

Straitéis Inbhuanaitheachta agus Athrú Aeráide 2026–2030

Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy 2026–2030



Comhairle Ceantair
an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne and Down
District Council

Ag freastal ar an Dúin agus Ard Mhacha Theas
Serving Down and South Armagh

Réamhrá



*An Comhairleoir Mickey Ruane
Cathaoirleach an Choiste
Inbhuanaitheachta agus
Comhshaoil
Cllr Mickey Ruane
Chair of Sustainability and
Environment Committee*



*Marie Ward
Príomhfheidhmeannach
Marie Ward
Chief Executive*

Cuireann sé áthas mór orainn Straitéis Inbhuanaitheachta agus Athrú Aeráide Chomhairle Ceantair an Lúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin 2026–2030 a thabhairt isteach. Leagann an straitéis amach an dóigh a ndéanfaimid gníomh dearfach chun aghaidh a thabhairt ar na dúshláin atá romhainn.

Is áit speisialta ár gceantar agus tá sé ríthábhachtach go gcaomhnóimid agus go gcuirfimid le háilleacht na háite agus lena timpeallacht leochaileach, chomh maith leis na tairbhí a sholáthraíonn sí do dhaoine atá ina gcónaí sa dúiche agus dóibh siúd thugann cuairt uirthi, do na glúnta atá anois ann agus na cinn atá le teacht.

Aithnímid go bhfuil freagracht ar ár gComhairle athruithe a dhéanamh ar ár gcleachtais agus ar ár n-oibríochtaí féin, ach ní mór dúinn ról ceannaireachta a ghlacadh fosta maidir le cultúr níos leithne inbhuanaitheachta a chothú ar fud ár gceantair.

Tá méadú ar an imní a léirítear faoi thionchar athraithe aeráide atá follasach cheana féin, lenár gceantar féin san áireamh. Lena chois sin, ní mór don Chomhairle plean gníomhaíochta soiléir a leagan amach síos tríd a cuid seirbhísí. Tá muid ag éirí níos eolaí ar thionchar áitiúil an athraithe aeráide, lena n-áirítear méadú ar mhinicíocht agus déine tuithe agus stoirmeacha inár gceantar.

Chun athrú ceart a bhaint amach, tá muid ag neadú na hinbhuanaitheachta i ngach réimse dár gcuid oibre. Cuireadh an inbhuanaitheacht agus an géarchéim athraithe aeráide san áireamh mar théamaí leithne sa Phlean Chorpáraideach agus i

bPleananna Gnó na Stiúrthóireachtaí. Tá príomhról le himirt ag gach ball foirne. Leanfaimid fosta ag déanamh teagmhála le pobail áitiúla, le saoránaigh, le gnólachtaí agus le páirtithe leasmhara eile, lena n-áirítear ar bhonn trasteorann, chun cinntiú go mbeidh ceantar seasmhach, rathúil agus inbhuanaithe againn.

Agus an straitéis seo á cur i bhfeidhm againn, tá muid ag iarraidh go mbeidh muintir na háite ag tacú linn agus muid ag athrú an dóigh a ndéanaimid rudaí. Chomh maith leis sin, spreagaimid daoine athruithe a dhéanamh ar a stíleanna maireachtála, trí éirí níos éifeachtaí ó thaobh fuinnimh de, dramhaíl a laghdú agus úsáid níos mó a bhaint as cineálacha inbhuanaithe iompair.

Ba mhaith linn buíochas a ghabháil leo siúd a chuidigh linn an straitéis seo a fhorbairt, daoine a leanfaidh ar aghaidh ag obair i gcomhar linn chun cinntiú go gcuirfear an straitéis i bhfeidhm chun dul i ngleic leis na bagairtí agus chun leas a bhaint as na deiseanna a éiríonn as athrú aeráide. Le chéile is féidir linn áit shábháilte, inbhuanaithe agus rathúil a dhéanamh de cheantar an Lúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin, áit a bhfuil muid bródúil as cónaí, obair agus imirt ann, anois agus sa todhchaí.

Foreword

We have great pleasure in introducing Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy for 2026–2030 which outlines how we will take positive action to address the challenges we face.

Our district is a special place and it is vitally important that we preserve and enhance the beauty of the area and its fragile environment and the benefits it provides for those who live in and visit the region, for current and future generations.

We recognise that our Council has a responsibility to make changes to our own practices and operations, but we must also take a leading role in fostering a wider culture of sustainability across our district.

In the wake of mounting concerns about the already evident impacts of climate change including within our own district, the Council needs to set out a clear plan of action across its services. We are becoming increasingly aware of the localised impact of climate change, including increased frequency and severity of flooding and storms in our district.

In order to deliver real change, we are embedding sustainability across all areas of our work. Sustainability and the Climate Change Emergency have been included as cross-cutting themes in the Corporate Plan and Directorate Business Plans. Each member of staff has a key role to play. We will also continue to engage with local communities, citizens, businesses and other stakeholders including on a cross border basis to ensure we have a resilient, thriving and sustainable district.

In delivering this strategy we would seek the support of local people as we change the way we do things. We would also encourage people to make changes to their lifestyles, by becoming more energy efficient, reducing waste and making greater use of sustainable forms of transport.

We would like to thank those who have contributed to the development of this strategy and who will continue to work in cooperation to ensure it is implemented to counter the threats and take advantage of the opportunities arising from climate change. Together we can make Newry, Mourne and Down a safe, sustainable and prosperous place where we are proud to live, work and play, now and into the future.

Cllr Mickey Ruane
Chair of Sustainability and
Environment Committee

Marie Ward
Chief Executive

Contents

Summary	5
Who We Are	6
Our Commitment	7
What is Climate Change?	12
Strategic and Legislative Context	15
Implementing Climate Action	18
Our Baseline Emissions	20
What Are We Doing Well?	22
Action Plan	26
Monitoring and Reporting	27
Acknowledgements	29
References	30
Appendices	31

Summary

This Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy sets out our plans to address climate change in Newry, Mourne and Down district over the next four years.

By identifying the current and projected impacts of climate change across the district, the plan looks at how the Council will act to reduce our carbon emissions and our impacts on climate change, meet our requirements under the Climate Change Act (NI) 2022 and work in partnership to influence others to take positive action to reduce our emissions and our impacts on climate change to ensure that together we become a resilient and thriving zero carbon district and region.



Who We Are

Newry, Mourne and Down district nestles in the south-east coastal area of Northern Ireland, encompassing large parts of Counties Down and Armagh.

The natural beauty and unique character of the area have been widely recognised, boasting no less than three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs): Mourne, Ring of Gullion and Strangford and Lecale. In 2023 the unique landscape and geology of the area was also internationally recognised, through the award of UNESCO Global Geopark status.

Alongside the natural characteristics of the area, the district is strategically located on the important eastern A1/M1 economic corridor, within one hour travelling distance from Dublin and Belfast, with close proximity to two major airports, a deep-water port at Warrenpoint, and transport routes to the south of Ireland and UK.

The economic strengths, complemented by the environmental beauty and natural resources of the area, makes the district an attractive place to invest in, and also a popular place to live in, work in, and to visit.

We fully recognise that as a Council we have a statutory duty to promote the achievement of sustainable development in the exercise of our functions, which is evidenced in the significant work undertaken in recent years. A sustainability team has been operating in Council for several years, working on areas such as sustainability, environmental education, energy management, biodiversity, active travel and sustainable food. Developments in the areas of waste prevention, recycling and recovery have also helped lead us towards a circular economy approach.



Our Commitment

“Newry, Mourne and Down District Council will work in partnership to influence others to take positive action to reduce our emissions and our impacts on climate change to ensure that together we become a resilient and thriving zero carbon district and region.”

Key targets

1

Net Zero Council and district by 2050

2

Climate Resilient Council and district by 2050

These first two key targets are set at International, UK and NI level and therefore must be met.

3

Council's scope 1 and 2 GHG emissions will be net zero by 2050

4

50% reduction in Council's scope 1 and 2 emissions by 2040

5

Measure and reduce our scope 3 emissions by engaging with 80% of our supply chain by 2035

6

Transition our light fleet to 100% electric or zero emission vehicles by 2035

7

Increase recycling rates to 70% by 2030

8

Fully decarbonise our fleet (including medium and heavy duty vehicles) by 2050

Additional areas for action

9

Energy efficiency and retrofitting of buildings

10

Invest in renewables

11

Promote and develop Active Travel

12

Align climate action with other key strategies, including our Biodiversity Strategy, Tourism Strategy, AONB Management Plans and our 10 Year Masterplan for our UNESCO Global Geopark

13

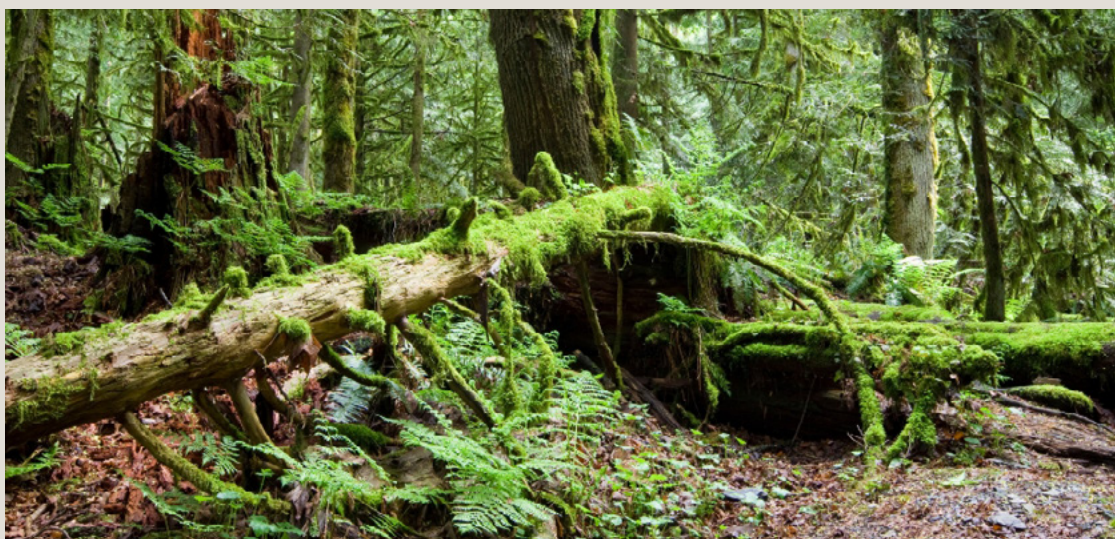
Engagement with community, businesses and schools to encourage climate action

14

Strategic leadership on climate action in the district

15

Cross border cooperation with Louth County Council to develop a net zero region



Themes

The Council has a statutory duty to report its carbon emissions/carbon footprint and how it is taking action to reduce emissions.

The Council also has a key role as an enabler and influencer to encourage and work with government departments, statutory bodies, community and local organisations as well as the district's citizens to ensure the entire district moves towards being a net zero district by 2050.

Actions will therefore be included which will directly encourage action across the district as well as internally within the Council estate and services.

Actions have been identified across five general themes, outlined below, with a commitment to ensuring that appropriate resources and funding must be in place in order to deliver on our targets.



Figure 1: Policy Framework Themes and Objectives



The strategy will set specific key targets and actions across these five themes towards the achievement of net zero carbon by 2050 (which is an international, UK and NI level target). Actions will be reviewed annually and will be reported on every three years in accordance with Public Body Reporting legislation.

Our Vision

“Our vision is a net zero, greener, healthier, sustainable district by 2050 — where people, communities, and businesses thrive and are resilient to the impacts of climate change.”

Aims

- 1 To support a fair transition to net zero.
- 2 To build climate resilience.
- 3 To protect, restore and reconnect people with nature.
- 4 To champion a circular economy.



What is Climate Change?

Climate change is the long-term shift in average weather patterns across the world and the increase in extreme weather events. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) highlight in its most recent report how human activities are extremely likely to have resulted in the unprecedented warming observed since the pre-industrial era via increased emission of greenhouse gases (IPCC, 2014)¹.



*Flooding
in Newry
October 2023*

© Copyright Pak
Aerial Media

The Greenhouse Effect

The earth is surrounded by a layer of gasses which retain some of the heat from the sun's rays and prevent it from radiating back into space. This is called the Greenhouse effect - a natural process without which earth would not be warm enough for life to survive. Human activity, mainly from burning of fossil fuels, releases greenhouse gases including carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and sulphur dioxide. This has resulted in an increase in this layer of gases around the earth, resulting in higher levels of heat being trapped and therefore a warmer world.

The IPCC has warned urgent action is needed to cut greenhouse gas emissions and limit warming to at least 2°C and preferably 1.5°C compared to pre-industrial values, to avoid catastrophic impacts of climate change. The most recent data from the IPCC confirms that human-induced climate change is already causing observable adverse impacts and damages to both people and nature, beyond typical variability of the climate (IPCC, 2022)².

UK climate change projections, published in 2018 (UK CP18)³, set out a range of possible outcomes over the next century. They are based on different rates of greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere. It is expected that Northern Ireland will have a greater chance of hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters with more extreme weather and rising sea levels.

The highest predicted projections for Northern Ireland show that by 2070 winters could be up to 3.9°C warmer and 25 per cent wetter, whilst summers could be up to 4.9°C hotter and 38 per cent drier.

In the last decade we have already seen examples of more extreme weather in our district, with major flooding incidents in Newry, Newcastle and Downpatrick in October 2023, storm damage from a number of named storms including Storm Eowyn in 2025, and the extent of our coastline means that we are also at risk from coastal erosion and rising sea levels.



*Flooding in Newry and Downpatrick
October 2023*



Climate Mitigation and Adaptation

There are two aspects of climate change which the Council needs to take action on: Mitigation and Adaptation.

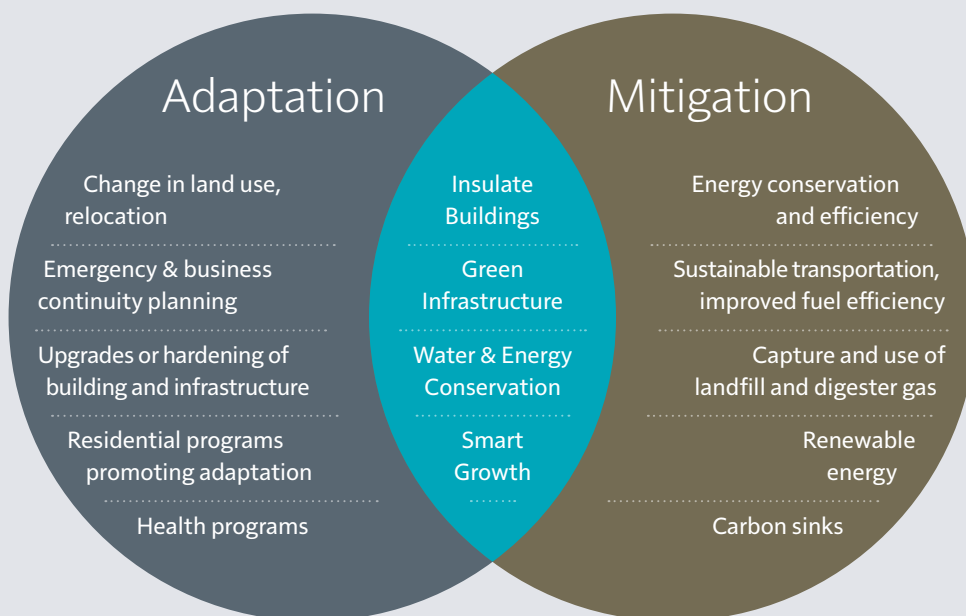
Climate Change Mitigation

Climate Change Mitigation is taking actions to reduce our contribution to climate change by reducing our carbon emissions. This includes taking action to reduce our use of fossil fuels like gas, oil and diesel for heating cooling and powering our buildings and our fleet and switching to low or zero carbon alternatives like HVO, hydrogen, electric and renewable energy sources like solar and wind.

Climate Change Adaptation

Climate Change Adaptation is preparing the Council to make its services, buildings and staff resilient and protected from the extremes of weather and climate which climate change will bring and is already causing across the globe.

Figure 2: Diagram Showing Climate Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Areas for Action and Crossover Activities



This strategy and action plan focusses on Climate Change Mitigation – taking action to reduce our carbon emissions and our contribution to the climate change problem.

Climate Change Adaptation actions are covered in the Council's Climate Adaptation Plan which is being developed to look in more detail at the impacts of climate change such as increased rainfall and flooding, increased storminess, extremes of heat and cold and rising sea levels, and how we will adapt to make our staff, services and buildings more resilient to these impacts.

Strategic and Legislative Context

There are many reasons to respond to the challenges associated with sustainability and climate change. Fundamentally it is the right thing to do in order to protect and enhance what we value in the district, and to deliver positive outcomes for the Council, and those who invest, live and work locally.

Action will be taken across our five themes, which are informed by the challenges and opportunities of climate change, our corporate objectives, and which respond to regional and national legislation which is in turn driven by International Law, and a number of key international treaties and agreements.

International

The Kyoto Protocol

The Kyoto Protocol was the first major international climate change agreement adopted in 1997 aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions to combat climate change. It was a legally binding treaty that set emission reduction targets for developed countries, based on the scientific consensus that global warming is occurring due to human activities.



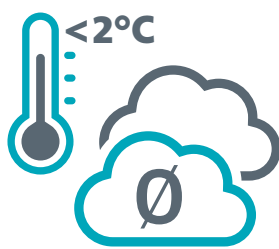
The Paris Agreement COP21

Climate change became a priority for governments all over the world as they realised its impacts threatened livelihoods, the environment, security, and economic growth. In 2015 in Paris 195 states agreed to sign the COP21 Paris Agreement to take action to reduce carbon emissions to limit Global warming to 1.5°C. The agreement set up the IPCC as the lead global body to advise countries on climate action.

A recent IPCC Special Report 2018 underlined the need to meet and exceed the Paris Agreement and achieve meaningful emission reductions before 2030:

“Pathways limiting global warming to 1.5°C would require rapid and far-reaching transitions in energy, land, urban and infrastructure (including transport and buildings), and industrial systems... These systems transitions are unprecedented in terms of scale, but not necessarily in terms of speed, and imply deep emissions reductions in all sectors, a wide portfolio of mitigation options and a significant upscaling of investments in those options” (IPCC Special Report 2018)⁴.

Figure 3: Paris Climate Agreement



- 1** Limit the average global temperature increase to <2°C and achieve net zero emissions by mid-century.



- 2** Enhance resilience and adaptation to climate impacts certain to occur.



- 3** Align financial flows in the world with these objectives.



The United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Sustainable Development Goals underline the importance of climate change for an equal and equitable society. All 17 goals can be related to the impacts and opportunities of climate change, with Goal 7 'Affordable Clean Energy' and Goal 13 'Climate Action' being particularly relevant. The SDGs recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.



The UK Climate Change Act 2008

The UK Climate Change Act 2008 establishes a framework for legally binding carbon emissions reduction targets and carbon budgeting. It was amended in 2019 to set a net-zero target by 2050.

Northern Ireland Legislation

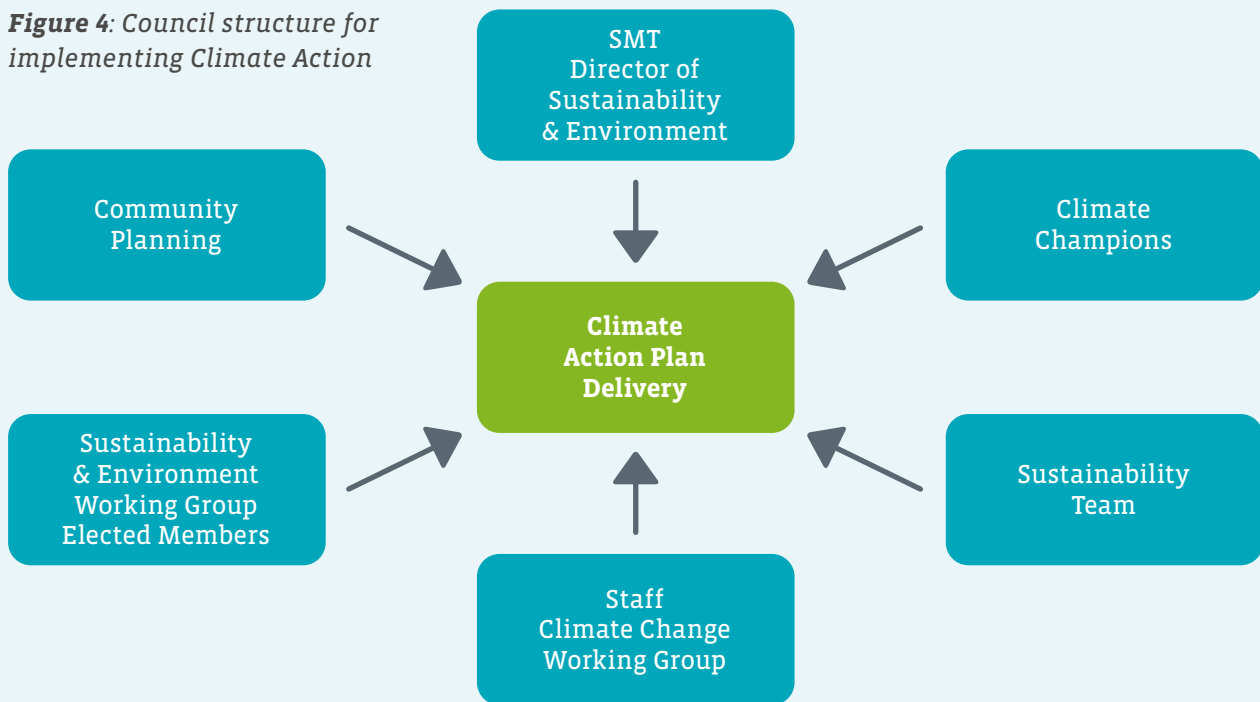
The Climate Change Act (NI) 2022 is the main NI legislative driver which requires organisations here to take action to reduce their carbon emissions and their impact on climate change. Public bodies, such as local authorities, are also now required to report on their carbon footprint and initiatives that are being undertaken to mitigate against climate change. The recent **Climate Change (Reporting Bodies) Regulations (NI) 2024** now requires the Council to report every three years with the initial baseline report due in October 2025. The Council has recently carried out work to measure its carbon footprint and has submitted the first report to government.

Additional Climate Related Legislation is listed in Appendix 1

The Council's Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy will lay out how we will respond to the legislation and to the imperative to take action now and over the next few decades to reduce our impacts on climate change as we move towards a zero carbon future.

Implementing Climate Action

Figure 4: Council structure for implementing Climate Action



Implementation of the Climate Action Plan will be led by the Council's senior management team and elected members of the Sustainability and Environment Working Group, guided by the community planning process. The staff Climate Change Working Group will help deliver the strategy and action plan, coordinated by the Sustainability team. The Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan will feed into the Council's business planning process via the Community Plan and Corporate Plan. This in turn will inform the Directorate Business Plans and develop actions for inclusion in each Service Plan. This will ensure that each service will contribute to addressing the Council's climate change impacts and reduce their carbon emissions by taking action across all areas of the Council's work.

Sustainability and climate change are already cross cutting themes within the Corporate Plan and this will develop further as climate action becomes a key theme for action across all service areas. Climate champions will be identified and engaged across the Council to help coordinate and encourage action.

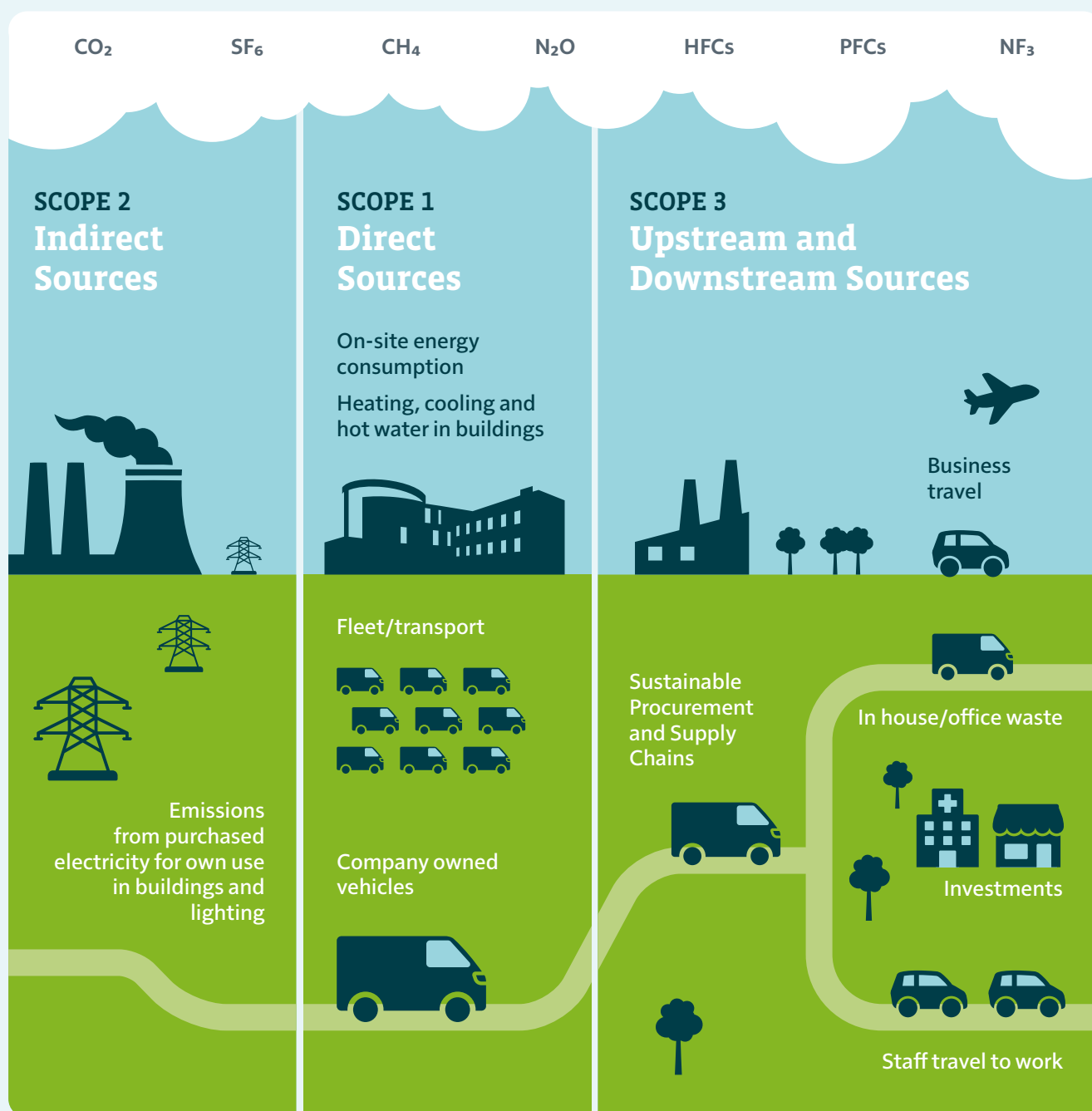
Areas for action will also develop as technology, legislation and the working environment evolves, for example a move towards electrification of heating and cooling as the electricity grid becomes decarbonised will ensure we reduce our emissions significantly. Measures such as switching our diesel fleet to running on HVO will reduce fleet carbon emissions in the interim, and boiler replacements in the short term from oil to gas will reduce those carbon emissions by about a third. In the longer term the move to net zero by 2050 will be delivered by further actions accessing technologies powered by fully decarbonised 'green' electricity and other renewable energy sources and technologies.

Getting to 100% net zero is a challenge and carbon offsetting will play a role in mitigating unavoidable carbon emissions to achieve net zero. This can partly be achieved through sustainable management of green spaces, wetlands and woodlands and other nature based assets within the Council's ownership and management.

Carbon Emissions – Scope 1, 2 and 3

This strategy will initially focus on Council operations which include Scope 1 (emissions from heating and cooling buildings and fuelling fleet vehicles) and Scope 2 (emissions from electricity used in buildings) carbon emissions. Scope 3 emissions will be included as part of planned future work. This is another means of ensuring that the strategy and our future actions have a wider impact, including positively impacting our supply chains.

Figure 5: Scope 1, Scope 2 and Scope 3 Emissions Types



Our Baseline Emissions

Measuring and Reporting our Carbon Footprint

Public bodies, such as local authorities, are now required to report on their carbon footprint and initiatives that are being undertaken to mitigate against climate change. Under the recent ‘Climate Change (Public Bodies) Regulations NI 2024’ the Council is required to report every three years with the initial baseline report due in October 2025.

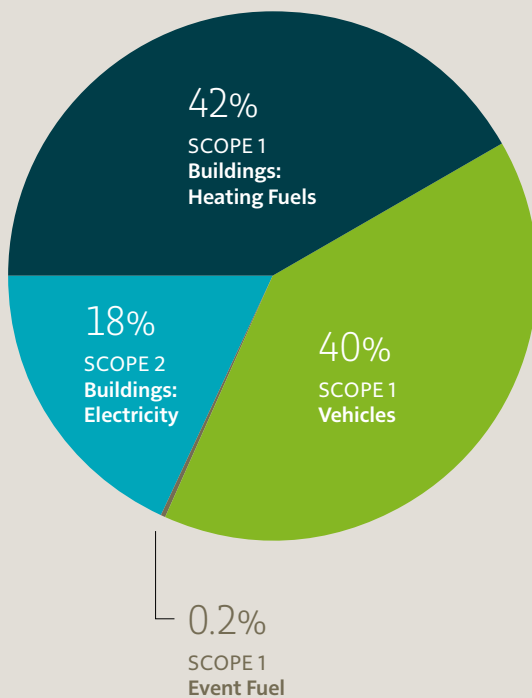
Council has established its Baseline Carbon Footprint for the year 2024/25 (set by government) by gathering and analysing data on Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions including electricity, gas and oil use in buildings as well as Transport/Fleet emissions.

The Council’s Carbon Footprint is 5,246 tCO₂e (Tonnes of CO₂ equivalent)

Table 1: Baseline Emissions Footprint for Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Scope	Emission Source	Total (tCO ₂ e)
Scope 1	Event Fuel (Gas Oil)	8
	Buildings — Heating Fuels	2,173
	Kerosene	1,142
	Natural Gas	1,013
	Gas Oil	7
	LPG	5
	Propane	5
	Vehicles	2,116
	Diesel	2,105
	Unleaded	10
	Gas Oil	0
Scope 2	Buildings - Electricity	949
Total Emissions		5,246

Figure 6: Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's Greenhouse Gas Emissions per Scope and Emission Source



The Council's Carbon Baseline report also looked at a breakdown of the various aspects of the emissions to identify key areas for action to reduce them.

- Scope 1 emissions make up the largest proportion of emissions (4,297 tCO₂e), with buildings heating fuels contributing 42% of emissions and fleet vehicles emissions 40%.
- Scope 2 buildings electricity use makes up 18% of emissions.
- Lesser emissions were identified from fuel use for events (generators) 0.2% and use of F Gases in air conditioning less than 0.2% – both Scope 1 emissions.

Carbon emissions from different fuel type use are set out in Table 1 above showing that kerosene (heating oil) (1,142 tCO₂e) and Natural Gas (1,013 tCO₂e) along with diesel for vehicles (2,105 tCO₂e) are the 3 largest carbon emission sources.

Further analysis shows that our biggest building energy users and carbon emitters are our leisure centres. This is to be expected as these buildings provide the community with activities which require a greater amount of heating (swimming pools) and electricity (lighting and equipment) during weekdays and weekends.

Further analysis and breakdown of the data from the carbon emissions baseline report will be used to identify target areas for actions to reduce our carbon emissions as well as ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of actions.



What Are We Doing Well?

In 2019, the Council declared a climate emergency and has continued to take steps to effect change in every area under its control, to mitigate against the impacts of climate change.

In 2020, the Council organised a climate symposium, bringing together a range of internationally renowned expert speakers as well as councils and community organisations from across Ireland and UK, who shared with us their achievements in climate action and practical case studies on carbon reductions.

A review of staff structure set up a new Directorate of Sustainability and Environment, led by a Director of Sustainability and Environment who is the Council's overall Sustainability and Climate Change

Champion. An Assistant Director of Sustainability is responsible for Sustainability as well as Estates, Facilities and Fleet Management and a Head of Sustainability heads up the Sustainability team who will lead on developing and delivering the strategy and wider sustainability and climate action.

Alongside the continued embedding of sustainability within Council policies and practices, a number of successful high-profile projects have been delivered in recent years. These include:



The CANN Project (Collaborative Action for the Natura Network), an INTERREG VA funded cross-border environment project to improve protected habitats and support priority species. A key part of CANN included the restoration of peatlands and wetlands which are known to be important carbon sinks which can offset climate impacts.



A former Council landfill site was used to improve biodiversity and help boost the population of the once endangered Irish Black Bees, an important pollinator species, by installing bee hives on site, with this initiative winning a number of awards.



In 2023 the Council was also part of the **INTERREG VA supported FASTER project**, which installed high-speed public EV charging points for electric vehicles installed at prominent sites across the district. The Council is also a member of the Northern Ireland EV Consortium delivering additional EV charge points for residents as part of the On Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme (ORCS project).

What We Can Do Better

Achieving our collective net zero 2050 goal will require ambitious action within our own organisation and championing change across all sectors.

To ensure we can maximise our impact, we will prioritise actions that eliminate emissions, followed by those that reduce or substitute emissions. Offsetting will only be used where all other options have been explored first, in line with the principles of the carbon management hierarchy set out below. We will prioritise nature-based solutions and solutions that help us adapt to climate impacts, where possible.

We will research and collaborate to develop best practice solutions to reducing our carbon emissions.

We will actively promote our successes by sharing case studies from Council, as well as local individuals, communities and businesses via social media and other innovative marketing.

Figure 7: The Carbon Management Hierarchy



1 Avoid/eliminate

Wherever possible, steps should be taken to avoid or eliminate the release of emissions at source and across the life cycle by:

- Influencing business planning and decision making
- Considering the need and purpose of any proposal
- Exploring alternative approaches that avoid the production of emissions



2 Reduce

Existing activity should seek to limit emissions at source by:

- Delivering real and relative reductions in carbon and energy use
- Promoting efficiency in operation, processes, fleet, or energy management
- Innovating and/or optimising new approaches to cut emissions



3 Substitute

Existing activities should seek to substitute carbon intensive activities with those that have a lower carbon impact by:

- Adopting renewable or low carbon technologies
- Reducing carbon intensity of use and purchased energy
- Prioritising products/services with lower embodied or embedded emissions



4 Offset

Where all other steps of the hierarchy have been explored, and only as a last resort, any unavoidable residual emissions should be offset by:

- Investment in carbon saving activities elsewhere to save an equivalent amount of emissions by way of compensation

Our Commitment to Sustainability

The Council recognises that environmental, social, and economic systems are interdependent. A thriving economy depends on a healthy society, which in turn relies on a stable and resilient natural environment.

Long-term economic success is only possible when the economy operates within environmental limits and contributes positively to society. That is why the Council has taken steps to embed sustainability into our Corporate Plan and Community Plan as a way of future-proofing our operations against regulatory changes, ratepayer expectations, and future risks.

Embedding climate action into everything we do

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is committed to integrating climate action and sustainability into all aspects of its operations, decision-making, and policies. With a combined revenue and capital budget of approximately £60 million and a workforce of over 1,000 employees, the Council provides a wide range of services including Household Waste Collection, Births and Deaths Registration, Leisure, Community Engagement, Environmental Health, Building Control, Economic Development and Tourism. We also manage Planning and Community Planning functions that were transferred from central government to local authorities in Northern Ireland in 2015.

Our work is driven by collaboration with local communities and organisations across the public, voluntary, community and private sectors. Together, we aim to create a shared vision for our area, improving services and quality of life for all citizens.

While this strategy primarily focuses on reducing emissions and improving sustainability within Council operations, we are committed to working with relevant stakeholders, including government departments, on broader policies that affect

emissions in our district. These include areas such as planning policy, energy policy, green growth and transport infrastructure.

We will work closely with other local authorities, both north and south of the border, to maximise efficiency in delivering shared climate objectives. In particular we will work in partnership cross border with Louth County Council.

The Council also acknowledges the importance of supporting local communities, businesses, and households as they transition to a low-carbon future. By working closely with our partners, we will ensure Newry, Mourne and Down becomes a greener, healthier and more sustainable district by 2050.

In the short term, it is essential that we begin by improving our own operations. This will involve reducing energy consumption in our buildings through retrofitting, adopting passive design, and implementing efficiency measures. We will also invest in renewable energy and low-carbon vehicles. We will ensure that any new technologies we adopt are cost-effective, suitable for our needs and aligned with our service delivery objectives.

This strategy also recognises the importance of a fair transition for all. We will continue engaging with stakeholders, including government departments, to influence policy and deliver local programmes that drive meaningful change.

Additionally, we recognise the interconnected nature of sustainability challenges, including land and water use, waste reduction, recycling, pollution and plastic reduction and air quality improvement.

This strategy addresses these challenges with targeted actions to make our district more sustainable for future generations.

Taking a long-term approach

The pursuit of sustainability requires a long-term perspective and the courage to make bold, decisive choices to address the climate crisis with urgency.

Many climate measures offer a return on investment, but some will require larger upfront investments with longer payback periods. In such cases, the Council will adopt a long-term approach, using whole-life costing to balance initial capital outlay against reduced operating costs and long-term value.

At the same time, the Council will work to ensure the district benefits from the growing green economy by positioning itself to attract investment, support the creation of new green jobs and equip people with the skills needed for a low-carbon future.

The evidence is clear: while the upfront investment in climate action is substantial, the economic and social benefits of action far outweigh the costs. Conversely, delaying action only increases future risks and expenses. As (the Stern Review (2006))⁶ demonstrated, early and decisive action is both the most cost-effective and the most responsible course of action.



Action Plan

Actions will be developed based on the Objectives in the Five Themes of the Strategy.

Figure 8:
Policy Framework Themes and Objectives

POLICY FRAMEWORK THEMES AND OBJECTIVES



Decarbonised energy and buildings

Objectives

- Reduced energy demand in buildings through retrofitting and behaviour change.
- New developments minimise their whole life carbon and air quality impact.
- Increased supply of clean, renewable and affordable energy.
- Residents and organisations using energy sourced from low and zero carbon sources.
- Demonstrate Local Leadership by supporting local communities to take climate action – e.g. supporting The ‘Sustainable Energy Community’ programme.
- Develop robust Data Monitoring systems to support accurate reporting and enable targeted carbon reduction actions.



Sustainable travel and transport

Objectives

- Fewer vehicle trips.
- Increased use of active travel and public transport.
- Low-carbon Council fleet vehicles.
- Transition to zero-emission vehicles across the district.
- Encourage car sharing facilities, park and ride and EV Charging Infrastructure.
- Develop our Greenways for local sustainable travel access and tourism potential.



Governance aligned to Net Zero

Objectives

- Net zero target a top priority in key Council Plans.
- Corporate Risk Register identifies the risks of climate change to the local area.
- Climate change embedded in council decision-making process.
- Greenhouse gas emissions reported annually.
- Greater resourcing for climate action delivery.
- Council pensions and investments aligned to net zero.
- Climate awareness training for key staff and committee members.
- Cross-sector engagement and collaboration on climate action.
- Develop Case Studies to promote best practice.



Green and resilient environment

Objectives

- Peat-free compost and soil used in all landscaping and horticulture.
- Pesticide use banned on all council owned and managed land.
- Green Flag status for all Council parks.
- Tree Management Plan with target to increase native tree cover.
- Mowing practices promote nature recovery.
- Biodiversity and habitat net gain required in new developments.
- District safeguarded from future climate impacts including flooding, storms and sea level rise.
- Promote Green Tourism and the Green Economy demonstrating the link between Environmental Stewardship and Economic Opportunities.



Reduced consumption and waste

Objectives

- Procurement policy requires tenders to deliver climate action & sustainability.
- Reductions in waste and a step change in rates of recycling.
- No single use plastic at external events on council land, property or public spaces.
- Growth of a low-carbon, circular economy locally.
- Sustainable Food Places Award.
- Initiatives to redistribute surplus food.
- Support local businesses with awareness and events on reducing carbon linked to cost savings.

DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

- Work in partnership with local businesses and communities to encourage sustainable practices.
 - Review and implement necessary policy, strategy and programme changes.
- Produce a comprehensive climate evidence programme to inform future policies & plans.

Monitoring and Reporting

Methodology

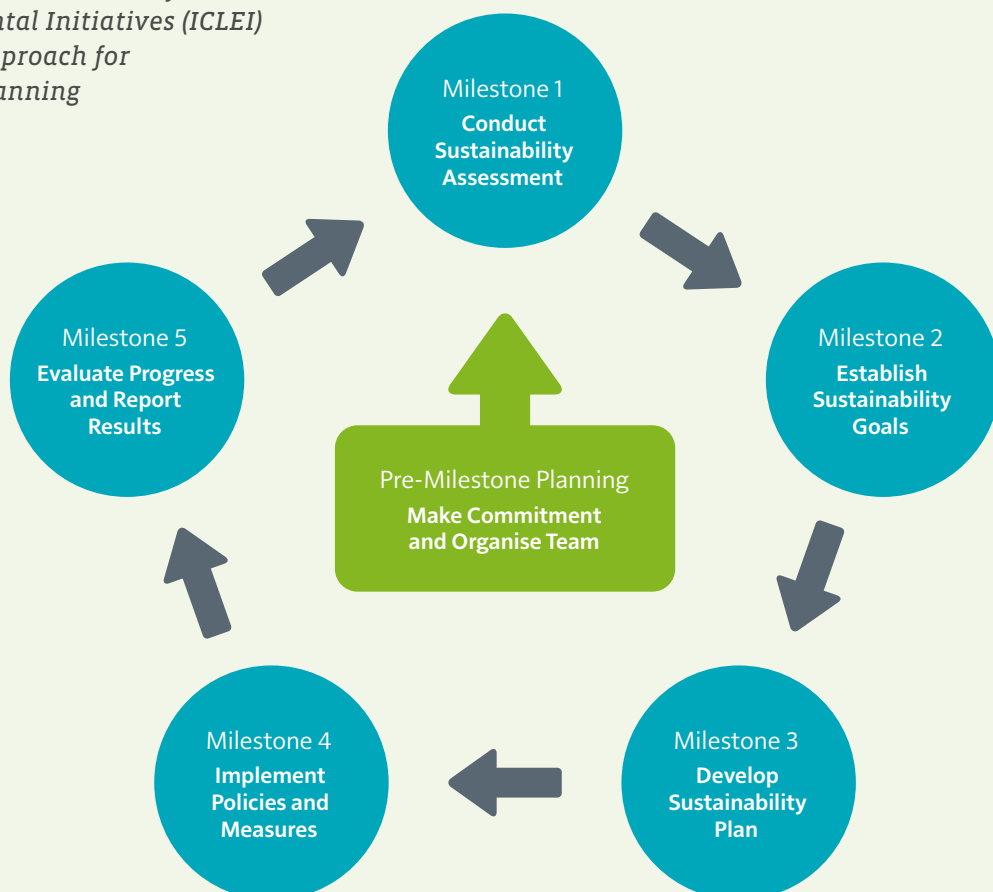
The strategy was developed using ICLEI's Five Milestone Approach, a widely used framework for local authorities to plan, implement, and monitor climate action.

The Council applied this methodology by first drafting a framework of priorities and objectives, then identifying and screening actions through workshops with staff and elected members, ensuring actions were both ambitious and achievable within current policy and funding contexts.

Future iterations of the Plan will expand the process to include consultation with businesses and community stakeholders.

International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) Methodology Process

Figure 9: International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) Five Milestone Approach for Climate Action Planning



Monitoring and Review

Performance on the action plan will be monitored each year to track progress against agreed actions, and progress will be published on our website to ensure transparency. The strategy will be reviewed after five years.

Resources and Funding

We recognise that delivering this strategy will require significant additional resources over its lifetime. While the full costs of achieving net zero emissions are not yet known, further detail will be developed as specific actions are designed and implemented.

A business case approach will be used to develop specific projects and investments linked to the actions. This will look at costs, carbon and energy savings, return on investment and payback periods. The payback and carbon savings generated will be monitored as part of the project management process. Our aim is to have a fully costed project pipeline in place as soon as possible, which will inform future revisions of this strategy.

Sustainability, climate change, and environmental and energy management require specialist expertise. Where appropriate, we will draw on consultancy support and engage with relevant stakeholders, businesses and partners to ensure the most effective delivery.

It is clear from estimates of the potential costs of meeting net zero in Northern Ireland that councils cannot absorb the financial burden of decarbonisation within existing budgets without placing undue pressure on ratepayers. As part of a just transition, there is therefore a need for additional financial support, to help us make the necessary investments to realise longer-term financial benefits associated with climate action. The Council will continue to plan and invest strategically to deliver emissions reductions in the most cost-effective way, while actively seeking opportunities to secure external funding and working closely with government departments and stakeholders on a cross border basis to unlock the resources required.



Acknowledgements

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council wishes to acknowledge the support of Sustainable NI who facilitated staff workshops and reviewed the strategy and action plan.

Ongoing support, advice and engagement from the Council's Elected Members, Senior Management Team and individual staff members is also much appreciated.



References

- Reference 1** IPCC (2014) Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report.
- Reference 2** IPCC, 2022: Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Sixth Assessment Report.
- Reference 3** UK CP18 – UK Projections 2018, Met Office Hadley Centre, published in 2018.
- Reference 4** IPCC Special Report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, 2018.
- Reference 5** The 2020 Greenhouse Gas Management Hierarchy, 2020, The Institute of Sustainability and Environmental Professionals.
- Reference 6** The Stern Review 2006 – Stern, N. (2007). The Economics of Climate Change: The Stern Review. Cambridge University Press.



Appendices

Appendix 1

Additional Climate Change and Sustainability Legislation

The Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006

Provision 25 outlines the Sustainable Development Statutory Duty on Departments and Councils.

Northern Ireland's Green Growth Strategy (Draft)

This is the Northern Ireland Executive's multi-decade strategy, balancing climate, environment and the economy (including green jobs) in Northern Ireland. It sets out the long-term vision for tackling the climate crisis in the right way.

The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (as amended)

Section 5 requires those who exercise any function in relation to Local Development Plans to do so with the objective of furthering sustainable development.

Building (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022

This outlines minimum standards for new buildings and retrofit of existing buildings, with respect to carbon performance and energy conservation.

Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme

There is a legal requirement for Northern Ireland Departments to prepare an Adaptation Programme in response to the latest UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA). A number of Councils, including Newry, Mourne and Down District Council have published or are working on Climate Adaptation Plans.

The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022

This includes a target for net zero carbon emissions in Northern Ireland by 2050 alongside a target for 80% of electricity to be supplied from renewables by 2030.

Northern Ireland's First Climate Action Plan (CAP)

Whilst still to be published at the time of drafting this strategy, Northern Ireland's first Climate Action Plan (2023–2027) is anticipated to include additional targets, such as Carbon Budgets, with reporting requirements on areas such as climate mitigation and adaptation.

NI Regional Development Strategy 2035

This strategy refers to climate change as a key economic and environmental driver and includes strategic guidance on relevant areas, such as a sustainable and secure energy supply, sustainable development and reducing our carbon footprint and facilitating mitigation and adaptation etc.

Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland – The Path to Net Zero

The Energy Strategy sets out a pathway for energy to 2030 that will mobilise the skills, technologies and behaviours needed to take Northern Ireland towards a vision of net zero carbon and affordable energy by 2050.

The Environment Strategy for Northern Ireland (Draft)

This provides guidance on preserving, protecting and improving our environment for our children and grandchildren.

0330 137 4000
info@nmandd.org
www.newrymournedown.org

 facebook.com/nmdcouncil

 x.com/nmdcouncil

Oifig an Iúir
Newry Office
Haughey House
Rampart Road
Greenbank
Newry BT34 2QU

Oifig Dhún Pádraig
Downpatrick Office
Downshire Civic Centre
Downshire Estate
Ardglass Road
Downpatrick BT30 6GQ



Comhairle Ceantair
an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne and Down
District Council

