

NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: SE/2025

Minutes of Sustainability & Environment Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 22 October 2025 at 6.00pm in Boardroom, Warrenpoint Town Hall

Chair: Councillor O Magennis

**In attendance in
Chamber:**

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor C Enright
Councillor J Jackson	Councillor M Larkin
Councillor K Murphy	Councillor H Reilly
Councillor M Ruane	Councillor D Taylor

**Committee Members in
Attendance via Teams:**

Councillor W Clarke	Councillor D Finn
Councillor M Hearty	Councillor S O'Hare
Councillor H Young	

Officials in Chamber:

Mrs S Murphy, Director, Sustainability and Environment
Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability
Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer

SE/113/2025:

APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillor K Feehan and Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director, Environment.

It was agreed, on the proposal of Councillor Magennis and seconded by Councillor Jackson, to amalgamate the Refuse and Cleansing Task Group and the Sustainability Working Group. The Chairperson advised that the new joint meetings would take place quarterly, with the next scheduled for November 2025, followed by February 2026. It was agreed that a full meeting schedule would be presented at the next committee meeting.

SE/114/2025:

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

SE/115/2025:

**ACTION SHEET: SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 16 SEPTEMBER 2025**

Read:

Action Sheet of the Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 16 September 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Jackson, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet of the Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 16 September 2025.

FOR CONSIDERATION AND/OR DECISION

SE/116/2025: OFFICER REPORT ON NOTICE OF MOTION – CLIMATE CHANGE ACT

Read: Report from Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability and Environment, presented by Mr Conor Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Notice of Motion - Climate Change Act **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Sage outlined the report to facilitate discussion on Councillor Reilly's deferred Notice of Motion from the 6th October Council meeting. The report summarised the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, relevant reporting regulations, and highlighted Council's current climate and sustainability priorities. Members were asked to consider the motion, note ongoing compliance efforts, and review its recommendations.

Councillor Reilly stated that the Notice of Motion had been brought forward due to significant concerns regarding the economic impact of climate legislation. He argued that the UK Climate Change Act had already contributed to increased electricity prices for households and rising manufacturing costs, which in turn had driven up the cost of everyday essentials such as milk, bread, and butter. He expressed the view that these cumulative effects were placing undue pressure on consumers and undermining industrial competitiveness.

He further stated that the Northern Ireland Climate Act 2022 would intensify these challenges by imposing additional regulatory burdens on key sectors including agriculture, transport, and industry.

Councillor Reilly criticised the broader drive to decarbonise, noting that while the UK invested heavily in the green economy, it remained reliant on imported technologies such as solar panels and wind turbines, which were predominantly manufactured in China.

In relation to Newry, Mourne and Down, Councillor Reilly acknowledged the importance of sustainable practices such as fuel conservation, recycling, and reuse. However, he expressed concern that the Climate Act had already led to the effective abandonment of the A5 road development and was being used to obstruct progress on the proposed Newry Civic Centre. He cautioned that unless amended, the Act could also be used to delay or prevent other vital infrastructure projects, including the Newry Southern Relief Road and the Ballynahinch bypass.

In conclusion, Councillor Reilly called for the repeal of the Northern Ireland Climate Act 2022 by the Northern Ireland Assembly. He urged that more practical and achievable legislation be introduced to enable the advancement of essential infrastructure, support the prosperity of agriculture and industry, and safeguard Northern Ireland's economic competitiveness.

Councillor Enright described the Climate Change Act as a financial opportunity for Northern Ireland. He referenced a book he had produced analysing Council finances and the potential impact of climate change legislation, noting that he had found no area of Council operations that would not be significantly improved from a financial perspective.

Councillor Taylor stated that while Northern Ireland has a role in climate ambitions, the Climate Change Act was impacting industry, infrastructure, and agriculture. He considered many targets unachievable and insufficiently scrutinised. He proposed that the word 'repeal' in the motion be replaced with 'review'.

Councillor Reilly confirmed that he would accept Councillor Taylor's proposed amendment.

Councillor Hearty concurred with Councillor Enright on the need for the NI Climate Change Act and its economic benefits. He noted that all major NI parties, including the DUP, had supported the Act after detailed scrutiny in the Assembly, and that Councillor Reilly's colleague Edwin Poots had introduced it. He described the motion as vague and ill-considered, stated that IPCC reports confirmed the reality and impact of climate change, and expressed opposition to the motion.

Councillor Finn concurred with Councillor Hearty, particularly on the work involved in bringing forward the NI Climate Change Act 2022. She stated that climate change was one of the greatest global threats and emphasised the need for legislation. She noted the Act was passed during the collapse of the NI Assembly and that progress on targets had stalled due to the absence of government. She added that her party would not be supporting the motion or Councillor Taylor's amendment.

Councillor Reilly expressed disappointment that Councillor Hearty did not give serious consideration to the motion, which he believed was brought with good intent. He referenced that Edwin Poots had introduced the legislation under pressure from other parties supporting a more extreme proposal from the Green Party.

Councillor Reilly emphasised that the issue was deeply serious and affected communities across Northern Ireland, particularly in rural areas

As there was dissent within the Chamber, the motion as amended was put to a recorded vote, with the results as follows: (Copy attached)

FOR:	2
AGAINST:	11
ABSTENTIONS:	1

The Motion was declared fallen.

SE/117/2025:

**DAERA PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON NORTHERN
IRELAND'S DRAFT CLIMATE ACTION PLAN 2023-2027**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Consultation Response – DAERA Public Consultation on Northern Ireland's draft Climate Action Plan 2023-2027. (**Copy circulated**)

Mr Sage outlined the report Advising that the draft response had been prepared for the submission deadline of 8 October 2025 and remained subject to full Council approval. It was recommended that the committee consider and approve the submissions in Appendix 1, including any comments or amendments as necessary.

Councillor Enright welcomed the submission and proposed the following additions:

- **Grid Connectivity:** Supported highlighting grid connection uncertainty and its impact on farmers facing high planning costs and limited incentives for renewable energy.
- **Just Transition:** Recommended referencing the Belfast energy efficiency database to support targeted retrofit funding.
- **Rural EV Access:** Endorsed financial support for rural communities, particularly those in poverty, to access electric vehicles.
- **Network Investment:** Welcomed scrutiny of gas network expansion and noted that electricity grid upgrades would deliver greater benefits, including reduced energy poverty.
- **Building Standards:** Supported pressure on the Department of Finance to adopt Passive House and net-zero standards, citing cost disparities between homes in Northern Ireland and the Republic.
- **Local Development Plans:** Raised concern that current LDPs restrict renewable energy development in rural areas and recommended introducing climate emergency planning policies across councils.

Councillor Reilly stated that the DUP supported the UK's long-term net zero ambitions and environmentally responsible policies, however, the party opposed the paper, citing concerns that recent climate legislation had been rushed, poorly drafted, and inconsistent with advice from the Climate Change Committee. He noted that while sustainable policies could improve living standards, many citizens associated climate action with increased taxes, higher costs, and threats to livelihoods—particularly in farming communities. He expressed concern over the financial burden of DAERA's draft climate action plan, estimated at over £1 billion by 2027, with limited evidence of environmental or economic benefit. He highlighted opposition to the 2050 net zero target, proposed amendments to the Climate Bill, and the establishment of a climate change commission, and urged a more realistic approach to Northern Ireland's climate ambitions. He acknowledged officers' efforts but confirmed the DUP could not support the paper.

Councillor Taylor stated that he could not support the paper in its current form, describing some of the targets as unachievable and likely to have a serious impact on individuals and industries. He recommended that the targets be reviewed.

Councillor Young referenced recent flooding in Newcastle and emphasised that the documents represented necessary actions to slow climate change and reduce the risk of severe weather events. She requested that outline notes of the disagreements and responses for sections 5, 6, 12, 27 and 31 be forwarded to her, and Mr Sage confirmed this would be done.

Councillor Andrews queried whether this would affect the closing date for submissions. Mr Sage advised that, should there be substantial amendments, these would be brought through the Council meeting alongside the minutes of this meeting.

As there was dissent in the Chamber, the item was put to a show of hands vote, with the results as follows:

FOR	10
AGAINST	3
ABSTENTIONS	0

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Enright, seconded by Councillor Andrews, the submission of the consultation response including any comments or additions was agreed.

SE/118/2025:**DEPOT CHARGING FUNDING SCHEME**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Depot Charging Funding Scheme. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Sage outlined the report, explaining that the Scheme had been launched by the UK Cabinet Office in partnership with the Department for Transport and provided up to 75% funding for eligible installation costs, including charge points, civil works, and energy systems.

Councillor Enright noted that the scheme offered up to £1,000,000 per organisation and expressed concern that Council's ambitions were too limited. He referenced Council-owned land in Newry and Downpatrick as potential sites for new depots and suggested investment in solar energy and electric fleets to reduce fuel costs. He encouraged officers to revisit the proposal.

Mr Sage advised that the funding was intended for shovel-ready schemes, which must be completed, commissioned, and handed over by 31 March 2026. He confirmed that Council had already developed a suitable project and was preparing for procurement when the funding became available. The focus remained on delivering that project within the required timeframe. Councillor Andrews expressed full support for the submission of the application.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Larkin, it was agreed to note the contents of the report and approve the submission of an application for grant funding under the Depot Charging Scheme.**

SE/119/2025:**SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY – PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Draft Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Sage outlined the report, which provided an update on the draft Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy and sought approval to proceed with public consultation. He advised that further work had been undertaken, including workshops with councillors and stakeholders, consultation with other councils, and a presentation to the S&E Working Group in September. The proposed public consultation would run from 13 November 2025 to 6 February 2026, with comments to be submitted to the NMD Speaks service. The strategy was scheduled for publication and launch in April 2026, at the start of the next financial year.

Councillor Andrews welcomed the report, stating that it was a valuable opportunity for public engagement.

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Finn regarding wider consultation, Mr Sage advised that Mr Keavney, Head of Sustainability, would revert to her outside of the meeting.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, it was agreed to note the draft Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy in Appendix 1, the attached consultation questions on**

Appendix 2, and approve the launch of a 12-week public consultation.

ITEMS RESTRICTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 1 OF SCHEDULE 6 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (NI) 2014

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Jackson, seconded by Councillor Ruane, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on the following items, which related to exempt information by virtue of para. 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local /Government (Northern Ireland) 2014 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Jackson, seconded by Councillor Taylor, it was agreed to come out of closed session.

The Chairperson advised the following had been agreed whilst in closed session:

RESTRICTED – FOR DECISION

SE/120/2025: **CONTRACT MODIFICATION – FIXED WIRE TESTING, EMERGENCY LIGHTING AND SMALL ELECTRICAL WORKS CONTRACT**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Contract Modification – Fixed Wire Testing, Emergency Lighting and Small Electrical Works contract. (**Copy circulated**)

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Larkin, it was agreed to approve the contract modification as detailed in section 2 of the officer's report.

SE/121/2025: **APPOINTMENT OF PUBLIC ANALYST**

Read: Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, presented by Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability and Environment, regarding Appointment of Public Analyst. (**Copy circulated**)

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Ruane, it was agreed to appoint the individuals identified in section 2.1 of the officer's report to act as Public Analysts for Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

SE/122/2025: HEALTH AND SAFETY PARTNERSHIP OFFICER FUNDING

Read: Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, presented by Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability and Environment, regarding Health and Safety Partnership Officer Funding. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Taylor, seconded by Councillor Jackson, it was agreed to approve the funding to support the Health and Safety Partnership Officer shared service between the 11 Councils and the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland until 31 March 2028.**

SE/123/2025: BUSINESS CASE - PROVISION OF DOG KENNELING SERVICES

Read: Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, presented by Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability and Environment, regarding Business Case – Dog Kennelling. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Young, it was agreed to approve the business case to procure dog kennelling services.**

FOR NOTING - ITEMS RESTRICTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 1 OF SCHEDULE 6 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (NI) 2014

SE/124/2025: ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure – Update. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Enright, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, it was agreed to note the report.**

SE/125/2025: ACTION SHEET FROM THE SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP MEETING OF 16 SEPTEMBER 2025 AND PRESENTATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE FROM SAME MEETING

Read: Action Sheet from the Sustainability and Environment Working Group Meeting of 16 September 2025 and Presentation on Climate Change from same meeting. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Enright, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, it was agreed to note the documents.

SE/126/2025: **ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING IN COMMITTEE MINUTES OF THURSDAY 28 AUGUST 2025 & JOINT COMMITTEE MEMBERS' MONTHLY BULLETIN OF 25 SEPTEMBER 2025**

Read: Arc21 Joint Committee Meeting in Committee Minutes of Thursday 28 August 2025 & Joint Committee Members' Monthly Bulletin of 25 September 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Enright, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, it was agreed to note the documents.

FOR NOTING

SE/127/2025: **ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 28 AUGUST 2025**

Read: ARC21 Joint Committee Meeting No 098 Minutes Thursday 28 August 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Larkin, seconded by Councillor Andrews, it was agreed to note the document.

SE/128/2025: **ONLINE REPORTING OF DOG FOULING INCIDENTS**

Read: Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, presented by Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability and Environment, regarding Dog Fouling Online Reporting Tool. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Reilly advised that some constituents had asked whether online reports could be submitted anonymously and expressed concern about the requirement to provide personal information when using the reporting tool.

Mrs Murphy explained that personal details were requested to enable officers to follow up with individuals, as most people expected feedback. She clarified that information was not shared unless a case proceeded to court and a witness statement was required. She added that officers would liaise with IT to explore options for anonymising details while still providing updates on actions taken.

Councillor Young enquired whether reports of dog fouling incidents were recorded in a separate database, noting the aim of streamlining resources in specific areas.

Mrs Murphy advised that information from the online system would be recorded on the back-office system which allocated service requests to the relevant officer. She added that the form

allowed residents to report incidents outside normal office hours, and all information—whether received online, by email, or telephone — was collated in one place.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Larkin, seconded by Councillor Andrews, it was agreed to note the report and encourage residents to report dog fouling through the online tool where possible.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 7.19pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 3 November 2025.

Signed: Councillor Oonagh Magennis
Chairperson

Signed: Mrs Sinead Murphy
Director of Sustainability & Environment