

# Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 8th August, 2024

## MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AND CITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

### HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM

Members present: Councillor R-M Donnelly (Chairperson);  
Councillors Anglin, Bell, Bradley,  
Bower, T. Brooks, Bunting, M. Donnelly,  
Flynn, Long and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;  
Ms. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner;  
Ms. B. Roddy, Project Support Officer;  
Ms. C. Shortt, Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer;  
Mr. M. Mulholland, Strategic Planning and Policy Officer; and  
Mrs. L. McLornan, Committee Services Officer.

### **Apologies**

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Alderman McCoubrey and Councillors R. Brooks, Doherty, S. Douglas and McCabe.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 13th June were taken as read and signed as correct.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were recorded.

### **Retrofit Workshop Agenda**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

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

**1.1 At the meeting of the Climate & City Resilience Committee on 21st of June 2024, it was agreed that a retrofit workshop would be arranged for elected members in September 2024, with expert members of the Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub invited to attend. The Committee agreed that a draft agenda would be considered by the Committee at its meeting in August.**

#### **2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 To review and approve the proposed agenda and suggest amendments as required.**

### 3.0 Main Report

Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub takes a consortium approach to catalysing retrofit activity across the public, commercial and private building sectors in Belfast. Belfast City Council's Climate Team convenes and supports the Hub's activities as part of the wider support the team provides for the Belfast Community Planning Partnership. Progress on the Hub's activities is reported regularly to the Climate and City Resilience Committee (and to the Resilience and Sustainability Board) with their most recent meeting generating a request for a retrofit themed workshop for elected members.

#### Proposed approach

The Retrofit Hub and the Council's UP2030 team recently ran a joint mapping exercise event with retrofit experts to help visualise the need and opportunities for a neighbourhood retrofit programme, focusing on the UP2030 pilot area which includes the Linen Quarter and adjacent communities living in Sandy Row, Donegall Pass, the Market and Barrack Street. This area was selected as significant groundwork has already been done with communities to help identify what a net zero community might look like, in order to develop a methodology that can be rolled out to other parts of the city.

The activity used data from the Local Area Energy Plan to create maps that visualised existing buildings' energy performance rating, building type and tenure, as well as retrofit measures already in place, to help participants understand the challenges and opportunities around retrofit.

The Climate Team propose to repeat this approach drawing on Member's diverse range of expertise and their working knowledge of community needs while also enabling Members to explore what a retrofit neighbourhood approach might look like when applied to real life settings across different building types and tenures in the UP2030 area. The event will be supported by Retrofit Hub members with expertise across the various building types, technologies and with experience of working with communities on retrofit and fuel poverty. The proposed agenda is shown below:

1. Welcome & event outline (3 hour event). Date to be confirmed.
2. Introduction to retrofit – Climate Team members and sectoral leads from the Retrofit Hub outline the main concepts, technologies, challenges and opportunities:
  - Public sector buildings

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- **Commercial sector**
  - **Residential**
3. **Mapping exercise** – using detailed maps and a series of questions with support from expert Hub members, work in groups to explore case study sub-areas of the UP2030 area:
- **Public buildings – e.g. Cecil Ward building**
  - **Commercial buildings**
  - **Residential – selection of streets**
4. **Group feedback** – group leaders feed main findings back to wider group with scribes capturing key findings and future actions.

**3.1 Financial and Resource Implications**

None at this point.

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

None known.”

During discussion, a Member requested that the workshop would be held in the evening to allow most Members to participate. She also requested that all Members for the UP2030 area would be invited to attend.

The Committee:

- i. reviewed and approved the proposed workshop agenda;
- ii. agreed that the workshop would be held in the evening to ensure high Member attendance;
- iii. agreed that all Members for the UP2030 area of the City would be invited to attend;
- iv. noted that Members were encouraged to spread the word of the workshop and to share the details with any experts to consider participating.

**Resilience and Sustainability Board - Annual Review**

The Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer reminded the Committee that, in December 2020, Belfast had launched a Resilience Strategy, a framework to safeguard the city against shocks and stresses which could threaten its safety and stability over coming years.

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The development of the Strategy had been led by the Belfast Resilience Commissioner, who had worked alongside a range of key partners to inform its development. She outlined that Belfast had become a member of the 100 Resilient Cities Network and had been able to draw upon valuable experience, insights and resources to help develop the Resilience Strategy.

The Committee was advised that the Strategy had been developed as a City document, to be delivered in partnership with external partners across the city. She explained that there had been significant progress made on many of the ambitions outlined within it, with regular reporting to the Climate and City Resilience Committee and the Belfast Agenda Resilience and Sustainability Board on ongoing climate activity.

The Members were advised that the Ambitions document comprised 30 projects designed to transition the city. The Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer reported that the Resilience and Sustainability Board oversaw the delivery and implementation of the Resilience Strategy. The Board had supported the embedding and delivery of sustainable development and resilience across all Belfast Agenda priorities, linking across Boards as appropriate, and reporting on progress to the Community Planning Partnership. Since 2020, when the Ambitions document had been developed, those projects had since progressed and new projects had emerged across the city. The Board's first Annual Review was intended to capture the progress of all of the projects which had supported the transition.

Each Board member had completed a template which captured the aims of the project, what had been delivered and the next steps. The template had also been completed for new projects, delivered by board members organisations, but not highlighted in the Ambitions document. The review had been structured around the updated Belfast Agenda (Our Planet) so that it aligned with current ambitions:

- Re-naturing the city and increasing resilience to climate change;
- Creating a sustainable circular economy; and
- Innovating to net zero.

The report had also highlighted the UN Sustainable Development Goals which were covered through the list of projects.

After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted that the update gathered together projects currently taking place in the city that ultimately aimed to support the transition to an inclusive, resilient and low emission economy;
- ii. agreed that the document would be issued to all Members and published on the Council website; and
- iii. agreed to hold a future meeting under the theme of sustainable transport/Electric Vehicles, with Translink to be invited.

**Net Zero Belfast Pathfinder project - update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

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

To provide an update on the Belfast Net Zero Pathfinder project which is de-risking two strategic projects to decarbonise the built environment in Belfast: a heat network and a solar PV project.

**2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 To note the contents of the report, specifically that:**

- I. the one year project commenced on 1st June 2024 and will be implemented over in partnership with the Energy Systems Catapult;
- II. the project will de-risk and progress two priority projects (heat network and a solar PV project) from the Belfast Local Energy Action Plan (LAEP) and Queen’s Island Decarbonisation Plan;
- III. a Project Assessment is currently underway (to scope the projects) with a market readiness assessment and business model development due to start in August;
- IV. Alongside this work, two separate projects are progressing to determine the potential for adoption of rooftop solar PV and to provide Council with an understanding of the technical and commercial factors surrounding the introduction of a low carbon heat network in Belfast; and
- V. Shared Island funding has also been secured with Cork under Community Climate Action Fund (CCAF) Strand 1A to install solar PV on Donegall Pass Community Centre.

**3.0 Main Report**

**3.1 Context**

**3.2** The Belfast Local Energy Action Plan (LAEP) and Queen’s Island Decarbonisation Plan (developed by the Energy Systems Catapult with a local energy consortium) were presented to elected members in April 2024. The LAEP included five outline priority decarbonisation projects as cost effective and deliverable interventions that could deliver significant energy savings and emission reductions while also unlocking growth and job opportunities across the city. These comprised: domestic retrofit, heat network, solar PV on public buildings, solar car port with EV charging and oil boiler to heat pump transition. There were also two modelled scenarios for Queen’s Island (a Heat network and Solar Photovoltaic Carports).

- 3.3 Members gave approval to establish a LAEP delivery group to support the delivery of decarbonisation projects across the city; and establish a community of practice to ensure that the data generated by the modelling is fully utilised by key stakeholders across the City. This work is underway and a report will be brought back to update elected members in due course.
- 3.4 Members were also notified in March 2024 that funding (£150K) had been secured from the Innovate UK Net Zero Living Pathfinders competition to de-risk two of the priority projects identified by the city's LAEP and the Decarbonisation Plan for Queens Island area of Belfast. The two projects are a heat network and a solar PV project which are assessed to have the greatest potential to reduce emissions from the city whilst also delivering significant socio-economic benefits for local communities.
- 3.5 The Belfast Net Zero Pathfinder project enables Belfast to act immediately upon delivery of the LAEP and QIDP to progress two projects using a whole systems approach to decarbonise a local area. The project commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2024 and will be implemented over the coming year in partnership with the Energy Systems Catapult.

#### Overview of the project

- 3.6 The project will focus on overcoming the following non-technical barriers to the delivery of the two decarbonisation projects identified in the LAEP and QIDP, specifically around:
- low maturity / readiness of market/supply chain to progress net zero innovation;
  - capacity of the Council to progress decarbonisation projects;
  - appropriate business models (e.g. off-taker arrangements) to enable an attractive value proposition to investors;
  - optimum legal and commercial arrangements for Council to engage with private sector to enable net zero projects; and
  - potential public resistance to decarbonisation projects and their impact on the local area.
- 3.7 By accelerating and de-risking the delivery of two priority decarbonisation projects identified in the LAEP and QIDP, the project will support ongoing efforts by the Council and its partners to reduce emissions from the city's built environment which is the largest source of emissions in the City. Project activities include:

**1. Project Assessment**

- a. Determine objectives for two priority decarbonisation projects (heat network and solar PV) from the LAEP / QIDP
  - b. Analysis of non-technical barriers to delivery (above)
2. Assess the maturity / readiness of market actors (potential off-takers, investors etc) to engage and deliver low-carbon projects
  3. Develop capacity of key stakeholders including Council to take forward LAEP / QIDP outputs
  4. Commercial viability and routes to finance
    - a. Business model analysis (value and finance flows)
    - b. Define optimum legal and commercial arrangements for Belfast City Council (BCC) to catalyse investment - this will enhance the capacity of BCC to engage the private sector in developing and delivering complex clean energy projects.
  5. Identify opportunities for downstream investments to upskill and empower excluded groups and communities through consultation and engagement
  6. Assess economic, environmental and social impacts of the interventions

**Progress**

- 3.7 The Energy Systems catapult have commenced the Project Assessment which will scope out each of the two projects in more detail. This will provide the necessary information for the subsequent work packages. Procurement of a commercial and legal firm to deliver 4b is also underway with an initial workshop planned for August. The market readiness assessment and business model development will also commence in August.
- 3.8 Alongside this work, an initial district heat network feasibility study is being commissioned to provide Council with an understanding of the technical and commercial factors surrounding the introduction of a low carbon heat network in Belfast. This work is being overseen by an internal Heat Working Group which has an overarching remit to inform and lead on the development of the Councils approach to incentivising the development of a heat network in Belfast. The work will take place from August through to November and will include:

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1. **Energy Demand and Supply Analysis** – this will include energy profiling of the target area (see Appendix A) to identify key anchor loads;
2. **Heat Mapping and Profiling** – to identify opportunities for the supply and use of heat;
3. **Energy Masterplanning** – to identify promising demand clusters, potential locations for an energy centre, private wire opportunities, provide an optimised solution and initial route map as well as an initial techno-economic assessment; and
4. **Heat Mapping & Masterplanning Outputs** – summarised in a technical report with proposed next steps.

**3.9** A separate project is also progressing to determine the potential for the adoption of rooftop solar PV in the same target area. This is a follow-on project from an earlier solar PV study of selected council buildings presented to members in August 2023. The results of this study will be presented to members once the work has been completed.

**3.10** Shared Island funding has also been secured with Cork under Community Climate Action Fund (CCAF) Strand 1A to install solar PV on Donegall Pass Community Centre which was selected as it had the strongest potential for generation and lowest payback (as evidenced in the solar PV report by GIA).

These four strands of work are being coordinated by the Climate Team working closely with Property and Projects, Legal Services and Procurement.

**3.1 Financial and Resource Implications**

None at this point.

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

None known.”

In response to a Member’s question, the Climate Commissioner advised that she would follow up on whether any battery storage was planned for the Donegall Pass Community Centre site. A further Member also queried whether planning permission was required for the solar PV as, if so, that could slow down the project.

The Committee adopted the recommendations as laid out within the report.



## Shared Island Fund

### Shared Island Fund update

The Committee considered the undernoted 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 Shared Island Initiative, and the role of officers in securing funding opportunities for the Council and also promoting these opportunities with organisations across the City.**

#### **2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 It is recommended that the Committee notes:**

- that an online information session was held for local organisations on 22 July 2024, with presentations on the Shared Island Initiative, Shared Island Civic Society Fund and Reconciliation Fund provided by officials from the Shared Island Unit (SIU) and Department of Foreign Affairs (DfA), the presentation slides are provided at Appendix A for Members information;
- two successful bids between Belfast City Council and Cork City Council under the Community Climate Action Fund (CCAF) Strand 1A; and
- that local organisations have recently been successful in received funding under the Shared Island Creative Youth Partnerships funding.

#### **3.0 Main Report**

**3.1 The Committee will recall that it has received two presentations and updates on the Shared Island Initiative, in June 2022 and February 2023, delivered by the SIU which operates within the Department of the Taoiseach. As well as these presentations the Committee has received updates on Belfast City Council Shared Island projects in September 2023 and February 2024.**

#### **Shared Island initiative**

**3.2 The Shared Island initiative is a whole of Government priority to engage with all communities and political traditions to build consensus around a shared future on the island, underpinned by the Good Friday Agreement. The Shared Island initiative is backed by the Government’s Shared Island Fund, with at least €1 billion**

out to 2030 ring-fenced for delivery of all-island investment commitments and objectives in the Programme for Government and revised National Development Plan 2021-30; and informed by a programme of engagement with people across the island through the Shared Island Dialogue series and a comprehensive policy research programme, which provides a stronger evidence base and analysis of the island of Ireland across a range of economic, environmental and social areas.

**Shared Island Civic Society Fund Round 3 – Online Information Session**

- 3.3 Following the announcement by the Department of Foreign Affairs (DfA) of a third round of the Shared Island Civic Society Fund at the end of June. Officers engaged with departmental officials to arrange an online information session for Belfast organisations to provide guidance to local organisations on the process for applying to this fund, which closed on 2 August 2024.
- 3.4 The information in relation to this funding opportunity and online session was also circulated to all elected members to disseminate across their local community networks. Allowing for the holiday period this session was well attended with a number of local organisations represented. During this session officials from the DfA and SIU delivered presentations on the Shared Island Initiative, Shared Island Civic Society Fund and the Reconciliation Fund.

**Community Climate Action Fund Strand 1A**

- 3.5 The Committee is also invited to note the recent confirmation that two Shared Island bids between the Council and Cork City Council under CCAF Strand 1A have been successful. The successful projects are:
- Solar-Powered Community Services in Cork and Belfast €87,024 total for both cities with €46,620 to install solar PV on Donegall Pass Community Centre.
  - Delivery of capital-only community gardening and growing elements of the food proposal €30K in total (€15 for Belfast City Council)

Following these awards officers will engage with partners to progress the delivery of these projects.

**Creative Youth on Shared Island**

- 3.6 The Committee are also invited to note that last week the Taoiseach, Simon Harris TD, and Minister for Tourism, Culture,

Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Catherine Martin TD, announced the awarding of funding to six successful Creative Youth on a Shared Island projects as part of the Creative Ireland Programme 2023-2027. The successful projects were created as a result of direct consultation with children and young people. Successful projects involving Belfast organisations include:

- ‘The Shared Island Songwriting Project,’ a series of residential ‘hot houses’ with children and young people from Laois, Offaly, and across Northern Ireland. Led by Music Generation Laois the project will culminate in the creation of twelve original compositions that will be showcased at festivals and arts centres.
- ‘Macnas’ ‘Future Parade,’ bringing together young people from Belfast and Galway for a series of workshops and residential experiences to create parades that celebrate their collective creativity.
- Extern Northern Ireland, working with twenty young people from Greater Belfast and Dublin, who have multiple and complex needs by providing a safe space for them to tell their stories using Theatre of the Oppressed techniques.
- ‘Creative Connections - Shared Writing Across the Island’ with Fighting Words, which will engage children and young people aged 15-24 from communities up and down the island through connected creative writing initiatives, including scriptwriting, poetry, prose, and songwriting.

**3.7 Financial and Resource Implications**

None associated with this report.

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

None associated with this report.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

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**Restricted Item**

**The information contained in the report associated with the following item is 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.

The 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.

**Shared Island Update on  
Belfast City Council Projects**

The Strategic Policy and Planning Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the projects which the Council was involved in under the Shared Island Funding Initiative.

Noted.

Chairperson