



Consultation on Climate Change Reporting by Specified Public Bodies - Developing New Regulations

Supporting Document:
The Benefits of Climate Change Reporting
by Public Bodies

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This document is one of three supporting documents to be read in conjunction with the consultation document. The supporting documents are provided for anyone who wants general additional background information to help inform their views and responses to the consultation. This document provides supplementary background information on 'The Benefits of Climate Change Reporting by Public Bodies'.

Summary

Climate change reporting by public bodies unlocks the potential for those bodies to reduce costs, develop smarter decision-making and enable better informed strategic and risk planning. It can inform their innovation and help them to build better stakeholder relationships. It may also help redefine the organisation's culture and increase its contribution to both tackling the causes of climate change and adapting to its impacts. As such, it can contribute to those public bodies continuing to be viable, adaptable and resilient in a future Northern Ireland net zero economy, and a climate changing world. It can help ensure that the services and functions which they currently provide, will continue going forward, with positive outcomes for now and for future generations.

Reporting by public bodies is also important for government, to enrich the bigger picture of what climate action is being undertaken by the public sector, and how effective that action is. This information could help inform future government policy, actions and interventions, as we all work towards a net zero emissions Northern Ireland by 2050, and to ensure our environment, and society are healthy, climate resilient and adaptable.

Further detail is provided below, on some of the many possible examples of benefits from climate change reporting by public bodies, under the future regulations. The details below are not an exhaustive list. These benefits could also apply to those who wish to voluntarily report, if they are not specified as having to report in the future regulations.

Strategic Planning and Risk Management:

- Through reporting, public bodies can gain a better understanding of their exposure to both the risks and impacts of climate change, as well as any potential related opportunities in the short, medium, and long term.
- By bringing to light climate change risks to the public body, which they could otherwise have been unaware of, reporting could help to better inform appropriate action, to improve the management of their overall risks.
- Public bodies' measurement of their greenhouse gas emissions when reporting, is an important first step to managing these emissions. This gives the reporting public bodies an understanding of where their main greenhouse gas emissions are coming from, and the levels. This can inform and empower those organisations to take appropriate, targeted action to reduce those emissions.
- In their business planning, public bodies who report can use their collected emissions data in a powerful way, to demonstrate their understanding of how they can do their bit to reduce emissions which cause global climate change.

Capital Allocation and Better Decision Making:

- Reporting can act as an important communications tool within the public bodies themselves, helping to gain support and buy-in from their staff, their senior management and Board, for the actions needed to reduce their emissions and tackle climate change risks and impacts.
- Reporting can enable a body to make better-informed investment decisions, on where and when to allocate its capital. This can result in a more effectively planned and cost-effective response by these bodies, to addressing their climate change risks and impacts and reducing their emissions.
- Reporting by public bodies can help inform their consideration of setting internal climate change targets.
- Reporting can provide an effective way of measuring progress on climate actions within their own organisation.
- Successive rounds of reporting can help to ensure continuity and improvement of climate change action.

- Reporting can help public bodies to proactively address investors' and/or funders' demands for climate-related information. Meeting these demands through reporting could help to preserve, and potentially increase, the financial capacity and stability of the organisation.
- Reporting could help build the public body's capacity for taking effective climate action.
- Reporting can help public bodies to take climate action in a timely way, to identify their climate change risks, impacts and opportunities, and appropriate actions needed by them. Being timely in these actions can help to reduce the risk of having to deal with higher costs in the future. Where actions to tackle climate change are delayed, they can become more costly to implement in the future. The impact of these higher costs can be exacerbated by having less time over which to spread the costs.

Better Data Availability, Transparency and Accountability

- The upcoming regulations will ensure a reporting framework which will standardise climate change reporting methodology for the specified public bodies.
- Continued reporting over the required reporting cycles could help build a database which will improve the quality and quantity of climate change data. This data could be available for the public bodies themselves and their stakeholders, the public, and government.
- Reporting will improve government understanding of the climate change impacts on public bodies, and the progress being made by public bodies, in adapting to climate change and in reducing their emissions. This information may also be used to inform further government policy, decisions, interventions and actions.
- It will enable and encourage public bodies to demonstrate transparency and accountability, for example, by showing:
 - how a reporting public body is performing in addressing their climate change risks and impacts; and
 - how they plan to have a greater positive impact and performance going forward.
- Reporting can help public bodies to better engage with other stakeholders upon whom their functions may depend or impact. For example, to discuss cooperation which could be needed, to address any barriers to implementing the body's plans and actions, for reducing emissions or adapting to climate change.

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