

Better is Possible

Our manifesto for the 2022
Northern Ireland Assembly Election



**KEEP
NORTHERN
IRELAND
BEAUTIFUL**

Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful

wants Northern Ireland to become a leader in the global battle against the Climate Emergency, Pollution and Biodiversity Crises.

We are already trying to play catch-up. Our spending on environmental protection is below the UK average and, given our unique difficulties in achieving agreement, and the fact that we had no Assembly for three years, we have fallen well behind where we need to be. Our targets for reducing carbon are exceptionally challenging, our air, land and water are failing to meet international quality targets and our 'protected' areas and species are under increasing threat. The new Assembly owes it to the people of Northern Ireland to address these issues urgently.

People are often told there is a choice between jobs or the environment – but that is simply not true. We cannot have a good quality of life or a prosperous economy if our environment is polluted and deteriorating. Doing nothing to address these issues is the biggest threat we face, in terms of our future prosperity, our health and wellbeing and our global reputation. In short, it's in all our interests to put our environment front and centre of everything we plan and do from this point onwards.

In this election, the climate and environment must be a top priority for our politicians. Not just during the campaign, but for the years ahead.

Our message is simple; **Better is possible.**

- ✓ A **better economy** with green jobs. We can reimagine how we do business.
- ✓ A **better society**, where clean, green spaces are available to all, enhancing everyone's health and wellbeing.
- ✓ A **better education system** with the environment at its core.
- ✓ A **better environment** that supports biodiversity, helping our native flora and fauna to recover and thrive, tackling the pollution rife in our land and seas, and addressing the climate crisis that is already impacting on all of us. The actions promoted below will help make that a reality.



Environmental Education

Eco-Schools is an international education programme running in 70 countries across the world. Building on our success in achieving our goal of “Every School an Eco-School” in 2015, we want to see at least half of all schools reach international Green Flag status by 2025.

In 2021, a Carbon Literacy Programme was launched for schools in Northern Ireland to teach young people about the value of looking after our environment and providing them with skills for climate action into the future.

We want the next Assembly to:

✓ Mandate Environmental Education in the Northern Ireland Curriculum.

✓ Support the rollout of Carbon Literacy education to other parts of the Northern Ireland economy.

✓ Continue to collaborate and invest in the Eco-Schools programme; providing enhanced investment for the core issues of waste, single-use plastics, textile waste, climate education and biodiversity recovery.



Community Engagement

The Executive needs to build a partnership with the general public to collectively engage in climate action, help nature recover and deliver waste and pollution solutions. The **Live Here Love Here** campaign promotes civic pride and empowers individuals to act in and for their communities. From improving mental health to re-visioning communities, the environment has an important role to play. Ensuring greater participation by the public and encouraging more sustainable behaviours is a critical step. Investment in community-led programmes is about more than just supporting projects. It is about helping people understand the value of change and working together to make a difference.

We want the next Assembly to:

✓ Support the *Live Here Love Here* campaign to scale-up and reach more people with key messaging around pollution, littering and nature recovery.

✓ Introduce a Deposit Return Scheme and other legislation to help tackle our dependence on Single-Use Plastics.

✓ Support programmes that encourage people to cut down on waste (especially fast fashion and food waste) and to be more resilient, for example by diversifying their diet and growing their own food.



Improving Environment Standards

The annual cost of littering is around £40 million in Northern Ireland. The problem is a scourge on our society, with huge implications for council budgets, biodiversity, tourism and individual wellbeing. This is just one example of how environmental inaction costs us all. The time for action is now. We know the problems, the challenges and many of the solutions, so what are we waiting for?

We want to next Assembly to:

- ✓ **Ensure litter prevention and clean-up is included in extended producer responsibility legislation to reduce the burden on the taxpayer.**
- ✓ **Focus on nature-based solutions to deliver services such as water purification, flood control, biodiversity recovery and waste management. Northern Ireland needs habitat-specific action plans with measurable targets to deliver programmes on land and sea.**
- ✓ **Ensure the protection of marine wildlife by establishing protected zones and developing a strategy to help improve the sustainability of fishing methods and areas.**
- ✓ **Support tree and hedge planting to improve woodland cover and manage hedgerows, including regenerating soils and protecting land from erosion.**
- ✓ **Support our public transport and cycle networks. Active travel and measures to decrease dependence on cars and reduce the carbon intensity of transport should be a priority for the next Executive.**



Believe that Better is Possible

At Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful we believe that any action, no matter how small, makes a real difference. We want to work with you to achieve our Manifesto goals. We understand that our local Assembly cannot do everything, however, it can be an important part of ensuring that Northern Ireland picks up the pace and moves into a leadership space where the environment is concerned, rather than falling further behind. That's why we are asking candidates for this Assembly to step up to the plate in the fight to address the climate emergency.

We want the next Assembly to:

- ✓ Put in place a robust, ambitious Environment Strategy that is a living, evolving document with strong and measurable targets and reporting arrangements.
- ✓ Make sure that Northern Ireland does not dilute, and works to exceed, any environmental standards.
- ✓ Raise Northern Ireland to at least the average UK spend on environmental protection.
- ✓ Commit to all Executive and Assembly members undertaking Carbon Literacy Training so that our leaders are fully informed regarding the impacts of the Climate Emergency and are on the same journey as every citizen.





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