

# Summary of the responses to the

---

## Consultation on the establishment of a Just Transition Commission



Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil  
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Depairtment o'

**Fairmin, Environment  
an' Kintra Matthers**

[www.daera-ni.gov.uk](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk)

On request, we can arrange to provide other formats of this document above, such as:

- Paper Copy
- Large Print
- Braille
- Other Languages

To request an alternative format, please contact us:

**Email:** [Climatechangediscussion@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Climatechangediscussion@daera-ni.gov.uk)

**Telephone:** 028 9056 9708 or 028 9056 9567 and talk to one of the Consultation Team.

If you have a hearing difficulty, you can contact DAERA via Text Relay.

- Dial 18001 028 9056 9708

**Post:** Climate Change Policy Division

1st Floor Clare House  
303 Airport Road West  
Sydenham Intake  
Belfast  
BT3 9ED

## Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
Methodology	4
Quantitative analysis	4
Qualitative analysis	4
<b>Summary of the Quantitative Analysis of Responses</b>	<b>5</b>
Process	5
Summary	5
<b>Summary of the Qualitative Analysis of Responses</b>	<b>8</b>
Process	8
Summary	8
<b>Background</b>	<b>11</b>
The Climate Change Act	12
Carbon Budgets	12
Climate Action Plan	12
Just Transition Principle	12
Just Transition Commission	13
The consultation	13
<b>Analysis of Consultation Responses</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Conclusion and Next Steps</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Appendix A</b>	<b>47</b>

## Executive Summary

In March 2022, the Northern Ireland Assembly passed the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022<sup>1</sup> (the Act), committing the region to a target of net zero emissions by 2050.

The Act requires the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to set five-yearly carbon budgets and to produce Climate Action Plans (CAPs) setting out the policies and proposals to meet carbon budgets. The Act also requires departments to have regard to the “just transition principle” when developing and implementing emissions reduction policies. To help meet these requirements, DAERA is required to establish an independent body known as the Just Transition Commission (the Commission) to oversee the just transition elements of the Act and provide advice to Northern Ireland departments.

A consultation on the establishment of the Commission was launched on 11 November 2024 and closed on 20 January 2025. The consultation received 100 written responses. During the consultation, DAERA engaged with consultees through a number of events that were held both on-line and in-person, some of which were hosted by external organisations and there were some direct engagement sessions with those sectors and groups mandated for representation on the Commission by the Act.

The Department would like to express our thanks to everyone who responded to the consultation and to those organisations and bodies that facilitated consultation events and to the many groups and individuals that participated in such helpful discussions. The feedback from all of these sessions has been carefully considered and will help inform decisions on the final Regulations to establish the Commission.

## Methodology

The consultation document posed 13 separate questions that provided a wealth of data that could be analysed both from a quantitative (mathematical and statistical) perspective, and from a qualitative (thematic, subject and content) perspective.

## Quantitative analysis

All but one question in the report provided an opportunity to produce a high-level breakdown of the simple response to a ‘Yes’, ‘No’ or ‘Unsure’ answer to the question, and this has been presented in the analysis as a bar chart.

## Qualitative analysis

Each question additionally offered the consultee the opportunity to provide more information to support the answer they had provided. A significant number of respondents provided additional detail. All responses were fully considered and included in the analysis.

<sup>1</sup> [Climate Change Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2022](#)

## Summary of the Quantitative Analysis of Responses

### Process

As part of the consultation, the Department presented a series of policy proposals around the establishment of the Commission and a set of draft Regulations to illustrate to respondents what the established legislation itself might look like. Twelve of the questions in the consultation asked consultees if they agreed or disagreed with a proposal related to the draft Regulations. None of the questions were mandatory, but there was strong engagement, with an 87% average response rate.

Those respondents who did not provide an answer to an individual question were not included in the quantifiable data presented.

A final, thirteenth question was included in the consultation on what consultees thought the initial priorities of the Commission should be. This was a comment-only question and so is not subject to quantitative analysis, however all of the responses to this question have been carefully considered and are covered in the overall analysis.

### Summary

From the consultation responses and the consultation events there was overwhelming support for the establishment of a Just Transition Commission with strong support across all of the proposals ranging from 65% to 95% agreement. The average support across all of the policy proposals was 80%.

**Table 1: Quantitative analysis of responses**

Question	Yes	No	UNSURE	TOTAL RESPONSES	% in agreement
<b>Question 1</b> - Do you agree with the proposal that the Commission should be established as an Advisory Non-Departmental Public Body with the chair and its members recruited in line with the guidance issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments?	77	4	7	88	88%
<b>Question 2</b> - Do you agree the Commission membership should be between 7-20 members?	73	7	9	89	82%

Question	Yes	No	UNSURE	TOTAL RESPONSES	% in agreement
<b>Question 3</b> - Do you agree the Commission membership should meet on average 15 days per year?	55	10	19	84	65%
<b>Question 4</b> - Do you agree that the Commission should be similar to the Scottish model and supported by a small team to provide a secretariat function to allow the Commission to function effectively?	71	8	6	85	84%
<b>Question 5</b> - Do you agree that members appointed to the Commission should serve a term of 5 years?	55	9	20	84	65%
<b>Question 6</b> - Do you agree that the Commission would fulfil the oversight function required of it in the Act by reviewing and reporting on the development and implementation of:  (a) any sectoral plan published under sections 13 to 21 of the Act;  (b) any climate action plan published under section 29 or 51 of the Act; and  (c) any scheme established by Regulations under section 31 of the Act.	60	5	17	82	73%
<b>Question 7</b> - Q7. Do you agree that the Commission would be fulfilling its advice function by:  (a) Responding to a Northern Ireland department's request for advice within agreed timeframes.  (b) Issuing research and guidance documents for departments to review and consider when developing emission reduction policies.	63	6	14	83	76%

Question	Yes	No	UNSURE	TOTAL RESPONSES	% in agreement
<b>Question 8</b> - Should the Commission include representation from the Transport sector?	83	1	6	90	92%
<b>Question 9</b> - Should the Commission include representation from the Energy sector?	81	11	3	95	85%
<b>Question 10</b> - Should the Commission include representation from the Financial/Green Finance sector?	67	12	10	89	75%
<b>Question 11</b> - Are there any other sectors in addition to the Transport, Energy, Finance and those listed in 37(4) of the Act that should be represented on the Commission – and if so, please provide reasons for your answer.	76	3	12	91	84%
<b>Question 12</b> - Do you agree the Commission should have a power to establish Ad-Hoc Committees or working groups to secure additional knowledge or expertise that may not be available with the Commission.	87	3	2	92	95%
<b>Question 13</b> - What do you think the key initial priorities should be for the Commission?	There were 92 individual responses to this question. While it is not possible to quantify the responses to this question all of the suggested priorities have been carefully considered and are included in the analysis later in this document and in a separate report that will be provided to the Commission.				

## Summary of the Qualitative Analysis of Responses

### Process

Each question had the option to provide a comment, and across the twelve 'Yes/No/Unsure' questions an average of 67% of respondents chose to provide additional comments and suggestions.

### Summary

Overall, there was significantly strong support from respondents for DAERA's proposals on the type of public body the Commission should be, the composition of its membership, the Commission's role and legislated functions, the proposed sectors to be represented, its reporting arrangements and the provision of a secretariat to provide the support required for the Commission. The majority of respondents agreed that the Commission should be an Advisory Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB).

The majority of consultation questions that focused on the membership of the Commission, and specifically which sectors should be represented on it, saw strong agreement emerge. Notably the three additional sectors that were put forward by the Department as potential additions to the existing seven mandated sectors<sup>2</sup> for inclusion on the Commission were endorsed, with significant majorities of respondents supporting their inclusion.

Proposed sector for inclusion	Percentage in support for inclusion
Energy	85%
Transport	92%
Green Finance	75%

With energy and transport, there was broad agreement from respondents that they should be included as they were understood to be two, currently high-emitting, sectors that could contribute the most in reducing Northern Ireland's emissions and could have an impact on both consumers and employment. Many respondents felt it was important for Northern Ireland to be able to attract and to be able to access the green finance and investment that aligns with sustainability goals. There was also recognition for the need for innovation, creativity and alternative and different funding models to help drive the green transition and that it was important for the Commission to have expertise that could support this to help ensure a just transition, thus creating support for the inclusion of green finance as a sector to be represented on the Commission.

<sup>2</sup> The seven mandated sectors are: Agriculture, Fisheries, Academia, Trade Unions, Youth Groups, Civic Society, and Environmental Groups. The three proposed additional groups were Energy, Transport, and Green Finance.



The question asked in the consultation on suggestions as to any other sector that might additionally be represented on the Commission saw a wide range of responses. Among the many suggestions, there was very strong support for three sectors in particular. These were ‘Built Environment’, which includes construction, housing, and planning; ‘wildlife, nature and biodiversity’; and representation for rural communities (distinct from the agriculture representative for reasons that are covered later in this document).

On the two questions related to the Commission’s statutory functions of ‘Oversight’ and ‘Advice’, there was strong support and endorsement that the proposals would effectively meet the requirements of the Act. Respondents were also of the opinion that it was an area that should be monitored over the life of the Commission and may need to be revisited, to amend them in response to emerging circumstances.

There was a strong focus across many of the responses on the need to position workers, consumers and communities at the heart of the work of the Commission.

There were also a number of comments across the responses to several questions of the importance of listening to the voices of young people, older people, people with disabilities, those with caring responsibilities, women, those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, migrants/refugees, and other minority groups.

The final open-ended question asked the respondents to set out their views on the priorities for the new Commission. We are grateful that so many respondents provided detailed and considered responses to this question and the composite analysis of these responses will be presented to the Commission members once it is established.

There were some key areas of agreement that emerged most frequently including:

- (i) Agree a Terms of Reference for the Commission and set out Memoranda of Understanding or other mechanisms for working effectively and collaboratively with other climate change and environmental statutory bodies.
- (ii) The need for an ongoing engagement plan so the Commission can quickly achieve a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities of net zero and a just transition, and then to continue to undertake outreach, meaningful engagement, inclusive listening and participation, especially with vulnerable or marginalised communities that may be at risk of the impacts of climate change or resultant economic shifts, including Section 75 groups and those impacted by fuel poverty.
- (iii) Identify sectors which offer more immediate opportunities and significant potential to help realise a just transition from a high-emissions to a low-emissions society and provide support to departments responsible for these sectors. This should be set out in an informal and clear workplan to ensure transparency.

As with many of the detailed responses to this consultation, a number of respondents looked to the experience of the Just Transition Commission in Scotland and Ireland and suggested the Commission should focus initially on high emitting sectors, have a sector-specific approach and needs to establish relationships with counterparts in other jurisdictions to ensure shared learning. The need for the Commission to look nationally and internationally for examples of best practice and for the Commission to be able to access and/or include expertise and experience from beyond Northern Ireland was also raised across a number of the responses.

There was also interest in the role the Commission could have in influencing wider action including important emissions reduction interventions and activities led by local government, the wider public sector and the private sector.

# Background

---

## Background

### The Climate Change Act

In March 2022, the Northern Ireland Assembly passed the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022<sup>3</sup> (the Act), committing the region to a target of Net Zero emissions by 2050. The Act requires the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to set five-yearly carbon budgets, to limit emissions and keep Northern Ireland on a trajectory to meet the 2030, 2040 and 2050 targets in the Act.

### Carbon Budgets

A carbon budget provides a limit on the maximum amount of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions for a defined budgetary period in order to help meet overall and long-term emissions reduction commitments. Carbon Budget 1 (covering 2023-2027), Carbon Budget 2 (covering 2028-2032), and Carbon Budget 3 (covering 2033-2037) were agreed and legislated for by the Assembly in December 2024<sup>4</sup>.

### Climate Action Plan

The Act requires that each carbon budget has an associated Climate Action Plan (CAP) which sets out the policies and proposals of each Department that will achieve the necessary reductions in emissions to meet that carbon budget. A draft CAP to cover the first carbon budget will be published for a 16-week consultation later this year.

### Just Transition Principle

Section 30(2) of the Act requires all Government departments to have regard to the 'just transition principle' when deciding on the proposals and policies to be included in the CAP. The just transition principle is defined in detail in section 30(3) of the Act and sets out 11 objectives including to promote fairness during the transition from a high-emissions to a low-emissions economy and to ensure support is provided to those who are most affected by climate change, particularly those who may have done the least to cause it or may be the least equipped to adapt to its effects.

Section 30(6) of the Act requires that *"Each climate action plan must explain how the proposals and policies set out in the plan take account of the just transition principle."*

<sup>3</sup> [Climate Change Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2022](#)

<sup>4</sup> [The Climate Change \(Carbon Budgets 2023-2037\) regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2024](#)

## Just Transition Commission

To help meet these requirements, section 37 of the Act requires DAERA to establish a Just Transition Commission (the Commission). The functions of the Commission under the Act are to “oversee the implementation of the just transition elements” of the Act, and “to provide advice to the Northern Ireland departments on how to ensure that proposals, policies, strategies and plans required under this Act comply with the just transition principle.” These are known as the ‘Oversight’ and ‘Advice’ functions of the Commission and are further defined in the draft Regulations which were part of this consultation.

## The consultation

The consultation launched on 11 November 2024 and was scheduled to close on 13 January. This was extended by one further week to 20 January 2025 at the request of stakeholders. The consultation was hosted online on the Citizen Space web platform and attracted 75 responses via that channel. E-mails and written submissions were also accepted and provided a further 25 responses, making a total of 100 responses.

Of the 100 responses received, 83 were from organisations including charities, business representative groups, women’s groups, environmental groups, local authorities, specific sectoral groups e.g. finance, agriculture, academia, energy and transport etc, and statutory bodies with the remainder from individuals with no declared affiliation.

The consultation sought opinion on the proposed structure and responsibilities of the Commission as well as asking a question on the immediate priorities for the new body. The consultation document also included a copy of the draft Regulations for illustrative purposes.

As part of the consultation, DAERA engaged with consultees through events that were held both on-line and in-person. Across all of these events there was well informed and active engagement. A summary of these events is included at **Appendix A**. Together with the consultation responses, the engagement event feedback has been extremely valuable to the Department in ensuring that the design of the Commission is as inclusive and representative as possible. DAERA appreciates the time and effort given by all those who attended the engagement events and would like to thank those individuals and representatives of organisations who spent time and effort in submitting researched, thoughtful and highly valued responses to the consultation.

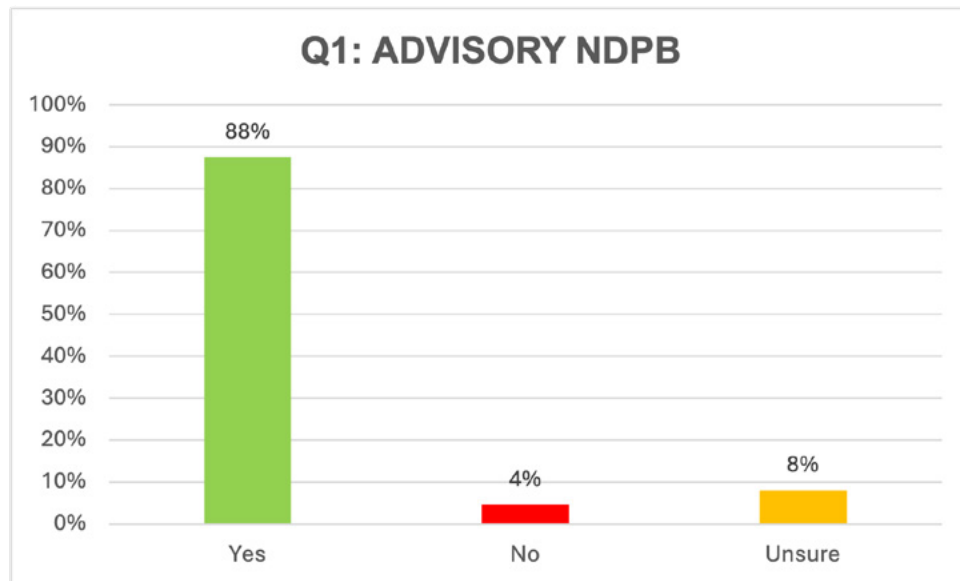
# Analysis of Consultation Responses

---

## Analysis of Consultation Responses

**Question 1: Do you agree with the proposal that the Commission should be established as an Advisory Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) with the chair and its members recruited in line with the guidance issued by the Commissioner for Public Appointments.**

There were **88** responses to this question, of whom **65** provided a comment.



There was support from 88% of the respondents for the Commission to be formed as an Advisory NPDB, with almost a third of respondents who provided comments supportive that the proposal would create a body that was “independent”, “transparent” and “impartial”. As would be the case consistently throughout the consultation, much of the support was informed by an appreciation of what respondents considered as the successful model employed by the Scottish Just Transition Commission and the Just Transition Commission in Ireland both of which have an advisory role.

***“The structure will enable the Commission to provide credible, expert, independent and impartial advice which serves to increase and enhance public trust in the body and its operations.”***

***“The Commission, when established, will be able to provide transparent decision making in relation to the implementation of ... the Climate Change Act.”***

In addition to the repeated endorsement that the Commission should be impartial and independent and therefore supportive of the proposed model, there were also many comments welcoming that the Commission would be established in statute.

***“Establishing the Commission in statute will help ensure consistent focus and stability over successive administrations and should help to create both status and political autonomy for the Just Transmission Commission.”***

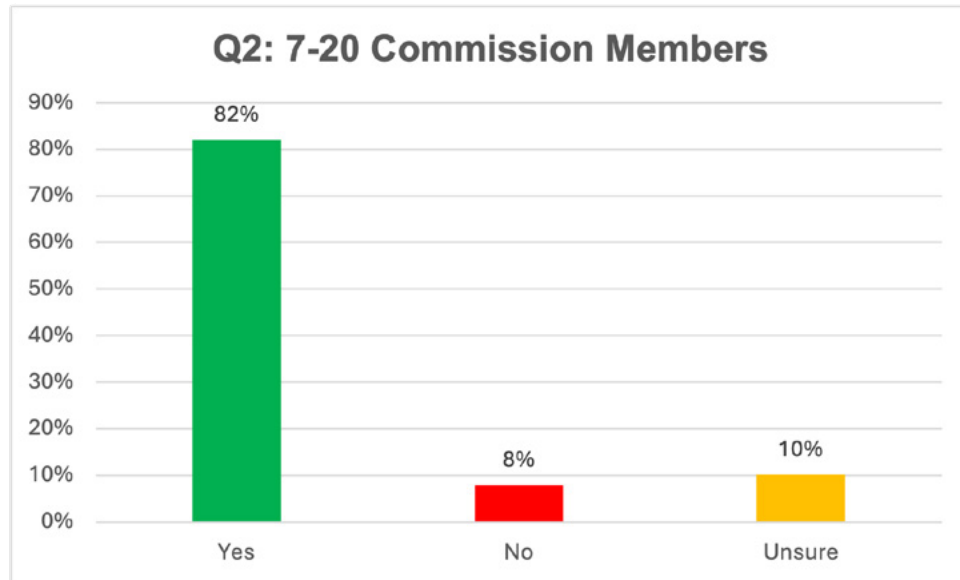
Of the four respondents that did not agree with the Commission being established as an Advisory NDPB, two wanted to see further action by having a dedicated Government department responsible for climate change, and two did not want any form of Commission to be established at all; it should be noted, however, that this would be a breach of the legislative requirements set out in the Act.

Of the 7 ‘unsure’ responses the majority wanted a stronger Commission. There were also 12 respondents that did not answer the first part of this question but provided comments that were supportive of its establishment and made specific comments later in their response on the broadening of the membership of the Commission.



**Question 2 - Do you agree the Commission membership should be between 7-20 members?**

There were **89** responses to this question, of whom **73** provided a comment.



A majority of 82% of respondents agreed that the Commission should have between 7 and 20 members.

***“7-20 members [is appropriate] to allow a broad enough representation across sectors ... whilst ensuring the Commission membership is not too large as to make the work of the group difficult to deliver.”***

***“We believe that this membership range balances the need for inclusivity with the practicalities of effective decision-making and governance”***

Many of the respondents who provided detailed comments in support of the proposal were in favour of the membership being towards the upper end of the scale, stating that this was required to have as broad a representation across society, sectors and regions as possible. It would also allow for greater diversity, ensure the provisions of adequate expertise and gather a wide range of perspectives that need to be represented on the Commission.

***“Just Transition has a very wide scope/mandate, and it is important to have representatives from a wide range of organisations to ensure that all opinions are considered.”***

Within the many comments on diversity, inclusivity and representation, the need for a regional and gender balance of the Commission members was raised a number of times and that having between 7 and 20 members would allow flexibility to accommodate this without the Commission becoming unwieldy.

Seven respondents answered 'No' to the question and three of those were of the opinion that there should be 15 members as a minimum. Of the nine respondents that said they were 'unsure' if they agreed with the Commission having between 7 and 20 members, comments typically focused on ensuring instead that it had the right expertise and on having the correct representation across sectors rather than having any set limit on the number of members.

***“The Commission membership council should consist of the appropriate numbers as per expertise necessary in determining the most suitable outcomes.”***

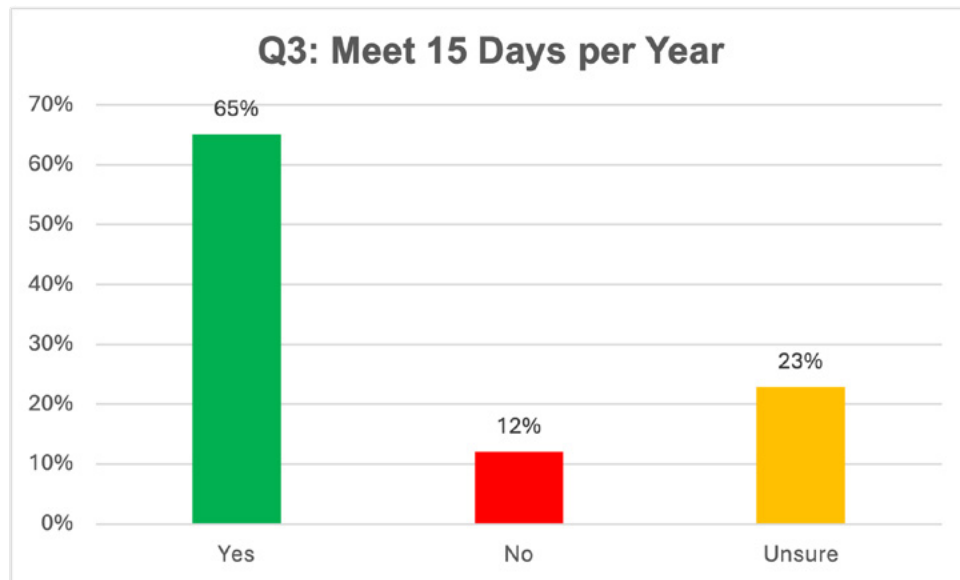
Some respondents recognised that the size of the Commission could also be best managed with the use of ad-hoc working groups as detailed in Question 12 of the consultation:

***“The Commission should be able to have a facility where, if necessary, ex officio members without voting rights can provide expertise to the core group of Commission members. This would also provide avenues for newer voices to be brought into the debate.”***

In answering this question several respondents stressed the need for the Commission members to meaningfully engage not only with the sector that they represent but with consumers, with workers and with marginalised and affected communities.

**Question 3 - Do you agree the Commission membership should meet on average 15 days per year?**

There were **84** responses to this question, of whom **65** provided a comment.



Of the 84 responses to this question 65% agreed that the proposed 15 days of meetings per year was appropriate. This question had over 20% of respondents indicating they were 'unsure'. There was general appreciation from all respondents that the number of meetings held per year would need to be flexible and to vary in line with policy development timetables, most notably the development and publication of the 5-yearly CAP. This flexibility for the scheduling of Commission meetings was mentioned by 11 of the 19 'Unsure' respondents about the proposal.

***“We agree with this number but also recommend ... [to] leave more room for additional meetings as issues arise, policies are implemented, or sub-groups are created. During this time there may be a need for several additional meetings for all or some members.”***

Of the responses received from organisations, the majority were in favour given their own experience of having regular monthly meetings and so were supportive of a minimum of 12 days annually and more as needed. Of the 14 respondents who provided an alternative suggestion as to the number of days per year that the Commission would need to meet, 11 were in favour of the Commission meeting more frequently, for example:

***“It is also recommended that provision is made for further days to enable broad stakeholder engagement including community liaison, representations to committees and working groups and support.”***

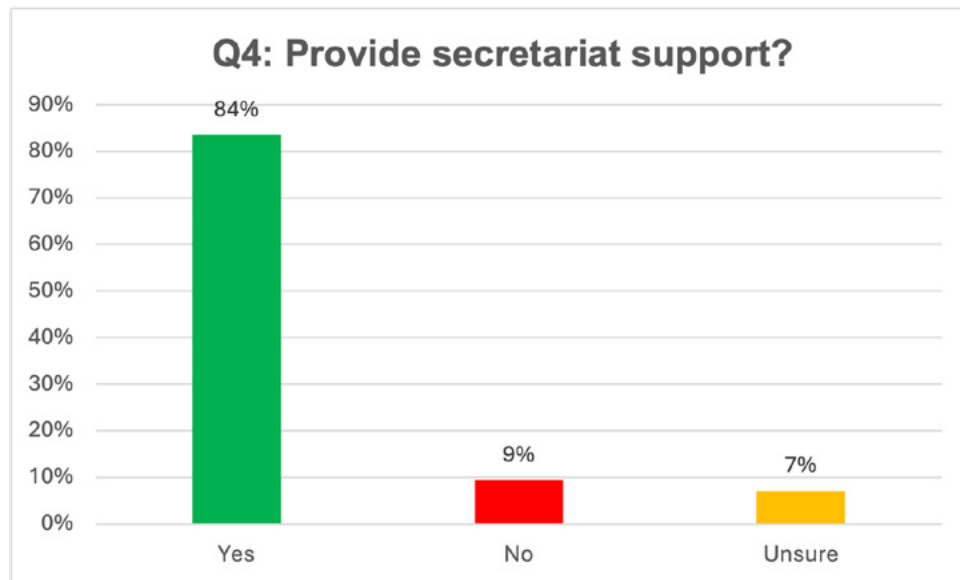
It was also noted by some that the meetings of the ad-hoc Committees mentioned in Question 12 might have an impact on the number of meetings of the Commission itself.

***“The whole Commission may not need to meet as often if it sets up specialist ad-hoc committees or working groups to bring back recommendations to the full Commission. It would however be important to ensure that when representatives are being appointed that they can give a yearly time commitment to the Commission and 15 days per year sounds reasonable in that regard.”***

Three respondents believed that the Commission should meet less frequently, referencing the Irish and Scottish Just Transition Commission. However it should be noted that the Irish Just Transition Commission members are expected to commit to 1.5 days per month, and the Scottish counterpart sets a “typical” expectation of the Commission meeting eight times per year in addition to “workshops, town hall events, discussions, evidence gathering visits” and “further meetings may be required (for example ahead of annual reporting).”

**Question 4 - Do you agree that the Commission should be similar to the Scottish model and supported by a small team to provide a secretariat function to allow the Commission to function effectively?**

There were **85** responses to this question, of whom **65** provided a comment.



Of the 85 responses to this question a total of 71 respondents or 84% agreed with providing a small team or secretariat to support the work of the Commission.

***“The secretariat approach seems to be a sensible approach to take for a number of reasons:***

- Helps reduce the administrative burden for the commission, allowing the members to focus on its core objectives***
- Reduces the effect of end-of-term transitions disruptions***
- Ensures a standardised reporting practice/ procedure***
- Improved governance and operational transparency.”***

With this question, again, there was significant strong support informed by how effective the model of the Just Transition Commission in Scotland has been and that the proposal was based on that practical experience.

***“The Scottish Just Transition Commission provides an existing model that has proven to be successful and should be replicated, where possible. We believe a small secretariat is essential to support the work of the Commission by assisting with research, decision-making, coordination, and the organisation of meetings and publications.”***

There were also views expressed on what the secretariat would or should do. Suggestions included supporting the Commission in meaningful community engagement, involving children and young people in decision making, effective governance, and engagement with departments. There was also strong support for the secretariat to ensure good working relationships and communication with the other Just Transition Commissions in Ireland and Scotland.

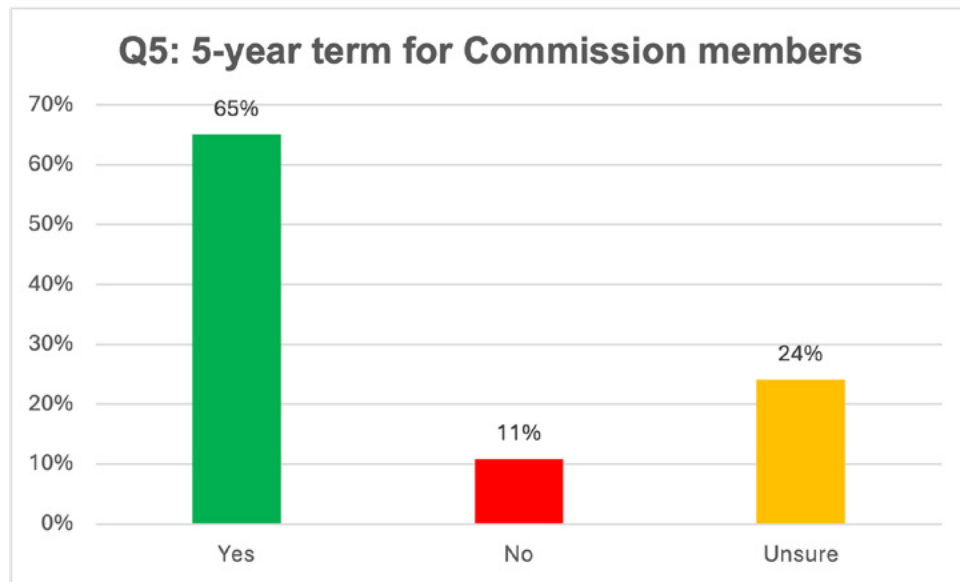
***“We believe a small administrative Department is essential to support the work of the Commission to aid with research, decision-making, coordination, and the organisation of meetings and publications.”***

Eight responses did not agree to the Commission having the support of a secretariat and six respondents were ‘Unsure’. Of these, the reasons varied with some responses wanting the secretariat supported by access to other government services, that the secretariat could be staffed by secondees from local government, and/or that it needed a much bigger resource to effectively engage with all government departments, especially in the initial programme of work for the Commission.

There were several responses focusing on the importance of ensuring the secretariat team had the correct skill set and knowledge and for a continuity of staffing where possible to ensure knowledge is retained within the Commission.

**Question 5 - Do you agree that members appointed to the Commission should serve a term of 5 years?**

There were **84** responses to this question, of whom **60** provided a comment.



Of the 84 responses to this question 65% agreed with the proposal of a 5-year term for members, but a significant number of respondents also commented that there could be some continuity between terms by way of the option of a renewal or second term built in, in order to maintain stability for the Commission and, critically, not lose valuable expertise.

***“It may be beneficial that a minimum number of members renew for one further term to provide continuity between the beginning and end of each 5-year term.”***

***“It allows members to become embedded within the work of departments and stakeholders - however it is suggested that after the initial 5- or 6-year period that the option to remain as external advisors to the Commission remain so as not to lose valued expertise.”***

Support for the five-year term focused on: consistency with other public bodies in Northern Ireland; the 5-year period for the CAP and carbon budgets; that this period would allow sufficient time to develop expertise, build relationships and for members to make an impact and contribute meaningfully to the work of the Commission. Several responses commented on the need for the Commission to have time to carry out their role. Ten respondents favoured a shorter 3-year term with reasons varying from a shorter term appealing to and attracting more applicants, and the introduction of fresh and new perspectives, but they still highlighted the potential of a second term being attractive.

***“5 years is a long commitment and therefore it may make it more difficult to attract applicants. 3 years may be more suitable with the possibility of extending the term for a further 3 years.”***

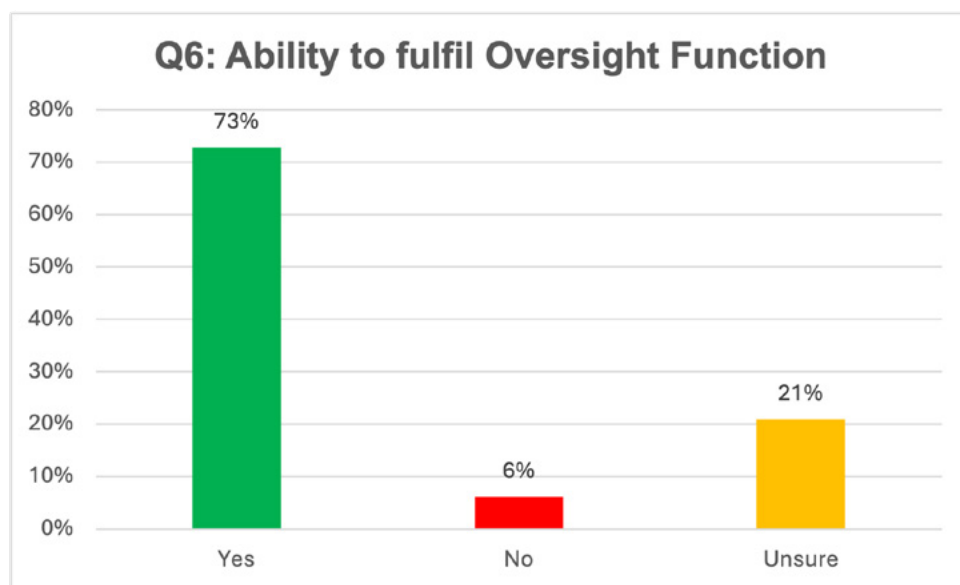
There was also the suggestion of staggered terms to ensure continuity of knowledge during membership transitions. Some respondents noted that it needed to be possible to assess the performance of Commission members, that they could be removed if needed, that there should be a robust conflict of interest mechanism in place and that there should be operational arrangements to address changes in circumstances of the members of the Commission including maternity cover or longer-term sick leave. It is intended that each of these will be accommodated within the mechanism to appoint members to the Commission.



**Question 6 - Do you agree that the Commission would fulfil the oversight function required of it in the Act by reviewing and reporting on the development and implementation of:**

- (a) any sectoral plan published under sections 13 to 21 of the Act;**
- (b) any climate action plan published under section 29 or 51 of the Act; and**
- (c) any scheme established by Regulations under section 31 of the Act.**

There were **82** responses to this question, of whom **56** provided a comment.



73% of respondents agreed that the Commission would fulfil its oversight duties as required by the Act, by conducting reviews of sectoral plans, climate action plans and schemes under section 31 of the Act. There was strong support through all of the comments from respondents.

***“Providing oversight function by reviewing and reporting on both development and implementation of the plans and schemes will be an important part of the function of the Commission”.***

***“Yes, we agree that these [proposals] allow the Commission to meet its obligations and that it would assist with covering many areas that have the potential to both positively and negatively impact a just transition.”***

***“Reviewing and reporting on sectoral plans, climate action plans and schemes established by Regulations under section 31 will enable the Commission to fulfil its oversight function by ensuring that these initiatives align with just transition requirements.”***

Respondents also felt that the oversight function must be carried out rigorously and comprehensively, something that was also shared by a majority of those who were 'Unsure' about the question. For example:

***“Give the Commission the necessary remit to get things done.”***

Some respondents provided suggestions as to how the Commission might fulfil its oversight function and how best it can be prepared to use it:

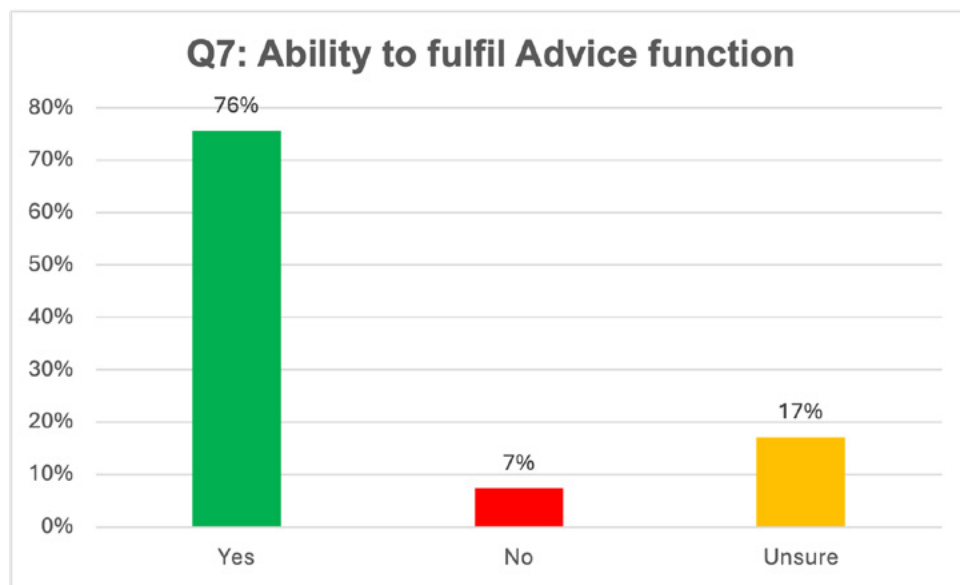
***“The Commission should have sufficient access to information and data to perform these oversight functions effectively.”***

***“Clear reporting mechanisms should be established to ensure the Commission’s findings are appropriately communicated and acted upon.”***

**Question 7 - Do you agree that the Commission would be fulfilling its advice function by:**

- (a) Responding to a Northern Ireland department's request for advice within agreed timeframes.**
- (b) Issuing research and guidance documents for departments to review and consider when developing emission reduction policies.**

There were **83** responses to this question, of whom **52** provided a comment.



76% of respondents were in agreement that the Commission can fulfil the requirement mandated for in the Act by providing the required advice function to departments on how to ensure the proposals, policies, strategies and plans required under the Act comply with the just transition principle.

***“Outcomes of national Commissions send strong signals to the public as climate leadership becomes ever more important.”***

There were additional suggestions offered as to ways in which this might best be supported.

***“Departments are going to need all the advice and help that they can get, and the Commission should provide that on a balanced and unbiased basis.”***

***“We think that it will be important that the Committee can pro-actively provide advice to any Northern Ireland department – rather than only providing advice when requested. This will help to ensure that just transition issues can be better considered at the early stages of the development of proposals, policies, strategies and plans.”***

Of the twenty respondents who answered ‘No’ or who were ‘Unsure’, whilst not fully agreeing to the proposal, they mostly accepted that the advice function as proposed was useful; six of these respondents felt that it could be extended and improved if it were a proactive function as well as a reactive one, which it will be. Some went further and insisted that the Commission’s advice must be acted upon, and departments should be able to illustrate how they have considered the advice of the Commission.

***“Departments could provide a written report or evidence acknowledging that they have considered and/or incorporated the research and guidance documents from the JTC in the development of their emission reduction policies.”***

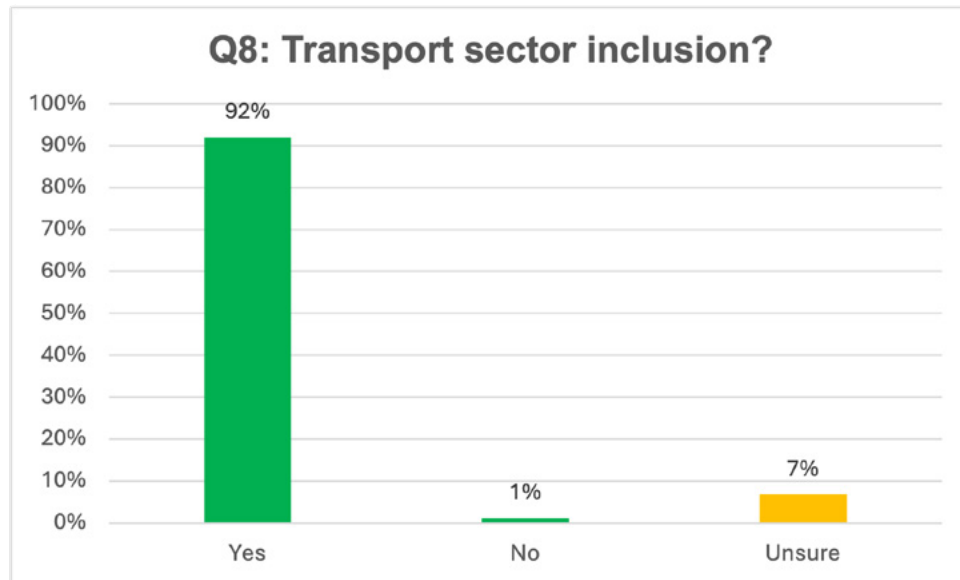
Several responses agreed with the proposal that the Commission will report to the NI Assembly and that it will be possible for Assembly Committees or individual Assembly members to bring recommendations from the Commission to the attention of departments and their respective Ministers.

***“These reports should be submitted annually for review to the appropriate committee of the NI Assembly and should inform future policy recommendations of those committees.”***

In line with the Department’s proposals and respondents’ comments, the Commission will publish its reports and recommendations.

### Question 8 - Should the Commission include representation from the Transport sector?

There were **90** responses to this question, of whom **71** provided a comment.



83 of the 90 respondents, that is 92%, agreed that the transport sector should be represented on the Commission.

***“The pathway to net-zero emissions is technically complex and varies greatly geographically. Specialist knowledge around infrastructure requirement, supply chain readiness, consumer accessibility, affordability, and business logistics will be required to ensure a just transition.”***

12 respondents noted that the transport sector’s most recent greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions were 18% of NI GHG emissions, and that it was currently the second highest source of emissions. A further 26 respondents identified transport as a sector potentially most ready to contribute to emissions reduction strategies as their reasons for supporting the sector’s inclusion.

Some respondents mentioned the challenges presented by technology, infrastructure, planning and security of energy supply as key in emission reduction in the transport sector. Several responses highlighted the opportunities of emission reduction from transport to improved air quality, improved health outcomes and addressing inequalities, and that inclusion of the transport sector on the Commission would be key to this.

***“Transport should be included as NI has a public transport network which could change significantly over the coming years to make it more accessible, sustainable and promoting active travel. This will impact on service users.”***

This strong support was frequently augmented in the comments by an observation that was repeated in relation to the energy and green finance sectors, that the representative must be able to reflect the multiple sub-sectors with differing profiles, needs, representation and opportunities including, in this instance, transport workers and consumers.

***“Representation of the public and private transportation sectors is vital to ensure policies consider the full spectrum of challenges and opportunities presented by all modes of transport, enabling a coordinated and equitable transition to sustainable transport solutions”***

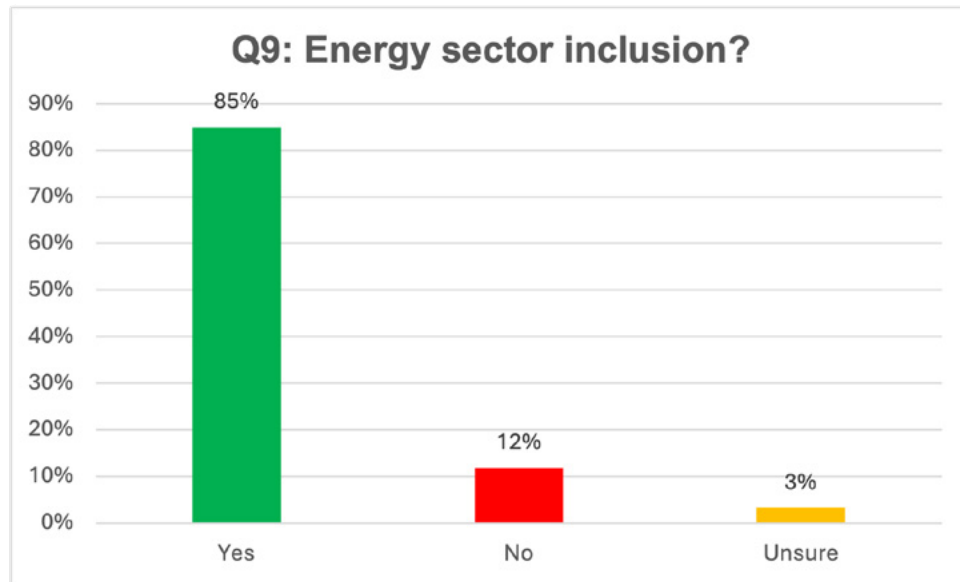
Respondents made observations that Northern Ireland’s transport sector has a range of factors that require consideration including infrastructure, electrification, rural vs urban transport needs, the needs of older people and those with disabilities, businesses, and traditional and emerging transport solutions.

***“Currently, public transport does not reach rural communities sufficiently, still has many accessibility issues for disabled people, and has poor compatibility with caring journeys.”***

***“Developing sustainable solutions to Northern Ireland’s transport needs will be a vital part of a Just Transition.”***

### Question 9 - Should the Commission include representation from the Energy sector?

There were **95** responses to this question, of whom **76** provided a comment.



85% of respondents supported the proposal for representation from the energy sector on the Commission. This question generated the greatest number of additional comments in the whole consultation. Many responses recognised the links between energy and other emitting sectors including transport, agriculture, business and buildings.

***“The energy sector will be a key stakeholder in the just transition as it is one of the most highly impacted industries in the de-carbonisation journey. Representatives can provide insights into the skills gap, reskilling opportunities, supply chain issues, energy markets, infrastructure requirements and employment trends.”***

In many of the responses there was recognition of the diversity of issues impacted by energy including that the renewable energy sector provides significant opportunities and the importance of addressing the needs of workers, communities and consumers affected by the energy transition and the need to develop sustainable and equitable solutions. Many respondents recognised energy as a sector where a just transition could play an important role in reducing NI emissions:

***“The energy sector has a key role to play in a just transition especially given the opportunities for Green Jobs, improving energy efficiency ... and addressing fuel poverty ... and has the potential to positively impact health.”***

***“A just transition creates great opportunities for investment in more decentralised and diverse ownership structures: green energy cooperatives, community-owned microgrids and more. Under these structures, the profits and benefits of new green industries stay in communities.”***

Several responses mentioned the multi-faceted nature of the energy transition and the intersections of production and supply through to home heating oil, gas, electricity, the opportunities of renewables, on and offshore wind, green industries, green energy cooperatives, community-owned energy, retrofit home insulation, impact on home heating and businesses, training providers, employers, workers, consumers and fuel poverty groups.

***“The transition to a low-carbon economy will profoundly affect how households heat their homes, consume energy, and adopt new technologies. Representation from the energy sector can provide valuable insight into energy systems, the challenges of de-carbonisation, consumer behaviours, and the critical need to maintain affordability throughout the transition. Their expertise will help ensure the Commission’s oversight and advice is focused on practical and equitable solutions, particularly for low-income and vulnerable households.”***

A number of responses suggested that there should be more than one energy sector representative on the Commission given the diversity and complexity of issues, while other responses were concerned that this could put too much emphasis on private or competing commercial interests over those of workers and consumers.

***“Ideally, representation from both renewable energy as well as the traditional energy industries will allow for a just transition by guaranteeing balanced views, addressing workers need and communities affected by the energy transition, and promoting collaboration to develop sustainable and fair results.”***

Overall, there was agreement that any energy sector representative should possess the experience, skills and knowledge to suitably understand and communicate the wide range of impacts on the energy sector and those most affected by action to reduce emissions. Several responses made helpful suggestions on how different aspects relating to the energy sector could be best represented including by energy academics, independent energy consultants or organizations representing consumers or focused on tackling energy and fuel poverty.



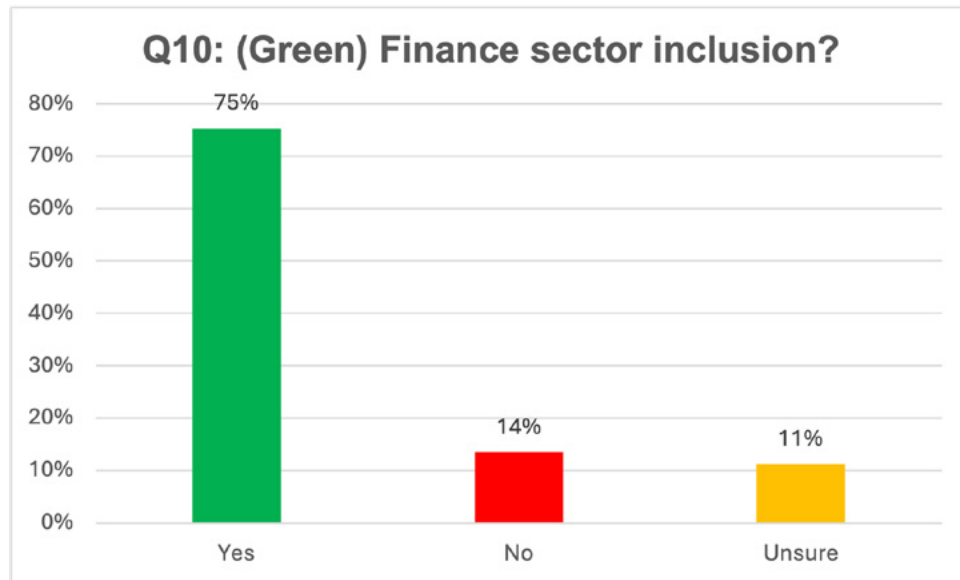
***“Carefully selected academic and consultants with no vested interest in the energy sector but with knowledge and expertise should be considered.”***

There was also the suggestion that this sector, in particular, given its complexity, would lend itself to the formation of a sub-group or external working group with subject experts to inform and/or advise the Commission, as per the proposal offered in Question 12.

The Department also welcomes the offer contained in several of the responses from those with an interest in or as representatives of renewable energy, the traditional energy sectors and those with technical expertise in this area or with engaging with consumers, to brief the Commission and provide support as required.

**Question 10 - Should the Commission include representation from the Financial/Green Finance sector?**

There were **89** responses to this question, of whom **69** provided a comment.



75% of responses supported the proposal to include the finance / green finance sector on the Commission.

***“Expertise from the Green Finance sector can help attract private capital and foster public-private partnerships. It will also assist in the promotion of innovative financial instruments including green bonds, sustainability-linked loans, and transition funds which will be critical to ensuring the transition is economically viable.”***

Key to the many supporting comments was that green finance was part of the ‘solution’ and ‘innovation’ needed to address climate change at an international, national and local level, and that private and foreign direct investment were powerful levers alongside public investment and that it will be crucial for the Commission to be able to understand these issues and the investment and economic challenges and opportunities presented through climate finance. Several respondents linked how the inclusion of green finance and delivering a just transition could make a difference to improved health and well-being.

***“Prioritise policies that can support a Just Transition as well as improve health. For example, phasing out fossil fuels and making renewable energy sources more affordable can cut greenhouse gas emission and reduce air pollution, reducing the health impacts caused by air***

***pollution such as respiratory illnesses. And often the most deprived communities are those living in areas with the highest levels of air pollution.***

Many respondents mentioned the inclusion of green finance in the Scottish Just Transition Fund as best practice and there were also a number of references to the importance of the Just Transition Fund for Agriculture.

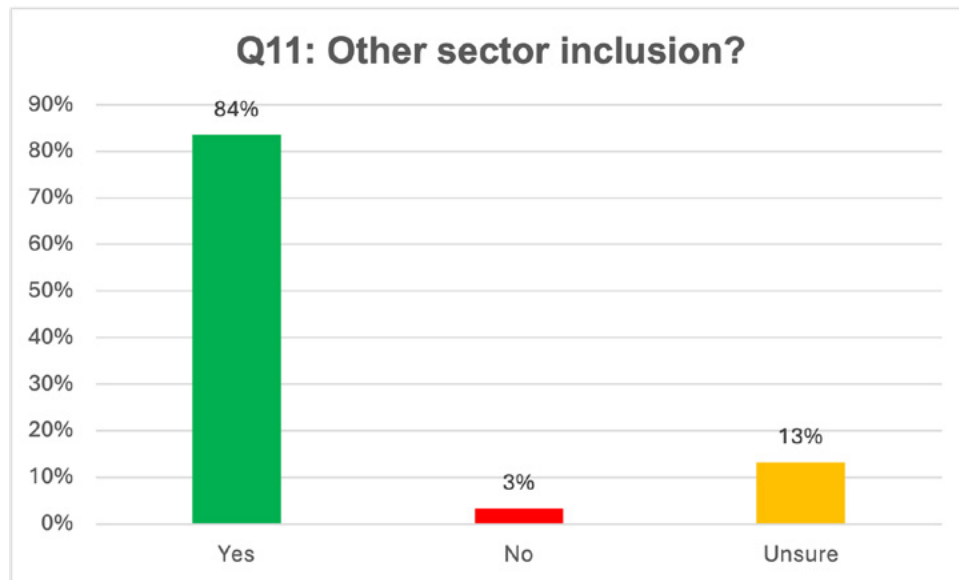
***“Private finance can also help ensure a just transition by redirecting financial flows to green technologies, adaptation solutions, and innovative businesses. Financial institutions can support emission-intensive businesses to lower their emissions and provide communities with access to finance to invest in measures that will support the transition. The representative on the Commission will therefore need to have a broad experience and knowledge of both public and private finance tools.”***

Several responses noted the significant economic and employment opportunities that could be delivered through a green economy, including for retrofit and other new growth employment areas such as renewables projects (manufacturing, deployment and maintenance), and agreed that there was value in having representation on the Commission with an understanding of the sustainable and green finance sector to enable strategic advice that could maximize the potential benefits of the net zero transition for consumers and business alike.

Of those who answered ‘No’ or ‘Unsure’ and provided a comment, there was still a degree of agreement that sustainable and ethical financing of climate action was essential, and that the green finance sector input was important, but it was felt that this could potentially be delivered outside of direct inclusion on the Commission. There were also a small number of respondents that were concerned and cautioned that the inclusion of a green finance representative might create a focus on corporate interests or profit at the expense of environment and climate action.

**Question 11 - Are there any other sectors in addition to the Transport, Energy, Finance, and those listed in 37(4) of the Act that should be represented on the Commission – and if so, please provide reasons for your answer.**

There were **91** responses to this question, of whom **88** provided a comment.



Of the 91 responses received to this question 84% agreed that other sectors should be represented on the Commission. In their response, many respondents reaffirmed their support for the 7 mandated sectors in the Act and the further 3 sectors proposed by the Department in this consultation. There was strong support in particular shown for inclusion of the agriculture representative and for the representation of environmental groups, and many of the comments in support of these two particular sectors made similar points on the breadth and diversity within both these sectors and their intrinsic importance to a just and fair transition suggesting that additional representation may be required.

***“The natural environment and nature-based solutions have a unique and unparalleled role to play in meeting Northern Ireland’s climate ambitions and already provide critical underpinning to the health of people, landscapes and the economy... It is precisely because of this tendency and the vitally important role nature will play in delivering a fair and effective climate transition that understanding and expertise regarding nature and biodiversity be included in the composition of the Commission’s membership.”***

Many comments in response to this question welcomed the additional proposal for ad-hoc committees (covered in the next section) as a means to ensure the Commission could be well

briefed on specific issues. A number of responses also reiterated points made earlier about genuine participation and active engagement with marginalised groups and the different communities impacted by Climate Change.

In addition to the comments received from the 76 respondents that answered ‘yes’ to this question, comments on the suggested membership were also made by the 12 responses that were ‘unsure’, and also by the 9 responses that did not answer the first part of this question. In addition, therefore there were in excess of 30 unique categories suggested for further inclusion on the Commission.

The following table lists those sectors where more than 1 respondent suggested its inclusion. For the purposes of this question, some answers have been grouped under headings where appropriate, to reflect the strength of opinion and their close relation.

<b>Proposed Sector / Group for inclusion on the Commission</b>	<b>Mentions</b>
<b>Built Environment / Construction / Housing / Planning</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Wildlife / Nature &amp; Biodiversity</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Rural Communities Groups &amp; Residents’ Groups</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Business / Manufacturing / SME</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Training &amp; Education (excluding Academia<sup>5</sup>)</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Anti-poverty Groups /fuel-poverty</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Health</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Water</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>IT/Technology</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Local Government Groups (NILGA / SOLACE)</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Female (and Gender) Advocacy Groups</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Waste (including wastewater)</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Food Manufacturing / Production (non-Agricultural)</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Social Scientists / Social Justice</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Legal / Environmental Law</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Minority, Ethnic and other Section 75 Groups (excluding Gender)</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Circular Economy</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>5</sup> Academia is already included in the 7 mandated sectors.

The following serves to illustrate respondents' supportive comments into similar groups / under similar headings for the three most frequently referenced sectors.

### **Built Environment / Construction / Housing / Planning**

*A sectoral representative would provide the expertise to inform strategies such as building energy performance, retrofitting, sustainable design and construction practices, and the de-carbonisation of heating systems.*

*Structures/materials/design and a fabric-first approach is needed to make sure that a fair and just transition can reach into households.*

*Improving the energy performance of Northern Ireland's homes through the installation of energy efficiency measures and low carbon heating systems.*

### **Wildlife / Nature & Biodiversity**

*Conservation organisations- These groups possess valuable expertise in biodiversity, ecosystem services, and sustainability, which are crucial for ensuring that the just transition is not only economically and socially fair but also environmentally sound. Their inclusion would help ensure that environmental considerations are integrated into decision-making, helping to balance climate action with the preservation and restoration of natural resources.*

*Northern Ireland faces significant biodiversity challenges and must prioritise nature-based solutions. The Woodland Trust's "Emergency Tree Plan" highlights the interconnectedness of climate and biodiversity crises, emphasising the need for integrated approaches.*

*Whilst increased afforestation offers significant climate benefits, it must be undertaken responsibly. New woodlands must be strategically located and managed to deliver multiple benefits, including enhanced biodiversity, improved water quality, and recreational opportunities for local communities. Furthermore, the Forestry Sector can provide valuable insights on how to maximise the social and economic benefits of afforestation, such as job creation and sustainable rural development. It is crucial to ensure that the costs and benefits of these changes are equitably distributed, minimising impacts on communities and supporting those whose livelihoods may be affected by land-use changes.*

### **Rural Communities Groups & Residents' Groups**

*Recognising and responding to the unique needs and circumstances of local communities ensures that policies account for variations in urban and rural areas, economic disparities, and specific industries.*

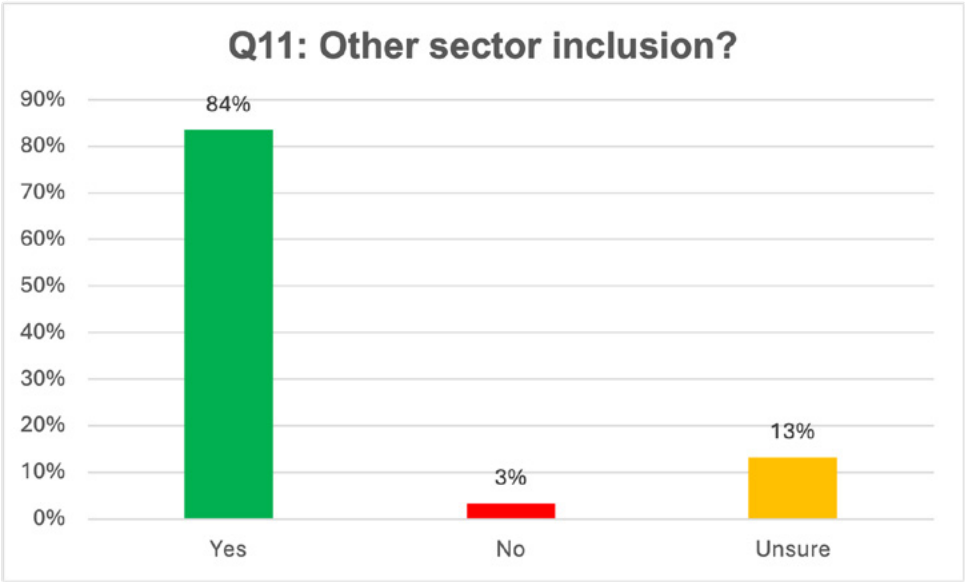
*Members to represent communities ... impacted by the transition.*

*In particular rural communities as there could be higher impacts on these as a result of the transition.*

In response to this question a number of additional points were made on the centrality of consumers in the just transition and the importance of listening to the voices of older people, young people, people with disabilities, women and those living with or caring for a person with a disability, those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, migrants/refugees, and other minority groups.

**Question 12 - Do you agree the Commission should have a power to establish Ad-Hoc Committees or working groups to secure additional knowledge or expertise that may not be available with the Commission.**

There were **92** responses to this question, of whom **65** provided a comment.



This was the highest supported policy proposal in the consultation with 95% of respondents in favour of the Commission being able to set up ad-hoc committees or working groups to facilitate learning, research and securing knowledge that may be unavailable through the existing membership of the Commission.

It was widely appreciated that:

***“It would be very difficult for the Commission representatives to be sufficiently informed on all aspects and working groups will be required. For example, an agriculture working group [could] include key production sectors, which could also include fishing and aquaculture.”***

There was an overwhelming consensus among the responses of the importance of securing additional knowledge and that it was essential for the Commission to have access to the most up-to-date information, expertise and research. Many respondents saw this approach of ad-hoc committees or working groups as a means to integrate specific expertise while maintaining the Commission as a manageable body with a focused remit. It was seen by others as a means to ensure the voices of those most vulnerable in society are heard by the Commission.



With many respondents across the consultation referring to the ongoing Just Transition Commission work in other jurisdictions, it was suggested that one such working group might comprise ***“Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales, for benchmarking purposes, knowledge sharing, exploring collaborative opportunities and ensuring the groups are strategically aligned where possible.”***

This was seen as a key mechanism to ensure the Commission would benefit from insights and knowledge from practitioners elsewhere.

Suggestions were also made for specific working or advisory groups to focus on the energy transition, technical expertise on agri-food, agriculture, rural issues, effective community participation, and the possibility of a ‘place-based’ approach to the just transition. This mechanism was also seen as a means for the Commission to engage fully with local government building on their strong connection with local communities, the voluntary sector and non-governmental organisations and others.

Some responses urged the Department to consider possible working groups that took advantage of ***“Ad-Hoc Lived Experience Committees specifically so that the voices of those people directly impacted by climate breakdown, but without a commissioner role, can be heard.”***

A significant number of respondents indicated they would be happy to brief the Commission on their area of technical expertise including energy, fuel poverty, housing, consumer protection, active travel and health inequalities.

### Question 13 - What do you think the key initial priorities should be for the Commission?

There were **92** responses to this question which invited comments and suggestions.

The Department is grateful to all of the written responses to this question and to the comments on this topic raised at each of the consultation events. This material will be compiled and analysed to be presented to the Commission, once established, in the form of a report as it is an important set of views and information. The material is not intended to set the work plan for the Commission but instead to provide it with information and insights as part of a wider set of considerations to aid the Commission as an independent body to establish and set out its own priorities.

For the purposes of this document this section summarises the main points raised. These have been grouped into simple headlines and ranked by frequency of mention to provide a snapshot of the variety of issues raised.

#### **Priority #1: Produce Terms of Reference (ToR)**

32 respondents highlighted the new Commission will need to clearly set its plan of work and ways of working as a first step to fulfilling its duties under the Act. Suggestions for inclusion in any Terms of Reference included - purpose, structure, reporting, responsibilities, sub-committees, working groups, meeting schedule, attendance requirements, agenda & minute procedures, register of interests, code of conduct, transparency arrangements etc.

Included within this will be the identification of how the Commission can best work collaboratively with other bodies and the creation and agreeing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with some of those bodies, e.g., the Climate Change Committee, the Northern Ireland Climate Commissioner, the Office for Environmental Protection etc.

***“The Just Transition Commission must initially agree a Terms of Reference that clearly sets out their role and working arrangements in line with the NI Climate Change Act but must ensure that it avoids duplication of the work of other organisations.”***

Respondents also felt the Commission should perform a review of the work already undertaken by similar bodies in Scotland and Ireland to inform its activities and should seek to meet with representatives of these bodies as soon as practicable in order that its Terms of Reference and any necessary MoU can be expedited and based on best practice and established learning.

***“Learning from and sharing best practices with similar bodies in Scotland, Ireland, and elsewhere to ensure Northern Ireland benefits from proven approaches while adapting them to local circumstances.”***

## **Priority #2: Stakeholder engagement, outreach and awareness**

With a significant range of mandated and suggested sectors that could be represented on the Commission, identified in responses to question 11 of the consultation, 28 respondents indicated that there needs to be an ongoing engagement plan for informing stakeholders of the Commission's work and to allow for the Commission to engage with, listen to and learn from a range of views on a regular basis, especially from those groups who do not feature on the membership of the Commission.

***“A comprehensive programme of education, engagement, and awareness-building across all sectors [is required]. Only through such an approach can trust and confidence be cultivated, ensuring meaningful participation and progress in this critical conversation.”***

Responses indicated that there needs to be a continual awareness piece within the remit of the Commission both for the departments and for the sectors and the citizens of Northern Ireland.

***“From the start there should be a public communication campaign ... Ongoing outreach is needed because the transition must be with people, not to people. Education ... is needed.”***

***“This engagement should be supported by a detailed strategy specifying steps to engage hard-to-reach groups effectively, fostering active participation.”***

## **Priority #3: Identify easily achieved emissions reduction policies, key high-potential sectors and provide early support to relevant departments.**

27 respondents felt that there are sectors which offer more immediate and significant potential to help realise a just transition from a high-emissions to a low-emissions society. Commonly mentioned among responses was the transport (both public and private) and energy (with particular emphasis on home energy efficiency and energy production) sectors. The Commission's ability to offer advice to the departments responsible for these sectors will be crucial in helping ensure that while any emissions reductions are gained, they are gained in a manner that aligns with the just transition principles.

***“Determine which areas can be improved quickly and with minimal cost and maximum benefit.”***

Other identified priorities were:

<i>Setting or commenting on baseline data / Measurable Objectives / Definitive targets</i>
<i>Advice on, and oversight of the first CAP and carbon budget</i>
<i>Define what a Just Transition for Northern Ireland looks like</i>
<i>Identify vulnerable sectors/players (s75) that will be impacted</i>
<i>Set sector-specific Just Transition policy objectives</i>
<i>Define what the Just Transition Fund for Agriculture needs from the Commission</i>
<i>Publish outcomes, reports, work and ultimately be transparent with the public</i>
<i>Effect measures to protect nature, wildlife, and biodiversity</i>
<i>Measure outcomes, provide scrutiny and ensure compliance</i>
<i>Protect the needs of the agricultural community</i>
<i>Address Fuel Poverty</i>
<i>Define cross-departmental relationships and opportunities</i>
<i>Research cross-border opportunities and whole-island approach</i>

# Conclusion and Next Steps

---

## Conclusion and Next Steps

This consultation and the associated engagement events have provided a body of evidence that overwhelmingly supports DAERA's proposals on the establishment of the Commission.

This summary of the responses to the consultation, together with the report on the engagement events at **Appendix A**, will be used to inform policy decisions and the draft Regulations for the next stages of the legislative process.

As per section 56(2) of the Act, the Climate Change Committee will be asked to review the draft Regulations and the advice they provide will be taken into account.

The Regulations that will give effect to this body will first need to be agreed by the DAERA Minister and the NI Executive. The Regulations are required to be made by the draft affirmative procedure which means they will be brought to the Assembly to be approved through a debate, before they become law.

A separate report will be produced containing a full analysis of the answers to question 13 on the priorities for the Commission. It is intended that the report will be provided to the new Commission members as part of an induction or Welcome Pack that sets out the expectations of the Commission, to complement other information detailing its legal duties and the responsibilities of Commission members.

# Appendix A

---

## Appendix A

### Stakeholder Engagement Events Summary

The Commission consultation stakeholder engagement events took place between November 2024 and January 2025.

During that time, DAERA officials met with a range of organisations and groups across multiple events including representatives of several sectors that are mandated in the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (the Act) for inclusion on the Commission along with representatives of other sectors, a variety of organisations and other interested parties and individuals. The engagement events involved a presentation on the proposals, and discussion on the establishment of the Commission and the wider context of a just transition to net zero.

The discussions also focused on what initial priorities the Commission should have as well as identifying the desired skillset of its members, both those mandated for inclusion as well as how this group might be expanded further to other sectors and/or to promote diversity and inclusivity.

The following groups hosted engagement sessions. Of these meetings some were in person while the majority were held online.

Many of the engagement sessions were open to the public:

- DAERA Agricultural Policy Stakeholder Group (Dairy Council, NIAPA, NIEL, NIFDA, NIMEA, UFU, NIGTA, BVA, RSPB, National Trust, Ulster Wildlife)
- Queen's University of Belfast (attended by a broad range of academics across the two Universities and open to the public)
- Utility Regulator (URNI)
- Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL) (online and open to the public)
- ICTU and Trade Unions (attended by a number of TU representatives and others)
- NI Youth Assembly
- NI Commissioner for Young People (NICCY)
- Young Farmer Clubs of Ulster (YFCU)
- Rural Community Network (RCN)
- Forum for Rural Organisations (significant number of organisations from across NI attended this)
- All Party Group on Climate Action (online and open to the public)
- Northern Ireland Consumer Council



Across the stakeholder engagement events there was overwhelmingly unanimous strong support for the establishment of the Commission. There was also significant support for the type of public body the Commission should be, the composition of its membership, the Commission's role and legislated functions, the proposed sectors to be represented, its reporting arrangements and the provision of a secretariat and support required for the Commission.

Concerns were expressed across a number of events on whether the Commission's budget was adequate for the challenge and remit that it would undertake. There were also questions on whether the Commission would have enforcement powers and how it could bring influence on its recommendations through publishing them or through the NI Assembly. The importance of the Chair of the Commission having mediation skills was raised alongside the need to ensure Commission members were provided with adequate support, training and induction to cover just transition, nature-based solutions, their role and remit, and on the impacts of climate change itself.

## **What is a Just Transition?**

The majority of stakeholders who attended the engagement events accepted that there are many definitions of what a Just Transition is and means, but they noted that some of the better definitions were those that were set in the context of the society and structures that were immediate to them. As such, a definition of the term "Just Transition", whilst welcome, would be strengthened if it were in answer to the question "What is a Just Transition for Northern Ireland?" or what would it look like. Most agreed, as was the case in many of the written responses to the consultation, that providing a positive vision for what a just transition means for Northern Ireland would be helpful.

## **Representation on the Commission:**

At each of the engagement events suggestions were made as to possible additional sectors to be represented. The consultation proposed the inclusion of the energy, transport and green finance sectors in addition to the seven sectors mandated in the Act. The feedback at the stakeholder engagement events reflected that found in the written responses, with strong support for these three proposals along with several other suggestions, most notably a dedicated representative to reflect the needs and impacts on rural communities.

At a number of events, while there was unanimous support of the Act's mandating of a representative for the agriculture sector, attendees drew the distinction between agricultural representation and representation of wider rural communities.

Groups with an understanding of protecting wildlife, increasing biodiversity and working to promote land restoration projects were also identified as key sectors.

## **Diversity and gender:**

All groups recognised that women's rights were important in ensuring a just transition. The interest groups with a focus on women's rights asked for the Commission to apply a "gender lens" to the work that they do. Understanding that a just transition must include opportunities for women as the economy and employment opportunities change to reflect new industries was a common theme in many of the sessions.

## **Participation and engagement:**

Across all of the events there was strong support for genuine participation and engagement with young people, older people, consumers, vulnerable groups and those most impacted by climate change and the potential changes in employment and the economy. Repeatedly the point was made about participation of and engaging with young people who will be faced with the significant impacts of a changing world.

## **Centrality of Consumers, workers and communities:**

At many events the need for the transition to net zero to be fair and just was raised. That consumers should not be adversely affected or bear the brunt of any increased costs but that they should be shared fairly across society was also raised. The importance of ensuring communities, consumers and workers are at the centre of considerations was repeatedly stressed.

## **Engagement with young people:**

There was significant discussion across several groups of the role to be played by the mandated Youth Group representative on the Commission. Questions were asked as to whether this individual would be a professional working in the Youth Sector or a young person, perhaps a member of the Youth Assembly or a similar body. Practical issues such as the time involvement, meeting schedules including flexibility and safeguarding were among concerns expressed by others about having a young person on the Commission. The Department will continue to look into the mechanisms for the Commission to genuinely support the participation of children and young people in its work.

## **Engaging with an older population:**

As was the case with youth representation, the event participants raised the needs of older people. The Agriculture and Rural groups highlighted the age profile of farmers being increasingly older and the communities in which they live having similar ageing characteristics.

Many people raised the value that older people as ‘elders’ could bring to work on climate change and ensuring a just transition.

### **Fuel poverty:**

Additional groups identified as having potential to add significant value to informing the work of the Commission included those that work with or support those impacted by poverty within our society, especially fuel poverty which was singled out at all stakeholder engagement events as one of the most pressing issues to address.

### **Education, information and guidance:**

Education was another topic that arose on more than one occasion, in relation to what the Commission does in terms of ensuring a just transition is felt by all of society, as well as the more general need for informing the public in relation to climate change, net zero and carbon footprints.

### **Collaboration and cooperation:**

Cross-departmental responsibility for a just transition would be key according to the majority of event participants. The Commission must ensure that their review of individual policies and plans take account of the inter-relationship between sectors and the departments that are responsible for them.

The need for cross-border co-operation and interworking was also identified as being key, especially for border communities.

How the Commission works effectively with the other Just Transition Commissions across these islands was raised, as was how the bodies could share experience and expertise. Alongside this, attendees were keen to see the Commission establish working relationships with other climate and environmental statutory bodies but also with other NI regulatory, scrutiny and oversight bodies dealing with social and economic well-being, equality, rights and good relations.

### **Influence and authority:**

Enforcement of the Commission’s’ advice and recommendations was raised across a number of events. As detailed in the consultation document there are no powers in the Act to provide the Commission with enforcement or punitive powers.

Stakeholders did welcome the proposal of the Commission reporting to the Assembly; however, it was highlighted that a mechanism should be incorporated to ensure the

Commission continues to operate and be able to publish its reports and recommendations even if the Assembly is not sitting.

There was strong support for the Commission to publish its reports and findings and to bring them to the relevant Assembly Committee(s).

### **Independence:**

It was widely appreciated that the Commission was designed to be, and indeed would be, independent from both Government and vested parties. It was the clear view of those attending the events that the Commission members must demonstrate their independence of thoughts and actions while still being experts in their sector. This was seen to be vitally important to the successful operation of the Commission.



Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil  
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Depairtment o'

**Fairmin, Environment  
an' Kintra Matthers**

[www.daera-ni.gov.uk](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk)