



NI WOMEN'S BUDGET GROUP

**NORTHERN IRELAND WOMEN'S BUDGET GROUP (NIWBG) RESPONSE TO THE
CAERA CLIMATE CHANGE (NO. 2) BILL CALL FOR EVIDENCE
Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (CAERA)
Prepared by Alexandra Brennan (Coordinator) of NIWBG
September 2021**

The Northern Ireland Women's Budget Group (NIWBG) is made up of organisations and individuals from the women's sector, trade union movement, academia and wider civil society in Northern Ireland, with the aim of implementing a gender equal economy. The members of the NIWBG scrutinise policy and budgetary matters with a gendered lens to bring attention to the different ways in which women and men are affected by government-level decision-making. It aims to provide policy and budget-makers with policy analysis to secure substantive equality for women and men through the assessment of gender impact.

The NIWBG works with a range of organisations in Northern Ireland on devolved issues and with sister organisations in Wales, Scotland, England and Ireland on East-West and North-South issues.

We hope that our response to the consultation will be considered by the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs when scrutinising Climate Change (No. 2) Bill.

If there are any questions or comments regarding the NIWBG's consultation response, please direct them to the Coordinator for the NIWBG, Alexandra Brennan (info@niwbg.org).

Introduction

There are three crucial components of an ideal bill tackling climate change that are missing from Climate Change (No. 2) Bill (hereafter known as 'No. 2 Bill'):

1. Plans for a just transition;
2. A goal of reaching net-zero emissions by 2050 at the latest;
3. Independent oversight mechanism

Without these factors, the NIWBG is concerned that Northern Ireland will not be able to properly prepare for the impending climate crisis. This has significant implications not only for environmental well-being, but for socio-economic well-being, too. As noted in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), "...ending poverty and deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests."¹

The NIWBG advocates for a caring, green, gender-equal economy for Northern Ireland, and these factors are all interlinked – we cannot have a caring economy without achieving gender and climate justice, and vice versa. Therefore, we promote legislation that is ambitious not only in preventing climate change, but in promoting a more sustainable and equal future for the people of Northern Ireland. This can only be achieved with the inclusion of a just transition, a net-zero emission goal, and an independent oversight mechanism.

The NIWBG would also like to support and refer the Committee to the response from Friends of the Earth NI, which contains a more detailed analysis of No. 2 Bill and additional aspirations for a Climate Change Bill for Northern Ireland.

Just Transition

According to economist Anne Pettifor, a 'just transition' is a transition that "will make sure that workers do not pay the price for the economy's transformation away from dependence on carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions."² The NIWBG would go one step further, wanting a just transition that would ensure those who contribute to the economy in any way – both in paid and unpaid work – are not impacted as we collectively move to a lower carbon economy. The inclusion of a just transition can mitigate the human and economic costs of such a drastic change, generate employment in existing low-carbon sectors and create jobs for new and emerging low-carbon sectors.

However, equality and human rights must be at the heart of any climate change bill and its implementation process for such a transition to occur. Therefore, the application of gender responsive budgeting is crucial to a successful just transition. Gender responsive budgeting tools can help recognise systemic disadvantages and lead to budgets and policies that promote greater gender equality. If implemented, policy-makers would have to consider the

¹ UN (2021). *The 17 Goals*. ([THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development \(un.org\)](https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/))

² Anne Pettifor (2019). *The Case for the Green New Deal*. pg. 17.

gendered impacts of spending and revenue raising decisions and how to use these mechanisms to bring about gender equality. Women's intersecting identities are also included in this analysis and policy makers are expected to promote these areas of equality as well.

Gender budgeting is transformative, assists in transparency and accountability, and is of value in delivering economic benefits, equality and rights, and securing sustainable peace. Because of this, plans for a just transition must be embedded in gender responsive budgeting mechanisms. To make the necessary changes in preparation for the climate crisis, a just transition must be at the core.

Reaching Net-Zero

It can be found throughout No. 2 Bill that the Climate Change Committee (CCC) stated that Northern Ireland only had to reach a net-emissions reduction goal of 82%. The NIWBG believes that this does not go far enough – Wales has a goal of net-zero by 2050³ as does Scotland, even going so far to say that they plan to reach net-zero by 2045⁴. As well, the Republic of Ireland also has a net-zero emissions goal⁵.

While the expertise offered by the CCC is valued, the NIWBG's ideal climate change bill advocates for an strict goal of reaching net-zero emissions by 2050. Northern Ireland needs to match the commitment made by other nations not only for the sake of preserving our climate, but because it's an indication of ambition. By solely meeting the bare-minimum, it paints Northern Ireland as a place that cannot adapt to necessary change and puts us at risk of losing out on investments to other nations with more ambitious targets.

As mentioned previously, equality and a just transition must be key to any climate change bill. However, the longer it takes to reach net-zero (whether that goal be 2050 or beyond), the more unequal and unjust this transition will be. Already we are seeing the beginning effects of climate change around the world – this will only worsen the slower we act. Therefore, it is in the interest of climate sustainability, attracting investors, and securing equality that a Northern Ireland climate change bill has a strict net-zero emissions goal by 2050 at the latest.

Independent Oversight Mechanism

It has already been stated in this response that the NIWBG values the expertise of the CCC. However, we are concerned that No. 2 Bill relies too heavily on a single oversight body. Therefore, the NIWBG supports Friends of the Earth NI's call for the creation of an

³ Welsh Government (2021). *Climate change targets and carbon budgets*. ([Climate change targets and carbon budgets | GOV.WALES](#))

⁴ Scottish Government (2021). *Climate change: Reducing greenhouse gas emissions*. ([Climate change: Reducing greenhouse gas emissions - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#))

⁵ Government of Ireland (2021). *Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill 2021*. ([gov.ie - Climate Action and Low Carbon Development \(Amendment\) Bill 2021 \(www.gov.ie\)](#))

independent Climate Change Commissioner – one that is not attached to any specific department and can offer proper critiques where there is lack of compliance with legislation.

Conclusion

The NIWBG strongly believes that the only way to combat climate change and foster a prosperous future for the people of Northern Ireland is to create a climate change bill with a just transition plan, a net-zero emissions goal for 2050 (at the latest), and an independent oversight mechanism like the Climate Change Commissioner.