



## Belfast City Council.

<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.
<b>Subject:</b>	Belfast City Council Participation in the 2009 World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Earth Hour
<b>Date:</b>	23 January 2009.
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Mr. Trevor Salmon, Director of Corporate Services, ext. 6083
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Mr. David Cartmill, Acting Head of Corporate Services Directorate , ext. 6084

### Relevant Background Information.

The World Wildlife Fund (also known as the World Wide Fund for Nature) within Northern Ireland is part of WWF-UK and is tasked with progressing a range of environmental issues from a Northern Ireland perspective. It principally focuses on policy development and lobbying to ensure that environmental and sustainability issues remain high on the local political and media agenda. WWF NI's current focus is upon improving the quality of rivers and oceans, promoting sustainable development and addressing contributors to climate change.

In relation to climate change, WWF has been championing a global awareness campaign over the past 2 years entitled 'WWF Earth Hour', whereby individuals, businesses, companies, schools and iconic buildings are invited to turn off their lights for a period of one hour on a designated day as a means of demonstrating support for tackling climate change. The campaign originated in Sydney Australia in 2007 when 2.2 million people took part in the world's first Earth Hour and in 2008, WWF reported that 50 million people in 370 cities and towns, in more than 35 countries worldwide switched off their lights for Earth Hour. Iconic buildings that participated in the 2008 campaign included San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge, the Colosseum in Rome and the Sydney Opera House. WWF is hoping to build upon the success of the Earth Hour initiative during 2009 and has approached Belfast City Council regarding participation in this year's event scheduled for Saturday 28 March 2009 at 20:30.

WWF NI has highlighted that within Northern Ireland, the Assembly has agreed to be part of the UK Climate Bill, but has not yet committed to Northern Ireland-specific targets or plans for reducing emissions. It has indicated that participation in the 2009 Earth Hour will provide an opportunity to highlight that government agencies, including the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive must commit to clear climate change targets and actions.

WWF has also indicated that a demonstration of support for the 2009 Earth Hour will also help to inform the outcome of the United Nations Climate Change Conference, scheduled to be held in Copenhagen from 7 – 19 December 2009 where leaders from 192 countries will debate support for, and participation in a new binding global climate change agreement.

During the development of the Council's Corporate Plan 2008-2011, Elected Members were invited to highlight priority action areas to be addressed within the plan. Under the theme of environmental sustainability, Elected Members identified addressing climate change for the City as an environmental priority alongside managing the City's waste. Accordingly, Council subsequently adopted a key objective of assisting in reducing the City's impact on climate change. It is considered that participation in the Earth Hour, accompanied with appropriate promotion will serve to heighten public awareness of climate change issues across Belfast and begin to address this corporate commitment.

### Key Issues.

In preliminary discussions with the Council's Sustainable Development Manager and David Cartmill (Chair of the Sustainable Development Steering Group), Geoff Nuttall (Head of WWF Northern Ireland) has suggested that Belfast City Council could extinguish the lights at the City Hall on the 28 March 2009 commencing at 20:30 for a period of 1 hour. WWF NI anticipates that the recent positioning of Belfast as one of the top 10 cities to see in Europe will add to the impact that such a gesture might realise.

### **Key Issues Contd.**

WWF NI has been advised that although the City Hall will not be occupied on that date, any planned extinguishing of lights must have regard for all relevant health and safety and fire control provisions. It is noted that the City Hall grounds will close at 17:30 on 28 March and, therefore, members of the public will not be within the building curtilage between 20:30 and 21:30.

Elected Members will be aware of the situation regarding the continued location of the 'Big Wheel' adjacent to the City Hall. The attraction is scheduled to operate until 31 January but an extension has been sought for it to remain in place until August 2009. Discussions regarding Earth Hour have already taken place between the Council's Events Manager and World Tourist Attractions, operators of the facility. The Events Manager is confident of the company's full co-operation should an operating extension be granted and should the Council agree to participate in Earth Hour.

WWF NI has indicated that it will be issuing publicity materials and press briefings relating to the 2009 Earth Hour. The Sustainable Development Manager has informed WWF NI that Belfast City Council's Corporate Communications Unit will require oversight of any publicity materials to ensure that the Council is not associated with any inappropriate or contentious statements. Moreover, WWF has also been advised that Belfast City Council will be likely to issue its own press release should it decide to participate in the event.

### **Resource Implications.**

#### Financial.

Minimal – staff costs to oversee the lighting 'switch off' are estimated at £100 max and will be offset by the associated energy savings.

#### Human Resources.

None

#### Asset and other implications.

None

### **Recommendations.**

It is considered that the proposal affords the Council an opportunity to demonstrate civic leadership and to communicate its position regarding the need for cities to play an important role in addressing climate change. Initial discussions regarding the proposal have already taken place with Facilities Management, Events and Corporate Communications staff. Participation in the Earth Hour initiative is contingent on the completion of satisfactory operational arrangements and the preparation of a thorough communications briefing for Council spokespersons.

Accordingly, it is recommended that the Committee approve Belfast City Council's participation in the 2009 Earth Hour scheduled for 28 March 2009, commencing at 20:30 and finishing at 21:30.

### **Key to Abbreviations.**

WWF - World Wildlife Fund (also known as the World Wide Fund for Nature).

### **Documents attached.**

World Wildlife Fund 2009 Earth Hour Toolkit



8:30pm  
28 March 2009  
[www.wwf.org.uk/earthhour](http://www.wwf.org.uk/earthhour)



# Introducing WWF's Earth Hour

## Connecting the world to tackle climate change

WWF's Earth Hour 2009 has one major aim: *for people to unite* and make a bold statement to show they are concerned about climate change, and convincing the world's leaders that *it is possible to take positive action!*

It's time to show we care about the world – its natural environments, people and wildlife.



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## Lights out!

On Saturday 28 March 2009 at 8.30pm, we want a *billion people* across the world to turn off their lights for an hour – WWF's Earth Hour.

Homes, businesses and iconic landmarks in more than 1,000 cities will go dark, sending a truly dramatic message to world leaders – simply by switching lights off.

## WWF's global deal campaign

At the end of 2009, leaders from 192 countries will meet in Copenhagen to decide how we tackle climate change. This is our one chance to put in place the means to combat the biggest threat to people and wildlife.

WWF's Earth Hour marks the launch of our biggest campaign yet – to make sure we get the best possible deal in Copenhagen.



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## The world's largest mass participation event – ever!

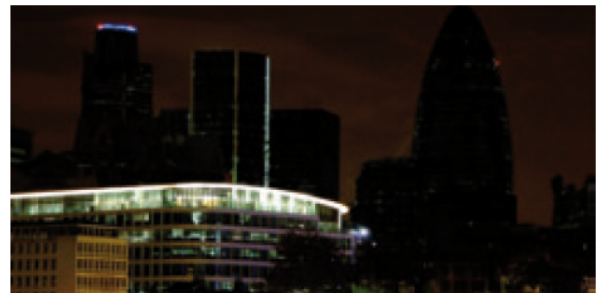
Earth Hour is a global WWF initiative.

In 2008, 50 million people across 35 countries switched off their lights for an hour. In 2009, WWF's Earth Hour aims to reach a billion people, making it the world's largest mass participation event ever!

## From the Golden Gate Bridge to the Sydney Opera House

In 2008, San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge, the Colosseum in Rome and the Sydney Opera House all went dark. And we hope more iconic buildings and landmarks will follow suit in 2009.

Thousands of companies will get involved, encouraging their staff and customers to join them. Political leaders will embrace the campaign, locally and at a national level. Schoolchildren across the globe will discuss WWF's Earth Hour in classrooms. And the event will be shared and discussed, with friends and strangers all around the world, on social media sites such as facebook, myspace, flickr and youtube.



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## Earth Hour needs YOU!

WWF's Earth Hour is an inspiring message of hope and action. Just imagine *how* powerful our voice will be if we all *act together*.

The numbers are growing every day. But our campaign needs *your* commitment. Just let us know *how* you want to get involved – whether it's *signing-up*, *organising an event* or *spreading the word*.

Join us at [www.wwf.org.uk/earthhour](http://www.wwf.org.uk/earthhour)

sign up and  
switch off



# WWF and climate change

WWF works to create solutions to the most serious environmental problems facing our planet, so that people and nature can thrive.

Climate change is the most serious problem we face. The consequences of changing weather patterns, warming seas and melting ice are devastating people and nature.

We're already seeing its impacts – from melting Arctic sea ice to flooding and droughts. So we must take urgent global action if we are to safeguard the natural world.



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## Staying below 2°C

The scientists agree. Average global temperatures must remain less than 2°C above pre-industrial levels, or we face irreversible and devastating changes in the planet's natural systems. WWF seeks cuts in emissions at the UK, EU and global level that will prevent this.

Although significant impacts will occur with average global temperature increases of less than 2°C, once we go above this threshold there will be increasingly severe consequences for people and nature, with the most vulnerable communities and species being hit first and hardest.

We also face rapidly increasing risks of passing a number of 'tipping points' – events which lead to sudden and increasingly large changes.

## Make your voice heard

In December 2009, governments will be gathering at the United Nations' climate summit in Copenhagen. It is vital that we get an effective international agreement – a global deal – at the summit, so let's make sure our voice is heard and show the world's leaders how much we care about climate change.



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## The world needs the right global deal

A key part of the global deal is to ensure that global greenhouse gas emissions peak and start on a downward path well before 2020, and fall steeply thereafter – by at least 80% by 2050. And the world's reliance on fossil fuels, the major cause of emissions of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) – the most prevalent greenhouse gas – must be drastically reduced.



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## Help us achieve a global deal

WWF's Earth Hour 2009 marks the launch of our global deal campaign. WWF will use our influence, resources and leadership to make sure the global deal is as effective as possible.

WWF wants you to join us and show world leaders that *you care* and want to make the global deal a reality, for the future of our planet.

## It is possible

Leading research – including WWF's 2007 *Climate Solutions* report – shows that it is still possible to avoid the worst impacts of climate change by measures such as rapid deployment of clean energy solutions (which would address some 65% of global emissions) and stopping tropical deforestation (addressing around 20% of emissions).

With climate programmes in many key countries – such as the EU, China, India, Japan, Canada, Russia, Brazil, Indonesia, Australia and the US – the WWF global network is well placed to work on this agenda.

More information at [wwf.org.uk/earthhour/globaldeal](http://wwf.org.uk/earthhour/globaldeal)

sign up and  
switch off



# Get involved in WWF's Earth Hour

## Show the world you care!

At 8.30pm on 28 March 2009, WWF wants a billion people to turn off their lights for one hour – WWF's Earth Hour – sending a powerful message from all around the globe, that we want action on climate change.

WWF wants as many people as possible to be involved in this historic global event. Here are just some of the ways you can join in.



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## Sign up for WWF's Earth Hour

Every single person who signs up to WWF's Earth Hour sends the message that they want action to tackle climate change!

If a billion people sign up, the event will create an overwhelming message which WWF will take to world leaders at the UN climate summit in Copenhagen.

So make *your* statement and add *your* voice to WWF's Earth Hour at [wwf.org.uk/earthhour](http://wwf.org.uk/earthhour)

You can register as an individual, organisation, school or business. And once registered, you will receive information on what you can do to become more involved in WWF's Earth Hour, including useful resources and tips.

## Spread the word

Every day, the number of people signing up to WWF's Earth Hour is growing. But if we want our voice to be heard we need to get as many people as possible to register.

So tell your friends and family, colleagues and strangers! Help us reach our one billion target and make this the world's largest mass participation event ever!

Just visit the website for more information. It couldn't be easier! Or if you're feeling adventurous, there are many other resources you can send, such as web banners, screensavers and posters.

## Be creative in the dark!

On 28 March 2009, towns, cities and businesses will turn off iconic buildings and landmarks. In 2008, Rome's Colosseum, the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, and the Opera House in Sydney all went dark for an hour, as did advertising billboards in New York's Times Square.

So think about how you can be creative in the dark.

Why not host a candlelit dinner party? We have lots of ideas to help you on your way – from menu suggestions and top party tips to fundraising ideas.

Or you could arrange an acoustic gig, organise a movie night or get your local to put on a pub quiz in the dark. In the run-up to WWF's Earth Hour, think about what you can do to spread the word.



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## Share your ideas

Let your friends know what you're planning for WWF's Earth Hour, and inspire the world with your Earth Hour photos and videos. There are Earth Hour communities on all of the main social sites on the web: Flickr, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter – the list goes on! We'll be linking to the best of your content from [earthhour.org](http://earthhour.org).

## Resources

Visit our resources page to download ideas, tips and a range of resources to help you promote Earth Hour. We've got posters, web banners and light switch covers. And don't forget to check out WWF's Earth Hour merchandise.

Visit [wwf.org.uk/earthhour](http://wwf.org.uk/earthhour)

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