



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Climate Change: Department of Agriculture,
Environment and Rural Affairs

17 December 2020

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Declan McAleer (Chairperson)
Mr Philip McGuigan (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Clare Bailey
Mrs Rosemary Barton
Mr John Blair
Mr Maurice Bradley
Mr Harry Harvey
Mr William Irwin
Mr Patsy McGlone

Witnesses:

Mr Owen Lyttle	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Ms Arlene McGowan	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

The Chairperson (Mr McAleer): Via StarLeaf, we have Owen Lyttle, grade 5 director of environmental policy; and Arlene McGowan, grade 7 working in the environmental policy division of the climate change branch. I ask Owen and Arlene to commence the briefing.

Mr Owen Lyttle (Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs): Good morning, Chairman and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to come before you today to discuss the launch last week of the consultation on the public discussion document for a climate change Bill. I am joined online by Arlene McGowan, who is part of the relatively newly formed climate change Bill team in the environmental policy division.

My opening remarks will provide a summary of the discussion document, highlighting what I believe are the key areas. I will also provide an outline of the Climate Change Committee's sixth carbon budget and the balanced pathway towards net zero for the UK by 2050 and its relationship with the discussion document and a climate change Bill. Finally, I will talk briefly about some of the challenges facing the progress of a climate change Bill in this mandate.

The discussion document on a climate change Bill for Northern Ireland was launched on Tuesday 8 December 2020 and will remain open until 1 February 2021. Unfortunately, due to the challenging timeline to deliver a Bill within this mandate, the normal two-week notification process of the consultation launch was unable to be provided to the Committee. Ideally, given the cross-cutting nature of climate change, the draft discussion document would also have been issued to other Departments via an interdepartmental write-round for their comment prior to publication. However, the

continuing political and public urgency for progress on the development and introduction of a climate change Bill meant that an opportunity was not afforded to engage at this stage with other Departments.

The discussion document covers four broad areas. It provides, first, an overview of climate change strategic drivers and political and public agendas nationally and internationally; secondly, the current policy and legal framework in Northern Ireland; thirdly, Northern Ireland's current greenhouse gas emission status; and, fourthly, the latest rationale for options and policy proposals for a Northern Ireland climate change Bill and its content.

Although the document does not introduce any new policies, the Minister has been keen to engage stakeholders from across the economy, society and the public and to ensure that requirements in the New Decade, New Approach (NDNA) agreement are met. As the Climate Change Committee has stated, people have a vital role in delivering net zero. Even if a large part of delivery relates to technological and investment challenges, there will be most success where proposals are seen to be fair and where people have been involved in developing the proposed solutions. The Minister has also directed that the legislation be well informed and based on sound evidence and science. The Minister intends to use the findings from the discussion paper, along with the expert advice and updates from the Climate Change Committee, to develop proposals for a Bill before taking them to the Northern Ireland Executive for their agreement. The timing of the public discussion document has, to a certain degree, been linked with the publication of the Climate Change Committee's advice and reports on the sixth carbon budget and the balanced pathway to net zero. After the 2019 legislative change to the UK Climate Change Act 2008, which brought in the target of the UK achieving net zero by 2050, we were aware that the Committee's reports for the sixth carbon budget would, due to the addition of that net zero element, have a lot more detail and therefore key relevance to the public discussion document.

In addition, the Minister wrote to the Committee seeking separate specific analysis and advice on Northern Ireland's fair contribution to the UK net zero target. That was also published last Wednesday. The analysis and detail to reach net zero by 2050 for the UK is a global first and was groundbreaking work by the Committee, as the over 1,000 pages of reports that were published last week testify. In the public discussion document, a series of questions relates, essentially, to the ambition of a climate change reduction target and how that target should be expressed; five-yearly carbon budgets that could be used to set interim targets; reporting powers and duties; and views on an independent advisory body.

The two options addressing ambition are fundamental. The first option has a focus on an evidence-based target that may not see Northern Ireland meet net zero by 2050 but, importantly, provides an equitable contribution to UK net zero by 2050. The alternative option presses for Northern Ireland to be net zero by 2050 or, indeed, before that time. Whatever the course of action decided, the selected overarching target will substantially shape future Programmes for Government, Budget and resource profiles and the demands on citizens for the next three decades if we are truly committed to tackling climate change. It is therefore timely that the reporting of the Climate Change Committee provides extensive evidence on the considerations that should be made in deciding between the two options.

Although the focus of the discussion paper and a future Bill seems to revolve around emissions reductions and, mainly, mitigation, it is also important not to forget about the need for adaptation plans. In light of our ongoing experience of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, "resilience", rather than "adaptation" may be a better descriptor of what needs to be done. Even if we meet net zero by 2050 and limit the global temperature increase to 1.5°C, the emissions already baked mean that there will be further impacts from climate change beyond those already occurring today. Indeed, we need to be cognisant of being prepared for a global increase of 2°C or even more. It will be important for future mitigation strategies and plans to reflect where adaptation can also be built in to provide wider effect and extra value for money: for instance, planting trees in a manner that also contributes to flood alleviation.

Finally, before I close, I will touch on the demanding timeline to introduce a Bill in the remainder of the mandate. The next three months are critical. If the Bill is to progress, assessment of the discussion document responses, policy development and drafting instructions are required to get it to production by early April 2021. That requires a certain amount of concurrence of activity and some seemingly expedient decisions, such as not affording the Committee the two-week notice for this discussion document. Every day counts, and the staff involved in the Bill are, like other parts of DAERA, working over Christmas to deliver this. To provide you with reassurance that the Department is taking the delivery of the Bill seriously, the Bill work has been prioritised, an extra Bill team has been allocated,

and other support services have been put in place. We are also liaising closely with the Office of the Legislative Counsel (OLC) and TEO to ensure that the timeline is achievable.

In summary, I thank the Committee for providing us with the opportunity to engage on the discussion document. Climate change is a global challenge and a fundamental threat. The discussion document is the next step in delivering a climate change Bill for Northern Ireland. It addresses the call for action to address the climate emergency and provides an opportunity for Northern Ireland to contribute to the global response to tackling climate change.

The Chairperson (Mr McAleer): Thank you very much, Owen.

Mr McGuigan: Chair, before I make a few points to Owen, I want to say that we did not get a chance to quiz the Minister on this important work. It might be useful to invite the Minister back to talk about this and the other key priorities that we did not get a chance to discuss earlier.

Owen, thank you very much. I have gone through the document, and these are points that I wanted to make to the Minister this morning, so I will make them to you. You talked about the challenging time frame, and the document says:

"Delivering an Executive Climate Change Bill within this mandate is a challenging but key priority for the DAERA Minister".

That does not really equate with the reality of the discussions that we and other MLAs have had with the Minister on this subject. The NDNA agreement, for example, was agreed in January, and the Assembly has had numerous debates on the climate emergency. Until now, the Minister has resisted that. The challenging time frame has been imposed by the Minister. This document could have been released three, six or nine months ago, in my view.

The other point that I want to make is that the paper says:

"The Discussion Document on a Climate Change Bill does not introduce any new policies".

That is very disappointing, given the delay in producing the document in the first instance. There is a complete absence of any mention of an all-Ireland dimension or cross-border cooperation, which is astounding. Obviously, the Minister cannot legislate on an all-Ireland basis, but it would be madness for us to discuss climate change on this part of the island without having had some discussion and cooperation with the Southern part of the island. The environment and climate impacts are inextricably connected. Those are two key points that I want to make.

You talked about the two options. It is my view and the view of the Assembly that the North needs its own climate legislation as we move towards net zero before 2050. We need to be ambitious here about what we do in legislation, and we need to show leadership on this issue.

Mr Lyttle: Do you want me to respond to some of those points, Chair?

The Chairperson (Mr McAleer): There are about 10 questions in there, so do your best, Owen.

Mr Lyttle: I will try. The Minister is on record as saying that he is very much about action, and some of the areas that he has pushed ahead on and championed since the return of Ministers have been recorded, such as Forests for our Future, support for the recycling programme and the plastics reduction action plan. That is despite the difficulties that all of us have faced in the last 11 months through concurrently having to deal with the COVID pandemic and EU transition, which have been stretching resources. It is not just this year; the staff involved in the legislative programme worked flat out for the whole of 2019 as well. To a certain degree, there is a capacity issue.

It is important to stress that, this year, we had a Hobson's choice. There was acknowledgement that, with the UK moving to net zero by 2050, the sixth carbon budget that the Climate Change Committee was going to prepare would have a lot more detail and evidence on how we should go forward, right down to devolved nation and region level. Therefore, if we pushed ahead too early, we might miss that evidence, and the decisions taken would not be founded in evidence.

The problem with delay is that you run up against the legislative timescale. That is just a Hobson's choice. The Minister has directed us to push ahead with, prioritise and resource the Climate Change

Bill and to engage with experts and the Climate Change Committee to make sure that we provide the best information to the public and other stakeholders.

The targets are ambitious, but I will not comment on that. There are two options, and there is to be a public discussion. It is not for me to say what my preferences are at the minute. It is for people to comment on the public discussion document. It is helpful that the information provided by the Climate Change Committee allows more consideration of the challenges involved in meeting different targets.

The Climate Change Committee has been pretty forward in its deep dives over the last two weeks. It says that it will be difficult for all of the constituent parts of the UK to reach net zero and thinks that an 82% reduction is a fair and equitable contribution. That assumption, as of today, will front-load the resourcing and the policies in the 2020s so that we can deliver these already ambitious targets by the 2030s, and that will set us on course for reaching UK net zero by 2050.

It will be up to you, the politicians, to sort out where that ambitious target lies on the range, but there will have to be a lot of discussion about how any target, no matter what it is, is resourced and what policies are in place to meet it.

There was a hint about the Irish connection. The document does not explicitly look at that. What should be noted is that the Minister's response to Lord Deben's advice is quite clear. He wants to look at the nature of targets for different greenhouse gases and at gas emissions in different sectors across the UK, the British Isles and Ireland. In that advice, there is also information about aligning, potentially, with the climate change action that the Irish are considering.

Mr Blair: Thank you, Owen, for the presentation. I am happy to have these conversations and keen to see things come forward. However, the coordination could be better. For example, earlier in the year, some of us were told officially that this would not happen. We were told that other plans had been put in place and other pressures brought to bear. With regard to coordination, should we be looking at other consultations and discussions that are taking place? Later in this meeting, for example, we will discuss a consultation document on 30-year sustainability, which does not, as far as I can see, include any mention of a climate change Bill from the Department. Is it not essential that any other consultations and discussions on the environment must include reference to the work done in relation to a climate change Bill and, hopefully, the timetable associated with such a Bill?

Mr Lyttle: I cannot comment on that piece of work. During the year, there has been a lot of activity and intent expressed. This climate change Bill reflects, as I said, a number of actions that the Minister has proceeded with. One that I forgot, and it is quite substantial, is the green growth strategy and framework. It is inextricably linked to climate change, particularly in mitigation and adaptation. Internally in the Department, we are realigning business areas to make sure that there is future coordination and cohesion to deliver across the rest of the Departments and the Northern Ireland Civil Service. For instance, the climate change mitigation and climate change adaptation teams are moving into the green growth division so that we will have better cohesion, which will, hopefully, improve that coordination, not just internally in the Department but across other Departments.

Mrs Barton: Thank you for your presentation. Is there anything in the Northern Ireland climate change Bill that is not in the UK Climate Change Act?

Mr Lyttle: As part of our review of climate change legislation within the UK, Ireland and other developed nations, such as New Zealand, we got a feel for what are the core elements of a climate change Act. A number of core elements stand out: overarching headline targets; carbon budgets; reporting, duties and responsibilities; and advisory bodies.

The climate change Bill that is being developed will complement the UK Climate Change Act. However, from the public discussion document, the intent is that those four key areas for consideration will be the core content of a climate change Act, which would pretty much be in line with the developed nations that have gone down this road.

Mrs Barton: You are working in tandem with the UK people?

Mr Lyttle: Yes, definitely. We take our lead from the Climate Change Act, and having a Northern Ireland Bill allows us to make bespoke measures to deal with issues that have more relevance to us. As we heard from the Minister in the previous discussion, agriculture is a significant element of the Northern Ireland economy, and we cannot get away from that. It accounts for 27% of current

greenhouse gas emissions, and we are totally out of line with the UK average. Therefore, it would be prudent for us to have a mechanism in the Bill to reflect targets and carbon budgets to ensure that we deliver a fair and balanced pathway to a future net zero.

Mrs Barton: Of course, we produce more food here per head than elsewhere in the UK.

Mr Lyttle: A bit of pragmatism needs to be brought to this. I am not sure whether anybody listened to any of the deep dives, but the Climate Change Committee was quite vocal in recognising that Northern Ireland is a significant exporter of agri-food products, with nearly 50% of what is produced here consumed in the rest of the UK. Therefore, and I will paraphrase Lord Deben from one of the deep dives, it is only right that the rest of the UK carries this burden. He recognised that the quality of meat and the way in which it is produced in Northern Ireland is an exemplar. The Climate Change Committee wanted to look after the territorial emissions from the UK and not push carbon overseas.

There is a balance to be struck. One of the dangers of pushing too hard — this is a risk that the Climate Change Committee mentioned — too fast or too slowly is that you end up offshoring carbon. We need to be careful that this does not become a vanity project and that we have a target just so that we can say that we have a target. We have to be careful what the consequences are because we are contributing to a global movement to reach net zero and meet the Paris agreement. Northern Ireland is providing quality food for the rest of the UK market and our carbon intensity is recognised as being very good. The latest figures in the carbon intensity report outline how well the dairy sector is doing with regard to productivity, etc. It would be dangerous, risky or foolish to offshore that to other nations that may not have as much regard for animal husbandry, quality or even carbon intensity.

Ms Bailey: Thank you, Owen and Arlene, for the presentation. I am a little disappointed in the consultation as well. It is quite directive in its style and quite reductive in its opportunities for answers. Having said that, however, at least the work has started, which is something to be thankful for. What information is it hoped will be gained from the consultation in comparison with, for example, the consultation on the previous environment strategy? I know that the Department received about 2,000 responses to that one.

Mr Lyttle: The Minister has stated that he is keen to engage across all sectors. That is important. There are concerns that, sometimes, when we look at legislation we look to others and there is a danger of mirroring. In the climate change arena, we have our own distinct issues and problems and our own profile. Therefore, in directing us, the Minister was keen that, at least, there should be engagement with broader society and the public to reflect those views.

The timeline is challenging. The Minister wants to take on board the views of the Climate Change Committee. There would have been an option to move directly to policy development and drafting instructions simply on the back of the views of the Climate Change Committee. As I said before, this is Hobson's choice; it is not perfect. I said in my opening remarks that we recognise that this is not the process.

If there is anything to take from this — I accept the criticism that perhaps some elements are absent from the discussion document— it is that there is serious intent to make sure, by the end of this mandate, that officials are pushing to get a climate change Bill that the Minister can present to Executive colleagues for agreement and get it introduced. By the end of this mandate, it is intended that Northern Ireland will have a climate change Bill. In reality, those three or four key provisions will not be so different from all the core legislation.

This is not about how big the Bill is. The amendment to the UK Climate Change Act last year, when it went to net zero, was one line, but that one line has already produced over 1,000 pages of reports, with more data to come in. That one line has stimulated new policies and plans. It is about making sure that we have quality, clarity and succinctness of direction for all stakeholders and the public in Northern Ireland over the next 10, 20 or 30 years. It is a cliché, but, when the Bill is enacted and we get Royal Assent, that will be just the end of the beginning. The hard work and intensity for everybody starts the day after that Bill is enacted, if not before or now.

As I said before, the Climate Change Committee said that to fulfil the ambition of net zero, or near net zero, we have front-load policies and resourcing in the 2020s.

Ms Bailey: Owen, I promise you that you do not need to hammer home the urgency and the complexity and the great need for any of that to me. I fully understand that and I get it. You said that

the Minister was keen to engage with the wider sector. What engagement has he had so far with other Ministers and Departments? This is a cross-cutting matter that needs buy-in and recognition across the Executive.

Mr Lyttle: The Minister has directed us to look at the sixth carbon budget. There is an urgency and, as I have said, this is not perfect. We have pushed this out to make sure that the discussion document was aligned with the sixth carbon budget and the balanced pathway to net zero. That is not just the start of the Minister's engagement. He has engaged with other Ministers, Departments and officials through the green growth agenda and, before that, the future generations working group, all of which has been about looking at mitigation, efficiency and reducing carbon. Before that, there was engagement on the adaptation plans, etc. There has been ongoing engagement on the Bill. That is still to come, and that is reflected in the Minister's letter to colleagues saying that he will follow up and engage with them.

Ms Bailey: In its report, the Climate Change Committee identified and rightly pointed out the role of citizens' assemblies in getting us to where we are now, the wider public buy-in and getting the public to understand the ramifications of the measures that need to happen. Has there been any discussion about establishing a citizens' assembly here? It has not been mentioned at all.

Mr Lyttle: I acknowledge that. The focus has been on getting clarity and succinctness of direction in legislation. I have come from dealing with waste policy, mainly recycling, for a decade or so. I did not need legislation to engage or push policy forward, reflecting what the views of the public were. We can work that in by other methods and focus on it as we go along. It is urgent that we get clarity of direction for businesses, society and the public. Development of the first carbon budgets is the first step in that, and engagement to produce carbon budgets will have to happen more broadly anyway.

Ms Bailey: It is a two-way thing. You could argue that we do not necessarily need legislation to set targets and to resource them so that people and sectors can achieve them. However, what we do need is the public to understand the buy-in, what will be required, and the changes that will come about. You could argue exactly the same for both of those, really.

Can I double-check something with you? We have the UK Climate Act. Can Northern Ireland and the Executive set our own targets? We are bound by the UK targets. Do we have the devolved competency to set our own targets in legislation different from the UK's?

Mr Lyttle: That is the intent. As part of the work on the Bill, we are checking to ensure that we have competency and that there are no pitfalls. Previous legislation had the Secretary of State reserving emissions matters, etc, so we are engaging with the Departmental Solicitor's Office (DSO) to ensure that we have the proper approach and that we are allowed to set targets. That is all part of the work to develop policy on the climate change Bill.

Ms Bailey: OK. The Climate Change Committee's report explicitly identified — as if we did not know — that the intensification of food production in the agri-food sector here is our big problem. I know that there is the green growth strategy and that other work is going on, but, putting all that in, it still remains our problem. Is there a strategy to reduce that? I know that the green growth strategy is with the Minister. However, it sounds to me as if we are really on track to legislate for a split methane target. Is that discussion going on? What has been the conversation on that? Is that the trajectory?

Mr Lyttle: There has been a conversation. It is in the discussion document. We have been engaging with scientists and experts to understand the pros and cons. There is no simple, clear answer. With regard to split methane targets, etc, there is still a requirement, no matter what target is set, that all sectors and areas have to reduce. That includes agriculture. Any gains that any sector makes above what it is expected to make is an advantage. We have to push ahead.

I will come back to engagement after this point. We need to be very clear that we should not get lost in a target. As I said, I was involved in recycling in 2010. Everybody was focused on a target. Nobody actually understood what the outcome of that target would be. We evolved the arguments on the target. Some of the early decisions were bad because they drove to low-quality recycling that has to be offshore. It was only when we turned it round to a more circular approach and looked at the target as a milestone to an outcome, that we got the big gains in recycling.

We need to be careful on climate change. We have to understand the complexity of the outcome. The targets set must be about more than just numbers: they must be guides to the outcome that they are seeking to support and direct.

In the agriculture sector, the Climate Change Committee advice to Minister Poots is about different splitting of targets, etc. We should always be cognisant of the fact that for us to get even to an 82% reduction — even with the agriculture sector biogenic methane taken into account — there will have to be a lot more carbon sequestration.

Our land use will have to turn from being an emitter to a sink, and that will have an impact on land use and agriculture. That is where a lot of the discussion will have to be. As I said, when we bring in mitigation measures, they also assist with adaptation, which, in turn, will assist with water quality, which will assist with biodiversity.

As we bring those strategies together over the next two or three years, we will soon find that they are synergistic and mutually supporting as opposed to what has more traditionally been seen as confrontational. This is a chance, under this Bill with these targets, for people to pull together and work collaboratively to get that outcome.

Engagement will be important, and you made that point. The Minister has written to ministerial colleagues, and I think that the Committee would have had that letter, about a Northern Ireland climate action programme, which we initiated. That is to support, in the first instance, Conference of the Parties (COP) 26 and COP 15 and biodiversity over the next year. However, it is not just a nine- or 10-month campaign; the plan is for this to be for three years initially.

COP 26 is just a milestone to use as a catalyst to gain interest. We already have plans to work with Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful and with the youth sector for Eco-Schools, which is coming together. We will support some of the key UK themes of working with youth and working through sports. I have had meetings with Nigel Topping, the UK Government's high-level climate action champion for UN climate talks COP 26, the Race To Zero campaign and the UK's Together for our Planet.

A lot of work is being done to get that engagement moving up the agenda. During 2021, you will see a lot more visibility and publicity as we build to COP 26. It is to reassure the Committee that this will not fall off a cliff come the end of December. The intent is that this follows right through, and that will provide an opportunity for more and more people to engage, provide feedback and start to get a better understanding. Part of the work that we aim to do in schools is about carbon literacy. There are a lot of positives.

Ms Bailey: Yes, but there are still a lot of concerns. There is intensification of the livestock sector in Northern Ireland, which is directly linked into our methane levels. I know that we are focusing a lot on carbon sequestration or reduction. We know that methane is a short-lived greenhouse gas, but it is over 80 times more potent than CO₂ over 20 years. There is a huge body of work that we need to do to reduce methane immediately. My concern is that if we are heading for split methane targets, what will we do there?

Is it the intent to have the Bill passed and given Royal Assent during this mandate or merely introduced during it?

Mr Lyttle: The intent is to get to Royal Assent and to have it introduced by April.

Ms Bailey: April 2021?

Mr Lyttle: Yes. My apologies upfront for the expediency of some of the decisions in getting this discussion document out. The next three months are critical. That is why we have front-loaded resources and stripped away some of our experienced people who are involved in legislation to make sure that we deliver a Bill to the Minister to engage with colleagues on.

Ms Bailey: Apologies, the feed on my computer was breaking up. *[Inaudible]* Royal Assent on the Bill by April 2021.

Mr Lyttle: I cannot say that, Clare; I am only an official. I will push the resources — well, the person who comes after me will, because I am moving shortly to the marine fisheries division. The people in charge are good people and are working hard. We will get it to introduction stage.

After introduction, the ball passes to the politicians, the Committee, the Assembly, etc. If there is the political will to get it through and if we get it to introduction in April, I see no reason why we would not have Royal Assent or an Act in 2022.

Ms Bailey: Thank you.

The Chairperson (Mr McAleer): That was a great politician's answer, Owen *[Laughter.]*

Mr McGlone: I want to ask a few questions. One or two of the consultation questions seem to be a wee bit grandma and apple pie, and others appear to be perhaps 10 or 15 years out of date. Forgive me *[Inaudible]* enquiries on this, including when I was the Chair of the former Environment Committee.

Are we likely to see legislation taking shape? Can you give me a time frame? Some could be forgiven for saying that the consultation exercise could be kicking the tin down the alley a wee bit further. Can you give me that in a nutshell?

Many of us are passionate about it and want to see it being moved on. As legislators, we want to see it being done in a time frame that is compatible with the issue. We all notice the problems with flash flooding and see what is happening around us. Many of the issues that are happening and that we are out at site meetings about daily should not be happening. It is because of the excesses of man that they are going on. We really want to push it and make sure that we are making a genuine effort to arrive at a point at which measures are put in place that at least mitigate the issues that are happening around us.

Mr Lyttle: As I have already said, we are putting the resources in place to make sure that we can introduce a Bill in the spring of 2021. That will provide the legislative time frame to progress it before the end of the mandate.

I accept what you said. To be honest, I thought that the question that you were going to ask about the public discussion document was not so much whether it was it kicking the can down the alley but about whether it was just a tick-box exercise because of the time frame to turn around policy development and drafting instructions. That is why we have put in extra resources and have engaged with our statisticians, who are looking to talk with NISRA and potentially bring in external support to make sure that we can deal with the responses when they come in and allow them to inform policy development.

I will be honest: some of the policy will have to be developed concurrently, but that is more about the legislative process. I do not think that the argument will be that there will not be a target so that we can do work while the work on the discussion document is going on. The target at the end will be the response, and the Climate Change Committee will inform that.

If you are asking me whether we are just buying time so that we can push it to the new mandate, I assure you that in my division and group, and after talking to the permanent secretary and the Minister, that is not the case. I have been tasked to resource it to get it to introduction in the springtime.

Mr McGlone: OK. Can you quantify what the extra resource is?

Mr Lyttle: Normally, a Bill team would have a grade 7, a deputy principal and a staff officer. That would be normal jogging pace. For this Bill, we have two of those teams, a grade 6 over the teams, and we are looking to secure dedicated DSO support.

We already have DSO support in the division and in the group, but we want to make sure that we have that support for the next three months during policy development. I see the intensity every day. The team has only come together. Arlene was the first member, so she carried the burden as we started to build the team at the end of July. The team has come together and is working hard. It has already provided information to the Minister — I think that it is briefing him next week — and it has met the spad several times. This is being progressed at pace and with urgency.

Mr McGlone: Thank you for that.

Mr McGuigan: I completely agree with Patsy: some of us are passionate about this and want to see ambitious legislation that helps the North to reduce its carbon footprint. That is the basis on which we

come at this. You talked about extra resources. Did I pick you up right that you are leaving the team? The fact that you have been driving it up to this point and are now leaving contradicts some of the things that you said. You talked about introducing the legislation in April. That is only three months away. What does that mean for Committee scrutiny prior to April or from April forwards?

Mr Lyttle: April is our target date. That is what we have been working to with OLC, but it might waver a bit. Arlene has the timeline tattooed on my hand. She also has it on posters in the office so that we make sure that those elements are met in the timetable. It will be tight, but we have those extra resources so that we can do concurrent activity and allow that engagement. Having a grade 6 means that I do not really need to be there. I have been involved, but the hard yards will be done by that team, and the people in that team have proven themselves; they have delivered before. If they cannot make it happen, there are not many who can. They are cognisant of what has to be done in the timetable and whom they have to engage with, and they will make sure that the Committee is informed.

The Chairperson (Mr McAleer): OK. No other members have indicated that they want to speak. I thank Owen and Arlene for joining us this morning for that comprehensive briefing and for answering all our questions. No doubt we will be seeing and hearing from you in the time ahead. I hope that you have a safe and peaceful Christmas and a happy new year.

Mr Lyttle: Thanks very much, Chair. Merry Christmas to everybody. The next time you see me, I will probably be in marine and fisheries division, speaking on a different topic.

The Chairperson (Mr McAleer): All the best. Take care.