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Date: 08 October 2020

Dear Mr Hanna

Climate Change Act

Thank you for your letter of 24th September 2020 regarding the Motion passed by Belfast City Council at its meeting on 1st September, around the issue of developing a Climate Change Act for Northern Ireland. I acknowledge your interest and concern.

Climate change is a global challenge which should be addressed through comprehensive and effective global action. If we are to reduce carbon emissions and successfully adapt to a changing climate, it will require action across all of society, including Councils. I am therefore encouraged by Belfast City Council's commitment to addressing climate change.

Climate change is my top priority and I remain fully committed to ensuring that Northern Ireland plays its full part in reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to our changing climate.

It is imperative that we build the evidence base and ensure government policy making has climate and environment at its core and that future policies and strategies can demonstrably deliver the outcomes people expect. We need to fully understand the unique characteristics on the makeup of Northern Ireland emissions and determine what our equitable contribution to Net Zero is. I have written to the independent expert UK Climate Change Committee (CCC) for advice on what would be our equitable contribution to the UK's net zero emissions target, to ensure our greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets are credible and evidence-based.

Unfortunately the CCC are not in a position to respond to my request until after they have provided advice on the UK's sixth carbon budget, which will be published in December 2020. In the interim, my officials have provided me with proposals on an options appraisal for a Climate Change Bill in Northern Ireland. I will consider those options along with the advice provided from the CCC and will present my findings to the Northern Ireland Executive to agree a way forward.

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I trust that you find this helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edwin Poots', written on a light-colored rectangular background.

EDWIN POOTS MLA
Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

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