



# Discussion Document on a Northern Ireland Climate Change Bill



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

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



**INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE**

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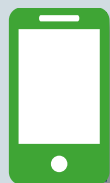
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To get a copy of this document in another format:



- **Telephone: 028 9056 9426** and talk to **Emma Finlay**.

If you have a hearing difficulty you can contact the Department via **Text Relay**. Dial **18001 028 9056 9246**.



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

## Please note:

As this is an 'Easy Read' version of this Discussion Exercise, this version contains a lot less detail than the full version. If you would like more detail you may find the full version better suited to your needs.

# About us

We are the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).

## What do we do?

Here are some of the things we do.



- We look after the development of farming, forests and fishing in Northern Ireland.
- We provide a service to look after the health and welfare of animals, fish and plants.
- We look after environment and rural development in Northern Ireland.
- We provide research, expert advice and education.
- We look after some parts of public health in how food is made.



# Why are we publishing this document?

We would like people to tell us which option they think is best for Northern Ireland regarding climate change legislation (Law), and what type of things they would like to see in this law.

We would like you to tell us your views by answering questions. (Details on how to do this are in the 'How to Respond' section).

We may not be able to use all of the views in your replies to the questions. We do promise though, to consider them all when we decide the best course of action for Northern Ireland on climate change legislation (Law).



# Do we need local climate change legislation (Law)?

There are many reasons why we think Northern Ireland needs to make its own climate change law, a few of these reasons are set out below.

- 1) People are concerned about climate change and they want to see stronger Government action.
- 2) Local climate change law can be fitted to the needs of Northern Ireland, helping us to achieve what is needed.
- 3) It will help us to do more to act on climate change and better live with (adapt to) the climate change that is already happening, which we can't prevent.
- 4) It will help us build a strong, climate friendly (low carbon) and green economy in Northern Ireland, giving certainty to businesses and society, to plan for and invest in a low carbon economy.

## Climate change legislation (Law)

- Northern Ireland does not have its own climate change law, unlike all other parts of the UK. Northern Ireland is currently tackling climate change through a UK-wide Climate Change law, called the 'UK Climate Change Act 2008'.
- In 2019, the UK Climate Change Act 2008 was updated by the UK Government, to include the requirement that emissions of Greenhouse Gases must be reduced enough to achieve 'UK Net Zero', by the year 2050.
- Scotland and Wales have created local laws, to support them in achieving their requirements under the UK Climate Change Act 2008.
- Climate change law includes both 'mitigation' and 'adaptation'.
- 'Climate Change Mitigation' means taking action to reduce the **causes** of climate change - such as reducing greenhouse gases being emitted into the atmosphere, or using 'carbon sinks' to store greenhouse gases.
- 'Climate Change Adaptation' means taking action to prevent or minimise risks from the **effects** of unavoidable climate change - like building flood defences to reduce the impact of flooding.

# What is 'UK Net Zero'?

- 'UK Net Zero' means that the UK will limit the amount of greenhouse gases being released ('emitted'), to a level no more than the amount of greenhouse gases that are removed from the atmosphere.

## UK Net Zero and Northern Ireland

- Northern Ireland is required by law to contribute its fair share (along with, England, Scotland and Wales) in meeting the UK net zero target by 2050.
- We will do this by further cutting our greenhouse gas emissions and doing more to remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.
- One of the many ways to remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere is by planting more trees. Trees remove and lock away the greenhouse gases from the atmosphere through natural processes.





## What do the experts say?

- Climate Change experts called the 'UK Climate Change Committee' advise the UK Government. The Committee has said that Northern Ireland's local circumstances can make it more challenging for us to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions than the rest of the UK.
- These challenges are about where our main greenhouse gas emissions come from. Some of our greenhouse emissions come from activities which cannot be changed quickly or easily.
- For example, most people in Northern Ireland don't yet have the option of changing from oil heating to gas heating (gas heating causes lower greenhouse emissions).





# Choosing how we go forward

DAERA has developed 2 Options on how Northern Ireland can tackle climate change. These options and a description of them are set out below:

## **Option 1:** Local climate change law - with targets for achieving Net Zero within Northern Ireland by 2050

- We would make a new Northern Ireland climate change law, which would set targets requiring 'Net Zero' greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, within Northern Ireland.
- It would mean that the total greenhouse gas emissions in Northern Ireland must be no more than the amount of greenhouse gases that are removed from the atmosphere (in Northern Ireland), by 2050.
- Please be aware that the climate change experts have said - it is unlikely that Northern Ireland will be able to achieve net zero by 2050, due to the characteristics of our society, economy and infrastructure.
- There is a risk that Northern Ireland could not achieve this target.

**Option 2:** Local climate change law - with targets for Northern Ireland to contribute fairly to UK Net Zero by 2050

- We would make a new Northern Ireland Climate Change Law. This Law would have targets for Northern Ireland to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions, to a level which meets its fair share of achieving overall UK Net Zero by 2050.
- We would set greenhouse gas emission reduction targets, and timings, for Northern Ireland, which would be based on advice and facts from climate change experts.
- These targets would be set so that they are both challenging and realistically achievable for Northern Ireland.



# Other things we can include in Climate Change Legislation (Law)

There are other important things that we could include in Northern Ireland climate change law like:

- **Checkpoints on the way to Net Zero 2050**

Our law could include a requirement to set for example, 5 yearly limits on Northern Ireland's total greenhouse gas emissions. This would create a series of checkpoints to meeting our overall greenhouse gas emissions target by 2050.

- **Reporting requirements**

Our law could include a requirement for large organisations to produce reports, setting out details of:

- what they are doing to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, and
- what they are doing to respond to impacts from climate change.

- **Expert climate change advice**

Our law could create a new expert organisation to provide advice on climate change in Northern Ireland, to add local detail to the advice already provided by the UK Committee on Climate Change.



## How to respond

Please send your responses as soon as possible, to make sure that they arrive before **1st February 2021**, because this is when the opportunity for responses closes.

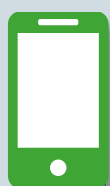
**Respond Online** - Please complete the survey online if you can, as we expect we will get a lot of responses. This will help you to get your response to us in good time, and help us to get through all the responses efficiently.



Complete the questions in the online survey at:

**<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/consultations/climatechangediscussion>**

**Contact us** - If you need help in responding to this consultation, you can contact us.



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