



Chartered  
Institute of  
Environmental  
Health

# NI Environment committee inquiry on Climate Change

Supplementary Paper 1

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# The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health

As a **professional body**, we set standards and accredit courses and qualifications for the education of our professional members and other environmental health practitioners.

As a **knowledge centre**, we provide information, evidence and policy advice to local and national government, environmental and public health practitioners, industry and other stakeholders. We publish books and magazines, run educational events and commission research.

As an **awarding body**, we provide qualifications, events, and trainer and candidate support materials on topics relevant to health, wellbeing and safety to develop workplace skills and best practice in volunteers, employees, business managers and business owners.

As a **campaigning organisation**, we work to push environmental health further up the public agenda and to promote improvements in environmental and public health policy.

We are a **registered charity** with over 10,500 members across England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

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## 1.0 Background and context

1.1 The Environment Committee is currently completing an inquiry on climate change and the issues relating to Northern Ireland. We gave evidence to this inquiry in May 2009. During the evidence session members of the committee requested further information on several points that we raised. This supplementary paper seeks to provide further information relating to the specific request for further detail regarding the costs associated with upgrading existing housing stock in Northern Ireland.

## 2.0 Detail

- 2.1 The government has made a pledge that carbon emissions from existing homes be cut by 80% by 2050. The housing sector represents 27% of total emissions in the UK, and increases in population and falling household size mean this sector is set to increase. It is estimated that some 80% of homes that will be standing in 2050 have already been built. Therefore, existing housing stock will need to play a key role in achieving climate change targets.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.2 In their submission to the NI Assembly Environment Committee Inquiry into Climate Change the Energy Saving Trust (EST) recommended that a series of targets must be set in Northern Ireland for the reduction of greenhouse gases. EST referred to The Committee on Climate Change's analysis<sup>2</sup> and highlighted the fact that one key feature of the sectors covered, particularly the residential sector, seemed to be the scope for significant energy-efficiency improvements. Significant energy savings are possible in housing because they can be made at low cost, nil cost and at even negative cost, as up-front investment would be quickly recouped and deliver a good return.
- 2.3 However, it was noted that while the Climate Change's analysis looked at the reduction of emissions in the UK as a whole it did not break down the potential for Northern Ireland and the EST were not aware of any NI-specific work on this. The energy efficiency and microgeneration technologies in NI are different from those in the UK as a whole. One reason for this is the number of households that are on gas. In GB, 95% of households are on gas, but only 122,000 homes are here.
- 2.4 There does not appear to be any specific analysis that has been undertaken to look specifically at the costs of NI meeting delivering a 'fair and proportionate' share of the UK's climate change targets, and this is understandable because NI's appropriate share has yet to be determined.
- 2.5 In terms of the costs of delivering improvements to the energy performance of existing buildings it worthwhile noting the Synthesis of Climate Change Policy Appraisals, (DEFRA, January 2007)<sup>3</sup> which showed that it is more cost-effective to deliver carbon savings in the household sector than in any other and the findings of the CCC's analysis<sup>4</sup> highlight that '*One key feature of the sectors covered, in particular of the residential sector, is that there appears to be scope for significant energy efficiency improvement at a cost to the economy and to individuals which is low, nil, or indeed negative (i.e. where upfront investment would be quickly repaid and*

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<sup>1</sup> Sustainable Development Framework *Existing Housing Stock – Climate Proofing* February 2009

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.theccc.org.uk>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/climatechange/uk/ukccp/pdf/synthesiscppolicyappraisals.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.theccc.org.uk/reports/>

give a good return).’ Despite the fact that this report originated from DEFRA this point is just as relevant and applicable in NI as in England and Wales.

- 2.6 The EST offered some figures to the NI Assembly Environmental Committee when evidence was given on 14 May 2009:

*" There are 75,000 homes that need cavity wall insulation; 75,000 homes that have solid wall insulation; 500,000 homes that need their lofts topped up to the right level of insulation; and 150,000 oil boilers that need to be upgraded. By 2020, we need 250,000 gas conversions, 55,000 wood-pellet boilers, and 200,000 solar and water panels, if we are to get to where we want to be. We need 50,000 ground or air heat pumps. **The cost of those measures amounts to £2.6 billion over the next 10 years or so, but they will result in savings of £3.7 billion and 7.3 million tons of carbon.**"*

- 2.7 Notwithstanding the excellent work of the EST, there still exists considerable scope for improving the efforts made in assisting private home owners and landlords to improve energy efficiency within existing housing. Particularly in this time of economic recession when often modest investment could yield significant savings.
- 2.8 Not enough use is being made of existing opportunities where public sector services in NI have a “ready made” interface with homeowners and occupiers. These settings and services, which include community health services (e.g. district nurses, health visitors, occupational therapists, social workers etc) as well as environmental health services, often present ideal opportunities to provide simple information on energy saving which at its most basic involves no cost to the homeowner.
- 2.9 Serious consideration should be given to utilising these opportunities much more effectively and to that end the development of an integrated information pack which sets out the benefits; the steps that individuals can take; and provides a comprehensive list of where further assistance and information can be obtained (including financial assistance with improvements). CIEH would be very happy to assist in the development of this idea and, assuming funds were available for its production, the development of such a pack. We have strong links with the Chartered Institute of Housing who should also be involved in this, along with other potential partners.
- 2.10 CIEH argued that the remit for home energy efficiency, currently with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, would have been much better positioned within the new local authorities post RPA, simply because they have much better opportunities in terms of interfaces with the general public, coupled with their active involvement in health partnerships. This remains our position.