



Subject:	Motion: Climate Change Act – Further Response from the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Date:	20th November, 2020
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, City Solicitor and Director of Legal and Civic Services
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	To consider a further response from the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in relation to a motion on a Climate Change Act.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to note the response.
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	The Committee will recall that the Council, at its meeting on 1st September, passed the following motion:

“This Council welcomes the environmental commitments in the New Decade New Approach Deal. This council is deeply concerned that the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs did not support an Assembly Motion to develop a Climate Change Act for Northern Ireland.

This Council notes that Northern Ireland has fallen behind other parts of the UK in progressing reduction of emissions. A Climate Change Act can help us realise the ambition of the Belfast Agenda to create an environmentally sustainable City. This Council calls on the Minister to immediately prioritise the development of a Climate Change Act with legally binding and ambitious sectoral emission-reduction targets and a just transition to protect jobs through upskilling in less carbon intensive sectors.”

- 3.2 A response was subsequently received from Minister Poots and was presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 23rd October.
- 3.3 In his response, the Minister had stated that he had written to the independent expert on UK Climate Change Committee (CCC) for advice on what would be Northern Ireland’s equitable contribution to the UK’s net zero emissions target, to ensure that its greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets were credible and evidence-based.
- 3.4 He had stated further that, unfortunately, the CCC was not in a position to respond to his request until after it had provided advice on the UK’s sixth carbon budget, which would be published in December, 2020.
- 3.5 In the interim, his officials had provided him with proposals on an options appraisal for a Climate Change Bill in Northern Ireland. The Minister would consider those options along with the advice provided from the CCC and would present his findings to the Northern Ireland Executive to agree a way forward.
- 3.6 The Committee, at its meeting on 23rd October, noted the Minister’s response and agreed that a further letter be forwarded to him seeking an update on the work which was being undertaken by his Department to address increasing carbon emission levels, including the mechanisms for monitoring, reporting and enforcement, the role of the Chief Inspector of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency in this work, and any assessment of carbon emissions which had been undertaken at a local level.
- 3.7 A response to that letter has now been received from the Minister, a copy of which is attached.
- 3.8 The Minister begins by pointing out that reducing carbon emissions requires a collective approach from Government and society and that it is the responsibility of Northern Ireland Departments to take action to reduce emissions in those areas under their control. He explains that the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs is responsible for emissions in the Agriculture, Land Use and Land Use Change and Forestry and Waste sectors and that it is taking forward or supporting a number of programmes of work which will directly contribute towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Several examples of these programmes are provided within the response.
- 3.9 The Minister then goes on to review the latest greenhouse gas emission figures for Northern Ireland and for its proportion of total UK emissions, both overall and in relation to the agriculture sector and points out that that sector is recognised by the CCC as being one of the most difficult ones in which to achieve reductions.

3.10	<p>Minister Poots then outlines the role of the Chief Inspector of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and concludes by referring to the Pollution Prevention and Control (Industrial Emissions) Regulations and the EU Emissions Trading Scheme in the context of the monitoring and reporting of emissions.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
4.0	Document Attached
	Copy of response from the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs