

WRITTEN MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

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Environment

NORTHERN IRELAND CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION PROGRAMME

Published at 12.00 noon on Thursday 30 January 2014

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): I have today laid before the Assembly the first Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme (Adaptation Programme).

There is no doubt that climate change represents the biggest environmental, economic and social challenge of the 21st century. The threat of global warming, the impact on the polar ice caps, sea level rises, increases in the frequency of extreme weather events, cyclones, floods, wildfires can all have extremely serious consequences for the environment, the economy and society.

These are global issues but they can and will continue to have significant local impacts. We have already experienced first hand extreme weather in the form of heavier snowfalls, more intense rainfall and the associated flooding events of recent years. Many of us as individuals and as part of the wider community have felt the severe and harsh consequences of these events.

As part of our obligations under the UK Climate Change Act 2008 relevant Northern Ireland Departments are required to lay programmes before the Northern Ireland Assembly setting out objectives, proposals, policies and associated timescales to address the risks and opportunities identified in the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA). The CCRA, which was published in 2012, brought together the best available evidence to identify the main risks and opportunities related to climate change. This Adaptation Programme is our response to the findings in the CCRA for Northern Ireland.

The Adaptation Programme sets out our vision to build '*A resilient Northern Ireland which will take timely and well-informed decisions that are responsive to the key risks and opportunities presented by climate change*'.

By working in partnership across Government and with relevant stakeholders, raising awareness of the likely effects of climate change, promoting and supporting the enhancement of scientific evidence, fulfilling the statutory duties and engaging with other administrations we have started the process towards achieving this vision.

This first 5-year Adaptation Programme sets out our strategic direction and objectives in preparing Northern Ireland for the effects of climate change. It identifies the initial four primary areas for action, within which progress on the application of the objectives and adaptation principles will be pursued. These are Flooding; Water; Natural Environment; and Agriculture & Forestry. The Programme focuses on integrating climate change adaptation into relevant key policy areas across Government, developing the climate change adaptation evidence base and communicating and promoting adaptation messages through our stakeholders.

The Adaptation Programme is the start of an ongoing climate adaptation process. It provides a proportionate and flexible cross-departmental response to the priority risks and opportunities identified

for Northern Ireland. It will also act as a catalyst for everyone in Northern Ireland to rise to the challenge of adapting to our changing climate. I am confident that we will rise to this challenge, and in doing so boost our resilience to a changing climate, improve the adaptive capacity and support our environment, society, and economy now and for future generations.