



Subject:	Consultation response to the DAERA Environment Strategy for Northern Ireland
Date:	14 th January 2020
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Strategic Director of Neighbourhood Services, City & Neighbourhood Services Department
Contact Officer:	Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services Grainia Long, Commissioner for Resilience

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"/>
Sometime 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 or Summary of main Issues
1.1	<p>Members are advised that the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) have recently commenced a consultation into proposals for a new Environment Strategy for Northern Ireland. DAERA have stated that a Northern Ireland Environment Strategy is required to form the basis for a series of interventions that can deliver real improvements in the quality of the environment and thereby improve the health and well-being of our citizens, create opportunities to develop our economy and play our part in protecting the global environment for many decades to come. The various consultation documents are available to download via the following weblink:</p> <p>https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/esni-public-discussion-document</p>

1.2	This report serves to summarise the contents of the consultation document and to highlight some of environmental statistics and environmental progress that DAERA have referred to within the consultation document.
1.3	This report also includes proposed consultation responses to the various questions that DAERA have proposed throughout the overall Environment Strategy consultation document.
1.4	Members should note that the consultation has been discussed by the All-Party Working Group on the Climate Crisis. Moreover, this report will also be presented to the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee for notation, given the Committee's interest in climate action.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are requested to note; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the draft response and to agree that the council's consultation response, as detailed in Appendix 1 to this report, be forwarded to DAERA for consideration.
2.2	Members are advised that the City Solicitor has written to DAERA concerning an extension to the Department's stated consultation deadline of 17:00 on the 23 rd December 2019. DAERA have advised that the Department is presently considering an extension to the public discussion exercise into the New Year and would hope to announce a revised closing date to the consultation process at the end of the current election period. The council's consultation response will be submitted in accordance with any revised DAERA consultation timetable.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<u>Key Issues</u> DAERA have advised that within the current draft Programme for Government (PfG) 2016-2021, the Department is responsible for Outcome 2 – <i>'We live and work sustainably, protecting the environment'</i> , and for five of the six associated indicators relating to greenhouse gas emissions; household waste that is reused, recycled or composted; annual mean nitrogen dioxide concentrations at monitored urban roadside locations; levels of soluble reactive phosphorus in rivers and levels of dissolved inorganic nitrogen in marine waters and; biodiversity – the percentage of protected areas under favourable management. DAERA have also advised that at a Departmental level, their vision is of <i>'A living, working, active landscape valued by everyone'</i> .
3.2	DAERA have advised that an Environment Strategy for Northern Ireland is therefore now required due to a number of factors including, environmental challenges, climate change, publication of the UK Government document, <i>'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment'</i> , Brexit and environmental knowledge gaps.

3.3	<p>In terms of progress with the PfG indicators, DAERA have advised that for greenhouse gas emissions, Northern Ireland accounts for around 4% of the overall UK total and in terms of the UK Climate Change Act committing the UK to at least an 80% reduction by 2050 from 1990 baseline levels, DAERA have stated that Northern Ireland emissions have decreased by 17.9% from 24.3 to 20 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent between 1990 and 2017. For household recycling, DAERA have stated that the NI household waste recycling rate was 48.1% in 2017/18; an increase from 44.3% the previous year, with a new high of over 420,000 tonnes of waste sent for recycling. DAERA therefore consider household waste recycling to have experienced a positive change since the baseline year. In terms of ambient air quality, DAERA have advised that the nitrogen dioxide average annual mean background figure measured in urban areas has remained relatively stable over recent years, whereas monitored roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations have been variable. For river and marine water quality, DAERA have stated that levels of soluble reactive phosphorous in river water are unchanged since the baseline year and levels of dissolved inorganic nitrogen in our marine waters have also remained relatively stable. For biodiversity, DAERA have advised that whilst the total terrestrial and marine protected areas have increased between 2009 and 2018, the proportion of these areas under favourable management has shown a decreasing trend.</p>
3.4	<p>DAERA have stated that the normal procedure for developing an Environment Strategy document would be for the Department to take its lead from the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and that the form and content of any Environment Strategy would be a matter for a DAERA Minister and NI Executive. DAERA have also stated that in the absence of a Minister, they would wish to obtain as broad a view as possible on what a future Environment Strategy might seek to address in order to help inform an incoming Minister. DAERA are therefore seeking views on what the environment should look like in the future, what the environmental priorities and objectives should be, and how the Department should achieve them.</p>
3.5	<p>DAERA have advised that at the very least, the key environmental areas covered by the new Strategy will be climate change (mitigation and adaptation); the natural environment and landscapes; resource efficiency, the marine environment, environmental quality (air, water and neighbourhood); fisheries (inland and sea) and aquaculture and the built environment.</p>
3.6	<p>To help inform the consultation process, DAERA have posed eleven questions for consultees to consider and address. The DAERA consultation document has been internally circulated to relevant council Departments and Services, and responses have been provided to the consultation questions where deemed necessary and where the questions relate to areas of</p>

	council responsibility. A copy of the questions, together with proposed council responses have been provided as Appendix A to this report.
3.7	In terms of the headline environmental issues and matters highlighted within the council's proposed responses, Members are advised that the council has highlighted the issues of climate change and climate adaptation; biodiversity; ambient air quality and its links to transportation; neighbourhood environmental quality; local development planning and the built environment; the consideration of natural capital in environmental decision making; resource and energy efficiency; zero waste and achieving a circular economy; waste management and enforcement; the need for a Northern Ireland litter strategy; dealing with dangerous structures and tackling dilapidations and; the need for greater education on the environment.
3.8	<u>Financial & Resource Implications</u> None
3.9	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessments</u> None.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1- DAERA Environment Strategy Consultation Questions and Proposed Council Responses.