

OGP Local Team

Dear Sir

The Northern Ireland Government is committed to the principles of transparent and open Government. This is demonstrated in our participation in the National Action Plan and reinforced in the New Decade New Approach document published on the return of the Executive.

We are committed to working collaboratively with all NICS departments and civic society towards making all information and data open by default where possible. We see citizen participation as a key strand of this piece of work.

In recent months we have re-written the Code of Ethics for Ministers and Special Advisers and committed to publishing Ministerial and Special Advisers' meetings with outside organisations and individuals, gifts and hospitality and Minister's travel overseas. In the spirit of openness and transparency we have also published Special Advisers' declaration of interests.

Northern Ireland is a post conflict region and there is recognition for the need for public sector reform and greater citizen participation. We believe joining OGP Local 2020 would provide an opportunity to share and learn from other regions with similar characteristics and challenges and assist us with this.

In terms of future direction of open government we want open data to be more ambitious and connected with citizen participation. Citizen participation was a commitment in the New Decade New Approach document with structured civic engagement a welcome first step. We are also keen to pursue fiscal openness for issues like the Budget. We are keen to create a civic space for participation which allows people to actively engage on key issues for example climate change.

Northern Ireland Open Government Network has been in existence for over 5 years and has a track record of engaging people across society. Northern Ireland Open Government Network through a National Lottery grant also aims to engage across 11 local authority districts during 2021.

Northern Ireland joined the National Action Plan in December 2016 and has participated in the last 2 National Action Plans. Over the 18 months of the initial Action Plan, good progress has been made in relation to implementation and delivery of NI commitments in relation to open policy making and public engagement, public sector innovation, open contracting and open data.

In relation to National Action Plan 4 we are more ambitious than previous plans and we have produced in collaboration with the open Government Network and Government departments, 36 milestone activities under 8 themes. These include transparency in Government contracting, access to Government land and property data, open data, improved transparency and public accountability, citizen participation and open policy making, open government skills across the public sector, public sector innovation and social innovation. Our mid-term assessment shows we have completed almost 40% of our commitments and are on track to complete the remainder by July 2021.

We would welcome the opportunity to work with other jurisdictions and cohorts to share our experience and learn from others. We are willing to participate in any peer learning or shared experience opportunities.

We believe through demonstrating the value and benefits to everyone of open government others within the jurisdiction are likely to follow our lead.

The Northern Ireland Open Government Network is already closely connected through the Steering Committee of UK Open Government network and we see the OGP local 2020 cohort as an opportunity to further enhance best practice.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sue Gray". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Sue Gray
Permanent Secretary