



Step One

Getting Started

What is the climate change policy context in Northern Ireland?

This document provides an overview of international, national and Northern Ireland (NI) climate change adaptation policy, with links to relevant documents.

Our climate is changing. We need to reduce our emissions to limit these changes. Unfortunately, no matter how much we reduce our emissions, we are locked in to a certain amount of change. Therefore, we need to take rapid action to reduce emissions, whilst preparing for the inevitable impacts of climate changes – this preparation is called climate change 'adaptation'.

MITIGATE



Action to reduce the severity of climate change

Responding to Climate Change



ADAPT



Preparing for the impacts of climate change

International Policy

The Paris Agreement 2015

The Paris Agreement is a landmark climate change agreement adopted on December 12, 2015 at COP21 in Paris, France under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The deal marked a critical turning point toward a zero carbon and climate resilient world. For the first time, 189 countries united under a single agreement to combat climate change and adapt to its impacts.

The deal aims to¹:

- Limit global temperature increase to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, whilst ambitiously pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius.
- Mobilise and enhance support for climate change mitigation and adaptation in developing countries by providing 'climate finance'.
- Provide a framework for transparency and accountability on countries progress of mitigation, adaptation, and support.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)

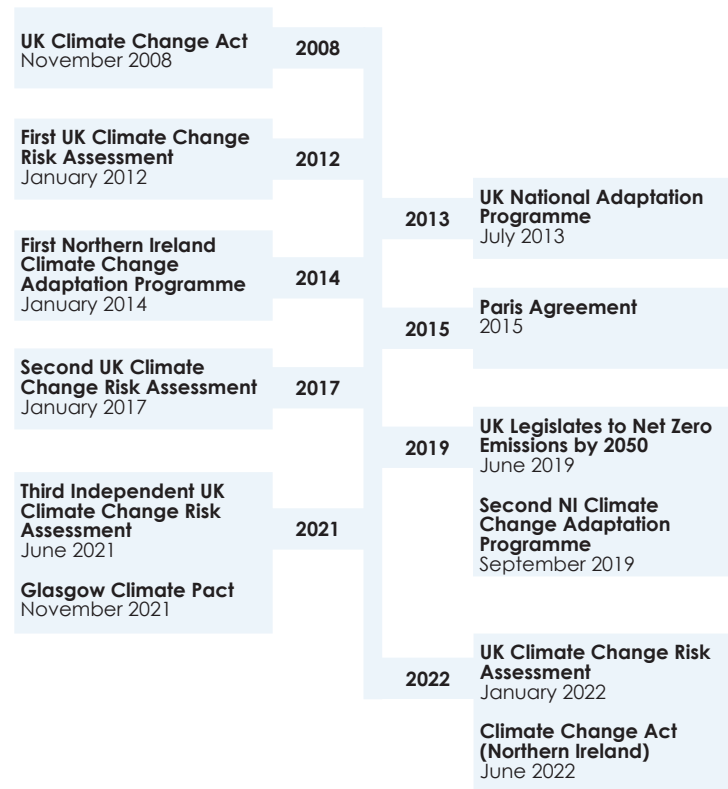
The IPCC is a United Nations body, dedicated to providing all countries regular assessments on scientific evidence for climate change, its impacts, future risks and options for adaptation and mitigation. The IPCC provide governments with scientific climate change information, to inform and develop climate policies.

The 2018 Special Report² projected that:

- Climate change-related risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, human security, and economic growth are to increase with global warming scenario of 1.5°C and increase further with 2°C scenario.
- Even if vigorous efforts to limit the emissions of GHG from human activities are undertaken, the world is locked into further climatic changes.
- Adaptation options specific to national contexts, will have benefits for sustainable development and poverty reduction with global warming of 1.5°C.

National & International Context

Policy Timeline



UK & NI Policy

Climate Change Act (2022) Northern Ireland

In June 2022 the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) received royal assent. The Act creates a target for net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, with bridging targets including at least a 48% reduction in net emissions by 2030.

The Act contains information about:

- Five-yearly Carbon Budgets
- Climate Action Plans
- Sectoral Plans
- Just Transition Commission
- Northern Ireland Climate Commissioner

For further information about the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) follow this [link](#).

UK Climate Change Act 2008

The Climate Change Act 2008 establishes a legally-binding framework for the UK Government to address and combat climate change.

The Climate Change Act commits the UK Government by to:

- Achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. This means that all UK GHG emissions would be either reduced to zero or offset through natural or technological measures. This includes special targets for emissions from Scotland and Wales, but no separate target was set for Northern Ireland.
- Assess the risks and opportunities from climate change by producing a UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) every five years.
- UK administrations are required to produce a National Adaptation Programme (NAP) every five years, setting out their objectives, proposals and policies in response to the risks and opportunities identified in the CCRA.

UK Climate Change Risk Assessment

The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) is produced by the Committee on Climate Change (CCC), a government advisory body set up under the Climate Change Act 2008. This is a five-yearly assessment of the major risks and opportunities from climate change to the UK economy. It sets out the key risk for the next five years, and scores these by urgency: More Action, Further Investigation, Sustain Current Action, Watching Brief. In 2021 the CCC published the third Independent UK Climate Change Risk Assessment³ (CCRA3) which sets out the risks to the UK's people, infrastructure, natural environment and businesses. The results of the CCC's assessment can be found on [UKClimateRisk.org](https://www.ukclimatechange.org.uk/assessments/ccra3), including:

- Technical Report
- National Summaries
- Sector Briefings
- Research and Supporting Analysis

Climate Northern Ireland wrote the CCRA3 Summary for Northern Ireland⁴. For Northern Ireland, 61 climate risks and opportunities were assessed, more action is needed now to address 31 of them, further investigation is urgently needed for 19, sustaining current adaptation action is only deemed appropriate for five of the risks or opportunities and six have been classified as watching brief.

Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme (NICCAP)

In response to the risks identified in the Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) for Northern Ireland, government must develop a Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme (NICCAP)⁵ to outline the approach for addressing the risks on a five-yearly basis.

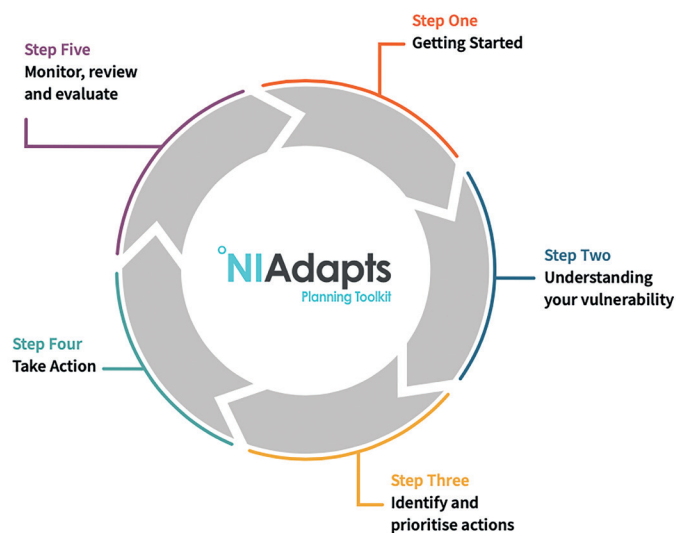
The Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme 2019–2024 was published in September 2019 and sets out Northern Ireland’s adaptation actions for the period 2019 – 2024. This programme addresses the government’s response to the climate change risk and opportunities as identified in the UK CCRA 2017 Evidence Report Summary for NI. For the first time, the NICCAP also includes an outline of how civil society and local government will contribute to addressing these climate change risks and opportunities.

Civil Society and Local Government Adapts

Climate NI was commissioned by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to work with civil society and local government to develop their response to the risks and opportunities outlined in the 2017 CCRA. A Civil Society and Local Government chapter is included in the main NICCAP, and Climate NI also prepared the Civil Society and Local Government Adapts Supporting Document⁶ which provides further detail on the adaptation actions being undertaken by civil society (academic, voluntary and community, and private sectors) and local government across Northern Ireland.

As part of the Local Government chapter in this report, SOLACE supported that a range of actions, including that councils should “embed the adaptation planning cycle across local council planning with the aim of encouraging councils to complete a minimum of Step 1 (getting started) by 2021 and Step 4 (understanding vulnerability, and taking action) by 2024”.

This means that each council should have set up a working group to consider adaptation by 2021 at the latest, and developed and begun implementing a climate adaptation plan by 2024.



References

1. United Nations Climate Change (UNCC) (2020) 'What is the Paris Agreement?' Available at: <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement> accessed February 2023
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4. Climate Change Committee (2021) 'Evidence for the third UK Climate Change Risk Assessment - Summary for Northern Ireland.' Available at: <https://www.ukclimaterisk.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/CCRA-Evidence-Report-Northern-Ireland-Summary-Final.pdf> Accessed June 2021.
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6. Climate Northern Ireland (2019) 'Civil Society and Local Government Adapts.' Available at: <https://climatenorthernireland.org.uk/site/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/NICCAP2-Civil-Society-and-Local-Government-Adapts.pdf> accessed January 2023