

# Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 7th August, 2025

## MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AND CITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor M. Donnelly (Chairperson);  
The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Doherty;  
Alderman McCoubrey; and  
Councillors Anglin, R. Brooks, Collins, P. Donnelly,  
S. Douglas, Ferguson, Groogan,  
Lyons, Magee, McCann, Murray and Walsh.

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

### **Apologies**

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Alderman Copeland and Councillors T. Brooks and Maskey.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 12th June were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st July.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were reported.

### **Notice of Motion - National Park City**

The Director presented the following motion to the Committee, which had been proposed by Councillor Groogan and seconded by Councillor T. Brooks:

“This Council recognises the ambition set out in the Belfast Agenda that Belfast will be a “vibrant, attractive, connected and environmentally sustainable” city by 2035, as well as somewhere “where everyone experiences good health and wellbeing”.

The Council celebrate the good work already happening right across the city that will help us achieve this aim; alleyway greening, community growing projects, the Blackstaff greenway, development of a neighbourhood net-zero framework, the One Million Trees project, and many more initiatives working to improve biodiversity, make green spaces more accessible and help make Belfast a greener and cleaner city.

The Council believes that a city where people, places and nature are better connected is one that not only helps us to tackle our climate and biodiversity crisis but leads to better health and wellbeing outcomes for everyone in the city.

As such, this Council commits to supporting the move to become a National Park City, convening stakeholders from across the city, improving support to empower local communities, bringing together existing projects, and developing a clear roadmap to how we collectively can restore nature for the benefit of people, wildlife and planet.”

He reminded the Committee that, as it had responsibility for making recommendations on the Council’s approach to addressing the climate crisis and the Council’s role and responsibilities at city level, including but not limited to considering public campaigns/public education programmes which the Council might wish to deliver to change behaviour amongst residents and businesses; and to take account of the Council’s statutory responsibilities on sustainable development, the motion had been referred to it.

A number of Members expressed their support for the motion and their aspirations for the City to become a designated “National Park City”.

One Member requested that the Committee invite Dr. Neil Galway, Senior Lecturer at the School of Natural and Built Environment at Queen’s University, and Mr. Conor McKinney, Wild Belfast, to attend a future meeting to discuss the issue.

A further Member added that he would like to see officers engage with their counterparts in the City of Galway, which was also aspiring to become a National Park City.

After discussion, the Committee agreed:

- to invite Dr. Neil Galway, Senior Lecturer at the School of Natural and Built Environment at Queen’s University, and Mr. Conor McKinney, Wild Belfast, to attend a future meeting;
- that officers would liaise with their counterparts in the City of Galway as part of the scoping exercise; and
- that a subsequent report be brought to the Committee outlining a detailed consideration of the Notice of Motion and the potential cost implications.

**Response to the draft Third Northern Ireland Climate  
Change Adaptation Programme (NICCAP3) 2024-2029**

(Ms. M. Quigley, Adaptation and Resilience Advisor, attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

**“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform members about the recent public consultation on the Draft NI Climate Change Adaptation Programme 2024-2029**

**2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 The Committee is requested to:**

- I. Note that the NI Climate Change Adaptation Programme has been drafted and refers to a series of climate risks for Northern Ireland based on the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2022.**
- II. Note that the current Programme out for consultation identifies a range of actions to be carried out by local government up to 2029.**
- III. Retrospectively approve the response that was submitted by Belfast City Council to the Public Consultation which closed on 4th August 2025.**
- IV. Agree that further discussion and engagement should be requested with DAERA on the actions to understand the resource implications of these on the Council before they can be agreed and adopted.**

**3.0 Main Report**

**3.1 Background**

The Climate Change Act 2008 places a statutory duty on Northern Ireland Executive Departments to lay programmes before the Northern Ireland Assembly, which set out their objectives, policies, proposals and timelines for introducing those policies and proposals in response to the most recent UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) which was published in January 2022.

To fulfil this legal requirement the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) has led on the development of a series of single coordinated adaptation programmes, which are known as the Northern Ireland

Climate Change Adaptation Programme (NICCAP), since the 2008 Act came into effect.

The recent public consultation, which opened on 9 June 2025 and closed on 4th August 2025 sought the views of stakeholders on the draft third iteration of these programmes (NICCAP3) which has been developed with input from all Departments and a range of key stakeholders, in response to the latest Third UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA3).

The Climate Change Committee are obligated under section 57 of the 2008 Act to produce an Independent Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA-IA) on a five yearly cycle, which is used to inform the development of the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) which must be laid in Parliament every five years under section 56.

Section 60 of the Act provides for Northern Ireland Departments to respond to each CCRA through an adaptation programme setting out:

- the objectives of the department in relation to adaptation to climate change,
- the department's proposals and policies for meeting those objectives, and
- the timescales for introducing those proposals and policies.

Effective climate change adaptation action requires a collaborative approach and so in recognition of this, DAERA has led on the development of a coordinated Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme (NICCAP) with the input of adaptation responses from across each of the NI Executive Departments.

The consultation document states that it also recognises the important role that key stakeholders including Local Government, academia, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and businesses can play in creating a climate resilient Northern Ireland, and in acknowledgement of this, they have also included an extensive range of actions from outside of Departments in the NICCAP3 Adaptation Delivery Plan.

### **3.2 What is in NICCAP 3?**

Part 1 provides information on the legislative context for NICCAP3 and details on the consultation itself including how to respond as well as a short introduction to the two main responses to climate change:

- **Mitigation**

Climate change mitigation refers to actions or activities that limit emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs) from entering the atmosphere and/or reduce their levels in the atmosphere.

- **Adaptation**

Climate adaptation means taking action to prepare for and adjust to the current and projected impacts of climate change.

Part 2 covers NICCAP3 itself including how DAERA has chosen to structure it and why it provides detail on each of the Key Areas within NICCAP3 which cover 5 key areas of sectoral impact as follows:

- Natural Capital;
- Food Security;
- Infrastructure Services;
- People and the Built Environment; and
- Disruption to Business and Supply Chains.

This chapter also provides details on the statutory and best practice impact assessments which were carried out on the draft NICCAP3.

Part 3 provides details on the next steps, following the close of the consultation, including information on the confidentiality of responses to the consultation, as well as on Data Protection and Freedom of Information consideration.

### **3.3 Actions relating to Belfast City Council**

There are 28 actions identified in the programme that are either owned by the Council, councils are required to support delivery of, or they are referenced in the programme description.

As part of our participation on the Local Government Climate Action Network (LGCAN), the following ongoing projects were highlighted and input into the programme:

- The Belfast Tree Strategy
- The Belfast Sustainable Food Strategy
- Preparation of a Climate Change Risk Assessment, Action Plan and Investment Framework

As well as that, the Council is listed as partners on the following initiatives:

- Greening the City (Belfast Healthy Cities)
- Regional Coordination of Adaptation (Climate NI)
- UPSURGE (QUB)
- SPACE (QUB)

Other actions that have an impact on Council programmes and operations include:

- NI Priority Species List (DAERA)
- NI Historic Environment Policy (DfC)
- Living with Water in Belfast Plan (DfI)
- The Eastern Transport Plan (DfI)
- The Connswater Community Greenway (Eastside Partnership)
- NILGA Elected Member Development Programme (NILGA)
- TalX 2 (University College Cork)

Actions relating to our Emergency Planning functions are:

- Severe Weather Debriefing (RCRG)
- NI Civil Contingencies Framework (TEO)
- Continued working by RCRG with communities impacted by flooding

#### **3.4 Actions Endorsed by SOLACE/NILGA**

There are 11 actions that the Council is required to deliver on that were endorsed by SOLACE in 2024. Some of these are on target to deliver, whilst others will require resources to be identified and deployed in their delivery across Climate, Emergency Planning, Spatial Planning, Community Planning, CNS and Finance and Resources. These are:

- Climate Adaptation Planning By 2025, councils will be delivering at least the first iteration of a climate adaptation action plan, linked to a regularly reviewed risk register, in alignment with public body reporting duties brought forward by DAERA.
- Corporate Risk and Adaptation Climate change adaptation will be embedded in each council corporate plan by 2029, recognising the challenges of increasing climate impacts over coming decades.
- Develop a baseline of Climate Impacts on Finance From 2025, councils will create a climate impact

‘tagging’ system, to create a baseline of financial impacts on council business operations from severe weather events. This will complement existing Met Office information gathering on non-financial impacts of weather events.

- Emergency Planning By 2029, Regional Community Resilience Group (RCRG) will have widened its remit to consider the promotion and development of societal resilience.
- Up to and beyond 2029, the Regional Community Resilience Group will continue to work with communities impacted by flooding to enhance preparedness, to better understand requirements for support, and identify what interventions should be prioritised to mitigate the impacts of flooding.
- Spatial Planning Councils will ensure local development plans demonstrate how climate adaptation considerations will be embedded in all approval decisions, recognising increasing climate impacts over coming decades.
- Local Development Plans will specify that developments are designed using the most up-to-date floodplain definitions from DfI, and councils will publish figures of how many approvals are granted by exception annually.
- Green and Blue Infrastructure targets are set by councils to ensure places and people are well informed and more resilient to more intense and frequent flooding and heatwaves.
- Community Planning Councils will collaborate through the community planning partnership to undertake work on how adaptation relates to community planning by 2026.
- Procurement Councils will ensure that any sustainability/net zero procurement screening includes climate adaptation considerations, to take advantage of co-benefits, ensure consistency and avoid unintended consequences.
- Food growing/local ownership Work with sustainable food places partnerships/communities to develop initiatives which enable more local food growing and community-owned food partnerships by 2029.

### **3.5 Public Consultation Response**

The response to the public consultation is attached in Appendix I for noting purposes.

**4.0 Financial and Resource Implications**

- 4.1 At this stage there is no immediate resource or financial ask of the Council to respond to this public consultation.**

Should the actions be adopted, resources will be required across departments to ensure their effective delivery and compliance with the plan. Identifying what the financial and resource implications are will require further cross-department consultation and agreement across Council.

**5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/  
Rural Needs Assessment**

While NICCAP3 contains a wide range of policies and proposals which cut across multiple sectors of society, the consultation document states that because NICCAP3 is a high-level programme which serves as a coordination document for these policies and proposals its creation and presentation to the Assembly does not in itself impact on any of the areas covered by the listed assessments. However, as policies and proposals contained within NICCAP3 may impact on each area to varying degrees, it will be the responsibility of the owners of such policies or proposals to ensure they are individually screened or assessed as part of their development as appropriate.

As a result of this determination, in each case DAERA has either found there to be no impact from the laying of NICCAP3 at the Assembly or have screened NICCAP3 out from a full assessment.”

In response to a Member’s question regarding allotments, the Adaptation and Resilience Advisor outlined that the growing areas across the City had already been mapped out, having been considered as part of the “Right to Grow” Motion which had been brought through the Council. She also provided further details of the Sustainable Food Programme and the Community Growing Forum.

A further Member requested that even small pockets of land in inner City areas be considered for green patches for growing, similar to one which had recently been established in the Short Strand area.

In response to a further Member’s query, she explained that officers were engaging with a number of different statutory bodies, including the Housing Executive, on accessing land for community growing and that the Belfast Tree Strategy would ensure that the Council planted the right trees in the right locations.



In response to a further Member's suggestion of utilising the rooftops across the City for growing, the Climate Commissioner advised the Committee that some rooftops were better suited for solar panels.

A further Member raised the recent High Court judgement which had stalled the A5 road upgrade due to Climate Change legislation and queried whether officers were taking such issues into account. The Adaptation and Resilience confirmed that officers regularly engaged with the Capital Projects Team and that the recently adopted Climate Action Plan had been developed across Council departments to ensure that integrated mitigation and adaptation planning was taking place in the Council.

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendations within the report.

### **Elected Member Training**

(Ms. B. Roddy, Project Support Officer (Climate), attended in connection with this item.)

The Project Support Officer (Climate) outlined that, following discussions with Elected Members, it was proposed that a two hour in-person climate training workshop would be delivered immediately after the Committee meeting on 11th September, 2025. She explained that the workshop would be delivered by Sustainable NI and supported by members of the Council's Climate Team. The Committee was advised that the content would be tailored to the findings of a training needs assessment carried out with Members of the Climate and City Resilience Committee.

The cost for up to 15 Elected Members to attend the training was covered within the Council's subscription as a partner to Sustainable NI for 2025/26. If additional places were required, the cost would be £150 per delegate, a 50% reduction on the regular charge, and would be funded via the existing City and Organisational Strategy budget.

The Committee:

- I. noted that Sustainable NI would deliver a two hour in-person Climate Workshop, on Thursday 11th September 2025, immediately following the Committee meeting, as a pilot for the wider group of Elected Members;
- II. gave approval to commission training; and
- III. agreed that Members should confirm their attendance by 22nd August.

### **Restricted Item**

**The information contained in the report associated with the following item was restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.**

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the following item as,

due to the nature of the item, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Members were also reminded that the content of 'restricted' reports and any discussion which took place during closed session must be treated as 'confidential information' and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

**District Heat Network: Results from Heat Mapping  
and Master-planning study for the City Centre**

The Climate Commissioner provided the Committee with an update on the high-level feasibility study of a Belfast City, Central Heat Network.

The Committee was reminded that Belfast City Council had committed to ambitious actions to address climate change across all areas of the Council and the City. The Council had commissioned a Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) which had been launched in September 2024. The plan integrated detailed energy system modelling with extensive stakeholder engagement. The LAEP outlined five priority projects for the near term, including the development of a heat network. The BCC Working Group continued to support delivery and the work was coordinated within the Council via the City Regeneration and Development Board and at the City level through the Belfast Net Zero group which reported into the Our Planet Board.

The Committee was advised of the results of the heat mapping and master-planning study.

The Committee noted that the work had been funded through the Innovate UK Pathfinders Project and had been delivered in partnership with the Energy Systems Catapult. Discussions were underway regarding the funding of the next phase of feasibility work ahead of further engagement and updates on options for the next steps.

After discussion, the Committee noted:

- I. that Belfast City had particularly advantageous conditions for a heat network, due to the compact heat load, and variety of energy centre locations;
- II. that the work to date was a high-level study, that figures were subject to change as and when more detailed feasibility progressed - a site to host the energy centre, choice of technology, anchor loads and network route were variables which might change as feasibility progressed;
- III. that, to progress the heat network project, further investment was required in feasibility, and market engagement activities;

- IV. That further work was required to lower the heat tariff to one more closely aligned with the price of gas;
- V. the results of the market readiness assessment and business model analysis;
- VI. that the Climate Team had been engaging with key city stakeholders, central government departments and facilities managers and sustainability leads for the key base load buildings; and
- VII. that the Corporate Management Team be requested to consider the issue at a future meeting to move the project forward.

Chairperson