climate Commissioner Brenda Roddy, Project Support Officer (Climate),

Is this report restricted? Yes No

Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.

Insert number

1. Information relating to any individual
2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)
4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter
5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained
6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction
7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

- After Committee Decision
- After Council Decision
- Sometime in the future
- Never

Call-in

Is the decision eligible for Call-in?

Yes No

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To present a draft response to the Department for Economy consultation regarding support for low carbon heating in residential buildings.

2.0	Recommendation
2.1	Members are asked to note the proposals set out in the consultation document and to approve the draft council response as attached at appendix 1. Subject to approval by Council, the response will be submitted to DFE via their online consultation platform.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>Background</p> <p>In December 2021, the Northern Ireland Executive published a ten year Energy Strategy, setting out a pathway to 2030 that would mobilise the skills, technologies and behavioural change needed to achieve net zero carbon and affordable energy by 2050. This was followed in June 2022 by the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) which set a legislative target of at least 100% reduction in net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050.</p>
3.2	<p>Energy accounts for almost 60% of greenhouse gas emissions in Northern Ireland however, despite around half of electricity being produced from renewable sources, through importing fossil fuels, the region continues to be susceptible to price volatility in its energy bills through the links to global wholesale commodity markets. The Energy Strategy aims to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, helping Northern Ireland to become more self-sufficient, utilising locally produced renewable energy to strengthen energy security. A key objective of the Energy Strategy is to ‘replace high carbon heating sources with lower and zero carbon sources in households’. This consultation seeks views on a new domestic low carbon heat support scheme, to help inform and improve heat policy in this area. It will also serve as a method to gauge public awareness in relation to low carbon heating, together with assessing public interest, including the local renewable heating industry, for a future support mechanism.</p>
3.3	<p>Draft Council Response</p> <p>Overall, many of the proposals outlined are welcomed, recognising this new grant scheme as an important step toward advancing low-carbon heating in Northern Ireland. However, within the draft consultation response, we’ve made a number of recommendations that in summary focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger alignment of funding support where possible with the pathways and measures recommended in the Belfast LAEP, specifically retrofit (via a fabric first approach), district heating and the transition of homes currently heated by oil to low carbon heating (including hybrid systems as well as ASHP) as the most affordable near-term interventions to achieve net zero by 2050. • The need for careful coordination with any plans to support and incentivise district heating in urban areas like Belfast referencing that if the heat zoning approach currently being trialled in England were adopted in NI, a situation could arise whereby grants are provided to households to install ASHP in areas that are subsequently included in a heat zone. This could be a wasteful use of public resources.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased recognition of a fabric first approach to low carbon domestic retrofit as insulated homes with high levels of energy efficiency require less energy and result in lower bills. Heat pumps in less energy efficient homes risk consuming high levels of electricity risk exacerbating fuel poverty. The response recommends that a domestic grant programme aimed at optimising energy efficiency should precede grants for low carbon heating systems. • The importance of providing additional funding support for workforce development to ensure that adequate numbers of certified installers are available to support safe and reliable installations of low carbon heating systems. • The need to build consumer awareness and confidence with support for awareness campaigns and a one-stop-shop to inform homeowners about the benefits of low-carbon heating, as well as the operational differences compared to conventional systems. <p>A copy of the DFE consultation and supporting materials can be accessed at here.</p>
3.4	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None</p>
3.5	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices - Documents Attached</p>
	<p>Appendix 1 – Draft BCC response to Department for Economy consultation on low carbon residential heating.</p>