



Department for the
Economy
www.economy-ni.gov.uk

ECONOMIC RECOVERY ACTION PLAN

REBUILDING A STRONGER ECONOMY

**WE ALL
MUST DO IT
TO GET
THROUGH IT**



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Ministerial Foreword

A little over a year ago I accepted the role of Minister for the Economy in the newly formed Northern Ireland Executive. I took up the post with a clear vision of what I wanted to achieve and how I wanted to transform our economy. I wanted to deliver for the people of Northern Ireland by creating jobs, developing skills and by helping our business community achieve their goals.

A few short weeks after my appointment the first case of coronavirus was diagnosed in Northern Ireland. As we began to understand the scale of the pandemic, we set aside our plans and began working to protect our people and our economy as best we could in the face of the unknown.

The people of Northern Ireland have been remarkable. It has been hard, the effects of the virus have touched all of our lives, many have lost loved ones and the restrictions have affected the mental health of many. Yet as the vaccine

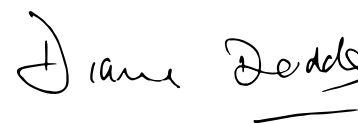
rollout gathers pace there is reason to be optimistic and reason to be hopeful once again.

I believe that the time is now right to return to our plans and to build a pathway to economic recovery. We must use this point in our history to build a more competitive, inclusive and greener economy. This means tackling the immediate and unfolding effects of Covid that are causing job losses, business closures and stifled demand, and by finding permanent and complete solutions to the frictions in the UK internal market caused by the implementation of the Protocol. It also needs us to be ambitious and creative about our future, embracing new thinking, and recognising that the old norms will not necessarily help us rebuild our economy.

This recovery plan sets out a range of decisive actions to kick-start economic recovery over the next 12 to 18 months. These first steps will be quickly followed

by a bold and highly ambitious vision which captures the bustling energy in our innovation ecosystem, and seizes the chance to make a generational change in our economy. Successful delivery of this plan will require additional investment at a time when the public expenditure landscape is extremely difficult, but we must prioritise our economic recovery. The delivery of this plan must also be flexible and respond to the economic events that unfold during this timeframe.

Recovery will be challenging but above all we must ensure that Northern Ireland is once again open for business, open to investors and open to visitors.



Diane Dodds MLA
Minister for the Economy



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Dr Bryan Keating, Chair of the Department’s Strategic Advisory Forum, said:

The Department’s Economic Recovery Plan is a significant piece of work which, I believe, will allow businesses to plan for the future. I also can see how the plan, when successfully executed, will allow young people a welcomed opportunity to join the workforce and older employees or those currently out of work to either enhance their careers or re-start them.

”

“

Angela McGowan, Director of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) Northern Ireland, said:

The CBI welcomes the Department for the Economy’s Recovery Action Plan. The emphasis on investing in skills, creating employment opportunities and stimulating investment and demand are strongly aligned with the CBI’s build-back-better proposals for a jobs-rich economic recovery.

”

“

Dr Joanne Stuart, CEO of the NI Tourism Alliance (NITA), said:

NITA welcomes the Department’s Recovery Action Plan which recognises the importance of the tourism and travel industry as a key economic driver for regional economic recovery. The actions outlined within the report are critical to supporting the survival and rebuilding of the tourism industry and NITA look forward to continued engagement with the Minister through the Tourism Recovery Steering Group on the development of a sustainable Tourism Strategy.

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Kevin Holland, Chief Executive of Invest Northern Ireland, said:

The Department's Recovery Action Plan sets out a wider ambition to create longer term economic prosperity. It will contribute to the trade, investment and jobs that will support the rebalancing of our economy and underpin the building of a shared future for all. We are very happy to see innovation front and centre in driving this ambition.

We are currently building detailed delivery plans under eight economic drivers aligned to the Department's plan. These plans can impact quickly, generate public economic success and build for the future.



John McGrillen, CEO of Tourism NI, said:

I welcome the publication of this action plan as we continue to offer support towards the recovery of our tourism industry in partnership with the Department for the Economy. Many businesses have been severely impacted by the pandemic, but we have also witnessed huge resilience and a determination to adapt and survive.

The recovery plan includes the development of a sustainable, regenerative Tourism Strategy focusing on economic growth, social wellbeing and the protection of the environment. The plan will also allow us to develop and deliver industry-wide training to the tourism sector, as well as campaigns and additional funding to provide the skills and capabilities to improve and grow product offerings and business models.



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Economic Context

The coronavirus pandemic has had a profound impact on the global economy, creating unprecedented economic challenges. This has significantly reduced market opportunities for Northern Ireland (NI) businesses to trade domestically and export. As a direct result of the pandemic it is estimated that economic output fell by around 25% at the height of lockdown in spring 2020.

Output levels improved markedly over the summer of 2020 as the NI Executive lifted many restrictions. However, while the rebound was strong, the economy as a whole had not fully reverted back to pre-pandemic levels before rising infections meant new restrictions, beginning mid-October 2020.

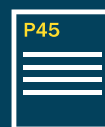
The trading restrictions have had a severe impact on the NI labour market. In total, nearly 250,000 NI workers have been placed on furlough at some point.

A further 78,000 workers have availed of the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). Even with these unprecedented job support schemes in place, unemployment increased

dramatically, with the January 2021 claimant count, at 56,700, being around twice that observed in the pre-pandemic months.



95,000
employees
currently
furloughed



5,150
confirmed
redundancies
in 2020



52,000
self-employed
claimed the third
SEISS grant



Exports
decreased 13.5%
over the year
to September 2020



Claimant count
increased **90%**
between March
and January 2021



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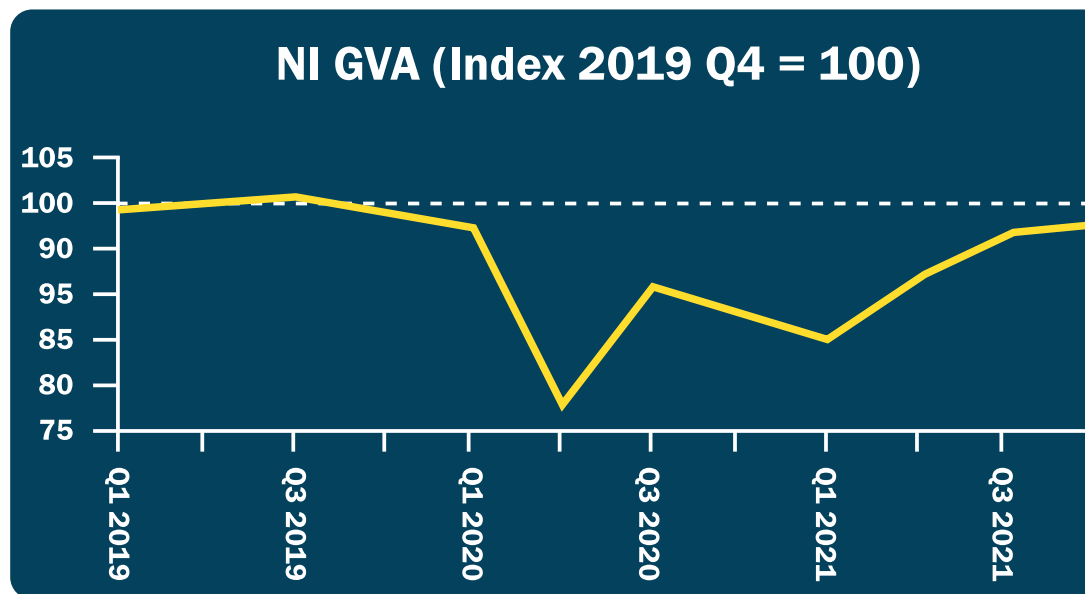


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As we look forward, independent forecasters believe that 2021 overall will be a year of recovery in the Northern Ireland economy, with growth of around 4% to 6%. The roll-out of the coronavirus vaccine programme will allow restrictions to be gradually eased as we move through the year. Similar to what was experienced during the third Quarter of 2020 (Q3 2020), we may see a strong increase in activity as businesses reopen and confidence returns. At the same time unemployment may increase in the short-term, and there are significant risks if recovery of output and jobs is not swift and sustained.

While there are real reasons to look towards the future with optimism. In the short and medium term the economic context remains stark. It is within this context of a recession like no other that this Recovery Action Plan is positioned.

Forecast Summary %		
	2020	2021
UK GDP growth	-10.7	4.2
NI GVA growth	-11.0	4.0
NI consumer spending growth	-14.0	4.5
NI employee jobs growth	-0.3	-3.0
NI unemployment rate	3.5	6.7
UK CPI inflation rate	0.9	1.4



Source: Oxford Economics, Danske Bank Analysis



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Economic Recovery Action Plan

“Rebuilding a Stronger Economy” set the priorities for a more competitive, inclusive and greener economy. This Recovery Action Plan defines the immediate actions required to deliver against that agenda; and to protect and stabilise employment.

A crucial part of rebuilding will be the process of reshaping our economy through government intervention, assisting people and businesses to adjust to the changing economic fundamentals caused by Covid-19 and EU Exit to maximise future growth potential. This will involve targeted interventions to encourage external growth in internationally focussed high-value added sectors where NI has the ability to exploit competitive advantage. It is in these sectors that our future economic prosperity lies.

As outlined in “Rebuilding a Stronger Economy”, the challenge is to deliver decisive interventions that will contribute to:

- Building a higher skilled and agile workforce;
- Pursuing and securing better jobs; and, ultimately
- Producing a more regionally balanced economy.

In providing this support we look towards the wider economic outlook, addressing key structural weaknesses so that we can avail of economic opportunities in global markets, prospering through a higher skills base, higher productivity and enhanced competitiveness. The policy responses must include opportunities for all our people to ensure economic recovery is inclusive. This will involve supporting a range of jobs to reflect the volume of jobs lost and the skills of those affected, including those in the hardest hit sectors e.g. tourism, retail and hospitality. To do this, we will build on the success of our existing employment support programmes, further adapting and modifying these to address the current challenges we face and ensure these meet future business needs.

This plan presents, at a high level, a significant amount of activity which is being taken forward across the Department and its delivery partners. It is underpinned and informed by work being taken forward by groups such as the Tourism Recovery Steering Group and the Skills Strategy Advisory Group. It also reflects a number of initiatives which, while already in train, will make a significant contribution to our economic recovery. A key example is the City and Growth Deals programme, which will see close to £1.5 billion of investment across NI providing a tremendous springboard for the recovery plan. Through continued collaboration with councils, industry and academia, we can use the planned investments to accelerate our recovery.

It is important to register at the outset that many of the actions set out within this plan are subject to funding availability and would be subject to the normal approval process including tests for value for money and meeting any EU State Aid / UK subsidy control requirements.



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Where appropriate, the actions will be designed to target the high potential areas identified within “Rebuilding a Stronger Economy”. This will ensure that, working with our partners, the limited resources available will be focused where we have the greatest opportunity to drive innovation and exports, develop the skills and capability of our workforce and secure sustainable, better jobs.

This Action Plan sets out what is possible if the resources are made available. **Successful delivery of this action plan will require an additional £290m in 2021 - 22 (including the cost of delivery the High Street Stimulus Scheme).** Recovery will not be completed in one year alone, and many of the actions set out within this plan will require funding beyond 2021 - 22.



R&D and Innovation
£20m



Highly Skilled & Agile Workforce
£50m



Greener Economy
£20m



Investment, Trade & Exports
£200m



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The recovery actions have been designed against the backdrop of an ongoing health and economic crisis. At the time of writing, restrictions remain in place on the day to day operation of many businesses across NI, and the Department, and wider Executive, continues to provide support to businesses and individuals impacted by these restrictions. It is inevitable that there will be an overlap between this initial response phase and the foundations we need to build for recovery. However, given the dynamic nature of this crisis, the timing of recovery interventions will be under constant review and the actions will need to be agile to respond to emerging economic events.

Economic recovery can only be delivered through collaboration and partnership. During the development of this Action Plan the Department has considered the valuable input of key stakeholders and delivery partners. However we recognise more engagement is required and this document is intended to progress these conversations.

The purpose of this document is therefore to start a wider and more detailed conversation regarding our recovery journey, to test with stakeholders if the steps laid out in this document are the right ones and, acknowledging the very real financial constraints we face in 2021 - 22 and beyond, seek views on the relative priorities of the actions. This will enable the Department to provide a comprehensive input into the wider Executive framework for recovery.

As we pivot into economic recovery it is important that the steps we take today not only tackle the disruption we are already experiencing and impacts that we expect to see ahead of us, but are also aligned to the bold actions we must take to seize the opportunity for a longer term generational change in our economy. Getting to this bold and highly ambitious vision – which we will publish shortly – will only be possible if we first overcome the real damage and disruption to lives and livelihoods.



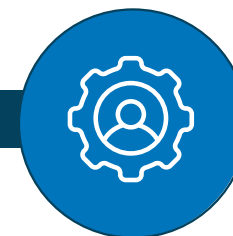
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Supporting a Highly Skilled & Agile Workforce

Covid-19, and the measures required to reduce its transmission, is having a significant impact on the NI labour market. At the same time, EU Exit is introducing changes to fundamentals such as migration and trade. We are focused on working with industry and our delivery partners to respond to these challenges and improve the skills profile of the working population; and, ensure our young people are well equipped for entry into the labour market. We will provide access and support to help people develop the skills required to meet the changing demands of the labour market. Not only does this support economic growth, it also improves wellbeing and helps address inequality.

By investing in skills, we will help to ensure that NI businesses can rebuild and grow their markets, protect and strengthen their supply chains and maximise new opportunities. This investment will also enable our people to avail of new and better employment opportunities. Potential also exists to target NI's diaspora and to attract highly skilled 'returners' who can contribute to addressing key skills needs in high value sectors and, thereby, accelerate the growth of sectors of strategic significance.

The development of the new Skills Strategy for NI has focused on key themes and policy objectives that aim to deliver against these challenges, whilst taking into account the need for our skills system to address growing inequalities, providing everyone with the access to the education and training opportunities that will enable them to fulfil their potential. The new strategy is

designed around three major policy objectives: addressing skills imbalances; creating a culture of lifelong learning; and enhancing digital education and inclusion across society.

Digitisation of the workplace in particular has been transformative, and it is essential that we ensure citizens have the necessary skills to contribute economically and thrive in an ever-changing economy.



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DfE will support a Highly Skilled & Agile Workforce by:

- **Growing and maintaining the Apprenticeship system as a critical skills pipeline for industry and valuable employment, particularly for young people, by providing incentives to employers to return apprentices from furlough and recruit new Apprentices;**
- **Make apprenticeship opportunities available to more people and sectors by amending age-related criteria; and, establishing public sector apprenticeships as a way of growing skills and supporting opportunities for new employment and re-training for all;**
- **Provide a flexible skills fund to offer new opportunities for individuals to upskill and reskill to meet evolving business needs, focusing on the priority sectors that will help our economy grow;**
- **Developing our Youth Training system to ensure young people have the skills to progress to higher levels of education or successfully enter the labour force, through vocational education, training and work experience, and developing these pathways further to support higher level 3 skills attainment;**
- **Ensuring that the Further and Higher Education sectors continue to play a key role in the response to COVID-19, raising skills levels and increasing productivity of the future workforce, and examining ways to ensure greater alignment between study and the needs of the economy;**
- **Launching a new Northern Ireland Skills Strategy, to help employers and individuals attain the skills needed to grow our economy and boost productivity, by addressing existing skills imbalances, improving lifelong learning, with a focus on the digital spine which cuts across all sectors; and**
- **Building upon the existing vocational education infrastructure by establishing a Northern Ireland Skills Board, bringing together employers, providers and trade unions to progress the skills agenda, supported by sector specific action plans and skills hubs at a local level.**



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Supporting a Highly Skilled & Agile Workforce - Updated November 2021

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

Adjusted our Apprenticeship offering to support new forms of delivery allowing training contractors to adopt flexible delivery models including remote and blended learning.

Extended Youth Training Programmes by 13 weeks to make up for lost training time due to Covid-19 restrictions enabling participants to achieve their targeted qualifications.

Moved Careers Service functions on-line and worked with the Department for Communities to support those most impacted by the pandemic.

Supported individuals impacted by Covid-19, to achieve one of over 90 online, fully accredited qualifications in key areas including digital, leadership and management and employability. These courses have been delivered across the Further and Higher Education sector, ranging from entry level to masters.

Through an Apprenticeship Challenge Fund supported ways to identify and deliver innovative approaches to tackle barriers to participation in the apprenticeship system.

Extended the Apprenticeship Recruitment Initiative.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

Delivering an Apprenticeship Return, Retain & Result Scheme to reduce the risk of redundancy following furlough by providing financial support to incentivise the return, retention and on to successful completion across the AppsNI and HLA programmes.

Delivering a New Apprenticeship Recruitment Initiative to encourage and support employers create apprenticeship opportunities for both new apprentices and apprentices who have been displaced by other employers.

Addressing productivity challenges via a New Advanced (Level 3) Vocational & Technical Award that will meet sector specific needs and provide an alternative pathway to higher education.

WHAT WE PLAN TO DO

Make Apprenticeships available to more people and sectors by amending age-related eligibility criteria. This will significantly increase the supply of skills to the economy and the range of opportunities available to individuals of all ages.

Introduce Public Sector Apprenticeships into the ApprenticeshipsNI and Higher Level Apprenticeship programmes.

[New] Deliver re-skilling and upskilling opportunities through the Further Education colleges in key areas such as Health and Social Care, IT / Digital, Tourism and Hospitality, Construction / Engineering, Leadership and Management.



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Supporting a Highly Skilled & Agile Workforce - Updated November 2021

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

Introduced the Northern Ireland Traineeship programme. This new level 2 Vocational Education and Training programme will improve outcomes for young people when it launches in September 2021. The Traineeship programme will continue to expand in future years.

Delivered a second round of fully accredited, online upskilling opportunities for 5,000 individuals, including those furloughed, made redundant, or availing of the self-employed scheme in priority growth sectors. Over 1,000 opportunities have been Post Graduate Certificates, with the digital sector accounting for a third of all places.

Supported 150 fully funded Post-Graduate Certificates in Software Development with Queen's University Belfast.

Increased the maximum student numbers by 410 in the 2020/21 academic year at the universities in response to Covid-19.

In partnership with the Open University, provided a range of free, business focused training courses via the NI Open University Social Learning Platform. Over 300 courses in areas including Digital, Numeracy and Wellbeing were made available, with over 20,000 individuals accessing in 2020.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

Piloting a range of graduate placement programmes, blending digital and leadership skills with an eight week internship at a local employer to deliver the commitment to support graduates into employment.

Increasing the maximum student number at the universities by 5% over the next 3 academic years (20/21, 21/22 and 22/23) to allow for flexibility in the offering of local student places following an increase in demand as a result of COVID-19. This increase in student numbers will be primarily directed at Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM) subject areas where there is a skills deficit.

Supporting the NI WISE Hub and the DfE Women in STEM Steering Group to develop a Women in STEM Vision and Action Plan with the aim that by 2030, 30% of all young people moving into STEM roles are women. To be published January 2022.

Supporting the development of a new Skills Ecosystem, building on our existing structures to bring together employers, providers and the public sector. This includes the development of a Northern Ireland Skills Council, a new approach to engagement at a local level.

WHAT WE PLAN TO DO

Develop a digital careers platform to provide advice and guidance on future and current skills needs and opportunities working closely with industry and key sectors.

[New] Raise the confidence and aspirations of young people in STEM education and careers through projects to support pupils and teachers and to improve the visibility of STEM pathways and careers for young people.



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Supporting a Highly Skilled & Agile Workforce - Updated November 2021

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

Established the NI Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) Hub and Pulsar Live to support and improve participation rates and progression of girls and women in STEM education and employment.

Expanded the Skills Focus Programme, available to SMEs, to offer free upskilling for staff, including those who are furloughed and waived the 25% employer contribution for April 2020 – March 2021. 1,800 employees have been supported up to January 2021.

In response to Covid-19 quickly transitioned Assured Skills Academies from classroom to tutor-led online learning.

Included Social Enterprises in the eligibility criteria for the Skills Focus Programme, introduced in September 2020.

Launched a Creative and Digital Technologies programme to support 100 young people impacted by Covid-19. This programme focused on digital skills development to create a strong pipeline to employment and economic growth.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

Launched a Flexible Skills Fund, using an evidence-based approach and will allow government to be fast moving in responding to any emerging needs. This will be used to reskill individuals in jobs at risk of automation into economic priority sectors or provide lifelong learning accounts/vouchers to individuals with low levels of skills.

Delivering qualifications online since April 2020 in response to Covid restrictions.

Supporting 100 individuals to get an export and trade qualification, focusing on processes around cargo operation, payment and insurance.

[New] In response to Covid-19, work with Invest NI to grow the Assured Skills Programme to meet the skills need of new businesses and expanding local companies.

[New] Pilot enhancement of the Open University Community Partnerships Project.

WHAT WE PLAN TO DO

Additional support for leadership and management, employer skills audits and a community partnership plan to provide a new and diverse means to support employers to identify their skills needs, boost productivity and bring in a local approach.

Develop a Capability and Skills Enhancement Programme to deliver industry wide training to the Tourism sector to provide business with the skills and capabilities to adapt their product offerings and business models.

[New] Offer 'Institute of Export' (IOE) training at Level 2, Level 3 and Level 4 through Further Education colleges which will meet the needs of the Northern Ireland market and the evolving requirements of the Protocol.



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Supporting a Highly Skilled & Agile Workforce - Updated November 2021

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

Worked in collaboration with Further Education Colleges to provide flexible delivery models in response to the health restrictions taking into consideration the capacity and capability of the learner and the needs of the specific course.

Undertook a pilot, “Press Refresh” to support 25 women returners undertake part-time learning in digital, with an internship and interview with a leading ICT employer.

Launched new cohorts of Invest NI Leadership Programmes, through virtual delivery, focusing on how best to help businesses review and redefine their strategy, rebuild and grow, in light of the new economic fundamentals brought about by Covid-19 and EU Exit.

Worked with industry and stakeholders to identify collaborative skills solutions at NI, sectoral and sub-regional levels by establishing skills networks within these groups.

Secured £7m of additional funding to provide laptops, IT equipment, software and free school meals for financially vulnerable learners.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

Delivering intensified support to help manufacturing and service companies develop resilient supply chains and identify and exploit new supply chain opportunities.

Working directly with companies to identify areas to enhance productivity and ensure they have the necessary skills to exploit these opportunities, whilst protecting profitability by minimising waste. Since 1st April 2020, Invest NI has engaged with 90 companies on Productivity Improvement projects.

[New] Responding to the demand for talent from NI businesses through increased campaign activity to attract experienced and entry level hires from overseas.

[New] Continuing to provide additional support for part-time distance learning higher education course provision to meet upskilling needs and lifelong learning requirements to improve the flow of appropriately skilled people.

WHAT WE PLAN TO DO



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Supporting a Highly Skilled & Agile Workforce - Updated November 2021

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

Introduced a Digital Hardship Fund to ensure our most vulnerable trainees can access on-line and remote learning.

Adapted a range of Skills programmes to meet social distancing and safe work environment requirements; including:

- Skills for Growth;
- Skills Advancement;
- NI Operational Excellence Programme;
- Invest NI Leadership Programmes; and
- Invest NI Collaborative Growth Programme.

Introduced a new Skills for Life and Work Programme to help increase essential skills in English, Mathematics and ICT, together with technical and employability skills that participants need to progress to Traineeships, Apprenticeships, Further Education, or employment. There will be provision for up to 1500 disadvantaged and vulnerable young people per year.

Delivered Screen Industry Reboot - a 4-month training programme for the video games industry developed and delivered by NI Screen.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

Providing support for companies to enable them to re-skill and upskill their employees to assist in safeguarding employment whilst equipping workforces with the skills to be competitive when markets recover.

Offering funding to industry-led groups to cover the cost of independent facilitation to collectively address issues and opportunities related to skills development.

Providing focused leadership development programmes, with locally and externally owned companies, to develop new skills to accelerate their growth potential, with a focus on addressing the consequences of Covid-19 and EU Exit.

[New] Strengthening of the pathways into and through the screen industries for those with the potential skills and drive to succeed in the screen industry.

WHAT WE PLAN TO DO



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Stimulating Research & Development and Innovation

R&D and the science behind it drives economic growth and competitiveness. It is a simple reality that our most R&D intensive firms are responsible for the majority of our exports. R&D and Innovation go hand in hand, but while only a few high technology and science driven companies will be R&D intensive, every business must innovate to survive.

NI has a rich history of pioneering leading innovations, however our performance in recent times has lagged behind other UK jurisdictions and other small advanced economies. It is imperative that we support both business and individuals to embrace innovative practices and utilise the available opportunities thereby unlocking our potential to become world class.

The global pandemic has already accelerated the adoption of digital solutions and emerging technologies.

In the past 12 months many companies have taken a digital leap forward, showcasing their resilience and capability to deliver on the world stage. We need to build on our excellence. Project Stratum, for example, will play a vital role in re-building the NI Economy by transforming broadband connectivity for many citizens and businesses in rural areas by bringing next generation broadband services to most of NI.

Innovative technology in pharmaceuticals has led us to a vaccine that will facilitate the pathway to recovery and opens the door to innovative opportunities that need to be explored and supported. The recent decision by Artemis Technologies, a spin-off from America's Cup team Artemis Racing, to establish a new facility in Belfast Harbour to develop zero-emission maritime technologies is an example of how NI can be at the heart of this decade of innovation. In the face of a changing economic landscape, we must adapt to ensure we secure

continued funding to support research, development and wider innovation activity. We will target new funding from inside and outside NI, and work to increase the capacity of NI businesses to access UK Research and Innovation, Innovate UK, cross-border and internationally mobile funds.



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DfE will stimulate Research & Development and Innovation by:

- **Accelerating delivery of plans for over £550m investment in innovation and digital across the 4 City and Growth Deals in NI;**
- **Creating a Chief Scientific & Technology Officer post to advise and guide on science, technology, R&D, innovation policies and strategies in the context of economic development;**
- **Providing support to businesses to engage in research and development so that they can continue to innovate and drive new commercial opportunities;**
- **Providing advisory services and support to assist companies understand innovation and develop their innovative capabilities;**
- **Assisting SMEs to gain the skills they need to engage in innovation activities;**
- **Assisting businesses to exploit new opportunities through the adoption of new technologies;**
- **Supporting businesses to build on recent successes in securing UK wide funding streams and ensure NI fully benefits from the opportunities presented by the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda; and**
- **Fostering collaboration and partnership working between industry and academia.**



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Stimulating Research & Development and Innovation - Updated November 2021

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

Expanded the Innovation Voucher Scheme to allow multiple vouchers to be used on complex issues with Covid-related projects specifically being invited in calls.

Engaged with Innovate UK / Department for Business, Energy, Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to influence the UK Research & Development and PLACE Strategies ensuring that Northern Ireland specific nuances are recognised and understood. This influenced actions included within the strategies increasing the potential funding available for innovation in NI.

Developed and implemented a digitised innovation framework for NI companies to improve their innovation success. To date over 200 Bronze (first time innovators) certificates have been awarded.

Developed and rolled out a new pilot Productive Investment Capital Grant Scheme.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

Providing additional funding for “Co-founders”, an initiative by Catalyst to encourage new start-up companies to be created by entrepreneurs, students and researchers.

Rolling out SME Process & Organisational Improvement Grant support.

Investing resource to support industry, universities and councils develop major innovation, digital and tourism projects that will create new and better jobs and sustained economic growth.

Delivering the COVID Digital Innovation and Productivity Programme to support businesses across the tourism sector to enhance their digital capability.

Increase support for value added R&D projects across all businesses with the aim of increasing wealth creation and delivering additional jobs.

Accelerate delivery of the City and Growth Deals programme including signing of Heads of Terms for “Mid-South West region” and “Causeway Coast and Glens” and start project delivery in the “Belfast and Derry / Strabane Regions”.

Invest heavily in place based innovation, digital and tourism through City and Growth Deals.

WHAT WE PLAN TO DO

Work collaboratively with Tourism Ireland to digitally link online visitor behaviour to real time visitors by delivering intense localised marketing.

[New] Launch an Innovation Engaged Entrepreneurship Programme which educates young people and adults on the opportunities available to them in roles as entrepreneurs.

[New] Collaborate with Innovate UK to extend funding to Northern Ireland ‘Blue Zone’ applicants to SMART Grants and Creative Industries Fund.



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Stimulating Research & Development and Innovation - Updated November 2021

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

Supported Belfast City Region and Derry Strabane District Council in identification of projects for inclusion in their respective City Deals, valued at over £600m.

Extended the eligibility criteria of the InnovateUs programme to include Social Enterprises and to allow businesses to undertake a third project.

Provided additional funding for University Research & Development.

Partnered with Innovate UK to enable increased access to UK funding e.g. Innovate UK Fast Start Grant Support Programmes.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

Develop Webinars and other potential solutions and delivery models for NI companies to support innovation.

Develop an action plan for NI to secure additional funding from UK government through the Levelling Up agenda contributing to stronger investment in NI commercial R&D capabilities.

Working with Visit Britain to use Tourism Exchange Great Britain (TxGB), a centralised booking platform, to enable NI businesses to access new markets and manage sales across multiple global distribution channels.

Supporting a greater number of firms to innovate; develop new products, processes or services; and improve efficiency through InterTradelreland Innovation Programmes (FUSION / Innovation Boost, Impact).

Piloting a cyber security job vacancy platform with free online access to skilled training.

Support the development of cross-border innovation collaborations and clusters through the InterTradelreland Synergy Programme.

WHAT WE PLAN TO DO

Fund NI university participation in large-scale collaborative Research Centres in key strategic sectors.

Expand the prestigious US-Ireland R&D Programme to generate further valuable discoveries and innovations which are transferable to the marketplace.



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Stimulating Research & Development and Innovation - Updated November 2021

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

Moved cross-border Innovation supports online (Inc. the All-island Innovation Programme) to increase participation and accessibility, enabling firms to improve their competitiveness as they respond to Covid-19 challenges.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

Develop proposals to implement an Artificial Intelligence Centre of Excellence. The aim of the proposed centre includes positioning NI as AI leaders on the globally competitive world stage.

Promote NI as a global cyber security hub, to achieve New Decade New Approach commitment of 5,000 cyber security professionals in Northern Ireland by 2030.

Create a Chief Scientific & Technology Officer post to advise and guide on science, technology, R&D, innovation policies and strategies in the context of economic development.

Expand strategic investment in university R&D to promote economic productivity and prosperity through excellent science and its commercialisation.

WHAT WE PLAN TO DO

[New] Provide support to businesses via Further Education Colleges to help them understand innovation as well as developing their capabilities in innovation and research and development.



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Promoting Investment, Trade and Exports

The transformational impact of trade and export growth for a small open economy like NI, in terms of global competitiveness, job creation, productivity, innovation and, importantly, sub-regional balance, is such that export growth and attracting inward investment will be pivotal in the region's recovery agenda and critical for our longer term prosperity.

Promoting trade and investment will be an important part of recovery. The size of the NI market is relatively small and external sales provide a vital part of business growth in NI. There has been significant change across key markets over the past year as a result of COVID, leaving the European Union and the protocol. However, even in this challenging environment work must continue to increase exports and promote NI as a destination for inward investment in a very competitive environment. We must recognise that exports rely on inputs, and we must also

ensure that any issues businesses have in sourcing from GB are resolved in a permanent and complete way, if we are to maximise our economic opportunity.

In recent years our economy has benefited from strong employment growth and provided valuable support to indigenous and overseas businesses to create new jobs in Northern Ireland. The current pandemic has disrupted global markets and trade leading to a sharp increase in unemployment in recent months. However, even in the face of adversity, opportunities remain in key sectors to drive external market growth, rebuild and create new jobs.

We will ensure that we adapt and flex our existing employment and skills support and introduce new initiatives to enable businesses to take advantage of these new market opportunities and adapt to new ways of doing business. This will help to create new jobs and employment opportunities for all, including our young people, the

disadvantaged and those who have been most impacted by the pandemic and the subsequent economic downturn.

As a small SME dominated economy, entrepreneurship remains a key success factor for economic recovery and future growth. More so than ever, it is critical that all economic development partners collaborate to build and nurture a strong entrepreneurship ecosystem where our start-ups, early stage and growth businesses with potential to scale are able to realise their ambitions and to flourish.

City and Growth Deals are large strategic investments that have the potential to seismically shift the NI economy and accelerate the economic regeneration of the region. The Deals provide multi-faceted coverage of activities that link industrial, societal, and regional challenges in a comprehensive, inclusive way.



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Promoting Investment, Trade and Exports (continued)

The four local Deals will see a combined investment of £1.5 billion from the NI Executive and the UK Government over the next 10 years.

Deals are aligned to NI's priority sectors and will contribute directly to the development of a much stronger and globally focused business base. The deals will also seek to develop our workforce, provide social inclusion, regenerate areas, and build new infrastructure to support NI's economic recovery.



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DfE will promote Investment, Trade & Exports by:

- **Pushing for a permanent and complete solution to end frictions brought about by the protocol;**
- **Securing clarity on long term trading arrangements and the regulatory environment arising from EU exit;**
- **Building on the success of Invest NI's International Strategy, and the continued promotion of NI's sectoral strengths across its global network, to maximise trade and investment opportunities;**
- **Providing investment and employment support to businesses to help them rebuild;**
- **Stimulating demand for local businesses including retail, restaurants and hotels;**
- **Assisting businesses to explore and increase cross border and GB market trade and develop new markets;**
- **Working with businesses to help them adapt to new trading conditions; and**
- **Ensuring SMEs in Northern Ireland are provided with support and guidance to fully benefit from opportunities for cross-border growth.**



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Investment, Trade & Exports - Updated November 2021

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

Provided a Covid-19 Business & Financial Planning Grant, which offered up to £8,000 of support to businesses operating in manufacturing, construction, professional services, information and communication, or science and technology to engage with professional support.

Provided grant support to businesses via the Covid-19 Digital Selling & Capability Grant. This scheme provides funding to help local businesses develop their e-commerce and online selling capabilities.

Developed a High Street Stimulus Scheme to provide individuals throughout Northern Ireland with a personalised prepaid card to be spent at 'bricks and mortar' businesses including retail, hospitality and close contact services.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

Establishing a shared DfC / Invest NI team approach when engaging with companies to assist in securing employment for the economically inactive and unemployed.

Leading the cross departmental Social Economy Policy Group to deliver an integrated strategic approach to the social economy. Funding the Social Economy Work Programme to support social enterprises to be part of NI's economic recovery.

Tourism Ireland marketing air and sea connectivity to Northern Ireland in 2021/22.

Providing support to Tour Operator & Destination Management Companies through development of marketing assets which can be used by tour operators to promote Northern Ireland internationally.

Secure additional funding from DCMS to extend Project Stratum to include a further 2,500 premises not currently 'in scope', increasing the number of eligible premises that can benefit from increased broadband coverage.

[New] Launch COVID Recovery Kick Start Programme for tourism businesses to stimulate tourism businesses to implement action plans and invest in priority areas to support recovery.

WHAT WE PLAN TO DO

Intensify support for businesses to sell to the GB market.

Raise awareness, ambition and confidence to export as a pathway to recovery and growth through an NI-wide marketing campaign.



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Investment, Trade & Exports - Updated November 2021

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

Used employment focused intervention programmes to safeguard and build a wide range of employment opportunities in the immediate aftermath of the emergence of COVID-19.

Delivered a locally focused EU Exit communications campaign focusing on key actions for business in the run up to 31 December 2020 i.e. Brexit Preparation Grants, on-line EU Exit Resilience Tool, Advice Clinics, support for all NI businesses via Webinars, FAQs and guidance on nibusiness.info.

Doubled the capacity of our Graduate to Export (G2E) programme, which builds capability of NI businesses to develop new overseas markets and attract trade growth opportunities whilst developing export-experienced graduates. Extending G2E drives further trade growth for NI.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

Flex and adapt employment programmes to support new job creation in response to changing business needs, to take advantage of new investment opportunities and to ensure that those most impacted are included.

Invest NI are working with partners and stakeholders such as Enterprise NI to refresh and relaunch its Entrepreneurship Forum and develop an Entrepreneurship Action Plan.

Rolling out a new Export Health Check for NI businesses to establish export readiness, ambition and support needs.

Offering a new International Sales & Marketing Leaders Programme.

Delivering a new international marketing campaign to reinforce 'Why NI' for international investors underlining new selling points of post EU Exit opportunities, our resilience and NI as a destination for Covid-driven new business models.

Providing advice and guidance to NI employers, employees and policy makers on the NI Labour Market, employee relations, best practice and compliance in response to the pandemic and its impact on labour relations.

Introducing a COVID Market Led Product Development Programme to support Tourist attractions, venues and experience providers enhance their products and tailor them to changed market conditions.

WHAT WE PLAN TO DO

Undertake a 'call to action' campaign to the NI diaspora to support economic recovery including the appointment of Trade Ambassadors in key markets and sectors.

Support North West air connectivity with GB by Funding, alongside the UK Department for Transport (DfT), the City of Derry Airport to London Public Service Obligation route over the next two financial years. This is subject to Executive agreement and DfT Ministerial approval.



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Investment, Trade & Exports - Updated November 2021

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

In the run up to 31 December 2020, DfE and its Arms Length Bodies (ALBs) provided a range of support to help business prepare and to provide guidance and training as part of their EU Exit Communications Campaign.

Delivered cross-border business development support through InterTradeIreland's Emergency Business Support Programme.

Helped secure £5.7m joint funding package in May 2020 to maintain NI's air connectivity with GB mainland during initial COVID pandemic.

Developed "A Practical Guide to Working from Home" and practical guidance on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme'.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

Developing a heavyweight tourism consumer advertising programme across NI and ROI to give consumer confidence and stimulate demand.

Delivering targeted product marketing in high value tourism sectors including Business Tourism, Tour Operators and Golf.

Providing support to the Market Access Programme to stimulate and sustain tourism marketing activity.

Delivering Crisis Management and Turnaround Fund support for tourism businesses including provision of a financial and business plan review to support viability of the wider tourism ecosystem.

Expanding on the ground support for NI businesses selling overseas to drive exporter confidence, capability and ultimately sales in markets that align with our export sectors of strength.

Working in conjunction with DfC and the Councils to set targets for the NI Business Start Up Programme that provides advice and support to people seeking to start their own business.

Working jointly with DAERA to deliver an Independent Strategic Review of the NI Agri Food Sector.

Tourism Ireland are undertaking international marketing programmes in core markets when consumer sentiment indicates this is appropriate, to increase international visitor numbers to NI.

WHAT WE PLAN TO DO

Accelerate the development of the Tourism Data Hub to support the industry with real time data to inform decision making.



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Investment, Trade & Exports - Updated November 2021

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

Delivered online webinar sessions to develop the export capabilities of all NI businesses including e-business skills.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

Work with the UK Department for Transport, as civil aviation is a reserved matter, to identify how we can provide support to airlines, to maintain and enhance NI's domestic and international air connectivity.

Delivering enhanced digital capability and presence to cross-border traders through the E-Merge Digital Programme.

Funding research to deliver a NI Aerospace Customer Diversification Programme to assist the NI Aerospace cluster recover and build resilience.

Continue to provide financial support to assist NI companies, particularly high growth SMEs, realise their export potential, develop export opportunities, and stimulate more companies to export to a wider range of markets.

Engaging with the British Business Bank and other relevant stakeholders, to encourage and promote alternative forms of finance, and respond to changing access to finance requirements during the economic recovery.

Delivering support via equity funding to innovative early stage companies to leverage additional investment and help these companies develop and market their products and services, thereby supporting external sales and employment growth.

Delivery of a Website Development Programme for tourism businesses to receive capital grants for the upgrading of their websites to make them bookable online.

WHAT WE PLAN TO DO

Establish a cross-border Trade Information Service to provide a comprehensive service to firms trading goods and services across the border, ensuring firms in NI have the information and support needed to benefit from cross-border growth opportunities.



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Investment, Trade & Exports - Updated November 2021

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

Project Stratum will be completed by March 2024 and will close the broadband connectivity gap that exists in Northern Ireland. The project will deploy Gigabit capable broadband services to approximately 76,000 premises across predominantly rural parts of Northern Ireland, providing citizens and businesses with the opportunity to access the highest broadband speeds available to consumers.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

Expand support through Invest NI to help micro and small businesses (particularly in sectors most impacted by COVID-19) to overcome current economic challenges and sustain businesses while they are planning for future recovery and growth in a post Covid-19 economy. Young, female and part-time workers will be specifically targeted through this support.

Carry out sectoral research on EU Exit business opportunities focusing on the sectors where NI has a competitive advantage.

Promote and develop cross border trade to support the enhancement and expansion of Intertradelreland's support to SMEs, via their trade programmes and innovation programmes including FUSION / Innovation Boost, and Impact.

Deliver an "Experience Development Programme" to provide grant funding for tourism experience providers to help develop their businesses.

Work with Tourism Ireland on a timely and strategic review of the GB Market and implement NI specific campaigns in GB when the time is right.

Undertake a programme of research, business communications, business supports and policy work to support trade in the context of the Protocol.

WHAT WE PLAN TO DO



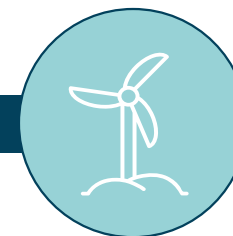
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Building a Greener Economy

In “Rebuilding a Stronger Economy”, it is recognised that the economic recovery must be sustainable, environmentally responsible and tackle climate change. Energy, across power, heat and transport, accounts for approximately two thirds of all greenhouse gas emissions and substantial investment from consumers and the public and private sectors will be needed in contributing to the UK’s 2050 net zero target. The Department is therefore leading on the development of a new Energy Strategy which will set out the pathway to a greener economy.

Clean energy is an area where investment will increase globally. It is essential that we capture and benefit from the significant opportunities that exist in clean energy, that we support green innovation and grow a sustainable and environmentally responsible greener economy. Energy efficiency

offers the NI economy the opportunity to build resilience, increase productivity, create jobs, strengthen competitiveness and realise carbon, energy and cost savings.

By encouraging innovation in renewable energy and low carbon technologies we can help to decarbonise energy and contribute to the growth of a greener economy. The Hydrogen Economy can build on our world-leading capabilities in renewables and manufacturing to create new sustainable jobs through: hydrogen production using renewable energy; hydrogen demand within the transport, industry, power and heat sectors; the manufacture of cutting-edge new technologies such as electrolyzers; export opportunities for advanced manufacturing in global hydrogen supply chains; and supporting a low carbon and hydrogen skills base.

Developing the Circular Economy will help reduce emissions across all sectors by transforming the way we design, produce and use products. This will contribute to the UK’s 2050, net zero ambitions. It will also help to eliminate plastic pollution, support clean and inclusive growth and create jobs, many of which will be high-skilled.



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DfE will support a Greener Economy by:

- **Delivering a net zero carbon energy transition;**
- **Improving energy efficiency of buildings and industry;**
- **Encouraging green innovation in renewables and low carbon technologies;**
- **Developing the Hydrogen Economy and Circular Economy;**
- **Enabling a low carbon workforce; and**
- **Working collaboratively across Government on a green growth approach to recovery.**



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Building a Greener Economy - Updated November 2021

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

Supported the creation of a hydrogen economy by funding NI Water to undertake an innovative Oxygen and Hydrogen Demonstrator Project. This will be the first in the UK and Ireland to demonstrate how electrolysis can help to increase processing capacity, reduce carbon emissions and improve flexibility in the electricity grid.

Delivered a contract, in partnership with DoF and SIB, for 100% renewable electricity to be supplied to Government buildings. This contract demonstrates how procurement can be a key lever in the transition to a Green Economy. The action helps the NI Executive meet its carbon reduction targets and produces financial savings which can be reinvested in public services.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

Supporting local councils to develop proposals for a hydrogen training hub.

Establish an NI Working Group to support NI companies gain access to UK Government Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) & Innovate UK funding in 2021 through increasing the success of NI firms in accessing funds for innovative low carbon energy technologies.

Developing an Invest to Save Fund to finance investments in central government buildings to provide energy, carbon and cost savings. This project will stimulate growth, create new jobs and encourage investment in innovative and renewable technologies.

Re-open the COVID-19 Energy Efficiency Capital Grant to applications in 2021/22. This will support businesses in implementing energy efficiency measures, providing cost and carbon savings.

Developing proposals to introduce a Green Innovation Challenge Fund that will seek applications from NI businesses on innovative low carbon technologies that will place NI at the forefront of the energy transition.

WHAT WE PLAN TO DO

[New] Run Carbon Zero NI pilot programmes which will be developed and delivered in the green skills sector.



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Building a Greener Economy - Updated November 2021

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

Provided “virtual” technical consultancy support to businesses to help identify improvement opportunities in the area of energy and resource efficiency driving improvements in business competitiveness. Since April 2020, support has been provided to 60 businesses to undertake 86 projects.

Announced that a new 2030 renewable electricity target for NI should not be below 70%.

Delivered an Energy Efficiency Capital Grant to help businesses recover by building resilience through energy efficiency. The grant supported the purchase and installation of equipment that offers greater efficiency in the use of energy, providing cost and carbon savings.

WHAT WE ARE DOING

Develop proposals to introduce an Energy Efficiency Home Retrofit Scheme in 2022/23 to drive energy efficiency in the NI building stock, providing opportunities for job creation and green economic growth.

Developing a Circular Economy Strategic Framework for NI to be published June 2022.

Working with UK partners to identify and target NI supply chain opportunities for offshore wind.

Launching an Energy Strategy by the end of 2021.

Developing options to increase renewable electricity investment in NI, including extending Contracts for Difference and launch a pilot Solar Photovoltaic grant scheme.

Working with the Utility Regulator to review how regulation can facilitate economic growth in delivering the Energy Strategy.

WHAT WE PLAN TO DO

Develop a sustainable regenerative Tourism Strategy for NI.

Develop specific targets and metrics to encourage companies to enter markets in the clean, green or circular economy to increase sales and drive sustained economic growth.



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