



Subject:	Climate Change and Sustainability Training for Staff and Elected Members.
Date:	12 th June 2025
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director Organisational and City Strategy
Contact Officers:	Debbie Caldwell, Belfast Climate Commissioner Brenda Roddy, Project Support Officer (Climate)

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

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 is being developed for NI councils.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is requested to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">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;

	<p>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;</p> <p>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;</p> <p>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</p> <p>V. Give approval to arrange these courses for Elected Members and CMT.</p>
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>Background</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
3.2	<p>Climate Change and Sustainability Training Programme</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<p>Climate Change Training for Elected Members</p> <p>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:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<p>Climate Change and Sustainability Training for Senior Managers</p> <p>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.</p>
3.5	<p>Central and Local Government Climate Change Working Group</p> <p>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.</p>
4.0	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p>
4.1	<p>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.</p>
5.0	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p>
5.1	<p>None identified. Engagement with Equality & Rural Needs team is ongoing across the Programme.</p>
6.0	<p>Appendices - none</p>