

Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 12th June, 2025

MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AND CITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor M. Donnelly (Chairperson);
Aldermen Copeland and McCoubrey;
Councillors Anglin, R. Brooks, T. Brooks,
P. Donnelly, S. Douglas, Ferguson, Groogan,
Lyons, Magee, Maskey, McCann and Murray.

Also attended: Councillor Flynn.

In attendance: Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Ms. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner;
Ms. C. Shortt, Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer;
and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported on behalf of Councillor Walsh.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 8th May were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 2nd June.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Matters Referred back from Council/Motions

Notice of Motion - Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty

(Councillor Flynn attended in connection with this item)

The Committee was advised that the following motion had been referred to it by the Standards and Business Committee:

“Recognising Northern Ireland’s commitment to achieve net zero by 2050, (and Belfast City Council’s previous motion recognising a climate emergency), Belfast City Council will endorse the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, an initiative to secure an international and legally binding treaty to phase out fossil fuels, and will write to the Northern Ireland Executive as well as the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero urging them to support this initiative.”

The Motion was proposed by Councillor Flynn and seconded by Councillor Smyth.

Councillor Flynn was invited by the Chairperson to address the Committee. He outlined that the motion had been endorsed by Trócaire and that it called upon the Council to endorse the Treaty to phase out fossil fuels.

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy explained that, if the Committee was content, officers would submit a report back to the Committee as quickly as possible, having considered the Motion and any potential cost implications.

The Committee agreed to that course of action.

Presentation on the Blackstaff Greenway Feasibility Study (Sustrans)

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. C. Pollock and Ms. P. Mansour, Sustrans, to the meeting. Ms. Mansour explained that the Council had engaged Sustrans to prepare a study on the creation of a Blackstaff Greenway, from the Stockman's Way roundabout through Boucher Road Playing Fields and continuing through the Boucher Estate to the 'Rise' sculpture.

She provided the Members with an overview of various factors which they had taken into consideration, including relevant plans and guidance, flood risk, contamination, air pollution, topography, ecology and the current and future transport network. She highlighted that the site was industrial and car-dominated.

The Committee was apprised of a number of options which had been considered and was advised that the highest scoring route was a shared walking, wheeling and cycling path which followed the route of the Blackstaff River. The plans included riverbed flood alleviation, biodiversity enhancement, an extension of the bog meadows and water filtration and contamination treatment.

The representatives from Sustrans reported that they were engaging with DfI Active Travel on the development of the greenway and that the project would ideally be cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary. A number of potential funding streams had also been identified to help deliver the project.

During discussion, a number of Members suggested that it was great to see development of the plans and that there was also real potential for the greenway to extend further in future.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for the presentation and they left the meeting.

Noted.

Shared Island Civic Society Fund

(Mr. M. Mulholland, External Funding Coordinator, attended in connection with this item.)

The External Funding Coordinator presented the Committee with the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update in relation to the current open funding call under the Shared Island Civic Society Fund being managed by the Irish Government’s Department of Foreign Affairs (DfA), and potential advice sessions of Belfast organisations for future funding opportunities.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes:

- the update provided in relation to the current round of the Shared Island Civic Society Fund and the commitment of future founding rounds until 2027;
- that an online information session has been organised for local organisations on Thursday 12 June 2025 on the requirements of the current funding call, details of this session has been shared with all elected members and relevant officers to share across their local networks; and
- that following engagement between officers and DfA officials, plans are being developed to run a future in-person session in late summer with Belfast organisations as to potential opportunities for successful applications under future rounds of this fund.

3.0 Main Report

Shared Island Civic Society Fund

- 3.1 The Shared Island Civic Society Fund is an initiative to promote practical North South cooperation and engagement across a range of sectors and themes, consistent with the objectives and commitments of the Good Friday Agreement.
- 3.2 The Shared Island initiative is a whole-of-government priority which aims to harness the full potential of the Good Friday Agreement to enhance cooperation, connection, and mutual

understanding on the island and engage with all communities and traditions to build consensus around a shared future.

- 3.3 The Civic Society Fund is intended to provide project funding to complement work supported through the Reconciliation Fund and other Government resources; and to promote practical North South cooperation between civic society actors, deepening such relationships on an all-island basis.
- 3.4 A total of €6 million will be available from 2025 to 2027, it is anticipated that a total of up to €2 million will be made available in this round to support successful projects. The maximum grant awarded to any project is €50,000. The average grant awarded in previous rounds was just under €30,000. Applications will be strengthened by the inclusion of funding contributions from the participating partner organisations.

The Fund will prioritise applications relating to, but not limited to, the following areas, including applications from regional or national representative bodies:

- Climate and environment.
 - Women
 - Youth
 - Migrants
 - Social Enterprise, charity and voluntary sector.
- 3.5 All applications must have a clear North South dimension and only applications from civic society organisations based in the South engaging in new project/programme work with a partner(s) in the North or civic society organisations in the North engaging in new project/programme work with a partner(s) in the South will be considered. East/West dimensions and partners to such projects will also be welcomed.
- 3.6 The following areas are not eligible for funding:
- Standalone activities that are not part of a wider project/programme.
 - Operational costs, such as core salaries and overheads
 - Capital costs.
- 3.7 The deadline for applications is 27 June 2025, guidance notes and the application form are available from [the Department of Foreign Affairs website](#).
- 3.8 Considering the tight timeframes for this current funding round. The Council has requested that DfA hold an online information session, taking place on Thursday 12 June, to provide information to prospective applicant organisations

based in Belfast. As there will also be future rounds under this Fund the Council will work with DfA officials to facilitate an in-person session to provide guidance and support for local organisations on project requirements and tips for future opportunities.

Financial and Resource Implications

None associated with this report.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

None associated with this report.”

The External Funding Coordinator outlined that he had participated in the online information session earlier that day, along with four organisations.

It was highlighted that there were capacity issues across the City and that submitting applications before the end of June would be a challenge.

A Member highlighted the importance of the Council participating and supporting events involving local organisations funded under the initiatives.

The External Funding Coordinator confirmed that representatives from the Shared Island Unit would present to the Committee at a future meeting.

The Committee adopted the recommendations within the report.

District Electoral Area Profiles - Local Area Energy Plan Dataset

The Monitoring, Reporting and Learning Officer advised the Committee that one of the main outputs of the Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) was a detailed dataset which highlighted key characteristics of homes across Belfast relating to energy efficiency. She explained that Council data analysts had expanded the dataset to link more indicators relating to household characteristics, such as tenure, acorn categories and descriptions.

She demonstrated the District Electoral Area Profiles on the Data Platform, created using the modelled data outputs from the LAEP. The profiles allowed users to explore different indicators in areas across the city, including current EPC, potential EPC, tenure, main fuel type, property type, insulation type and window type.

The Committee was advised that the variables listed could be broken down further into smaller areas of around 300 households, namely “Datazones”, with approximately 800 households in a “Super Datazone”. Both of those geographies had been designed to analyse data for the 2021 Census and it was also possible to amalgamate the data up into quadrants, North, South, East and West.

In regard to further opportunities with the data, the Members were advised that Council data analysts had created a retrofit index that amalgamated different variables into one index that would help indicate areas in most need of retrofit. There were also other opportunities to link general population demographics to the profiles that were currently being explored.

The Committee was advised that the profiles would be accessible for Members to investigate through the Climate Data Platform test site on the Council’s internal website.

Noted.

Climate Training for Elected Members and Corporate Management Team

The Climate Commissioner presented the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide members with an outline of an Elected Member climate change training programme which is being developed for NI councils.**

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 The Committee is requested to:**

- I. Note that the Climate Change (Reporting Bodies) Regulations process is likely to require capacity building for Elected Members and staff across the organisation to support them as they scrutinise and report on the climate impacts of the Council’s activities, policies and assets;**
- II. Note that the Council’s membership of Sustainable NI provides access to a new comprehensive sustainability and climate change training programme for Elected Members and staff, with preferential rates of up to 50% discount;**
- III. Note that a training course has been developed for Elected Members that will help them to understand climate change, how that aligns with the Council’s work and how they can influence and take action;**
- IV. Note that Sustainable NI has offered to design and deliver a climate and sustainability training course**

- tailored to the needs of the Corporate Management Team and other senior managers; and
- V. Give approval to arrange these courses for Elected Members and CMT.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

Belfast City Council has committed to ambitious action to address climate change across all areas of Council work and relies on the support and engagement of all staff and Elected Members.

The Council has recently been tasked with reporting on climate change adaptation and mitigation as mandated by the new Climate Change (Reporting Bodies) Regulations, with an initial deadline of 31st of October 2025 for the first comprehensive report on climate mitigation efforts. This process is likely to require capacity building for Elected Members and staff across the organisation to support them as they scrutinise and report on the climate impacts of the Council's activities, policies and assets.

3.2 Climate Change and Sustainability Training Programme

Belfast City Council is a partner in the NI Sustainable Development Forum. Sustainable NI (SNI) facilitates the group as well as providing councils with education, advocacy and support services. In response to requests from NI councils, SNI has developed a series of sustainability and climate change training programmes tailored to the needs of NI councils including training strands tailored specifically to the needs of Elected Members and senior managers. Course development and delivery can involve Council staff and could be delivered in person on Council premises.

Similar training programmes have been rolled out across councils in the Republic of Ireland (RoI) and Great Britain. The RoI scheme in particular is regarded as an exemplar, with training co-ordinators advocating that programmes focus initially on Elected Members and senior managers. Delivery of training courses is likely to commence in September 2025 and courses will include:

- Climate Change Training for Elected Members
- Climate Change and Sustainability for Senior Managers
- Sustainability and Net Zero Introduction
- Sustainable Capital Projects

- Sustainable Procurement
- Sustainability Reporting in the Supply Chain
- Screening Decisions for Sustainability

3.3 Climate Change Training for Elected Members

This will equip NI councillors with the skills and information that they need to mobilise change within their constituency and to communicate climate change effectively to hard-to-reach groups. The course is typically run over a full-day or as two half-days. An initial two hour condensed course is proposed. By the end of the training, councillors will be able to:

- Explain the basic science of climate change and how climate change will affect us both globally and locally;
- Explain why local authorities are vital to tackling climate change;
- Explain how local authorities can tackle climate change (through direct control, procurement, place-shaping, showcasing, partnerships and community engagement)
- Explain the risks of flooding and temperature rise and the role of nature and biodiversity in building resilience;
- Articulate the risks and opportunities associated with the energy transition and explain the wider benefits of action to their communities (eg health, jobs traffic congestion, supporting local businesses etc);
- Communicate, engage and consult with local communities on the climate agenda; and
- Consider the overall costs and benefits (including co-benefits) of action to cut carbon.

3.4 Climate Change and Sustainability Training for Senior Managers

Sustainable NI has also offered to design and deliver a climate and sustainability training course tailored to the needs of the Corporate Management Team and other senior managers. The course would be delivered on Belfast City Council premises, with an expected duration of around 2 hours and would be based on a training needs analysis which would be carried out in advance.

3.5 Central and Local Government Climate Change Working Group

A Local & Central Government Working Group has been established by DAERA and SOLACE to strengthen local and central government collaboration to address the climate and ecological crisis. The Working Group recently agreed to explore expanding the provision of online, self-directed Climate Smart Level 1 (2.5 hours) and 2 (3 hours) training to local government over the next 18 months. So far, this training has been completed by 1,000 central government staff, has been well received and can be delivered for approximately £9,000 pa with a CPD certificate included. The training is delivered through an e-learning platform. If this goes ahead, it would build initial awareness, understanding and capacity across BCC staff at scale. Likely costs would be c£750 per Council per year to have access to 2 courses each month. Further updates will follow through the regular SOLACE meetings.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

- 4.1** The cost for up to 15 Elected Members attending the training is covered within Belfast City Council's subscription as a partner to SNI for 2025/26. If additional places are required the cost would be £150 per delegate (a 50% reduction on the regular charge £295) and would be funded via existing City and Organisational Strategy budget.

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 5.1** None identified. Engagement with Equality & Rural Needs team is ongoing across the Programme."

During discussion, a Member stated that she felt that the best arrangement for Members' training was outside of a Committee format.

A further Member stated that perhaps the training could take place after a Committee meeting.

Further Members stated that they were keen to develop a Forward Work Plan for the Committee, as well as to consider it's remit in light of the upcoming governance review.

After further discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations within the report and approved the courses for Elected Members and CMT, and additionally:

- a) agreeing that officers would report back to the Committee, based on the Members' feedback, with suggestions for the most appropriate format and time for the Members training to take place; and
- b) noting that officers were seeking three Members to participate in a Training Needs Assessment to gauge the level of training required, and that an email would be circulated seeking volunteers in the first instance.

Chairperson