



## Belfast City Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.
<b>Subject:</b>	Development of a Council led Climate Change Action Plan for Belfast and actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from road transport.
<b>Date:</b>	22 <sup>nd</sup> January 2010
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Mr William Francey, Director Health and Environmental Services (ext. 3260)
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### Relevant Background Information

The 2006 Stern Review concluded that the scientific evidence for climate change is now overwhelming and that climate change should be regarded as a serious global threat demanding urgent global action. Lord Stern's views have been echoed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) whose Fourth Assessment Report concluded that global atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide have increased markedly as a result of human activities and now far exceed pre-industrial values. Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) has been identified as the most important anthropogenic greenhouse gas, with global concentrations having increased from a pre-industrial value of around 280 ppm to 386 ppm in 2009. Moreover, the annual carbon dioxide concentration growth rate was larger during the last 10 years than it has been since the beginning of continuous direct atmospheric measurements.

Recognising the Stern Review's call for prompt action, the Council's 2008-2011 Corporate Plan has identified reducing the city's impact on climate change as a key priority within the strategic theme of 'Better care for Belfast's environment - a clean, green city now and for the future'. In terms of indicative actions supporting this key priority, Council committed to the adoption of a Declaration on Climate Change for the city and to the subsequent development of a prioritised action plan to address the causes and consequences of climate change within Belfast in collaboration with outside bodies and local communities. Accordingly, the Council formally subscribed to the Eurocities' Declaration on Climate Change at the Eurocities' Annual General Meeting in Stockholm on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

### Key Issues.

#### Development of a Climate Change Action Plan for Belfast.

Reflecting upon the principal sources of greenhouse gas emissions within Northern Ireland, the 2008 DoENI State of the Environment Report identifies carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) as the most prevalent greenhouse gas with 34% of emissions arising from energy generation, 33% from transport, 18% from residential sources, 9% from businesses, 4% from industry and agriculture and the remainder from the public sector.

In order to develop an effective prioritised Climate Change Action Plan for the city, it is suggested that the Council would have to demonstrate civic leadership by developing initially actions to minimise greenhouse gas emissions associated with its own activities. The Council would also have to identify how its Departments could contribute individually towards the Action Plan through their everyday business activities. Furthermore, the Council would also need to consider how its services and functions could be adapted to account for the predicted future impacts of climate change within Northern Ireland.

The Climate Change Action Plan would also have to include a range of measures to reduce emissions across Belfast associated with energy generation, transport and residential premises and businesses, etc. Developing such actions would require the Council to foster partner working with a range of government Departments including, for example, those with responsibility for the environment, transportation, energy and housing. It would also be important to involve key representatives from industry, education establishments and communities from across the city in the development of the Action Plan.

The Council's anticipated role in the development of a Climate Change Action Plan would be to act initially as a convening body and to function then as a co-ordinating and managing organisation for its implementation and monitoring.

## **Key Issues.**

### **Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from road transport through the introduction of zero emission vehicles.**

In order to begin to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from road transport, Government has recently announced the UK Strategy for Ultra Low Carbon Vehicles. The Strategy provides an overview of government's activities for the next 5 years in terms of research, demonstration and incentives for consumers and industry. The Strategy also includes a reference to £250m of consumer incentives designed to stimulate the take up of electric and plug-in-hybrid vehicles, scheduled to become commercially available across the UK from 2011 onwards.

Government has recognised however, that an electric vehicle charging infrastructure framework will have to be developed in advance of the introduction of fiscal incentives for consumers. This is to be achieved via the Department for Transport (DfT) Office for Low Emission Vehicles 'Plugged-In Places Infrastructure Framework'. Launched on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2009, the Plugged-In Places Infrastructure Framework is designed to support the creation of a critical mass of vehicle recharging infrastructure in 3-6 lead cities or regions of the United Kingdom. The infrastructure will help to support the early market for plug in rechargeable zero emission electric vehicles (ZEV) that government wishes to develop across the UK as a means of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving ambient air quality.

The Office for Low Emission Vehicles has stated that seed funding of up to £30 million will be made available to consortia in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland comprised of local authorities, businesses, electricity distributors and suppliers and other organisations like the Regional Development Agencies. This funding will support installation of various types of recharging infrastructure both on street and in local authority, work, retail and leisure facility car parks. Funding will be available between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 when applicants can apply for grants of up to 50% of eligible costs. Indicatively, the £30 million funding will be spread equally over the three-year period.

The Council's Sustainable Development Manager has undertaken preliminary informal discussions with the DoENI Climate and Waste Division during which DoENI indicated that it wishes to lead the development of a recharging infrastructure funding bid for the Belfast area. DoENI acknowledges that a successful funding bid will require partner working with bodies such as the Council, Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) and Electricity Supply Board (ESB), as well as the involvement of a range of commercial partners. DoENI has indicated that the Department for Regional Development and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment are also, in principle, in favour of developing a Northern Ireland bid for funding.

At its meeting of 21<sup>st</sup> August 2009, the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee recommended that research be undertaken to enable the development of a detailed carbon abatement strategy for the Council's vehicle fleet. It is considered that the development of electric vehicle recharging infrastructure across Belfast would assist the Council to introduce greater numbers of zero emission vehicles (ZEV) across its vehicle fleet, thereby cutting both greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution. Green electricity generated at the Council's North Foreshore site would constitute a suitable energy source for charging electric vehicles.

DoENI has indicated that it wishes to convene a working group early in 2010 in order to develop a recharging infrastructure funding bid for the Belfast area. It has requested that Council considers participating in the development of the bid.

## **Resource Implications.**

### Financial.

There are no immediate financial implications for the Council associated with the development of a prioritised Climate Change Action Plan for the city.

Similarly, there are no immediate financial implications for the Council associated with participating in a DoENI led working group to develop a Belfast electric vehicle infrastructure funding bid. Members are advised, however, that government funding will meet up to 50% of eligible costs and consequently, partner organisations may be invited to provide financial support to the bid. A further detailed report will be provided to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee should a financial contribution be sought from the Council.

**Resource Implications contd.**Human Resources.

It is proposed that the Director of Health and Environmental Services, together with the Council's Sustainable Development Steering Group and Sustainable Development Manager, will lead the development of a Climate Change Action Plan for the city. All Council departments will, however, need to identify how they can contribute individually towards the Action Plan through their everyday business activities. Departments will also be encouraged to consider how their services and functions can be adapted to account for the predicted future impacts of climate change within Northern Ireland.

It is further proposed that the Council's Sustainable Development Manager will also represent the Council on the DoENI led working group to develop a Belfast electric vehicle infrastructure funding bid.

Asset and Other Implications.

N/A

**Recommendations.**

It is recommended that the Council convenes a cross-sectoral working group in order to commence the development of a prioritised Climate Change Action Plan for Belfast.

The Committee is also recommended to agree that the Council's Sustainable Development Manager represents the Council on the DoENI led working group to develop a Belfast electric vehicle infrastructure funding bid.

**Key to Abbreviations.**

N/A

**Documents Attached.**

N/A

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