

Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 15th June, 2023

MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AND CITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor R-M Donnelly (Chairperson),
Councillors Anglin, Bell, Bower, R. Brooks, T. Brooks,
Carson, Collins, Doherty, M. Donnelly, D. Douglas,
S. Douglas, Kelly, Maghie, McAteer, McCabe,
McKeown, Smyth and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Ms. D. Caldwell, Commissioner for Climate and City
Resilience;
Ms. A. Diver, Climate Programme Manager;
Ms. M. Quigley, Adaptation and Resilience Advisor;
Mr. R. McLernon, Climate Programme Manager City;
Ms. B. Roddy, Project Support Officer – Climate;
Ms. C. Shortt, Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer;
Mr. J. McKearney, Project Support Assistant; and
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 6th April, 2023 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 May.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor T. Brooks requested that it be recorded that she was a member of the RSUA and that she was employed by QUB School of the Natural Environment.

Councillor Brooks was advised that as the items referred to on the agenda were presentations and that no decision by the Committee was required, there was no conflict of interest and Councillor Brooks was permitted to remain in attendance for the duration of the meeting.

Request to Attend the Next Meeting of the Belfast Retro-Hub

Councillor McCabe requested that, in the absence of ex Councillor Spratt, and based on a motion which he had proposed and she had seconded on the subject of the

Belfast Retrofit Delivery- Hub, that she be permitted to attend the next meeting of the Retrofit Delivery-Hub.

In response, the Commissioner for Climate and City Resilience reported that she would be content to accede to the request of Councillor McCabe and extended an invitation to any Member of the Committee to attend the next meeting of the Retrofit Delivery-Hub should they wish to do so.

**Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions from the Built Environment:
Presentation of the RSUA Climate Action Report, Alan Ritchie,
Chair of the RSUA Climate Emergency Committee**

Mr. Ritchie attended in connection with this item and was welcomed by the Chairperson.

Mr. Ritchie stated that the climate action report was concerned primarily with changes which could be made to the built environment and which could impact positively on climate change. He provided an outline on the role of the RSUA in assisting the development plans to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

Mr. Ritchie referred specifically to the areas which the Climate Emergency Committee was examining to impact positively on climate change including:

1. Existing Buildings
2. New Buildings
3. Travel
4. Green
5. Building Materials and
6. Heat and Power

He highlighted the areas under which the Council had control and could influence change, under the afore-mentioned specified headings. In terms of buildings, he specified the need to improve the energy performance and reduce emissions from existing buildings and increase the use made of those buildings. The Members were informed that it was important to publish data on energy production and consumption associated with Council buildings, on an annual basis, including a plan to reduce energy consumption within individual buildings. He highlighted the requirement to modify planning laws in order to increase the use of existing buildings.

The Committee was informed that net-zero carbon emissions was required to be within the brief of the construction of new buildings and that they would be required to be constructed in a manner to ensure longevity. Mr. Ritchie explained that there was a requirement to reduce the carbon used to construct new buildings as, in many cases, carbon debt often exceeded the operational carbon produced.

The Members were informed of the need to reduce embodied carbon, which was the amount of energy used to construct new buildings. Mr. Ritchie emphasised the importance of the Council publishing data on embodied carbon in the construction of those buildings. The Committee was provided with the key areas which required attention if the Council was to achieve its climate ambition targets, including:

Travel by Traditional Motor Vehicles

The need to reduce travel and increase the level of high-density inner-city housing was identified as a key determinant to reducing carbon emissions by reducing the need to travel. The Committee was informed that new area plans were required to be put in place to facilitate high density residential development. Mr. Ritchie suggested the recruitment of a city architect, in a cross-departmental role, to assist the Council in that regard. He highlighted the need to integrate the public transport system by incorporating cycles lanes and pedestrian pathways.

Green

The Members were informed of the need to increase the coverage of native Irish trees to increase the future supply of local timber. It was reported that Northern Ireland was required currently to import a large proportion of its timber and this would negate that requirement. Mr. Ritchie suggested the creation of a fund to develop green spaces, in urban areas, and of the need to increase urban food production, including the increased provision of allotments, vegetable gardens and terraces.

Building Materials

The Committee was alerted to the requirement to reduce building material consumption, as part of the building process, and to publish data on the measures taken to reduce embodied carbon. He referred to the need to encourage the use of local building and recycled materials in the building construction process.

Heat and Power

The Members were informed of the need to move away from the use of fossil fuels and of the requirement to increase the production of green electricity. Mr. Ritchie highlighted the benefits of facilitating local and community heat and power production within existing communities and new developments.

In response to a question from a Member in regard to how far the Council had progressed in the achievement of reducing its carbon emissions, Mr. Ritchie stated that progress had been made and referred specifically to the new university campus as an example of positive change in building design and social integration.

A Member requested what action could be taken to increase the occupancy of vacant buildings above street level in city centre dwellings. Mr. Ritchie responded by stating that a change in planning policy and financial incentives, through subsidies and grants, might assist and that residents in city centre living required integrated planning and transport with green and eco-friendly spaces throughout the city.

A Member highlighted further the problem associated with a lack of political governance presently and was reminded that the Council could affect change through its local development plans, linked to the Belfast Agenda.

The Committee was informed that the inclusion of mandatory building standards, by the Council, could not only assist the Council in achieving its carbon emission targets but could encourage inward investment. In terms of payback associated with positive building design, Mr. Ritchie stated that it was not always the case that passive house design cost more to incorporate within the structure of a building. He confirmed that the Council needed to look at long-term investment and that, in general terms, a passive house had ten per-cent of the running costs associated with a standard build. He confirmed that investors tended to invest in long-term programmes.

A Member raised concerns in regard to the lack of connective infrastructure associated with the provision of alternative forms of transport, including safe cycle lanes and the maintenance of both road and cycle surfaces. He highlighted the need to separate alternative forms of green transport from congested and dangerous traffic lanes.

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy, at the request of a Member, agreed to bring back, to a future meeting of the Committee, a report on the gaps which the Council was required to address, in terms of meeting its targets, on delivering the recommendations contained within Mr. Ritchie's presentation.

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Mr. Ritchie for his detailed and informative presentation and he departed from the meeting.

Noted.

An Overview of the Climate Programme

The Commissioner for Climate and City Resilience provided the Committee with an overview of the climate programme which had commenced in 2019, when the Council declared a climate emergency. She reported that a Resilience Strategy had been formulated subsequently, in 2020, which had included the creation of a carbon roadmap. The Commissioner reported that the Council had a key role and responsibility to deliver on its climate targets and, in so doing, pay particular attention to the operation within its own estate, including the climate consequence associated with its policies and procurement processes.

The Climate Commissioner highlighted the need to unlock the social and economic benefits associated with a climate transition and how the Council could use its estate to lead by example to achieve net-zero and emphasised the need to encourage behavioural change. She stated, that as part of that objective, the Council would accompany its climate plan with a climate investment plan as a means to promote climate actions and to identify new funding opportunities to meet its emission targets.

The Committee was informed of the work which was required to identify and quantify the Council's Scope one, two and three emissions, stating that over seventy per-cent of the Council's emissions were currently category scope three emissions. The Commissioner reported that the Council was evaluating the implementation of energy audits in regard to its buildings and how energy savings might be attained. The Members were informed that the Council had approved a £1 million climate fund to reduce its emissions and improve resilience. As part of that investment, it was reported that eighteen projects had been developed as part of that process.

The Committee was informed of the importance of data in building an evidence-based platform regarding de-carbonisation. As part of that process, the Commissioner reported that the Council was undertaking a programme to monitor and record its carbon emissions. The Members were informed that the Council had joined the global reporting framework, Carbon Disclosure Project, during the COP 26 climate conference, receiving a B in year one and an A in year two. She referred to the work undertaken, using heat maps, to identify the most vulnerable areas of the city.

It was reported that the Council was working on a Local Area Energy Plan for Belfast, on a geographical basis, to show the most effective ways to de-carbonise which would provide evidence-based interventions, pulling data from an extensive range of both public and private organisations. The Commissioner reported that it was anticipated that the Council's energy plan would be published in January 2024. She referred to a range of specific projects which had been developed, including the One Million Trees and the UPSURGE projects, which were nature-based solutions to climate change.

The Commissioner informed the Committee that the Council was evaluating the development of Solar PV at locations such as buildings and parks and was looking at options to use hydrogen-based fuel cells to power its vehicle fleet. She highlighted work undertaken regarding sustainable food production, including the establishment of both a sustainable food partnership and heat network for the city.

The Committee noted the information which had been provided.

EV charging points: an update on the FASTER Project

The Climate Programme Manager City submitted the undernoted report on the Council's proposals to expand its electric vehicle charging infrastructure.

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the FASTER project, which will increase Electric Vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure in the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to:

- I. Note that the sites previously agreed by Committee on 13th October 2022, Girdwood Hub, Brook Leisure Centre, and Ballysillan Leisure Centre are now included as primary sites within the live procurement exercise which will appoint a Charge Point Operator to manage Design, Installation and Operation of the Northern Ireland charge points.**

- II. Note that a process of assessing EV charger capacity at a range of Belfast Leisure Centre locations has taken place, whereby Ulster University who are technical lead in the project, have worked with NIE to assess sites and have made recommendations on inclusion or omission accordingly.
- III. Note that one previously agreed site, Belvoir Activity Centre, has been omitted due to constraints in the energy capacity on site.
- IV. Note that Shankill Leisure Centre and Ozone Complex were assessed and deemed to have insufficient energy capacity at present for EV chargers.
- V. Note that Olympia Leisure Centre was considered for inclusion however had to be omitted due to time constraints relating to the procurement process and the fact that Olympia Leisure Centre's energy is managed by the IFA through Windsor Park.
- VI. Approve Avoniel Leisure Centre being included on the list of primary locations within Belfast, as a replacement for Belvoir Activity Centre.
- VII. Approve an additional three locations which have been included as reserve sites, should they be required. These are Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre, Grove Wellbeing Centre, and Whiterock Leisure Centre.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Background

3.2 The FASTER Project is a joint cross border project across Scotland, the border Counties of Ireland and Northern Ireland to support the overarching ambition to transition to low carbon transport systems and to demonstrate how each of the three jurisdictions can provide early systems learning in relation to the electrification of transport.

3.3 The FASTER Project aims to ensure that the availability of public charging stations is not a major obstacle to Electric Vehicle (EV) market penetration.

- 3.4 Further information about the FASTER Project can be found at www.fasterevcharge.com
- 3.5 The FASTER Project has been awarded funding for the Project's costs from the European Union's INTERREG VA Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).
- 3.6 The partnership will implement the physical rollout of 73 rapid charging stations in the programme area. The Project aims to ensure that the availability of charging stations is not a major obstacle to Electric Vehicle (EV) market penetration with the proposal to carry out the design, analysis, procurement, installation, and operation of 73 Rapid Chargers across the three programme jurisdictions. There must be cross compatibility between the three jurisdictions which may be achieved using contactless card payments or other methods.
- 3.7 The FASTER Project is led by East Border Region Ltd. There are a total of seven project partners and 16 associate partners from across the three jurisdictions.
- 3.8 The following Project Partners will be directly involved in the planning and delivery of the overall Project:
1. East Border Region Ltd (EBR) (Lead partner)
 2. Louth County Council (Procurement lead in R.O.I)
 3. Dundalk Institute of Technology (DKIT)
 4. Ulster University (Procurement lead in N.I.)
 5. South West College
 6. Highlands & Islands Transport Partnership (HiTRANS)
 7. University of Strathclyde
- 3.9 Other Associate Partners essential to the delivery of the overall project are:
1. Monaghan County Council
 2. Cavan County Council
 3. Leitrim County Council
 4. Sligo County Council
 5. Donegal County Council
 6. Meath County Council
 7. Sustainable Authority of Ireland (SEAI)
 8. IT Sligo
 9. Armagh Banbridge Craigavon Borough Council
 10. Ards and North Down Borough Council
 11. Newry Mourne and Down District Council
 12. Mid-Ulster Council
 13. Fermanagh and Omagh Council
 14. Derry and Strabane Council

- 15. Belfast City Council
- 16. Mid & East Antrim

- 3.10 In Northern Ireland it is anticipated that up to 22 EV RAPID chargers will be installed through the FASTER project. RAPID chargers are 55kw chargers, capable of fully charging a vehicle in approximately 30 minutes.
- 3.11 Belfast City Council is in the final stages of developing a Belfast EV Strategy, which will set out the city's requirements and recommended approach to be implemented through a partnership approach, aligned to the regional EV Infrastructure Action Plan <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/infrastructure/ev-infrastructure-action-plan-2022.pdf>. However, Council has been involved in two funding proposals which will increase publicly available EV chargers in Belfast by utilising the Council estate. These are the FASTER project, and through the ORCS (On Street Residential Charge Point Scheme). FASTER is focused on Leisure Centres, ORCS is focused on publicly available car parks.
- 3.12 Belfast City Council made an initial submission of sites based on criteria provided by East Border Region (the coordinating body) which were that sites had to be publicly accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This ruled out many of the Belfast Leisure Centres as they are subject to restricted access, leaving Girdwood Hub, Ballysillan Leisure Centre, Belvoir Activity Centre and Brook Leisure Centre.
- 3.13 Of these sites Girdwood Hub, Ballysillan Leisure Centre and Brook Leisure Centre had sufficient energy capacity for the installation of EV chargers. Belvoir Leisure Centre was omitted due to lack of capacity.
- 3.14 Girdwood Hub was deemed to have capacity for a single charger, Ballysillan Leisure Centre was deemed to have capacity for a single charger and Brook Leisure Centre was deemed to have capacity for a double charger.
- 3.15 Subsequently, SEUPB has varied the criteria so that sites which are publicly accessible on a restricted basis can be included, on the proviso that timings are signposted and available through information sources on EV charger availability such as Zapmap <https://www.zap-map.com/>. This variance resulted in the assessment of additional sites as set out below:
- 3.16 Avoniel Leisure Centre – deemed to be suitable for a double EV charger

Grove Wellbeing Centre – deemed to be suitable for a double EV charger

Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre – deemed to be suitable for a double EV charger

Ozone Leisure Centre – insufficient capacity

Shankill Leisure Centre – insufficient capacity

Whiterock Leisure Centre – deemed to be suitable for a double EV charger

- 3.17 Following liaison with the Belfast City Council Energy and CO2 Manager officers recommended the inclusion of Avoniel Leisure Centre as one of the four primary sites, subject to approval from Elected Members.
- 3.18 The remaining sites, Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre, Grove Wellbeing Centre and Whiterock Leisure Centre have been placed on a reserve list, should an opportunity arise due to another site not proceeding. This is subject to approval from Elected Members.
- 3.19 One additional site was considered as a potential reserve; however, Olympia Leisure Centre was unable to be included at this stage due to the FASTER project timeframe for procurement which did not allow additional assessment of capacity and, the fact that Olympia Leisure Centre's energy is managed via Windsor Park under IFA management and would have required further engagement with the IFA, which was not possible in the time available to officers. However, Olympia Leisure Centre will be included in any future plans for use of EV on the Council estate.
- 3.20 Further updates will be provided to Committee on the FASTER Project as the project progresses, the ORCS funding application which has previously been agreed by Council, and on the development of Belfast EV Strategy and next steps.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

The FASTER project is fully funded by SEUPB.

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

- 5.1 Officers are currently developing the Equality, Good Relations and Rural Needs Screening and will incorporate within the emerging programme of work.”

In response to a question from a Member in regard to accessibility to the charging points and the various selected leisure centres and the maintenance of the sites, the Climate Programme Manager City reported that, where 24/7 charging was not available, signage would be provided to highlight the operation hours of those sites

which did not operate on a 24/7 basis. In response to the Member's further question in regard to the maintenance of EV charging points, it was reported that a charge point operator would be recruited to ensure the maintenance of the various charging points, covering an initial contractual period of seven years.

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Consultation on Climate Change Reporting by
Specified Public Bodies - Developing New Regulations**

The Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer submitted the undernoted report regarding the reporting schedule to DAERA on climate change.

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on the consultation response to DAERA on climate change reporting.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i) Note the contents of the consultation**
- ii) Agree submission of response to DAERA**

3.0 Main report

3.1 Climate Change Reporting Requirements

A climate emergency was declared by the Northern Ireland Assembly in February 2020. In June 2022, the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 received Royal Assent. This Act sets out Northern Ireland's framework for tackling climate change and reducing emissions, by setting (among other things) challenging targets to deliver net zero emissions ('net zero') in Northern Ireland by the year 2050. The Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) is leading on the development of Northern Ireland's first 5-year climate action plan (CAP) as required under the Act. The CAP will contain the Northern Ireland departments' policies and proposals to meet the first 5-year carbon budget for the years 2023-27 (which is a limit on the amount of emissions Northern Ireland can emit) and it will set our longer-term pathway towards net zero by 2050.

The important role of public bodies in tackling climate change is recognised by the Act, by requiring new law (regulations) to be made, which will set a requirement for specified public bodies to report on climate change.

The consultation aims to help guide the department on what should be included within future monitoring requirements from public bodies and establish how often the information should be gathered.

Belfast City Council response includes:

- **Adaptation reports should be provided every 2 years - Adaptation strategies tend to run on 3-5 year cycles, setting the direction of travel and the results of programmes can take longer periods of time to bear fruit, however, adaptation action should be continuous, reflecting the amount of change required, making reporting every 2 years valuable to track progress. The first report should be submitted by January 2025 to align with the independent expert climate change advice from the Climate Change Committee**
- **Mitigation reports should be provided every 2 years - Mitigation action plans are often short term or can at least be measured in clear stages, reflecting the quarterly energy billing and data collection system. There is therefore a need for more frequent updates on progress towards meeting NI and UK overall emissions reduction targets. It also aligns with the United Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) reporting requirements for mitigation. The first report should be submitted by October 2025 to align with outputs from the Climate Change Committee.**

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

4.1 None

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

5.1 None.”

A Member raised concerns on the consultation document proposing that NI Concessionary Fare Scheme be raised from sixty to sixty-five years of age. The Member suggested that the Department should be incentivising individuals to use public transport, given the current climate emergency, and suggested that the Council make a submission, as part of the consultation process, to have the decision reversed.

In response, the Director of City and Organisational Strategy stated that he would endeavour to ascertain which Council department would take a lead in the matter raised and would report back, by way of an officer-led response, to the proposal outlined in the consultation document.

The Committee approved the officer-led response to the consultation document.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

**Felling of Trees in Orangefield Park –
Councillor Brian Smyth**

The Member raised the issue of the felling of approximately one hundred and seventy trees in Orangefield Park by contractors, acting on behalf of N.I.E. In that regard, the Member requested to be furnished with information on the circumstances surrounding the decision to fell the trees, the agreement which was in place between the Council and N.I.E., the cost of the tree restoration programme and what legal redress the Council might have in the matter.

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy reported that the matter had been referred to the Council's Legal Services Department and that the Committee would be provided with an update when more information became available.

**Climate and City Resilience Dashboard –
Councillor Tara Brooks**

The Member requested if it might be possible to summarise the Council's climate adaptation and mitigation measures, in a dashboard format, for the purpose of clarity and ease of public access.

In response, the Climate Commissioner reported that the Council was working on capturing all of its data, in a dashboard format, showing climate actions, targets and outcomes. She stated that she would be happy to provide the Committee with an update in the matter by the Autumn and that climate actions would be linked to the Belfast Agenda.

The Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer informed the Members that a pilot study was being undertaken currently, with Amazon, focussing on climate data capture and that it would be possible to furnish the Committee with a draft outline of the dashboard proposals in the Autumn.

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy reported that a new performance team was being recruited, within his directorate, and that this would provide greater transparency and accountability in terms of climate adaptation and mitigation outcomes and would assist in the promotion of inclusive growth for the local economy.

Noted.

Chairperson