



CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY FRAMEWORK IN NI

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14 MAY 2009

The purpose of this note, prepared for the Committee for the Environment, is to identify the current policy frameworks in the NI Executive and its Departments to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The NI Sustainable Development Strategy¹ was published by the SoS in May 2006. It was intended to represent *'our first steps in establishing the focus for tackling the challenges ahead toward our long term objective of securing a better future for the present generation and protecting the future for generations to come'*.

The strategy dealt with 6 main themes/policy areas as outlined below:

Sustainable consumption and production

Vision: NI as a one planet economy.

Strategic objectives:

- To become more resource efficient.
- To make the NI public sector a UK regional leader in sustainable procurement.
- To minimise the unsustainable impacts of consumption.

Natural resource protection and environmental enhancement

Vision: NI has a diverse, healthy and resilient natural environment.

Strategic objectives:

- To conserve our landscape and manage it in a more sustainable way.
- To protect and enhance the freshwater and marine environment.
- To improve our air quality.
- To conserve, protect, enhance and sustainably re-use our historic environment.

¹ <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/sustain-develop.pdf>

- To protect and enhance biodiversity.

Sustainable communities

Vision: NI is built around a network of sustainable communities encompassing urban and rural areas, where existing settlements and any new developments are designed to be more sustainable.

Strategic objectives:

- To increase the economic well-being of the people of NI.
- To create an attractive, high quality environment where people feel safe and which provides the conditions for health and social well-being.
- To promote the development of community engagement, civic leadership and responsible citizenship.

Climate change and energy

Vision: NI adapts to the impacts of climate change and operates as a highly energy efficient society using a sustainable energy system.

Strategic objectives:

- To reduce greenhouse gas emissions, principally by promoting energy efficiency and the use of renewables.
- To establish NI as a world class exemplar in the development and use of renewable energy.
- To plan and prepare for climate change impacts in NI.

Learning and communication for sustainable development

Vision: An informed society, committed to the co-ordinated pursuit of sustainability.

Strategic objectives:

- To provide access for all citizens to gain sustainable development skills and knowledge.
- To bring about the behavioural changes necessary to progress towards a sustainable society.

Governance and sustainable development

Vision: Good governance enjoys a strong relationship with its social partners and supports a thriving, innovative and sustainable business community.

Strategic objectives:

- To mainstream sustainable development across Government.

- To strengthen the network of accountability for governance for sustainable development.

PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT

The Programme for Government (PfG)² was published by OFMDFM, on behalf of the Executive, in May 2007. It was intended to set out '*our plans and priorities for 2008-2011 as well as some of our longer term aspirations and intentions*'.

In its **foreword** and **introduction**, the PfG states that:

- We will work together to address the key challenges we face and build a shared and better, and more sustainable future for all our people.
- We aim to build a prosperous, fair and inclusive society, supported by a vibrant and dynamic economy and a rich and sustainable environmental heritage.

In its **strategic priorities**, the PfG states that:

- Our over-arching aim is to build a peaceful, fair and prosperous society in NI, with respect for the rule of law and where everyone can enjoy a better quality of life now and in years to come.
- We must also do this in ways that protect and enhance the physical and natural environment and use resources as efficiently and sustainably as possible.
- It is also imperative that economic growth and wealth creation are taken forward in a manner which is fair and sustainable if we are to meet the needs of today, as well as those of future generations.

Sustainability is 1 of 2 **cross-cutting themes** in the PfG, which states that:

.....building a sustainable future will be a key requirement for our economic, social and environmental policies and programmes. We will ensure that the principles of sustainability.....underpin our approach to all our activities. As an Executive, we will demonstrate our commitment to sustainability through the decisions and actions that we take and will work in partnership with others outside government to promote a wider understanding and knowledge of the issue.

The PfG **priorities** provide a framework to address the key social, economic and environmental challenges we face. The following priorities are relevant to climate change:

- Priority: **Growing a dynamic, innovative economy**. The PfG states that this will require investment in our infrastructure, driving forward social transformation and environmental improvement.
- Priority: **Protect and enhance our environment and natural resources**. The PfG states that:

² <http://www.pfgbudgetni.gov.uk/index/programme-for-government-document.htm>

- There are recognised links between a healthy environment, a thriving economy and a high quality of life.
 - Action is needed to protect and enhance our environment for future generations.
 - It is clear that climate change is one of the most serious problems facing the world. While we recognise that it requires action internationally, we are determined to play our part in addressing this challenge by reducing our impact on climate change.
 - At a local level, therefore, action is needed to protect our built heritage, our landscape and marine environment and to reduce our impact on climate change.
 - This Executive recognises the importance of Sustainable Development, encompassing economic, social and environmental considerations.
- Priority: **Invest to build our infrastructure.** The PfG states that:
 - Considerable investment is needed in our infrastructure. Over recent decades, such investment has not been given the required priority and we now have major deficiencies in key areas.
 - This limits our capacity for further fair economic and social development and undermines our ability to safeguard our environment and comply with key EU Directives.

The **Public Service Agreements** in the PfG are the detailed directions and guidance given to Departments to achieve their desired outcomes. Not all PSAs have obvious implications for climate change, but many have at least indirect influence.

Note that it might be worth considering how PSAs can also bring unintended negative outcomes, and if they represent the best way to achieve intended positive outcomes. Thus, when scrutinising the PSAs, consideration could be given to sectoral contributions to greenhouse gas emissions and the direction/guidance outlined above in the Sustainable Development Strategy and PfG. For example:

- In productivity growth (PSA 1), promoting a competitive and outward looking economy brings obvious financial and social benefits in employment, but if NI exports goods to global markets while importing similar goods for local consumption then this might involve an unnecessary carbon cost to the economy. If, however, it involved research, development, manufacturing and export of 'green technologies', it could represent a 'win-win' situation.
- In tourism (PSA 5), enhancing NI's tourism infrastructure also brings obvious financial and social benefits in employment, but if NI achieves that through more high-carbon infrastructure (such as more/bigger airports) then this might involve an unnecessary carbon cost to the economy, social costs to the population and degradation of the very qualities which attracted tourists in the first place. If, however, it involved development of 'green tourism', it could represent a 'win-win' situation.

- In making peoples' lives better (PSA 7), reducing levels of fuel poverty by implementing energy efficiency measures directly benefits those living in fuel poverty while also reducing the climate change implications of energy inefficient housing.
- In improving the transport infrastructure (PSA 13), improving the strategic road network brings obvious benefits for business and social mobility, at least in the short term, but if it does so by encouraging more cars onto the roads it might just exacerbate problems of carbon emissions, pollution and congestion while diverting possible funds from lower-carbon alternatives. If, however, those roads were improved while increasing priority for public transport or car-sharing, for example, it could represent a 'win-win' situation.

The PSAs with relevance to climate change are outlined below:

PSA 1: **Productivity growth**

- Objective 1: Promote a competitive and outward looking economy. **(DETI)**
- Objective 3: Ensure a modern sustainable economic infrastructure to support business. **(DETI)**
- Objective 7: Improve the Strategic Road Network by the advancement/ completion of a range of major works schemes. **(DRD)**

PSA 3: **Increasing employment**

- Objective 4: Promote business growth. **(DETI)**

PSA 4: **Supporting rural businesses**

- Objective 1: Support the development of rural businesses. **(DARD)**
- Objective 3: Support environmentally sustainable land management. **(DARD/DoE)**

PSA 5: **Tourism**

- Objective 1: Enhance NI's tourism infrastructure. **(DETI/DCAL)**
- Objective 2: Promote the growth of the tourism sector. **(DETI)**

PSA 7: **Making peoples' lives better**

- Objective 4: Reduce levels of fuel poverty. **(DSD)**

PSA 11: **Driving investment and sustainable development**

- Objective 2: Regenerate former military sites to promote economic growth and for the benefit of local communities. **(OFMDFM/DSD)**
- Objective 3: Coordinate delivery of the Sustainable Development Strategy. **(OFMDFM)**

- Objective 4: Support the wider Public Sector in taking account of sustainable development principles when procuring works, supplies and services. **(OFMDFM/DFP)**

PSA 12: Housing, urban regeneration and community development

- Objective 1: Provide access to decent, affordable and energy efficient housing. **(DSD)**
- Objective 2: Regenerate disadvantaged urban areas. **(DSD/DE/DHSSPS/DEL/DETI/OFMDFM)**
- Objective 3: Promote viable and vital towns and city centres, helping to create shared spaces that are accessible to all and where people can live, work and socialise. **(DSD/DCAL)**
- Objective 5: Promote strong, integrated sustainable communities where people want to live, work and socialise. **(DSD)**

PSA 13: Improving the transport infrastructure

- Objective 1: Improve the Strategic Road Network by the advancement/ completion of a range of major works schemes. **(DRD)**
- Objective 2: Maintain the road infrastructure to keep it safe, effective and reliable through resurfacing, surface dressing and the timely repair of road defects. **(DRD)**
- Objective 3: Promote increase in usage of public transport. **(DRD)**

PSA 14: Promoting safer roads

- Objective 2: Contribute to safer roads, using a range of initiatives, including road safety engineering, traffic calming and further enhancement of the pedestrian and cycling network. **(DRD)**

PSA 15: Water and sewerage infrastructure

- Objective 3: Acceptable levels of compliance with EU requirements and other relevant standards and targets by 2010. **(DRD)**

PSA 17: Rural infrastructure

- Objective 1: Improve rural infrastructure. **(DARD)**

PSA 22: Protecting our environment and reducing our carbon footprint

- Objective 1: Take forward strategic action to improve air quality and reduce our carbon footprint. **(DoE/DETI/DSD)**
- Objective 2: Promote energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy. **(DETI)**

- Objective 3: Improve the quality and ecological status of the water environment. **(DoE/DCAL/DARD)**
- Objective 4: Take forward action to improve air quality. **(DoE/DHSSPS/DETI)**
- Objective 5: Promote waste management and reduce the annual tonnage of controlled waste illegally disposed. **(DoE)**
- Objective 7: Conserve NI's bio-diversity. **(DoE)**
- Objective 8: Deliver a modern effective planning system which meets the needs of the whole community and the economy while protecting the environment. **(DoE)**

PSA 23: **Managing the risk of flooding from rivers and seas**

- Objective 1: Deliver sustainable flood risk management policies to meet society's social, environmental and economic needs. **(DARD)**
- Objective 2: Implement the requirements of the European Directive for the assessment and management of flood risks. **(DARD)**
- Objective 3: Reduce the number of properties at risk of flooding from rivers and the sea. **(DARD)**
- Objective 4: Maintain flood defence and drainage infrastructure in a satisfactory condition. **(DARD)**

DEPARTMENTAL PRIORITIES

Most, if not all, Departments have some policies on climate change. It can be argued, however, that these policies will have little positive influence on climate change unless they are reflected in the core activities of the Department.

The top-level direction statements of the Executive Departments are outlined below:

OFMDFM³

Purpose: to set a central overarching vision for government

Strategic objectives:

- Supporting Ministers and the institutions of government.
- Building a PfG and modernising government programme.
- Promoting better community relations, a culture of equality and rights.
- Targeting social need and promoting social inclusion.

³ <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/about-ofmdfm/about-the-department.htm>

DARD⁴

Vision: a thriving and sustainable rural community and environment in NI.

Strategic goals:

- To improve performance in the market place.
- To strengthen the social and economic infrastructure of rural areas.
- To enhance animal, fish and plant health and welfare.
- To develop a more sustainable environment.

DCAL⁵

Vision: a confident, creative, informed and vibrant community.

Goals:

- Enable as many people as possible to experience and appreciate the excellence of our cultural assets.
- Promote creativity and innovation and lifelong learning.
- Encourage respect for and celebration of diversity.
- Ensure the sustainable management of our cultural infrastructure.
- Develop and deliver quality cultural products and services.
- Reform and modernise our service delivery.

DE⁶

Vision: to educate and develop the young people of NI to the highest possible standards, providing equality of access to all.

Strategic aims:

- Valuing education.
- Fulfilling potential.
- Promoting equality and inclusion.
- Resourcing education.

⁴ <http://www.dardni.gov.uk/dard-strategic-plan-2006-2011.pdf>

⁵ http://www.dcalni.gov.uk/about_us.htm

⁶ http://www.deni.gov.uk/25-22_nov_strategic_framework_pyramid.pdf

DEL⁷

Aim: to promote learning and skills, to prepare people for work and to support the economy.

Objectives:

- To promote economic, social and personal development through high quality learning, research and skills training.
- To help people into employment and promote good employment practices.

DETI⁸

Goal: to grow a dynamic, innovative economy.

Priorities:

- Productivity Growth - improve manufacturing/private services productivity.
- Increasing Employment - raising employment levels.
- Tourism - develop the tourism sector.

DOE⁹

Aim: to improve the quality of life for everyone in NI through promotion of sustainable development principles in all the activities of government and wider society, reduction of road traffic casualties and promotion of efficient and effective local government.

Objectives:

- To protect, conserve and enhance the natural environment and built heritage.
- To improve the quality of life of the people of NI by planning and managing development in ways which are sustainable and which contribute to creating a better environment.
- To reduce road casualties.
- To support a system of Local Government which meets the needs of residents and ratepayers.

DFP¹⁰

Vision: Leading reform, delivering value and promoting sustainability

Departmental Objectives:

⁷ <http://www.delni.gov.uk/index/about-the-dept.htm>

⁸ <http://www.detini.gov.uk/cgi-bin/downutildoc?id=2242>

⁹ http://www.doeni.gov.uk/index/about_us.htm

¹⁰ <http://www.dfpni.gov.uk/index/about-us/about-dfp.htm>

- To prioritise the use of resources available to NI, ensure that these are used efficiently and secure the reform and modernisation of public services.
- To deliver efficient and cost effective services to the public in the Department's areas of executive responsibility.

DHSSPS¹¹

Mission: to improve the health and social well-being of the people of NI.

Main responsibilities:

- Health and social care, which includes policy and legislation for hospitals, family practitioner services and community health and personal social services.
- Public health, which covers policy, legislation and administrative action to promote and protect the health and well-being of the population.
- Public safety, which covers policy and legislation for fire and rescue services.

DRD¹²

Vision: a region with modern, safe and sustainable roads, transport and water services which meet the public need.

Key objectives:

- Supporting the economy by maintaining and developing safe and sustainable transportation networks; promoting airport and harbour services.
- Addressing regional imbalance in infrastructure; and shaping the long-term future of the region.
- Contributing to community health and well-being and protection of the environment by maintaining and developing the policy and regulatory environment for sustainable, high quality water and sewerage services.

DSD¹³

Mission: together, tackling disadvantage, building communities.

Strategic priorities:

- To invest in housing and address the housing crisis.
- To build communities, tackle disadvantage and encourage social responsibility.
- To create vibrant cities, towns and urban areas.

¹¹ http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/about_dept.htm

¹² <http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/aboutus.htm>

¹³ http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/about_dsd