



**sustainableNI**

Annual Report 2020/21

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**sustainableNI**

## Message from our Executive Director

As we start to recover from the pandemic – keeping everything crossed – we'll need to summon all our energy to tackle the climate and ecological crisis and achieve net-zero carbon emissions in the shortest time possible.

This is a monumental challenge. It must be met with equal ambition. The COP26 summit in November is our last chance to save the world from dangerous levels of climate change. World leaders have a moral responsibility to rise to the challenge, by pledging to decarbonise their economies by 2050.

Organisations in Northern Ireland are waking up to this challenge. The government is developing policies and legislation to reconcile economic success and environmental damage.

Sustainable Northern Ireland is a small organisation. We cannot make the changes necessary to achieve a sustainable future alone.

We can however work with our partners, particularly statutory bodies with significant influence on policy, to make a difference. Local authorities influence around a third of carbon emissions in their areas, so we continue to prioritise our resources to support and guide councils to push the boundaries on what can be achieved when it comes to sustainability and climate action.

At Sustainable Northern Ireland our ambition is clear: to achieve a world where prosperity is achieved in ways that are good for people and the planet.

So, what's your ambition?

Nichola Hughes  
Sustainable NI  
Executive Director



# 2020/21

The year in numbers

sustainable**NI**



**12**

funders



**1,125**

social media  
followers



**643**

People reached over  
**12** learning events



**10K**

sessions on  
our website



**7.7K**

users of  
our website



**68**

sustainability  
practitioners trained





## Sharing Ideas



The pandemic led us to switch our communications and forums to online-only, enabling us to share information and spread awareness to even more people.

### Facilitating Peer to Peer Support & Learning

All things considered it was another successful year for the Sustainable Development Forum, holding four virtual meetings despite challenges posed by the pandemic. The June meeting focussed on COVID19 impacts and opportunities to build back better. In September, we launched the 3rd phase of the nationwide [Sustainable Food Places](#) programme which resulted in four councils receiving grant funding from Sustain to develop local sustainable food partnerships.

In December, the group heard from Cenex who discussed a range of sustainable travel options from greening fleet vehicles to installing EV charging infrastructure. Sara Lynch then fired up imaginations on the possibilities of corporate sustainability as she outlined her approach to embedding sustainability across operations, teaching and research activities at Queen's University Belfast.

The March meeting introduced the Government's new Walking and Cycling Champion, who told members about the Minister for Infrastructure's approach to active travel and financial support available through the Blue Green Infrastructure Fund.





## Sharing Ideas

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### Examining the work of the UK Climate Assembly

In November 2020, we hosted a [webinar](#) examining the constructive work of the UK Climate Assembly and the resulting recommendations report “The Path to Zero” as well as discussing the prospect of a localised Climate Assembly for Northern Ireland with key stakeholders from government and local government.

### Promoting funding for EV charge points

To remedy a lack of uptake of the [On-street Residential Chargepoint Scheme \(ORCS\)](#) – a fund of £20 million to increase EV infrastructure, in September 2020 we hosted a webinar in partnership with the Energy Saving Trust, to provide local authorities with information on the application process, the procurement and the installation of EV charge points.

### Introducing a Plan to Tackle Single Use Plastic on the Government Estate

SNI supported DAERA in the development of a Plan to remove unnecessary plastic from the government estate. Local councils followed in the government’s footsteps, taking measures to remove unnecessary plastic from their buildings, operations, and events with support from Sustainable NI through the [Tackling Plastic NI](#) project.

### Providing Training on Sustainable Procurement

We provided a limited amount of training this year for councils, upon request. The training focussed on sustainable procurement strategies and aimed to equip staff with knowledge, understanding and confidence to integrate social and environmental considerations into the procurement of goods and services.

## Case Studies

Tackling the climate and ecological emergencies involves transforming towns and cities into places that make it easy for people to live and work sustainably, with space for nature.

We collated several case studies this year to show what this looks like in practice, including:

[Ormeau Parklet, Belfast](#) [View project >](#)

[Dingle 2030, Kerry](#) [View project >](#)

[Bonham Quay, Galway](#) [View project >](#)



# Shaping Policy

We draw on our practical experience to influence policy for a better, more sustainable future.

## Campaign for a Climate Change Bill

A key milestone for climate action in Northern Ireland came on Wednesday 21 October following the submission of a [Climate Change Bill](#) to the Northern Ireland Assembly by a cross party group of MLAs.

Sustainable NI worked with eNGOs and academics to shape the development of the Bill, identify sponsors and foster political support through the All Party Group on Climate Action to enable a successful passage through the Assembly.

## Build Back Better Campaign

Experiences and lessons learned throughout the pandemic were distilled into a series of digital [communications](#) to outline ways in which public bodies might champion a green recovery from the pandemic.

We also supported the development of the environment sector's [Plan for a Green Recovery](#) resulting in an [Economic Recovery Action Plan](#) which sets out actions to kick-start economic recovery in Northern Ireland and build a more competitive, inclusive and green economy.





## All Party Group on Climate Action

We established the All Party Group in 2020 to provide a forum for discussion between politicians, NGOs, business leaders and academics, to drive progress on climate action in Northern Ireland.

The **All Party Group** met five times this year and explored:

- Government's approach to Green Growth and Climate Action (June)
- Youth voice on climate change (August)
- Decarbonising the social housing sector (December)
- Nature based solutions for climate change (January)
- Carbon impact of the construction sector (March)

These meetings are an invaluable way to develop a shared understanding of key climate issues across political parties, to help inform decision making in councils and the Northern Ireland Assembly.



With input from:



## Influencing the Development of a new Energy Strategy

We fed into the development of the new Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland, led by the Department for Economy. Over the course of 2020 and early 2021, we attended several energy stakeholder workshops and submitted written evidence on what new policy and support should look like for the decarbonisation of our energy mix.

Other government consultations that we responded to:

- Discussion Document on a Climate Change Act for NI
- Discussion Document on the Future of Recycling
- Draft Transmission Development Plan 2020-2029
- Consultation on Environmental Plans, Principles and Governance for Northern Ireland
- Consultation on the EU PEACE PLUS Programme
- Discussion Document on a Clean Air Strategy for NI
- Consultation on the Programme for Government Framework



## Influencing the Electric Vehicle Agenda

With the UK Government's ban on the sale of petrol and diesel cars coming into effect from 2030, the focus is now switching to electric vehicles. However, with only 300 charge points in the network, Northern Ireland has been slow to upgrade and invest in the public charge point network.

We wrote to the Minister for Infrastructure to outline the need to accelerate the expansion of the public EV charging network in Northern Ireland and provide support to councils to access funding from the Office of Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV). Whilst progress remains slow, Derry City and Strabane District Council has created a Northern Ireland Electric Vehicle Consortium Working Group to progress the EV agenda and Sustainable NI will be working within this group to accelerate the transition.





# Creating sustainable organisations

We developed a sustainability framework to help partners create truly sustainable businesses, communities and cities.

## Climate conscious policies

Working together with sustainability officers from local councils, we developed a corporate sustainability policy, screening tool and guidance designed to help local authorities align their projects and decisions with the UN SDGs and overarching UK carbon target of net-zero by 2050.

## Measuring sustainability performance

Using our sustainability framework, we designed a performance tool to help organisations keep tabs on how sustainable their operations are, based around key pillars of social, environmental and economic performance aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

## Practical advice and support

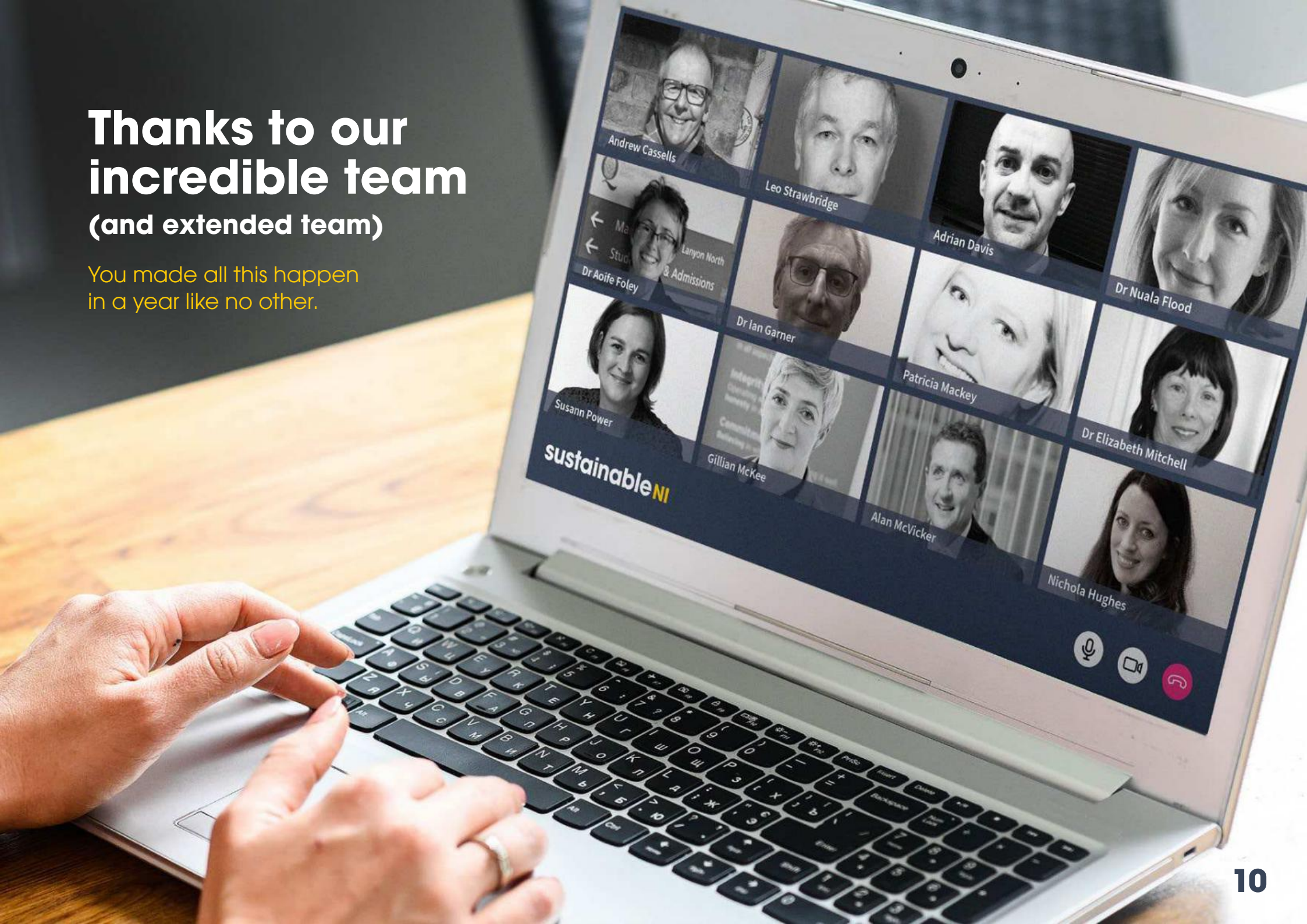
We provide technical support and advice for sustainability practitioners and elected members. This involves answering questions, producing/creating and sharing resources, showcasing best practice and reviewing sustainability strategies and plans.





# Thanks to our incredible team (and extended team)

You made all this happen  
in a year like no other.





# Priorities for 2021 /22

Our priorities for this year are to:



## Capitalise on COP26

Working through our networks, we aim to persuade and inspire businesses and governments to increase their ambition in the run up to the COP climate summit in November 2021.



## Re-define what we do

Rather than try to do everything, we will reflect on what we do best and identify the areas where we can make the biggest contribution. A key outcome will be to re-define our mission and update our funding model. We will communicate this to our stakeholders through a new corporate plan.



## Invest to grow

We will hire staff in an effort to support delivery and expand our operations. There will be an emphasis on business development and identifying revenue streams that will help advance the organisation.



## Look after our staff

We will support colleagues' wellbeing and keep finding better ways of working and connecting as we navigate our way through another year of this devastating pandemic.

# Our funders in 2020/21

The trustees and staff would like to place on record their gratitude to all the organisations and individuals who continue to support the work of the charity. Our work would not be possible without the support of our partners and funders. Thank you.

Grant funders this year were:

## Local authorities



## Government



## Public Bodies



# Board of Directors and Staff

The Board of Directors meets four times a year to determine the strategic direction of the organisation, to provide guidance, facilitate networking, help to secure funding and to support the delivery of the charity's objectives. The board has a broad range of experience from local government, academia, public health, business, and the environment.

## sustainableNI

### Directors

Chair.....	Andrew Cassells
Vice Chair .....	Leo Strawbridge
Treasurer.....	Adrian Davis
Directors .....	Dr Nuala Flood
.....	Dr Aoife Foley
.....	Dr Ian Garner
.....	Patricia Mackey
.....	Dr Elizabeth Mitchell
.....	Dr Susann Power
.....	Gillian McKee
.....	Alan McVicker

### Staff

Executive Director .....	Nichola Hughes
Business Development Manager .....	Alison Miller



# Financial Summary

31 March 2021

	Notes	2021 £	2020 £
<b>Fixed Assets</b>			
• Tangible assets	11	-	-
		<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Current Assets</b>			
• Receivables	12	13,365	13,365
• Cash at bank and in hand		<b>61,285</b>	48,939
		<b>74,650</b>	62,304
<b>Creditors:</b> amounts falling due within one year	13	<b>(2,970)</b>	(5,005)
<b>Net current assets</b>		<b>71,680</b>	57,299
<b>TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<b>71,680</b>	57,299
<b>Creditors:</b> amounts falling due after more than one year		-	-
<b>Net assets</b>		<b>71,680</b>	57,299
<b>The funds of the charity</b>			
<i>Unrestricted income funds:</i>			
• General funds	16	<b>71,680</b>	62,303
		<b>71,680</b>	62,303
<i>Restricted income funds:</i>			
• Single Use Plastic (SUP) Project	16	-	-
• Environmental Fund	16	-	(5,004)
<b>Total funds</b>		<b>71,680</b>	57,299

The notes on pages 14 to 20 form part of these financial statements.

For the year ended 31st March 2021, the company was entitled to exemption under Article 257A of the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. No members have required the company to obtain an audit of its accounts for the year in question in accordance with Article 257B(2).

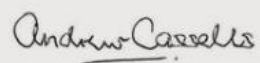
The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for complying with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 with respect to accounting records and the preparation of accounts.

# Extracted Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31st March 2021

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses in the year.

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors on 7th December 2021 and signed on their behalf by:

Andrew Cassells



Adrian Davis



	Notes	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted funds £	Totals 2021 £	Totals 2020 £
<b>Income</b>					
<i>from donations and legacies</i>					
• Donations	3	-	-	0	-
• Grants	3	60,000	5,004	65,004	66,000
<i>from charitable activities</i>					
• Business income and sponsorship	3	250	-	250	-
• Project admin	3	10,192	-	10,192	5,835
<i>from other activities</i>					
• Investment income	3	112	-	112	155
<b>Total income</b>		70,554	5,004	75,558	71,990
<b>Expenditure</b>					
<i>on raising funds</i>					
• Promotional costs	4	264	-	264	600
<i>on charitable activities</i>					
• Employee costs	4	51,919	-	51,919	39,142
• Premises costs	4	747	-	747	672
• Travel & training costs	4	383	-	383	1,088
• General administration costs	4	4,846	-	4,846	6,027
• Programme costs	4	279	-	279	13,463
<i>On other items</i>					
• Legal & professional fees	4	2,580	-	2,580	2,580
• Other expenses	4	159	-	159	226
• Depreciation of assets	4	-	-	0	-
<b>Total expenditure</b>		61,177	0	61,177	63,798
<b>Net income / (expenditure) for the year</b>		9,377	5,004	14,381	8,192
Transfers between funds	10	-	-	0	-
<b>Net movement in funds for the year</b>		9,377	5,004	14,381	8,192
<i>Reconciliation of funds</i>					
• Fund balances brought fwd at 1st April		62,303	(5,004)	57,299	49,107
• <b>Fund balances carried fwd at 31st March</b>		71,680	0	71,680	57,299





## Our vision

A world where prosperity is achieved in ways that are good for people and the planet.

## Our mission

Building a sustainable and resilient society by inspiring, influencing and informing.



### Inspire

We inspire individuals and organisations by sharing stories of success



### Influence

We influence policy and practice by providing technical and strategic support



### Inform

We share knowledge about how to address common sustainability challenges

## Our values

SNI aspires to excellence in everything it does. We pride ourselves on being:

### Knowledgeable

we focus on understanding the global and national issues around sustainability and sharing that knowledge with key stakeholders

### Collaborative

we work closely with partners to co-design and deliver solutions to common sustainability challenges

### Transformative

we put sustainability at the heart of society in Northern Ireland, transforming how people think, live and work

## Our status

Sustainable NI is a non-profit organisation which works with government and others to advance sustainable development in Northern Ireland.

SNI is evolving. Established in 1998, we are now a registered charity (Charity No NIC103426) as well as a company limited by guarantee in Northern Ireland (Company No NI038784). We are governed by a Board of Trustees comprising academics and representatives from the public, private and voluntary and community sectors.

We have put environmental and social goals at the heart of what we do and are diversifying our funding base. Delivering for governments and public bodies is the cornerstone of our approach.

## Our partners

SNI works with and supports government, local authorities, businesses, and others; acting as a catalyst for positive action to build a sustainable and resilient society. For a full list of our partners, please see [www.sustainableni.org/our-partners](http://www.sustainableni.org/our-partners)



**sustainableNI**

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Sustainable Northern Ireland is a  
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NI038784 and a Charity registered with  
the Charity Commission for Northern  
Ireland No. NIC103426

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**sustainableni.org**



Adrian McCreesh  
Chief Executive  
Mid Ulster District Council  
Burn Road  
Cookstown  
BT80 8DT

26 November 2021

### **Subscription Request 2022-23**

Dear Adrian

I am writing to thank you for your continued support for Sustainable Northern Ireland and have pleasure in attaching our latest Annual Report which provides a summary of our activities in 2020-21.

Sustainable Northern Ireland is a small organisation. We cannot make the changes necessary to achieve a sustainable future alone. We can however work with our partners, particularly statutory bodies with significant influence on policy, to make a difference. Local authorities influence around a third of carbon emissions in their areas, so we continue to prioritise our resources to support and guide councils to push the boundaries on what can be achieved when it comes to sustainability and climate action.

#### 2020-21 Highlights

- Facilitated four meetings of the Sustainable Development Forum an enabler of peer-to-peer support and learning on sustainability and climate action matters across the public sector.
- Circulated responses to key policy consultations such as the Energy Strategy, Programme for Government, Climate Change Bill, Clean Air Strategy, Future of Recycling etc.
- Wrote to the Minister for Infrastructure outlining the need to accelerate the expansion of the public EV charging network and provide support to councils to support this agenda.
- Helped establish the Northern Ireland Electric Vehicle Consortium Working Group.
- Provided 1-2-1 technical advice and support for sustainability and climate change leads.
- Developed a template sustainability policy and screening tool to help organisations align their plans, policies and projects with sustainable development and a low-carbon future.
- Facilitated five meetings of the All-Party Group on Climate Action
- Facilitated a webinar sharing the key findings of the UK Climate Assembly and the resulting recommendations report "The Path to Zero".
- Produced a 'Plan to Reduce Single Use Plastic' that was implemented by the NI Civil Service and shared with Councils and Non-Departmental Public Bodies.

## 2022-23 Funding Request

Next year we will be increasing our subscription to £6,000. As you may be aware, our fees have remained at £5,000 per year since 2014, despite inflation. We are pleased to offer additional services next financial year to reflect the uplift in cost.

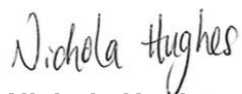
In return for your subscription Sustainable Northern Ireland will:

- Assist Council to comply with the Sustainable Development Statutory Duty (Section 25) through dissemination of ideas, advice, support, research, policy guidance and best practice
- Promote greater understanding and awareness of sustainability and climate issues within Council through attendance at forums and meetings as and when required
- Facilitate the Sustainable Development Forum which promotes and shares good practice among councils and public sector organisations in the region
- Facilitate the All Party Group on Climate Action which helps develop a shared understanding of key climate issues across political parties to inform decision making
- Help you assess sustainability performance within your organisation through a sustainability audit (New)
- Provide one internal training session on 'Understanding Section 25 – The Statutory Duty on Sustainable Development' (New)

I hope the Council will continue to support Sustainable Northern Ireland, despite the pressures on local authority budgets. If you decide to proceed with a subscription in 2022-23, please send a purchase order by 31 March to facilitate prompt invoicing and payment in April. Our payment terms are 30 days from the date of the invoice and all services will cease in the event of non-payment.

If you would like any additional information, or if you have any queries in relation to this request, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



**Nichola Hughes**

Executive Director