

**Climate, Planning and Public Transport**



Department for

**Infrastructure**

An Roinn

**Bonneagair**

Department for

**Infrastructure**

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

**To: Council Heads of Planning**

**Deputy Secretary**

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Your Reference:

Our Reference:

22<sup>nd</sup> August 2023

Dear Colleague

## **THE STRATEGIC PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE**

You will be aware that the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 came into force in June 2022, setting a net zero target by 2050, with interim targets to be set for 2030 and 2040. The Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) is currently consulting on the related Carbon Budgets and the CCC advice report on

“The path to a Net Zero Northern Ireland”:

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

The consultation closes on 11 October, and I would encourage you to express your council's views as part of that process.

As you are aware, later this year, DAERA will also consult on the first Climate Action Plan and the current consultation on Carbon Budgets will help to inform that process. The legislation also requires the Department to put in place a transport sectoral plan and an infrastructure sectoral plan for combatting climate change. The infrastructure sectoral plan must include policies and proposals for planning and construction, while the transport sectoral plan must include policies and proposals for public and private transport. Significant cross public sector collaboration will continue to be required over the coming months to put in place the mechanisms which will ensure compliance with

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the Act and support the delivery of the related Green Growth, Energy, Clean Air and Nature Recovery Strategies.

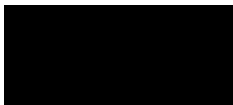
It is widely recognised that the planning system has a key role to play in guiding, encouraging, and promoting a more sustainable and integrated approach to land use and infrastructure development and in looking for innovative and locally agreed solutions to the challenges we will continue to face in terms of climate change. Beyond the ongoing work to finalise the review of regional strategic planning policy on renewable and low carbon energy, it is important that the policy framework provided for by the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) is fit for purpose and suitably future proofed to appropriately support the Climate Change agenda going forward.

It is within this context that I am writing to advise you that the Department will soon bring forward a Call for Evidence on a potential focused review of the SPPS on the issue of Climate Change. It is the Department's intention to undertake this stakeholder engagement exercise this autumn. The primary purpose of the Call for Evidence is to engage with key stakeholders on the proposed areas of focus for a review of the SPPS and to invite the submission of evidence on the relevant factors that can assist with determining the best way forward.

The information gathered through the Call for Evidence will be taken into account by the Department and will help inform any decision by a future Infrastructure Minister on a review of the SPPS and the options for it. Should there be an absence of Ministers, a decision on the way forward will be considered in light of the decision-making legislation in place at that time.

Further information will be provided when the Call for Evidence exercise is formally issued but, in the meantime, you may wish to consider how your organisation can provide support and feedback as part of this process.

Yours sincerely

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Julie Thompson.

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**JULIE THOMPSON**  
Deputy Secretary