

2024-25

CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN



Department for
Communities
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

An Roinn
Pobal

Department fur
Commonities



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Contents

Foreword	5
Introduction	6
Mitigation	9
Progress to date	10
Key Activities for 2024/25	11
Adaptation	15
Progress to date	16
Key Activities for 2024/25	17
Behavioural Change	19
Progress to date	20
Key Activities for 2024/25	21
Barriers, Challenges and Opportunities	25
Governance	29
<hr/>	
Annex A	34
2023/24 Departmental Business Plan Updates	
Annex B	36
Summary of Key Activities for 2024/25	





Foreword

The impacts of climate change can be seen in all parts of the world and we here in Northern Ireland are no different. We are at the beginning of a transformational journey for everyone in society, from how we heat our homes, travel, work and source energy.

My Department delivers a diverse range of functions that impact on the lives of everyone in our society and by building climate change considerations into these functions, I can ensure that as we make this transition, people and communities will be protected and can benefit from the opportunities presented.

This plan sets out the work that my Department intends to take over the next year which will see us start to address the challenges that climate change presents to our people, our communities and our places. It also sets out the work we will take forward in educating and influencing our staff and partners to begin making the behavioural changes necessary to help us move to a lower carbon future. At its core is the principle of a just transition to this lower carbon future.

I recognise that we are at the start of our journey in responding to climate change and fulfilling our obligations under the Climate Change (NI) Act. I am pleased to see the steps my Department has taken in responding to this challenge and the actions we will take over the next year to build on this progress.

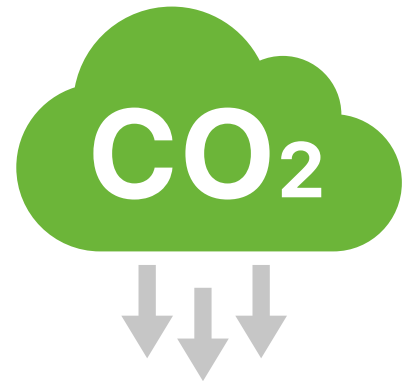
I am committed to achieving our low carbon ambitions by working collaboratively across Government and with our partners, sharing knowledge, expertise and resources and providing a clear vision on what the future will look like.

Gordon Lyons MLA
Minister for Communities

Introduction

Our climate is changing, and it is in our local communities, workplaces, and our families where the impacts will be felt but it is also here where the solutions will be found. The Department for Communities delivers a diverse range of functions that impact on everyone in our society, and we want to demonstrate leadership in our response to climate change through how we reduce our impact on the environment, adapt to make our communities more climate resilient and how we seek to influence and encourage the wider community.





Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022

The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022¹ ("the Act") sets targets for the years 2030, 2040 and 2050 for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and creates specific duties and obligations in relation to climate change for all Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) Departments.

The Department is the sector lead for Residential Buildings for the Northern Ireland (NI) Climate Action Plan. In addition, Section 52 of the Act places a duty on Departments to exercise their functions in a way that is consistent with achieving the carbon reduction targets set out in the Act, cooperating with other Departments to assist with this and in drawing up such plans, policies, and strategies, as may be appropriate to support this duty.

Moving Northern Ireland towards net zero by 2050 as stipulated by the Act is a hugely challenging target and will require a significant level of cross-departmental working and collaboration.

Department for Communities Response

The Department for Communities is a large and diverse Department of over 10,300 people with a wide range of policy and operational responsibilities ranging from the payment of social security benefits to managing the historic environment, housing policy, and funding the voluntary and community sector, including sponsorship of several Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs).

In response to the Act and to demonstrate our commitment and show leadership, in February 2023, the Department formed the Climate Change Division. The Division has responsibility for the development of policies and proposals to reduce residential carbon emissions whilst ensuring a Just Transition in response to the Act. The Division also has responsibility for supporting the Department to meet its obligations in helping Northern Ireland to be climate adaptable, resilient, and healthy for current and future generations.

¹ Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (legislation.gov.uk)





In order to achieve this the Division is working on the following:

- Developing a Fuel Poverty Strategy and future fuel poverty intervention
- Developing a Departmental Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy
- Secretariat of the Departmental Climate Change Working Group
- Developing a Residential Buildings Decarbonisation Strategy
- Leading on the Residential Buildings Sector of the Climate Action Plan

In recognition of the challenge created by climate change and the need for an urgent response, the Department established a Climate Change Working Group with members from across the Department and a number of our ALBs and published Departmental Climate Change Action Plans in 2021/22 and 2022/23.

These plans recognised the educative and influencing role the Department must play in supporting climate change mitigation and

adaptation, as well as the specific areas within the vires of the Department that we need to address.

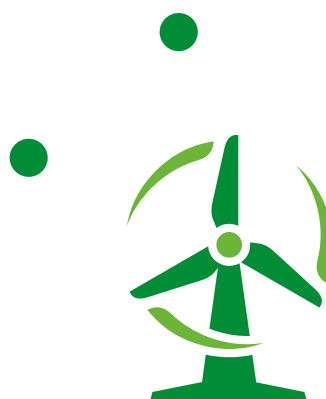
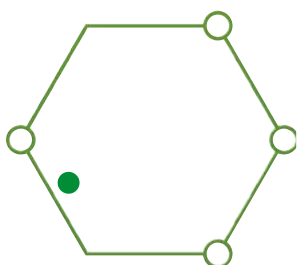
For 2023/24 the actions the Department would take in response to climate change were contained in the 2023/24 Departmental Business Plan under the strategic objective –

“To ensure our approaches deliver a cohesive programme of activity to mitigate and adapt to climate change and to show leadership in this regard” (See Annex A).

The purpose of this plan is to summarise the activities that have been taken by the Department and our ALBs since the last Climate Change Action Plan for 2022/23 along with the actions and initiatives proposed for the next twelve months to tackle the challenges faced under three headings:

- Mitigation
- Adaptation; and
- Behavioural Change

A table of all proposed actions for 2024/25 can be found at Annex B.





HIGH
EMISSIONS

LOW
EMISSIONS

Mitigation

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change. They state that “climate change mitigation is achieved by limiting or preventing greenhouse gas emissions and by enhancing activities that remove these gases from the atmosphere²”.

For the Department and our partners, this means monitoring and reducing energy consumption in our buildings and transport and incorporating these activities into the design considerations of future policies and capital projects.

² Working Group III — IPCC

Progress to date

Since the last Climate Action Plan, the Department and our ALBs have recognised that urgent action is required to deal with climate change and have undertaken a number of actions to respond to climate change mitigation.

Over the past year the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) has managed to reduce its electrical energy consumption by over 25 percent. Most of this reduction is down to better management of the air handling unit in their repositories. PRONI has also invested in an electric van and embarked on a process of replacing all the lighting in the building with light-emitting diode (LED) bulbs. In addition, the Display Energy Certificate (DEC), which shows the energy performance of public buildings, for the PRONI building in Belfast has improved from an E rating in 2022 to a D operational rating last year. PRONI hope to improve this to a C rating in the coming year.

Our Historic Environment Division (HED) have purchased two electric vehicles for use on the internal estate and installed workplace chargers at the Moira and Annacloy Conservation Depots. Solar panels have also been installed at the Moira Depot.

We have also delivered a number of cloud-based IT solutions and are designing climate change considerations into a number of our

capital projects including City and Growth Deals' and the Northern Ireland Football Fund.

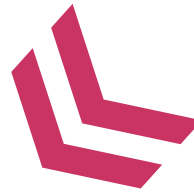
Housing Division supported the Housing Executive, in securing and utilising €22.951 million from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) for their Energy Efficiency in Social Housing Programme with match funding from the Housing Executive. The programme improved the thermal efficiency of 1,406 non-traditional construction homes within the Housing Executive stock.

Arm's Length Bodies

Our ALBs continue to show great leadership in taking actions to mitigate against climate change.

Libraries NI has refurbishment projects underway at three libraries (Ballymoney, Bessbrook and Killyleagh). These buildings are being fully refurbished to achieve EnerPHit standards (the established standard for refurbishment of existing buildings using Passive House components) which should see a significant reduction in the energy consumed at these sites.

National Museums NI has conducted carbon audits for 2018/19, 2021/22 and 2022/23. Despite an increase in the estate from the baseline year the kilogram of carbon equivalent per square metre (kg CO₂e/m²) for Scope 1 and Scope 2 greenhouse gas



emissions³ has dropped from 34.25 kg CO₂e/m² to 32.42 kg CO₂e/m². They have also installed Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) capability across their estate, purchased four electric vehicles and installed workplace chargers for these vehicles. At the Ulster Folk Museum at Cultra, Phase II⁴ clearance of ancient woodland was completed. 540 tonnes of invasive cherry laurel and rhododendrons were removed and sent to energy recovery. Also at Cultra, planning permission was obtained in December 2023 for new capital infrastructure project, 'The Reawakening'⁵ which will have a visitor centre designed to BREEAM Excellent standard⁶, a store and industry zone designed to Passivhaus standards⁷. The project will also incorporate an energy centre with solar PV and air source heat pumps.

Sport NI launched the Renewable Energy Fund in September 2023. This is a fund designed to provide support for local sports clubs to enable capital interventions. Its primary objectives are to reduce the environmental footprint and carbon emissions of sports clubs, create a 'greener' sports club sector and save on utility bills so that resources can be redirected back into their clubs/sport. Phase one of the programme

saw 36 applicants receive funding to undertake an energy and building audit of their sport facilities.

Key Activities for 2024/25

Mitigation activities planned for the coming year include:

PRONI will continue to implement a rolling plan to replace existing halogen and fluorescent lights with LED lighting throughout 2024/25.

PRONI will continue to work with Belfast City Council to explore the options for developing a heat network across Queens Island, Belfast by 2033.

The Department's Regional Development and North West Development Offices will continue to work with Councils and design teams on the options to include carbon reduction in Departmental led City and Growth Deal projects.

They will also work closely with local councils to ensure the development and implementation of physical regeneration projects consider place-specific climate change measures. This will be measured

³ Measuring UK greenhouse gas emissions - Office for National Statistics

⁴ How We Restore Ancient Woodland - Woodland Trust

⁵ Reawakening the Ulster Folk Museum | Ulster Folk Museum

⁶ How BREEAM works - BREEAM

⁷ What is Passivhaus? (passivhaustrust.org.uk)



through industry standards, for example BREEAM, BREEAM Infrastructure and PAS 2080.⁸

Our Regeneration teams will continue to include methodology for managing and minimising whole life carbon emissions in procurements on large-scale projects (such as the Bangor City Deal project)

The Historic Environment Division (HED) will continue to embed climate change considerations in the Department's heritage activity, including our custodianship of State Care Monuments.

As part of investment in local football, the NI Football Fund (NIFF) will prepare Programme and Project level business cases which will set out final proposals for disbursement of funding to clubs, achieving positive impacts for climate action and to protect such actions through project lifecycles to prevent dilution of benefits if cost pressures arise. As such, NIFF will seek to significantly reduce the carbon produced by football club grounds by more than the carbon which will be released during initial capital works.

As part of the development of the Department's Decarbonisation Strategy, the Climate Change Division (CCD) will look to secure cross-departmental agreement and commence work on developing a long-term

plan for the decarbonisation of the residential buildings sector.

CCD will also develop a new Fuel Poverty Strategy which will provide a long-term framework for addressing fuel poverty and its impacts while also recognising our responsibilities under the Act to ensure a Just Transition for the residential sector. Public consultation is planned in Autumn 2024.

Housing Division will begin a review of the Decent Homes Standard for Northern Ireland social housing and an important part of this is energy efficiency and thermal comfort. They will also seek Executive approval for the Housing Supply Strategy which acknowledges the importance of ensuring we have good quality homes. One of the proposed long-term commitments of the Strategy is to ensure there is an emphasis on improving the energy efficiency of homes and a just transition to decarbonised solutions. They will also continue to work with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in responding to climate change and a further £57.5 million has been made available by the Housing Executive for thermal improvement and low carbon programmes in the financial year 2024/25.

⁸ PAS 2080 - carbon management in infrastructure | The Carbon Trust

Arm's Length Bodies

Our ALBs plan the following Mitigation activities for 2024/25:

Libraries NI are currently preparing bids for Invest to Save funding from the Department for Economy for the replacement of existing lighting with LED lighting and the installation of PV panel arrays at various libraries.

They also plan to design a number of EnerPHit library refurbishments to pre-tender stage, subject to available funding.


National Museums NI has developed a number of actions for the next year. These include:

- Review and update the current Environmental Sustainability Action Plan to maintain momentum toward sustainability and net zero aspirations.
- Continue to measure and monitor carbon footprint and seek opportunities to fund the carbon action plan and target areas of high emissions to make progress toward net zero ambitions.
- Utilise the AMR system to react more proactively to areas of significant energy use and through the Energy Management Working Group identify areas of their estate where energy efficiency could be improved in line with Executive Energy Management Strategy.

- Monitor the use of their electric vehicles. They will also investigate options for implementing an electric vehicle lease scheme for employees.
- Implement recommendations from the fleet review and target areas where decarbonisation can occur within organisation's fleet.
- Identify opportunities from a solar PV feasibility study to deploy PV panels across the estate.
- Delivery of a pilot training programme on Carbon Literacy® for staff using the Museum Sector Toolkit.
- Seek funding for Phase III clearance of ancient woodland. Continue to work with our partners, The Woodland Trust, and The Conservation Volunteers, to develop and implement a planting scheme for cleared areas.

Sport NI will seek to procure a consultant who will provide a baseline carbon audit for the Sport NI estate, including the development of a carbon reduction action plan. Following the production of the carbon audit action plan they will update relevant policy actions and objectives.

They will establish an Energy Monitoring Group to identify areas of significant energy use and to improve energy efficiency within the organisation following the findings of the baseline carbon audit.



Sport NI will continue to measure and monitor their carbon footprint post audit, seeking opportunities make improvements to operations and targeting areas of high emissions to make progress towards reducing energy use and carbon footprint.

Sport NI have proposed a survey of sports clubs to gauge the financial repercussions of the recent EU ban on 'intentionally added microplastics'⁹ and the impact this has on the sports sector within Northern Ireland, including lifecycle and mitigation measures in place. They will continue to engage the National Lottery Cross Distributor Environmental Working Group and Artificial Grass Pitch Environmental Stakeholder Group on this and other environmental issues.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) plans to complete the Rural-Led Energy Transition (RULET) project as part of proofs of concept which test and refine approaches to retrofitting domestic properties; and complete a 300-unit Low Carbon Programme (LCP), which commenced in 2022/23 for a three-year period, to provide the evidence base for a revised NIHE heating policy and inform development of wider decarbonisation policies.

For RULET, works completed on site in March 2022, with a two-year monitoring assessment from March 2022 until March 2024. A final report will be published in November 2024, which will bring the pilot monitoring to a close.

The 300-unit LCP will be completed by March 2025 at a capital cost of approximately £10 million, funded through the NIHE Landlord Services Capital Stock Improvement budget. Its purpose is to provide an evidence base and key learning points from decarbonised retrofitted solutions via their Landlord and Private Sector Investment business areas.

As part of this programme, NIHE will deliver renewable energy for power generation and electric storage. This is divided into two phases, with approximately 87 dwellings to be retrofitted by the end of July 2024 and the remainder by April 2025.

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) are leading on the overall development of the first NI Climate Action Plan. The Department has the lead for the Residential Sector in the plan. Our Climate Change Division will continue to work with DAERA, and the other sector leads across the NICS on the finalisation of the plan throughout the coming year.

⁹ Microplastics-Information-Document.pdf (sportni.net)



Adaptation



Regardless of how successful mitigation efforts to reduce emissions are, the consequences of climate change are unavoidable due to the delayed impacts of past and current emissions. Therefore, how we adapt to this reality and become climate resilient is vital.

Adaptation refers to the ecological, social, or economic adjustments required to respond to the actual or expected effects of climate change. It is the changes in processes, practices, and structures required to moderate potential damages or to benefit from opportunities associated with climate change.¹⁰

¹⁰ Introduction | UNFCCC



Northern Ireland's second Climate Change Adaptation Programme (NICCAP2) was published in September 2019, and covered the period 2019-2024.

NICCAP2 contained the NICS Departments' response to the risks and opportunities relevant to Northern Ireland as identified in the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2017.

DAERA are currently developing the third Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme (NICCAP3). This will cover the period 2024 to 2029.

The Department has provided its input to NICCAP3 and has appointed a lead to engage and work with DAERA to develop the programme, which is due to be published later this year.

While NICCAP3 will look at the actions being proposed over the next five-year period, in this section we will look at the progress the Department has made over the past twelve months and look forward to what we hope to achieve in this space in the coming year.

Progress to date

Progress made by the Department in areas of Adaptation includes:

Belfast Regeneration Division (BRD) completed the evaluation of the pilots of the Climate Change Risk and Vulnerability Assessment approach and template in

regeneration interventions. Pilot workshops were conducted between April and June 2023 for Public Realm schemes in Rathfriland, Gilford, Markethill, Omagh, Strabane and Belfast. The purpose of the workshops was to test and evaluate a four-step risk and vulnerability assessment tool designed to determine the nature and extent of risks posed by climate change to the projects. This was done by analysing potential climate hazards and evaluating existing vulnerabilities to understand the seriousness of the potential impacts on people, assets, services, livelihoods, and the environment. An evaluation report was completed, and its recommendations will be acted upon.

Preliminary work has been conducted by BRD on existing research, data, and activity in relation to definitions and measurement of urban green spaces in Northern Ireland to ensure that towns and cities are better adapted to flooding and heatwaves.

Historic Environment Division (HED) will continue to work closely with the National Trust in the production of climate change adaptation guidance for heritage sites and landscapes and is also a member of the UK Heritage Adaptation Partnership (UKHAP).

To ensure our State Care Monuments are climate resilient, HED, as part of their ongoing management, have put in place adaptation interventions in response to weathering and environmental change, such as the new roof at

Carrickfergus Castle's Great Tower.

HED has established a programme of monitoring including curatorial-led condition surveys which allows us to flag issues for follow up action.

HED has also partnered with other UK heritage organisations to produce broad-scale climate change hazard mapping to help custodians of heritage assets to identify the risks associated with climate change, for example, to their building, monument, or historic gardens.

Arm's Length Bodies

Libraries NI, recognising the importance of enhancing biodiversity as part of climate resilience, have installed swift nesting boxes at Portadown and Antrim Libraries to protect and enhance an established breeding site of swifts. It is hoped that the nesting boxes installed at the library will attract breeding pairs of swifts.

Sport NI conducted a club flood survey following the October 2023 flooding and identified sports clubs that were impacted by the flooding at that time. Impact of climate change on assets and clubs needs to be considered as part of funding risk.

Key Activities for 2024/25

Adaptation activities planned for the coming year include:

Our Regional Development Office (RDO) will include Adaptation change within all of the Department led City and Growth Deal projects and are currently investigating the possibility of introducing adaptation to flooding as part of the Newry City Deal Project.

Following the evaluation of the workshops, our Regeneration offices will develop detailed instructions to integrate a Climate Change Risk and Vulnerability Assessment into Public Realm Scheme development processes and guidance and undertake a live pilot by 31 March 2025. The Risk and Vulnerability Assessment will be piloted on a live scheme, the Blackstaff Square project under Phase 5 of the Belfast Streets Ahead (BSA) programme.

BRD will prepare a discussion paper on the feasibility and opinions of developing an urban greenspace target to ensure towns and cities are better adapted to flooding and heatwaves.

They are currently working with Belfast City Council to plant 18,000 trees on the Department's land in the Colin area of Poleglass, Dunmurry as part of the Belfast One Million Trees Initiative.¹¹ The application to Belfast City Council was recently approved,

¹¹ One Million Trees (belfastcity.gov.uk)

which is the first step to applying to the Forestry Enhancement Scheme (FES).

The Greyabbey Climate Change Pilot Study is a project which aims to create an operational study which will guide and inform the Historic Environment Division (HED) and other stewards of heritage assets on how, when and whether to adapt their management and conservation planning for sites and assets in their care.

They will continue to utilise hazard mapping and will develop vulnerability scoring to create a priority list of State Care sites deemed to be at high risk from the impacts of climate change.

HED will also publish guidance for owners on retrofitting historic buildings.

The Northern Ireland Football Fund also plan to develop an Adaptation Plan using the NIAdapts Planning Toolkit¹² and identify priority areas where adaptation measures will be most needed and effective within the estate.

Arm's Length Bodies

National Museums NI will develop an adaptation plan using the NIAdapts Planning Toolkit to identify priority areas where adaptation measures will be most needed and effective within their estate.

Libraries NI will finalise business continuity plans for the key areas in the organisation. They will identify libraries where grassed areas could be left uncut to encourage flora and fauna, together with habitats for insects.

¹² Home - Climate Northern Ireland (niadapts.org.uk)

Behavioural Change

Behavioural Change is essential for achieving our ambitious climate targets. How we think and how we act in dealing with the climate emergency is critical. Even small changes, which we can build on over time, will make a big difference for future generations. All of us, whether in the workplace or in our day to day lives can, through changing our behaviours, support a more climate friendly environment. The continued learning and development of our people to change mindsets and adopt more climate focused thinking into our decision making is a crucial part of the Department's response.



TIME FOR
CHANGE

Progress to date

The adoption of sustainable behaviours is a key component in responding to climate change and this is where the Department and its Arm's Length Bodies, due to the engagement we have with our people and communities, has a critical role. To date, actions to influence behavioural change include:

The Department's Voluntary and Community Division (VCD) has included an Inclusion and Sustainability clause in its grant funding agreement template. This will ensure that, where applicable, the mitigating factors associated with climate change are considered as part of funding arrangements. This will continue to be used, when appropriate, for all new letters of offer in 2024/25 and going forward into future years.

Senior staff in the NI Football Fund have completed Carbon Literacy Training and achieved certification. Staff have also undertaken Climate Smart training and helped encourage its roll out across the Department. Climate Smart are introductory climate change training sessions which have been specifically designed for NICS. The training is funded by DAERA and delivered in conjunction with DoF. A number of Historic Environment Division staff have also undertaken accredited Carbon Literacy training with the Heritage Alliance in the last year.

The Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) for Architecture and the Built Environment in Northern Ireland was established to advise the Minister for Communities on the implementation and development of the Architecture and the Built Environment policy. MAG supports communities, developers, local authorities, and government to create high quality places, buildings and landscapes that promote well-being, sustainable futures, and the economy in Northern Ireland. MAG are very active in ensuring that climate change is appropriately considered as part of any decision making and have established a Climate Change Working Group which identifies opportunities for cross-collaboration with other Departmental groups on strategic climate change related matters and provides advice to the Department, ALBs and other partners. MAG has also published Principles Papers on 'Quality of Residential Space'¹³ and 'Inclusive Places',¹⁴ in which sustainability is a key principle.

The Historic Environment Division has engaged with councils through their community planning process to advise them of the potential of the historic environment and are working with a number of councils as they produce Local Development Plans, including steps to consider the future impacts of climate change.

¹³ MAG Principles - Quality of Residential Space | Department for Communities (communities-ni.gov.uk)

¹⁴ MAG Principles - Inclusive Places | Department for Communities (communities-ni.gov.uk)



Arm's Length Bodies

Libraries NI has sought to highlight actions individuals can take to adopt a 'greener lifestyle' through a climate change exhibition which has visited 71 libraries since April 2022. They have also signed up to the Green Libraries Manifesto in August 2023. Signatories of the manifesto commit to a set of common principles with an emphasis to put sustainability at the heart of their work and planning, to embrace innovation that will help change current practices and to grow and share knowledge.

Sport NI issued 'The Club Environment' Survey in August 2023. This was open for eight weeks to collect data on sports club's environmental performance, knowledge and built structures. Their Environmental Policy Working Group undertook carbon literacy training in May 2023. They have also published an Information Paper and a Position Statement following the ban of microplastic in the EU, to provide guidance to the sector. As part of the sectoral engagement Sport NI hosted a day long information session for local authorities, governing bodies, and other stakeholders.

National Museums NI purchased a Carbon Literacy Toolkit for Museums. They also developed two Sustainability Staff Newsletters. A commuter survey was issued to staff to estimate Scope 3 emissions¹⁵.

Locations were identified across the estate for recycling containers for visitors and the procurement of these containers is now in progress. National Museums NI also launched a sustainability webpage¹⁶ to provide information to visitors and staff on sustainability initiatives within the organisation.

Key Activities for 2024/25

The Department's Voluntary and Community Division will seek to include a shared commitment to climate justice and sustainable development in the New Partnership Agreement between the Voluntary and Community Sector and government. It is anticipated that the new Agreement will be finalised by June 2024.

The Ministerial Advisory Group for Architecture and the Built Environment in Northern Ireland (MAG) will continue to meet with senior officials across the NICS to ensure the Executive are prioritising climate change and striving to achieve net zero emission targets.

The MAG Climate Change Group, in responding to climate change will:

- Complete a MAG Climate Change Action Plan for 2024/25 by 30 April.

¹⁵ Measuring UK greenhouse gas emissions - Office for National Statistics

¹⁶ Sustainability | National Museums NI



- Provide input into the Review of Architecture and Built Environment Policy as and when required.
- Publish further MAG Principles Papers in relation to 'Transport', 'Heritage' and 'Inclusive Design and Dementia' with sustainability a key theme for each document. The 'Heritage', 'Inclusive Design and Dementia' documents are due to be published by 31 December 24.

Digital, Security & IT Services will upskill their team to consider environmental issues in their work and to adopt a more climate focused thinking into their decision making. They will also use the Departmental intranet as a communication platform for raising awareness of technical climate considerations for those procuring digital solutions.

Historic Environment Division (HED) will continue to work with other heritage organisations dealing with climate change across the UK and Ireland. They will also:

- Maintain and develop the HED climate change webpages.¹⁷
- Encourage more staff to undertake carbon literacy training with the Heritage Alliance, including members of their Senior Management Team.
- Organise an internal 'Sharing and Learning' event to raise the profile of the climate agenda and HED's responsibilities.

- Produce flooding and retrofitting guidance for historic buildings.
- Submit the biennial report on 'Protocol for Care of Government Historic Estate' to the Communities Committee of the NI Assembly for publication.

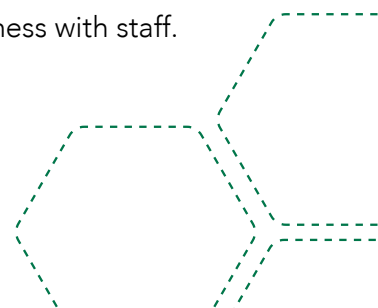
The Northern Ireland Football Fund will encourage football clubs to undertake carbon literacy training and promote the learning across club networks (leadership, players, fans, communities).

The design of the NI Football Fund is heavily focused on achieving wider benefits beyond the core benefits for football. This includes actions to address climate change. This will be reflected in scoring criteria for funding and in expectations for design, tender preparation, and delivery stages.

Climate Change Division will be to the forefront of the Department's actions to increase climate change awareness, promote climate literacy and lead on behavioural change. Work is already underway in this regard and will cover:

- Developing a Climate Change intranet webpage that will collate all Departmental climate change material and act as an online resource area for staff.
- Contribute articles to the Departmental intranet that highlight climate initiatives and stories to raise awareness with staff.

¹⁷ Heritage and Climate Change | Department for Communities (communities-ni.gov.uk)



- All staff in the Division will complete both modules of the Climate Smart training. We will also actively encourage and promote the completion of the introductory module across the Department. The Department's Communities, Place and Local Government Group have additionally committed that all their staff will complete the introductory module by March 2025, and this will be included on each staff member's Personal Development Plan.
- Attending Senior Management Team meetings across the Department to engage with branches to explore further the ideas, initiatives and support needs described in the Climate Change Survey.
- Working with the Communications Unit to develop a communications plan to best support colleague engagement
- Developing and delivering a series of policy and awareness seminars throughout the year focusing on different climate related topics and themes.

Arm's Length Bodies

Sport NI will look to undertake a detailed dive into the data collected as part of the 'The Club Environment' survey, the findings of which will be published on the Sport NI website. Other priorities for Sport NI this year include:

- Refining the draft Sports Club Energy and Environment guidance documents.

- Develop a webpage to host the Sports Club Energy and Environment guidance documents and engage with the sports sector about the information contained therein.
- Develop and maintain a sustainability webpage, as required, including the publication of Sport NI's carbon action plan, calculated carbon figures, the changes they are making and the impact these are having.
- Use the Carbon Literacy Toolkit to deliver training to Sport NI staff.
- Explore 'Business in the Community Climate Pledge'¹⁸ and 'Pledge to Net Zero'¹⁹.

National Museums NI will:

- Use the Carbon Literacy Toolkit to deliver carbon literacy training to their staff over the period of the three-year licence.
- Issue the Sustainability Staff Newsletter at least twice per year.
- Encourage staff to consider the impact of their daily commute through the annual staff commuter survey and to share data from the previous survey.
- Deploy recycling containers within estate and monitor the recycling rate on a monthly basis for improvements. It will also undertake a waste audit of back-of-house operations to inform how the current recycling rate can be improved upon by

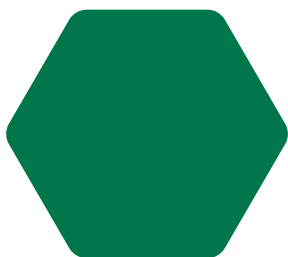
¹⁸ Climate Action Pledge (bitcni.org.uk)

¹⁹ <https://www.pledgetonetzero.org>



determining the composition of their waste streams.

- Maintain and develop their sustainability webpage, as required, and include the publication of calculated carbon figures, as required under their commitment to the 'Pledge to Net Zero'.





Barriers, Challenges and Opportunities

The Summary of our last Climate Change Action Plan in 2022/23 began with the line "Climate change has been described as the defining issue of this generation. It impacts on – and is impacted by – all that we do". Two years on from that this line proves truer than ever.

The effects of climate change are all around us; our winters are getting milder and wetter²⁰, and our summers are continuing to get hotter (see Fig.1) and drier. These are facts that we must accept if we are to move forward with an agenda of introducing measures and policies to slow the pace of change and to adapt to this new reality.

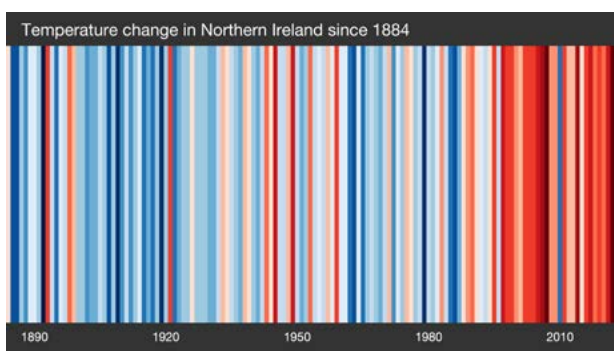


Fig.1 Temperature Change in NI 1884 – 2022²¹

We have detailed the actions we have already taken as a Department, along with the interventions that we are planning to take, which are within our sphere of responsibility, to:

- A. Mitigate against this situation getting any worse
- B. Learn to become resilient to living in a hotter and wetter Northern Ireland
- C. Try to change the way we think and act towards the world we're faced with today.

In terms of Mitigation and Adaptation the biggest hurdle we face in tackling these areas is funding. We have been living in economically straitened times for some years now. All corners of society have felt the effects of the cost-of-living crisis. Government finances are no exception. We are having to do more with less. The actions we will need to take in response to climate change will require significant financial support and we need to ensure the best use of the funding available and consider alternative funding mechanisms.

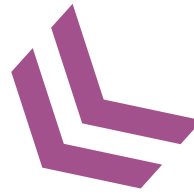
However, money is neither the only challenge, nor the only solution. We must show leadership. All of us.

In February 2024 the devolved administration was restored in Northern Ireland after a period of two years, ensuring that Ministerial and Executive leadership is now in place.

That leadership is not only required at Executive, Ministerial and Departmental Management level though. Climate change impacts on all the work of the Department and each of us must show leadership to tackle the problems that we face with respect to climate change. It is a massive challenge for everyone, but we need to approach it with an open mind and a firm resolve. We will need to

²⁰ Analysis: How UK winters are getting warmer and wetter - Carbon Brief

²¹ <https://showyourstripes.info/l/europe/unitedkingdom/northernireland/>



be creative and pragmatic in our thinking and open to new and innovative solutions.

Skills

A lack of green skills currently presents a big challenge in Northern Ireland. However, the Department has a leading role in co-developing and delivering employability interventions through standalone labour market provision and within initiatives that include Labour Market Partnerships and the wider Levelling Up agenda. To do this effectively, we must collaborate with the Department for the Economy with its lead on skills, and our local partners. There are significant opportunities for groups that are economically inactive, unemployed, or underemployed to develop new green skills.

As with society at large, the opportunity also exists for the Department to improve awareness in our people, by using the actions and initiatives detailed under the Behavioural Change theme above. By equipping them with relevant knowledge of climate change and its impacts, we can make them more resilient to deal with the challenges faced both in a work context and also in their everyday lives.

Partnership

We will only meet these challenging targets if we work together, share resources, knowledge, and skills. A number of climate

change working groups have been established across the Department and in our ALBs in recognition of the wide range of skills and business areas that need to come together to respond in a joined-up way. We need to build on this partnership across the NICS and with our partners in the wider community.

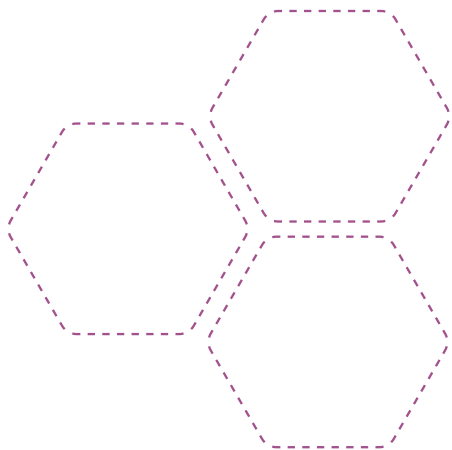
Just Transition

The concept of a Just Transition has evolved and broadened over time and has now become a well-established part of discussions on how to tackle the challenges of climate change. In the context of climate change it means ensuring that communities whose lives and livelihoods are expected to be particularly impacted by efforts to reduce emissions should be protected and that as we move towards a lower carbon economy, we should address current inequalities across society. The effects of climate change will be felt across all of society, but they will not affect the whole of society equally.

Section 30(3) of the Act sets out the objectives of the just transition principle which include supporting jobs that are climate resilient and environmentally sustainable, supporting low-carbon investment and supporting those who are most affected by climate change and may be the least equipped to adapt to its effects or may stand to lose out economically.

Ensuring a Just Transition as we transform to a net zero society sits within the Department's common purpose of **Supporting People, Building Communities, Shaping Places.**

We must ensure that we protect the most vulnerable in our community as we move towards meeting our climate change targets.





20
24



Governance

To support the actions set out in this plan, it is important that we have the correct organisational arrangements to provide leadership, build capacity and capability and manage risk.

Leadership

The Departmental Management Board (DMB) will ultimately be responsible for ensuring that the actions proposed above (and contained in Annex B) will be delivered during the next year. Reports on progress will be shared with the DMB bi-annually.

However, it is the responsibility of all areas of the Department to take ownership of this Climate Change Action Plan, and within their own teams to transfer organisational policy into day-to-day operational working practice and integrate carbon reduction into all decision-making.

Risk

Non-compliance with the Department's duties and obligations under the Act is a principal risk of the Department and a number of actions and controls have been established to mitigate this risk, including the development and delivery of this plan.

Monitoring and Reporting Climate Change Working Group

The Departmental Climate Change Working Group meets on a quarterly basis, or more often if deemed necessary. It is chaired by the Director of the Climate Change Division.

The scope of the Working Group's remit will encompass all activity related to climate

change in the Department. The work will include:

- Drafting, implementing, and monitoring the Departmental Climate Change Strategy and yearly action plans.
- Receiving and debating climate related reports from NICS structures.
- Maintaining knowledge of connected climate related activities across Northern Ireland and NICS.
- Reviewing draft reports prior to their submission to DMB and other decision-making bodies, including progress updates on this plan's actions throughout the year.
- Considering incentives, guidance and instruction required to embed climate change adaptation and mitigation in Departmental activity.
- Supporting DMB in monitoring the actions throughout the year.

In all of this work, the Working Group will provide a forum for informed debate and ensuring understanding and connections within and beyond the Department.

Climate Change Division

Climate Change Division, as secretariat to the Climate Change Working Group, will ensure that updates from business areas are collated each quarter, progress against milestones accurately and appropriately measured, and reported as such to the Working Group.

The Division and Working Group will continue to draw on the expertise within our Department, across NICS and with our partners to ensure we develop our capacity and skills necessary to embed our climate change response in our corporate approach and give all staff the support and confidence to develop innovative solutions to this important issue.

Climate Change Division will develop an annual survey for all colleagues in the Department to ascertain attitudes and awareness to climate change. This will be used to measure progress on awareness levels of climate change in the Department on an ongoing basis.

Next Steps

Climate Change Division, with the support of the Working Group, will develop a long-term Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy.

This Strategy has the opportunity to create shared leadership and collaboration with all business areas by setting a collective vision, building the framework to encourage innovation, develop partnerships and share skills and knowledge and, most importantly, giving authority to all staff to take action.





The background is a dark blue field filled with abstract geometric shapes. Large, light blue hexagons are layered, with some containing darker blue hexagons. A network of thin, light blue lines, some solid and some dashed, weaves across the composition, connecting various points. Small white and light blue circles are scattered throughout, adding to the technical or architectural feel of the design.

Annexes

Annex A

2023/24 Departmental Business Plan Updates

Source: Departmental Business Plan 2023/24 ²²

Theme: Sustainability & Inclusive Growth

Priority: Develop and support sustainability & Green Growth in Northern Ireland

Strategic Objective: To ensure our approaches deliver a cohesive programme of activity to mitigate and adapt to climate change and to show leadership in this regard.

BUSINESS PLANNING ACTIVITY	BUSINESS PLANNING MILESTONE	GROUP	STATUS
To meet the requirements of section 33 of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 as the sector lead for the residential element of 'residential and public buildings'	By 30 June 2023, final residential buildings input for Carbon Budget consultation to be with DAERA	HURLG ²³	Complete
To meet the requirements of section 33 of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 as the sector lead for the residential element of 'residential and public buildings'	By 30 September 2023, to have tested the feasibility of the Housing Executive accessing unconsolidated borrowing	HURLG	Delayed
To meet the requirements of section 33 of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 as the sector lead for the residential element of 'residential and public buildings'	By 31 December 2023, support DAERA in the consultation process for the Carbon Budget	HURLG	Complete
To meet the requirements of section 33 of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 as the sector lead for the residential element of 'residential and public buildings'	By 31 March 2024, provide a recommendation on options to extend or replace the Affordable Warmth Scheme	HURLG	Complete
To meet the requirements of section 33 of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 as the sector lead for the residential element of 'residential and public buildings'	By 31 March 2024, to provide a recommendation on options to increase investment and low carbon retrofitting in Housing Executive properties and to tackle the maintenance backlog	HURLG	Delayed
To meet the requirements of section 33 of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 as the sector lead for the residential element of 'residential and public buildings'	By 31 March 2024, provide 4,200 Energy Efficiency interventions in 2,800 homes through the Affordable Warmth Scheme	HURLG	Complete

²² DfC Business Plan - Key Deliverables (communities-ni.gov.uk)

²³ Housing, Urban Regeneration and Local Government. NB. Following a Departmental restructure in January 2024, HURLG was replaced by two new Groups, Housing and Sustainability (HSG) and Communities, Place and Local Government (CPLG). All relevant milestones for HURLG were retained under HSG following the restructure.

BUSINESS PLANNING ACTIVITY	BUSINESS PLANNING MILESTONE	GROUP	STATUS
To meet the requirements of section 33 of the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 as the sector lead for the residential element of 'residential and public buildings'	By 31 March 2024, finalised draft of Residential Sector Climate Action Plan to be with DAERA	HURLG	Delayed
Ensure that the Department embeds consideration of its statutory obligations under the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 in all of its activities	By 30 June 2023, complete the evaluation of the pilots of the Climate Change Risk and Vulnerability Assessment approach and template in regeneration interventions	All	Complete
Ensure that the Department embeds consideration of its statutory obligations under the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 in all of its activities	By 30 September 2023, to have agreed the structure and scope and resource a new Division to lead on delivering the Department's obligations in relation to Climate Change and carbon reduction	All	Complete
Ensure that the Department embeds consideration of its statutory obligations under the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 in all of its activities	By 30 September 2023, agree process and mainstream into regeneration scheme development	All	Delayed ²⁴
Ensure that the Department embeds consideration of its statutory obligations under the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 in all of its activities	By 31 December 2023, ensure that climate change issues are a central consideration in the design and delivery of Labour Market Partnership interventions, subject to affordability	All	Complete
Ensure that the Department embeds consideration of its statutory obligations under the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 in all of its activities	By 31 March 2024, work with key IT suppliers to complete a Cloud Adoption Assessment to measure the costs/ environmental impacts of migrating DfC legacy IT solutions to the cloud to help inform future decisions for a full cloud migration programme	All	Complete
Ensure that the Department embeds consideration of its statutory obligations under the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 in all of its activities	By 31 March 2024, further embed climate literacy amongst staff, so that they feel reliably informed as regards the choices they have to make and their impacts on climate change	All	Complete
Ensure that the Department embeds consideration of its statutory obligations under the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 in all of its activities	By 31 March 2024, implement the agreed Green Growth Test in all of our activities, thereby embedding climate, environmental and economic considerations – and the appropriate balance between them – in all of our decision making	All	Delayed
Ensure that the Department embeds consideration of its statutory obligations under the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 in all of its activities	By 31 March 2024, take forward baseline carbon audit recommendations for state care sites and identify actions to reduce the sites' carbon footprint	All	Delayed

²⁴ Action carried forward to 2024/25.

Annex B

Summary of Key Activities for 2024/25

NO	THEME	ACTIVITY	OWNER
M1	Mitigation	By March 2025, prepare bids for 10 libraries for Invest to Save funding from the Department for Economy for the replacement of existing lighting with LED lighting and the installation of PV panel arrays	Libraries NI
M2	Mitigation	By March 2025, design EnerPHit library refurbishments at two libraries to pre-tender stage, subject to available funding	Libraries NI
M2	Mitigation	Implement a rolling plan to replace existing halogen and fluorescent lights with LED lighting throughout 2024/25	PRONI
M4	Mitigation	By March 2025 – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure and monitor carbon footprint and seek opportunities to fund carbon action plan and target areas of high emissions to make progress toward net zero ambitions • Utilise the AMR system to react more proactively to areas of significant energy use and through the Energy Management Working Group identify areas of estate where energy efficiency could be improved in line with Executive Energy Management Strategy • Implement recommendations from the fleet review and target areas where decarbonisation can occur within organisation's fleet • Identify opportunities from a solar PV feasibility study to deploy PV panels across the estate 	National Museums NI
M5	Mitigation	Include carbon reduction in Departmental led City and Growth Deal projects. For example, include methodology for managing and minimising whole life carbon emissions in procurements which form part of large-scale projects (such as the Bangor City Deal project) by 31 March 2025	Regional Development Office / North West Development Office
M6	Mitigation	By 31 March 2025, to ensure the development and implementation of physical regeneration projects considers place-specific climate change mitigation, adaptation, and behavioural change, as measured through industry standards (e.g. BREEAM, BREEAM Infrastructure and PAS 2080)	Regional Development Office / North West Development Office / Belfast Regeneration Division
M7	Mitigation	By March 2025, embed climate change considerations in the Department's heritage activity, including our custodianship of State Care Monuments	Historic Environment Division
M8	Mitigation	By the end of 2024/25 have procured a consultant who will provide a baseline carbon audit for the Sport NI estate, including the development of a carbon reduction action plan	Sport NI
M9	Mitigation	Establish an Energy Monitoring Group and hold quarterly meetings during 2024/25 to identify areas of significant energy use and improve energy efficiency within the organisation following the findings of the baseline carbon audit	Sport NI

NO	THEME	ACTIVITY	OWNER
M10	Mitigation	Engage with National Lottery Cross Distributor Environmental Working Group and Artificial Grass Pitch Environmental Stakeholder Group in 2024/25	Sport NI
M11	Mitigation	By 31 March 2025, to prepare Programme and Project level business cases which will set out final proposals for disbursement of funding to clubs which includes climate change considerations	NI Football Fund
M12	Mitigation	By 31 March 2025, to have completed a public consultation on the Fuel Poverty Strategy	Climate Change Division
M13	Mitigation	Secure cross-departmental agreement and commence work on developing a long-term plan for the decarbonisation of the residential buildings sector: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By 30 June 2024 to review progress on stakeholder actions identified in the “roadmap for decarbonisation” and provide an updated timeline of actions to 2030 to the Residential Decarbonisation Coordination Group By September 2024 to submit a paper on defining a common carbon reduction measurement to the Residential Decarbonisation Coordination Group Hold at least 4 meetings of the Residential Decarbonisation Coordination Group by March 2025 	Climate Change Division
M14	Mitigation	To publish a final report in November 2024 on the Rural-Led Energy Transition (RULET) to provide the evidence base for a revised NIHE heating policy, and inform development of wider decarbonisation policies	NIHE
M15	Mitigation	By March 2025, to have delivered the 300 Unit Low Carbon Retrofit Programme (LCP)	NIHE
M16	Mitigation	As part of the LCP, retrofit approximately 87 dwellings by July 2024 to deliver renewable energy for power generation and electric storage, with the remainder by April 2025	NIHE
M17	Mitigation	By 31 March 2025, to continue to work on input for the Residential Sector and to work with other Departments to assist DAERA in meeting timeframes for the NI Climate Action Plan	Climate Change Division

Summary of Key Activities for 2024/25

NO	THEME	ACTIVITY	OWNER
A1	Adaptation	Develop an adaptation plan using the NIAdapts Planning Toolkit by 31 March 2025 to identify priority areas where adaptation measures will be most needed and effective within the estate	National Museums NI
A2	Adaptation	During 2024/25, to have included Mitigation and Adaptive change in all of the Department led City and Growth Deal projects	Regional Development Office / North West Development Office
A3	Adaptation	By 31 March 2025, at 10 libraries grassed areas to be left uncut, where appropriate, to encourage flora and fauna, together with habitats for insects	Libraries NI
A4	Adaptation	Urban Team to integrate Climate Change Risks and Vulnerabilities assessment as part of all public realm scheme business cases by 31 March 2025	Belfast Regeneration Division / North West Development Office / Regional Development Office
A5	Adaptation	By 31 March 2025, to have piloted the Risk and Vulnerability Assessment on a live public realm project (namely BSA 5 Blackstaff Square)	Belfast Regeneration Division
A6	Adaptation	Draft a discussion paper on the feasibility and opinions for setting an urban green space target by end of February 2025	Belfast Regeneration Division
A7	Adaptation	Belfast City Council to plant 18,000 trees on the Department's land in the Colin area of Poleglass, Dunmurry as part of the Belfast One Million Trees Initiative by 31 March 2025	Belfast Regeneration Division
A8	Adaptation	By 31 March 2025, to progress the Greyabbey Climate Change Pilot Study	Historic Environment Division
A9	Adaptation	By 31 March 2025, to produce adaptation guidance as part of ongoing engagement with sister organisations	Historic Environment Division
A10	Adaptation	By 31 March 2025, to utilise hazard mapping and develop vulnerability scoring to create a priority list of State Care sites deemed to be at high risk from the impacts of climate change	Historic Environment Division
A11	Adaptation	By 31 March 2025, to publish guidance for owners on retrofitting historic buildings	Historic Environment Division
A12	Adaptation	By the end of 2024/25, have undertaken a survey to understand the financial and facility management implication of the recent EU ban on intentionally added microplastics and the impact this has on the sports sector within Northern Ireland, including lifecycle and Adaptation measures in place	Sport NI

Summary of Key Activities for 2024/25

NO	THEME	ACTIVITY	OWNER
BC1	Behavioural Change	Finalise New Partnership Agreement between the VCS and government by June 2024 containing a shared commitment to climate justice and sustainable development	Voluntary & Community Division
BC2	Behavioural Change	Include a Climate Change clause, where appropriate, in all new letters of offer for grant assistance in 2024/25	Voluntary & Community Division
BC3	Behavioural Change	MAG Climate Change Group to complete Climate Change Action Plan 24/25 by 30 April and identify opportunities for cross-collaboration with DfC Groups on strategic climate change related advice to DfC and ALB and other partners	MAG
BC4	Behavioural Change	MAG Chair will attend meetings with DfI, DAERA and SIB by 30 June 24	MAG
BC5	Behavioural Change	The 'Heritage', 'Inclusive Design and Dementia' documents are due to be published by 31 December 24	MAG
BC6	Behavioural Change	All Communities, Place and Local Government staff to complete Climate Smart by 31 March 25	Communities, Place and Local Government
BC7	Behavioural Change	By 31 March 2025, deliver the Carbon Literacy Museum Sector Toolkit training to at least two pilot groups of staff during the first year of the three-year licence. Participation in Carbon Literacy Action Day ¹² on 14 November 2024 through organised staff training on that date	National Museums NI
BC8	Behavioural Change	Issue the Sustainability Staff Newsletter at least twice per year	National Museums NI
BC9	Behavioural Change	During 2024/25, deploy recycling containers within estate and monitor the recycling rate on a monthly basis for improvements. Undertake a waste audit of back-of-house operations to inform how the current recycling rate can be improved upon by determining the composition of our waste streams	National Museums NI
BC10	Behavioural Change	During 2024/25, maintain and develop sustainability webpage including publication of calculated carbon figures as required under our commitment to Pledge to Net Zero	National Museums NI
BC11	Behavioural Change	By 31 March 2025, to submit the biennial report on 'Protocol for Care of Government Historic Estate' to the Communities Committee of the NI Assembly for publication	Historic Environment Division

²⁵ The Carbon Literacy Action Day 2024 - The Carbon Literacy Project

NO	THEME	ACTIVITY	OWNER
BC12	Behavioural Change	By 31 March 2025, to encourage football clubs to undertake carbon literacy training and promote the learning across club networks (leadership, players, fans, communities)	NI Football Fund
BC13	Behavioural Change	By September 2024 have a draft report detailing the data that was collected as part of the 'The Club Environment' survey, the findings of which will be published on the Sport NI website	Sport NI
BC14	Behavioural Change	By 31 March 2025, to refine the draft Sports Club Energy and Environment guidance	Sport NI
BC15	Behavioural Change	By 31 March 2025, to develop a Sport NI webpage as a resource hub hosting the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Sports Club Energy and Environment guidance documents and engage. Draft engagement by end of Q3 2024/25 Sport NI's carbon action plan, calculated carbon figures, the changes they are making and the impact these are having. Delivered in line with M8 and M9 above 	Sport NI
BC16	Behavioural Change	By 31 March 2025, to use the Carbon Literacy Toolkit to deliver training to Sport NI staff	Sport NI
BC17	Behavioural Change	To increase climate literacy across the Department, Climate Change Division will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By April 2024, develop a Climate Change intranet webpage that will collate all Departmental climate change material and act as an online resource area for staff By March 2025, have contributed at least five articles to the Departmental intranet that highlight climate initiatives and stories to raise awareness with staff By December 2024, develop and deliver three Climate Change Policy and awareness seminars By October 2024, develop an all-staff survey of climate change awareness and attitudes to set a baseline to measure improvements in climate literacy 	Climate Change Division
BC18	Behavioural Change	By March 2025, all Climate Change Division staff to complete both modules of the Climate Smart training	Climate Change Division

