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Dear Henry

CARBON EMISSIONS LEVELS

Thank you for your letter of 3 November acknowledging my response of 8 October 2020 in regards to the motion passed by Belfast City Council on the issue of developing a Climate Change Act for Northern Ireland.

You have requested an update on the work being undertaken by my Department to address increasing carbon emission levels. Taking action to reduce emissions requires collective action across all of government and all of society. It is the responsibility of all NI departments to take action to reduce emissions for areas that they have responsibility for. My department takes responsibility for emissions in the Agriculture, Land Use and Land use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) and Waste sectors. My Department is taking forward or supporting a number of programmes of work which will directly contribute towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions. These include the rewetting of peatlands, the development of a Green Growth Strategy and the planting of trees under 'Forests for our Future' which I launched in March 2020.

In the latest available figures (2018) NI's greenhouse gas emissions were estimated to be 19.4 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (MtCO₂e). This was a decrease of 2.5% compared to 2017. The longer term trend showed a decrease of 20.0% compared to 24.3 MtCO₂e from the 1990 base year. In terms of a proportion of total UK emission levels, NI emissions made up 4.3% of total UK emissions in 2018. This has risen from a rate of 3.1% in 1990 but is lower than the peak of 4.4% in 2016. However the makeup of emissions in each region are unique and it is difficult to compare emissions between countries. For example the agriculture sector makes up 27% of NI emissions and only 10% of overall UK emissions. It is recognised by the UK Climate Change Committee that the agriculture sector is one of the most difficult sectors to reduce emissions from.

The role of the NIEA Chief Inspector is to enforce various pieces of legislation designed to protect the Environment and Public Health and therefore contribute to emissions reductions.

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One of the main pieces of legislation, the Pollution Prevention and Control (Industrial Emissions) Regulations 2013, encourages energy efficiency through the implementation of best available techniques. The EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) is another mechanism which contributes to emissions reductions. It is a market force driven scheme where installations have to buy allowances for every tonne of CO₂ that they emit. The NI installations in the ETS scheme regulated by the Chief inspector account for around 18% of total NI emissions. As part of these schemes, installations have to monitor and report emissions.

I trust that you find this helpful.

Yours sincerely



EDWIN POOTS MLA
Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

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