

# Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 12th October, 2023

## MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AND CITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND  
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor R-M Donnelly (Chairperson); and  
Councillors Anglin, Bell, Bower, R. Brooks,  
Collins, Doherty, M. Donnelly, D. Douglas,  
S. Douglas, Kelly, McAteer, McCabe, McKeown,  
Smyth and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;  
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director (Operational) City Region and  
Development;  
Ms. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner;  
Mrs. L. Toland, Senior Manager- Economy;  
Ms. C. Shortt, Monitoring. Learning and Reporting Officer;  
Ms. M. Quigley, Adaptation and Resilience Advisor;  
Ms. C. Persic, Development Manager, City Centre  
Regeneration; and  
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

### **Apologies**

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors T. Brooks and Carson.

### **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 14th September, 2023 were taken as read and signed as correct.

### **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were recorded.

### **Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel Update**

The Director of City Region and Development and the Development Manager provided the Committee with an update on the Eastern Transport Plan, including a Bolder Vision for Belfast and the ongoing work being undertaken across the Council in conjunction with stakeholders and Members in relation to connectivity, including active and sustainable travel. The Director highlighted the fact that in 2020, the Zero-Net Carbon Roadmap had identified that transport was responsible for twenty per cent of the City's carbon emissions.

The Director provided the Members with an overview of the Eastern Transport Plan (ETP) and its aim to provide a transport vision for the city and the wider local authority area. She highlighted the importance of the ETP in the support of decision making with regard to major capital investment within the metropolitan area, and how it could assist the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) to deliver on its climate obligations contained within the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.

The Committee was provided with an overview of key aspects contained with the Bolder Vision for Belfast and of the need to adapt to changing demands from city centre occupants and to the provision of better place-based infrastructure to support city centre living. The Director referred to four key elements contained within the Bolder Vision, namely:

1. Creation of a Civic Spine with a focus on People;
2. Reimagining the Inner Ring and ending Car Dominance;
3. The promotion of City Centre Living; and
4. Embracing the River Lagan and the Waterfront.

The Senior Manager stated that a final draft of the Bolder Vision had been provided to the August 2022 meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee (CG&R) and was subject to DfI and DfC ministerial sign-off.

In terms of Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel (CAST), the Members were informed that a cross-sector stakeholder sub-group, co-chaired by Sustrans and Translink, had been formed to develop a CAST action plan included as part of the Belfast Agenda consultation process. The Committee was informed of the many positive attributes associated with the delivery of active and sustainable travel, including access to employment, education and tackling climate change. The Members were informed that the Council had been successful in securing funding from DfI's Blue and Green Infrastructure Fund for the delivery of covered cycle stands, a further step in encouraging the public to consider alternative forms of sustainable transport.

The Members were informed that an all-party round table on CAST had taken place on 30th August 2023, providing Members with the opportunity to engage with the work undertaken under that programme and highlighting the connections to the Council's strategic priorities and governance structures. It was reported that the round table meeting had provided an opportunity for elected members and other participants to discuss and consider the potential impact of the Eastern Transport Plan on a range of strategic and physical regeneration projects.

In response to concerns by the Committee about the dangers of cycling in the city and the need to separate cycling lanes from both pedestrians and vehicular traffic, the Director stated that DfI would be attending a future meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and that Members would be given the opportunity to address their concerns to the department directly.

A Member requested that Translink might wish to consider extending their service to facilitate the night-time economy and was informed that Translink would also be making representation to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on their

proposed extended service arrangements and that the Members would be provided with the opportunity to raise their concerns with Translink directly.

Noted.

**Consultation Response to Northern Ireland's  
Emission Reduction Targets and Carbon Budgets  
the UKCCC'S Advice Report**

The Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer provided the Committee with an update on the consultation response to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) on emissions targets, carbon budgets and the Climate Change Committee's (CCC) advice.

She reminded the Members that a climate emergency had been declared by the Northern Ireland Assembly in February 2022, culminating in the Climate Act (Northern Ireland) 2022. The Committee was informed that the Climate Act set the framework for tackling climate change and a reduction in emissions to achieve net zero by 2050. The Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer referred to the work undertaken by DAERA in leading the development of Northern Ireland's five-year climate action plan as required by the Climate Act.

The Members were informed that the main aim of the consultation process was to seek views on the proposed 2030 and 2040 emissions targets for Northern Ireland, including the proposed carbon budgets for the periods 2023-27, 2028-2032 and 2022-2037. The Committee was advised that DAERA was using the consultation process to seek the views of the public on the Climate Change Committee's Advice Report.

The Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer stated that the Council was in broad agreement with both the targets and budgets contained within the consultation document. The Council had agreed also to keep the 2030 emissions reduction target of at least forty-eight per cent emissions reduction compared to the baseline, and a 2040 emissions target of at least seventy-seven per cent. The Committee was informed also that a reduction in the carbon budget should be set at thirty-three per cent average annual reduction in emissions, a second reduction of forty-eight per cent reduction followed by a sixty-two per cent reduction in emissions compared to the baseline figure.

The Members were informed of some of the work which was ongoing in the city to reduce carbon emissions, including the support for small and medium enterprises to assist with reducing their carbon output. The Committee was informed also of the need to coordinate and improve action in terms of energy from waste infrastructure in Northern Ireland which had historically been under-developed.

Noted.

### **Amazon Web Services - Climate Data Platform Challenge**

The Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer provided the Committee with an update on the work with Amazon Web Services (AWS). She reported that, in February 2020, a climate emergency had been declared by the Northern Ireland Assembly, setting out Northern Ireland's framework for tackling climate change and reducing carbon emissions. The Members were informed that the Department of Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) was taking a lead on the development of Northern Ireland's first five-year climate action plan and the important role of public bodies in tackling climate change was highlighted and recognised by the Act. To that end, and with new reporting mechanisms required, the Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer stated that the Council was required to have an accessible platform for climate related data. It was reported that the climate team had been working with Amazon Web Services (AWS), and other council departments, to establish what the data needs were, across the Council, in relation to climate and other work areas.

The Members were informed that the opportunity to avail of AWS originated with the Cloud Innovation Centre, based at Arizona State University. The Committee was informed that the objective of the engagement with AWS was to assist in the construction of a visual representation, via wireframe, displaying what the platform would look like with a build time completion of the platform estimated to be approximately eight weeks.

The Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer reported that a further update report on progress on the wireframe build programme would be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

Noted.

### **Update on One Million Trees**

The Adaptation and Resilience Advisor submitted the undernoted report providing an update on the launch of the one million trees project.

#### **“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues**

**1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on Belfast City Council's One Million Trees initiative.**

#### **2.0 Recommendation**

**2.1 The Committee is asked to:**

**i) note the contents of the report.**

#### **3.0 Main Report**

##### **3.1 Background:**

**Belfast City Council's One Million Trees initiative was launched in November 2020 and is committed to supporting the planting of one million trees, within Belfast, by 2035.**

- 3.2** The initiative is delivered through the Climate Team and engages with partners from the private, community/voluntary, and statutory sectors and maintains internal partnerships within Belfast City Council, to support the objectives of the initiative. The objectives of One Million Trees Initiative are to:
- 1.** Create an inclusive structure and processes which enable tree planting and the growth of green infrastructure and biodiversity in Belfast;
  - 2.** Plant at least one million trees within the next 15 years – delivering a step change in our approach to climate adaptation and environmental improvements; and
  - 3.** Protect the city and the people of the city by increasing carbon capture, reducing harm from air pollution, weather impact and loss of nature and improving health and well-being.
- 3.3** The core funding for the programme is through the Woodland Trust's Emergency Tree Fund (details below), which is due to end May 2024. A key priority for the Climate Team is to secure additional funds to support both Council's ongoing commitment to deliver by 2035, and the excellent work of our delivery partners, primarily The Woodland Trust, and Belfast Hills Partnership.
- 3.4** The Million Trees Partnership is made up of 21 partners who will be brought together in October/November to review progress to date and to identify the key priorities for the next phase of the programme so that funding can be sought and secured.
- 3.5** The funding has supported the delivery of the iTree Eco Report, as well as the Belfast Tree Strategy (recently delivered by City and Neighbourhood Services). It has also allowed for the delivery of volunteer coordination, community outreach and support for PR and communication, working with the Belfast Hills Partnership since the last planting season and will continue up to May 2024. Whilst also coordinating physical planting of trees and hedgerows, Belfast Hills delivers school engagements, across the city, to educate and introduce young people to the benefits of trees and also introduce the conversation around climate change and city resilience.
- 3.6** In the 2023/2024 financial year, Belfast Hills will:
- engage with 8 primary schools, where trees and hedgerows will be planted by pupils;

- deliver 10 Woodland Workshops, to educate and inform residents, in such things as; seed collection hedgerow laying, foraging, badger surveying and storytelling, amongst other topics;
- engage and work with 6 Youth Centres, in partnership with the Education Authority, to allow young adults to engage in the climate conversation, through the installation of the 'Forest in a Box' project, which will be used to create nature spaces for the benefit of users;
- coordinate 6 woodland walks across the city, to again educate around woodland preservation and environmental impacts on precious natural resource; and
- BHP will also coordinate a number of volunteer activities, which will include maintenance and management of existing sites and also the planting of new sites.

3.7 These activities delivered within the upcoming planting season will cumulatively plant 5,700 trees across Belfast.

3.8 One Million Trees reports quarterly to the Woodland Trust on progress, both on financial and physical activity. The Emergency Tree Fund is currently in the second quarter of it's last year of funding the Million Trees Programme.

3.9 Reporting for the last financial year includes tree numbers from all our statutory, private and internal partners, which culminated in 28,813 trees being planted in the 2022/2023 season (Oct-April) to include hedgerow planting.

Partner	Number Trees	Number hedgerow	Date range	New/ Existing site	Million Trees Funding Y/N	Other Funding
DFC	3728	3827	Oct-Apr	E	N	Self
NIE	0	0				
NIHE			Oct-Apr	E	N	Self
NIHE N&W	557	2257				
NIHE S&E	3171	1530				
National Trust	353	0	Oct-Apr	E	N	Self
Belfast Hills Partnership	6028	6192	Oct-Apr	N	Y	
BCC	1170	0				
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,007</b>	<b>13,806</b>				<b>28,813</b>

3.10 In total 92,313 trees have been planted in Belfast through this project. In the upcoming planting season, it is estimated that there is potential to plant between 80,000 and 100,000

trees, however some of these sites are still to be confirmed and the new Belfast Tree Strategy should provide the basis for these to come forward in the coming planting seasons. To achieve this goal, it will however require continued positive working both internally and externally with other partners and a secure tree supply to be confirmed.

**4.0 Financial and Resource Implications**

4.1 None.

**5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/  
Rural Needs Assessment**

5.1 **There are no Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment requirements.”**

The Members noted the information provided and recognised the valuable societal contribution associated with the one million tree project and the benefits of community engagement, including schools and youth and community organisations in that programme.

**Belfast Dublin Economic Corridor Update**

The Senior Manager provided an update on the progress of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor, including the draft action plan for the second half of the current financial year. She reminded the Members that the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor had been formed in 2021, comprising eight councils along its boundaries and including two partner universities, namely, Dublin City University and Ulster University.

The Committee was informed that the current secretariat of the partnership was managed by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and that the governance structure of the partnership comprised twenty-four elected representatives, three from each of the local authorities, who constituted a political advisory group. The Senior Manager stated that the political representatives provided an advisory and consultative forum, supporting both the Directors Group and Chief Executive Officer in the governance of the partnership.

The Committee was informed that new political representation had been sought from Belfast City Council following the local government elections, in May 2023, and that the next meeting of the partnership was scheduled to take place at the Belfast campus of the Ulster University in December 2023.

The Senior Manager informed the Members that the strategy around the creation of the corridor was based around an ambition of creating a leading axis of development and the achievement of sustainable growth through collaborative research and development, supported by a highly skilled workforce and enabling infrastructure. She highlighted the ambition to be recognised globally as a major international centre in growth sectors such as professional services, advance manufacturing, ICT and health sciences.

The Senior Manager highlighted the priorities with the action plan for the current year, including a review of existing skills strategies and the identification of gaps and

barriers to learning. She referred to a feasibility study on Regional Innovation Hubs, supported through the Shared Island Unit Fund, including an additional feasibility study on a connected circular economy due to be completed by November 2023.

The Members were informed that engagement with the Shared Island Unit was continuing to explore additional funding opportunities and that additional sources of funding were being explored with SEUPB to access additional funding through Peace Plus. The Senior Manager stated that additional funding would be explored to develop area-based skills initiatives in addition to funding the ongoing operations of the corridor team.

The Committee was informed that regular meetings of the partnership governance structure had been agreed up to the summer of 2024, including meetings at Director level and quarterly meetings for elected representatives. She stated also that a draft partnership agreement had been prepared to clarify areas of co-operation and partnership working.

In terms of communication, the Committee was informed that a coherent marketing and communications strategy was being prepared and that as part of that work partners were exploring the potential to hold an economic conference in early 2024.

Noted.

### **Issues Raised in Advance by Members**

#### **Irish Passport Design**

The Committee agreed to forward a letter to the Department of Foreign Affairs in Dublin, requesting that they include depictions/landmarks of Northern Ireland in any new proposed Irish passport design.

Agreed.

Chairperson