

Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 12th September, 2024

MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AND CITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM

Members present: Councillor R-M Donnelly (Chairperson);
Alderman McCoubrey; Councillors Bell,
Bower, R. Brooks, T. Brooks, Brennan,
Bunting, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, S. Douglas,
Flynn, Long, Lyons, Magee and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Ms. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner;
Ms. B. Roddy, Project Support Officer; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland, Councillors Anglin and Doherty.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 8th August 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 September.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest reported.

Presentations

Feasibility Study: Green Shipping Corridor Belfast – Liverpool

The Committee was reminded that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 19th January, 2024, had agreed that the Council would partake in a scoping study for a project to examine the feasibility of establishing a Green Shipping Corridor between Belfast and Liverpool. The project would seek:

- to mitigate transition risk for the two ports as the global economy decarbonised ensuring that the ports of Liverpool and Belfast served as gateways to trade and investment in decarbonisation technologies; and
- to position Liverpool and Belfast at the forefront of net zero innovation and as testbeds for commercialising new approaches and technologies.

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. A. Cousins, Director of Regional Development, Connected Places Catapult, who delivered a presentation in the matter. She explained that the creation of the Belfast/Liverpool green shipping corridor would support in delivering the United Kingdom's obligations as set out under the Clydebank Declaration. The corridor, which was one of six envisaged for the Irish Sea area, recognised the role of ports as places which could promote effective energy innovations to support the maritime sector.

The Committee was advised that the key findings of the study had been as follows:

- that existing infrastructure was capable of, but needed to be adapted to use methanol and low carbon fuel;
- that significant investment was required in the national grid; and
- that there was a requirement to design and deliver new terminal infrastructure.

Ms. Cousins indicated that multi-agency collaboration and innovation would be necessary to address the issues identified within the study. As such, a range of civic leaders would be required to become advocates for policy change to overcome barriers and to enable progress. In addition, significant investment from both the private and public sectors would assist to realise regional economic benefits. She concluded by outlining the next steps that would be undertaken in progressing the Belfast/Liverpool corridor.

Ms. Cousins answered several questions which were posed by Members.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. Cousins for her presentation and the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Saughton Park Green Energy – City of Edinburgh Council

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. A Crichton, Energy Officer with the City of Edinburgh Council, who delivered a presentation in respect of the Saughton Park Green Energy Project.

Mr. Crichton explained that the project had been Edinburgh's first green-powered, low carbon park. It combined a micro-hydro scheme to generate electricity, together with ground source heat pump, which generated heat for properties across the park. The Committee was informed that the scheme, which had been funded through a range of partners, used Ground Source Heat Pump (GSHP) technology to provide a low carbon heating solution for the park's visitor facilities, cafe and greenhouses. In addition, a micro-hydro scheme located on the Water of Leith used an Archimedes Screw Turbine to generate electricity by utilising water flow. He explained that the Council was exploring how similar projects could be replicated across its portfolio to support its target of net zero emissions by 2030.

Mr. Crichton concluded by reporting that it was estimated that greenspaces in Edinburgh could provide ground source heating to approximately 11 per cent of households, which would be equivalent to the carbon footprint of 15,600 homes using gas to heat their homes each year.

Mr. Crichton answered several questions which were posed by Members regarding the feasibility of utilising Belfast's several tributary rivers in similar-type projects.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Crichton for his presentation and the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Belfast Sustainable Food Programme – Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To provide an update on the sustainable food programme for Belfast.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i. Note the contents of the report.**
- ii. Note the ongoing work of the Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership and the city's success in re-establishing its Bronze Sustainable Food Award status.**
- iii. Note that the Sustainable Food Strategy work is underway and due for completion by April 2025.**
- iv. Note the progress that has been made on the Horizon 2020 UPSURGE project and agree to request a six-month project extension until February 2026, subject to agreement by the funders.**
- v. Agree to a knowledge exchange and learning programme for the UPSURGE project being developed through the Sustainable Food Partnership's Community Growing Working Group, subject to agreement by the funders.**
- vi. Note the work ongoing to establish a baseline of community growing space in the city, and agree this approach is developed further.**
- vii. Note the grant offer from the Shared Island Fund to test community growing within the UP2030 area, partnering with Cork Food Policy Council to work collaboratively to improve community growing provision in both cities.**

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Sustainable Food Places Bronze Award

Belfast previously achieved its Bronze Award from Sustainable Food Places in 2016 but it had since lapsed and needed to be renewed. A previous unsuccessful attempt for Bronze in September 2023 indicated that there wasn't sufficient evidence of partnership working for it to be renewed. The Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership has now been established and collectively developed a new bid for Bronze in June 2024 which has been successful.

Funding from Sustainable Food Places for a Sustainable Food Coordinator role (0.3FTE) to support the bid for Bronze has now ended. The role to date has been delivered by the Adaptation and Resilience Advisor in the Climate Team. Given the expansion of the programme during this period, there is now a need to resource the Sustainable Food Programme work through an additional temporary part time post (1 day per week) shared between the Climate and Anti-Poverty & Inclusive Growth teams for two (?) years. This will help service the Partnership and its working groups and help develop a Sustainable Food Strategy and a 3 year plan to progress to Silver Award status in line with the Belfast Agenda. This work is currently underway, with the Strategy due for delivery by April 2025.

3.2 Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership

The Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership was established in August 2023 and currently has twenty-three individual partner organisations, representing local and regional government, businesses, and the community and voluntary sector. The Partnership has met five times to date and delivered two food network events to over 200 members of the public. A cross council officer workshop has also helped identify the key areas that the Council is responsible for and can influence, in relation to sustainable food. This includes food poverty, waste, environmental health, community growing, procurement, climate, education and outreach, culture and regeneration.

In April, the Climate Team supported Northern Ireland Environment Link to host a Food and Farming Conversation with DAERA, and also supported Brink! one of the SFP partners to deliver a programme of free events centred around food and sustainability as part of their Summer Solstice Weekend.

Working groups have been setup representing key areas of focus for the partnership. These include food access, food supply chains, community growing, and climate and nature. The partnership also supports the Belfast Food and Drink

Network in its ongoing work to encourage food businesses in the city to become more sustainable. Further work is needed to develop a governance and food waste working group in the future. The purpose of the working groups is to engage citizens across the city on the sustainable food issue and develop a 3-year goal as part of the Sustainable Food Strategy work.

The Partnership has also supported a placement student in the Climate Team to carry out spatial mapping of the food system in Belfast, with food access and community growing mapping underway to establish baselines. Another work-based placement student is currently researching policy and legal issues relating to the Right to Grow which was brought forward as a Motion by councillors in November 2023, with the report to come forward with findings once completed.

3.3 Horizon 2020 UPSURGE Project Update

The Climate Team has been progressing with the Horizon UPSURGE Project since 2022, developing a demonstrator site at Lower Botanic Gardens. A Project Board structure was established and is overseeing a capital delivery group and operational group of council officers from CNS, Climate and Property and Projects. There are four nature-based solutions being tested on the site with capital works almost completed:

Nature based solution 1: Agroecological community garden
Nature based solution 2: A soil decontamination and food growing research space
Nature based solution 3: A climate resilience garden
Nature based solution 4: Habitat enhancement works

In addition to the above, improvements to the paths, a new entrance and active travel infrastructure has been installed on site. Environmental sensors that are recording live data on climate and pollution are due to be installed this month.

There has been engagement with local groups throughout the process, and a number of volunteer days have been delivered, including a garden open day and tree giveaway, a bioblitz, planting, and weed pulling days, working in partnership with CNS.

The project will move into its operational phase in September, with a knowledge and learning exchange programme for climate action and community growing to be delivered, centred around the main demonstrator site at Lower Botanic Gardens.

The original funding application was to develop five BCC satellite sites in the city, however upon discussion with key stakeholders and officers, it is agreed that a more inclusive way to distribute the funding should be via a participatory budgeting exercise, made available to groups across the city (North, South, East, West and Central) and that the learning programme also be widened across the city. Participatory budgeting is a recognised process that allows local people to decide how money is spent within their city or local community and has been piloted by the Council through the Move More and Eat Well and Bank of Ideas projects already.

The proposed criteria for participation of groups in the programme would be that they are involved in active or future potential community growing spaces, and that they should become a member of the SFP Community Growing Working Group to participate in the UPSURGE programme.

Due to unforeseen delays across the five UPSURGE cities, the project partners are being asked by the funder to seek a project extension from August 2025 to February 2026 to allow the demonstrator sites time to develop, gather data, and to allow the programme of activities and research to be completed.

3.4 Shared Island Funding

Members were informed in August that an offer of Shared Island Funding had been secured through the Cork – Belfast partnership (which previously accessed funding for the solar PV study). Alongside funding to install solar PV on Donegall Pass Community Centre, this offer included funding for Cork Food Policy Council and Belfast City Council to deliver community growing improvements across the two cities. The letter of offer has subsequently been accepted, and the funding (€30,000) will be used support the improvement of community growing infrastructure across the UP2030 project area, as one of their key strategies for greening across these inner city neighbourhoods. There may be an opportunity to link this funding with the UPSURGE programme by doing a joint participatory budgeting exercise. This is currently being scoped by officers.

3.5 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no financial and resource implications.

3.6 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

None known.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations as set out within section 2.1 of the report.

Notices of Motion - Quarterly Update

The Committee noted an update in regard to the Notices of Motion which had referred to the Committee for its consideration.

Chairperson